

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

No.44 December 2024



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



BIRDS

NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa



2025

AUCKLAND

Tāmaki Makaurau

PUBLISHERS

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.

Email: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz Website: www.birdsnz.org.nz

Editor: Michael Szabo, 6/238 The Esplanade, Island Bay, Wellington 6023.

Email: editor.birdsnz@birdsnz.org.nz Tel: (021) 819 660

ISSN 2357-1586 (Print) ISSN 2357-1594 (Online)

We welcome advertising. Classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles/photos of birds in NZ or the South Pacific are welcome such as bird news, members' activities, birding sites, identifications, letters. Deadlines: 10th Feb, Aug & 1st May, Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor. When you're finished with this copy please pass it on to someone interested in NZ birds.



▲ Pīpiwharau Shining Cuckoo: Vandy Pollard.

||||||| NO.44 DECEMBER 2024 |||||

- 4 From the President's Desk
- 7 New funder sought for Birds New Zealand Research Fund
- 8 At-sea areas of conservation concern for Kuaka
- 9 eDNA identification of the wild diets of kiwi chicks
- 10 Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguin early chick mortality
- 12 2024 nationwide Royal Spoonbill Census
- 14 Nelson/Tasman Bird Youth Camp a 'booming success'
- 17 Bounty Islands - filled with wildlife and frozen in time
- 18 Atlasing the Kaimanawa Southern Access Corridor
- 19 Regional Roundup
- 23 Book Reviews

COVER IMAGE

Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguin, 2024 Bird of the Year.

Photo by Mike Ashbee: <https://www.mikeashbeephotography.com/>



NT Bird Specialists

Birding & Photographic Safaris

2025 TOURS

MAR	Sri Lankan Birding & Wildlife EcoTour	15 Days
MAY	Tropical Outback Bird Photography Tour	8 Days
JUN	Kakadu Birding, Wildlife & Nature Tour	5 Days
JULY	Ultimate Top End Birding Adventure	10 Days
AUG	Kakadu Birding, Wildlife & Nature Tour	5 Days
AUG	North Australian Finch Frenzy	7 Days
AUG	Outback Birding Darwin to Mount Isa	9 Days
AUG	Australian Finch Frenzy & Outback Birding *Linked Tours Extension*	19 Days
SEPT	Kakadu Birding, Wildlife & Nature Tour	5 Days
OCT	Borneo Birding & Wildlife EcoTour	16 Days
NOV	Ultimate Top End-East Kimberley Birding Adventure *Linked Tours Extension*	15 Days

Year Round Darwin Day Tours and Private Tours (Australia / Sri Lanka / Borneo)

*Spaces can be limited. Please book & express interest early.

AUSTRALIA • SRI LANKA • BORNEO



World-Class Birding Experiences, Local Expertise

Led by Renowned Specialist Guide Luke Paterson & Experienced Team.



Join Our Award-Winning Team on Unforgettable Small Group Adventures & Unique Private Nature Experiences in Northern Australia & Beyond.

- 5 Star Reviews • Specialist Guides • Unique Local Knowledge
- Target Species Missions • Private Cruises & Rock Art • Spacious Vehicles
- Exceptional Value • Accessible Tourism & EcoStar Operators • Fully Licensed & Insured

Group Calendar & Private Itineraries at NTBirdSpecialists.com.au



tours@NTBirdSpecialists.com.au / +61 455 921 092

ONE WITH NATURE



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK



MORE



NL PURE 42

SEE THE UNSEEN

From the President's Desk

As summer begins, we enter a busy time of year, with many of us out and about conducting surveys and field work, tracking nesting progress, or making observations of the increased bird activities from our backyards. I've enjoyed receiving reports on nesting activities of Blackbirds and the steady arrival of migratory shorebirds, and watching the breeding behaviours of the local Kererū from the deck of my flat in suburban Auckland. A particular spring highlight was attending the Pūkoro Miramira Shorebird Centre's Spring Migration Day (12 October), that began with an inspiring international perspective from Clare Fearnley, the former New Zealand Ambassador to China and Korea. It was wonderful to see so many visitors to welcome the Kuaka Bar-tailed Godwits, Huahou Red Knots and other shorebirds back for the summer, despite the cool conditions!

Council meeting

We had a full agenda for the Birds New Zealand Council online meeting on 28 September, where we worked through a substantial amount of business, including updates to the Code of Conduct, continued efforts to digitise existing data, and endorsement of applications for research funding. Council subsequently held an additional Finance Sub-committee meeting in October, to ensure we are supporting our Treasurer, Paul Garner-Richards, as we continue to maintain a careful balance between the Society's income and expenditure. At the end of 2023 we ceased hard copy printing of our scientific journal *Notornis* as a way to help alleviate financial pressure caused by the increasing costs of printing and postage. We made the switch to a fully open-access digital-only journal publication from Volume 71, and are tracking our finances carefully to determine the impact of this. We continue to consider the Society's spending with care, and have been able to continue to provide all our regular services, including the printing and distribution of the Birds New Zealand magazine, showcasing the projects and activities of the Society.

We welcome your support for efforts to remain financially secure by ensuring your annual membership subscription is up to date. You could also consider gifting membership to friends or family over the festive season. As a charitable society, we also welcome donations (tax credits are available for donations made in NZ), through which we are able to deliver the Projects Assistance Fund (PAF). In 2024, The PAF has supported Tūturīwhatu Northern New Zealand Dotterel monitoring, the National Royal Spoonbill Population Census, and research work to understand Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguin chick mortality.

Birds New Zealand Strategy refresh

We have also begun preparations to refresh the Birds New Zealand multi-year Strategy document in 2025, to ensure our priorities are up to date and meet the needs of the Society for the coming years. The current Strategy document is available at www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Strategy-Birds-NZ-2015-2025-revised-2021.pdf. As a first step in this process, we have launched a survey inviting feedback from members regarding Society priorities and activities. This survey was also opened to the general public, as a way to gather information that will help us both maintain and continue to grow our membership base. With a large and active membership base, we can provide a wide range of activities, while also enhancing knowledge of the birds of Aotearoa New Zealand.

As a volunteer-based society, our core activities are developed for and led by members in a volunteer capacity. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have volunteered for Birds New Zealand in some capacity over the past year, whether as a Regional Representative, Regional Recorder, a scheme or committee convenor, coordinator, or

member. Thanks to you, we've delivered hundreds of activities across the country that bring together members, and share our knowledge and enthusiasm with the wider public. Your efforts are instrumental to the success of Birds New Zealand! I hope you have taken the opportunity to complete the new survey and have a say in the future direction of Birds New Zealand.

Birds New Zealand Research Fund

As I noted in the September magazine, our relationship with T-Gear Charitable Trust is drawing to a close, and we are now actively seeking a new sponsor to help us deliver the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (see page 7). While we work to develop a new partnership, we have made the difficult decision that we will not call for proposals for the BNZRF in 2025. I acknowledge that this news may be especially disappointing for emerging researchers, who have often used this funding to kick-start careers in ornithology and the natural sciences. As the infrastructure of the BNZRF is well-established, we consider it an attractive proposition for potential sponsors, and the Birds New Zealand Council is working hard to attract a new sponsor to support this important research fund.

Dr George Mason

In sad news, I report the passing of Dr George Mason, a noted philanthropist and friend of the late David Medway, a past President of the Society. Dr Mason established a scholarship for bird research focussed in the Taranaki region in Mr Medway's name. We are grateful to Dr Mason for his generosity, which has contributed to the postgraduate research of seven students since 2015, including projects on Kiwi, Matuku-hūrepo Australasian Bitterns, and Kuaka Bar-tailed Godwits.

2025 New Zealand Bird Conference

I'm pleased to report that registration is now open for our 2025 NZ Birds Conference, to be held over King's Birthday Weekend (31 May - 2 June). While our recent conferences have taken us around the regions, in 2025 we are returning to the big city, with Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland as hosts. The Local Organising Committee have been busy with preparations, and are looking forward to sharing a weekend full of the latest bird research and showing off some of their region's birding hotspots. Early-bird registration will be open until 28 February, so don't miss out on the discounted rates. You can stay up to date with the latest conference news at: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference-2025/>.

NATALIE FORSDICK, PRESIDENT





2025 NZ Bird Conference & Birds New Zealand AGM

The 2025 NZ Bird Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Auckland during King's Birthday weekend (31 May-2 June). All events and meals will be at the Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel. The deadline for early-bird registration is 28 February 2025. Abstracts must be submitted by 31 March: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference-2025/>. Check www.birdsnz.org.nz for details, or contact your regional representative.

30 May 2025 (Friday)

18:00 - 19:00 Registration at Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel

31 May 2025 (Saturday) at Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel

08:00 - 09:00 Registration. Tea/coffee available
09:00 - 09:30 Opening
09:30 - 17:00 Scientific Day One
19:00 Informal Dinner

1 June 2025 (Sunday) at Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel

08:00 - 09:00 Registration. Tea/coffee available
09:00 - 15:00 Scientific Day Two
15:30 AGM and Awards
19:00 Conference Dinner

2 June 2025 (Monday) Field trip options:

Tiritiri Matangi Island; Tawharanui Regional Park; Behind the Scenes at the Museum - bird collection; Ambury Regional Park; Pelagic trip to the Mokohinau Islands.
There will also be the usual photo competition at the conference.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2024 Annual General Meeting (for the year ending December 2024) will be held on 1st June 2025 at the Novotel Auckland Ellerslie (72-112 Greenlane East, Ellerslie, Auckland). Johannes Chambon, Secretary, 74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011. Email: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Call for Nominations for Council

The three-year Council terms of Colin Miskelly and Eleanor Gunby, and Bruce McKinlay's (ex-President) 'ex officio' term will expire at the next AGM (2025). Colin Miskelly will not be standing again. Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again. Nominations will close with the Secretary on 28th February 2025.

Nominations must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include a brief C.V. of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council. Nomination forms are available on the website (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/forms/>). Please send to Johannes Chambon, Secretary, 74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011 or email to: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notices of any motion to be considered by the 2025 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2025, be in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society. Please send to Johannes Chambon, Secretary, 74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011 or email to: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

2025 Membership Renewals

Annual memberships are renewable on the anniversary of your joining date. Renewal reminders are sent out at regular intervals starting six weeks before your renewal date, and will continue until six weeks after the due date, until your annual subscription has been paid. You can renew your membership via the website, either by a direct credit payment or a credit card payment:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount>

The Society depends on your subscription, so please pay promptly. Please also notify the Membership Secretary if your email address has changed since your last renewal: membership@birdsnz.org.nz

Giving the Gift of Birds at Christmas

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give someone special? You can gift them a 2025 Birds New Zealand subscription for \$1.75 a week to help foster a lifetime of enjoyment and study of birds. Please send an email to eo@osnz.org.nz and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/christmas-gift/>

Make a difference with a donation

Birds New Zealand is working to ensure a better future for our birds, but we also need donations to fund our work. We are a registered charity (CC 41020) so tax credits are available for donations made in NZ in the following two ways:

* Deposit a donation into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00

* Make a donation by online credit card payment: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/make-a-donation/#form/Donation>

Leaving a Gift in your Will

If you would like to discuss leaving a Gift in your Will to Birds New Zealand, whatever it may be, please contact our Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsnz.org.nz

Fledgling Fund grants

Birds New Zealand's annual Fledgling Fund provides grants to encourage student members to attend the NZ Bird Conference and AGM. Each grant covers the registration fee and formal dinner. Applicants must have been a student member for two or more years and enrolled full-time at a NZ tertiary institution or secondary school. Only one grant can be awarded per student member. Criteria and application form here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/awards-and-prizes/notornis-and-conference-awards/fledgling-grant/>. Applications must be submitted to the Secretary (secretary@birdsnz.org.nz) by 28 February 2025,

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members: Tim Charman, Silke Hartung, Juliet Saul, Anna Reilly, Amber Aratema, Sabine Melzer, Margaret Murray, Serena Simmonds (Auckland); Erick Akeley, Grant Davey, Rory Luxton, Justin McCormack, Jean-Louise Roberts (Canterbury); Jake Sandkuijl, Nick Terry (Hawke's Bay); Robert Scotcher, Nicky J Stone, Wei-Hang CHUA (Manawatu); Hamish Lindsay, Tom Young, Murray Gavin, Moira Pryde (Nelson); Susan Buckle, Andy Jones, Samuel Moynan (Nelson); Andy Owen (Northland); Nadika Hapuarachchi, Anna Harding-Shaw (Otago); John Collins, Mariona Sarda Serra (Southland); Martin Blyth (Volcanic Plateau); Friends of Mana Island, Francesca Neal, Emma Parker, Kristen Fraser, Deborah Titchener, Roald Bomans, Graham Titchener, Donna Jennings (Wellington).

Donations

We thank the following: Sian Luckie, Murray Gavin, Andy Owen, Ken Fraser, Ian Armitage, John Troost, Geoff de Lisle, Cecily Horne, Rosemary van Essen, Bruce McKinlay, Nick Terry, Nataliya Rik, Michael Szabo.



■ Kākāpō have two colour morphs: green or olive: DOC.

Kākāpō have two colour morphs

Kākāpō evolved two different colour morphs to help them avoid predators, according to new research involving genome sequencing. The flightless nocturnal parrot's olive colouring first appeared nearly two million years ago, coinciding with the evolution of two now-extinct endemic raptor species, Haast's Eagle and Eyles' Harrier. The new research by the Department of Conservation, Ngāi Tahu and Helmholtz AI was published in September on the website PLOS (*Public Library of Science*) Biology. The researchers found that the colour variation survives, so the species has two colour morphs - green or olive - in roughly equal numbers.

New higher Takahē population estimate

On 1 October every year, the Department of Conservation's Takahē Recovery Team do a stocktake, adding Takahē to the population that have hatched and survived, and subtracting any that have died. The team then estimate the overall population. This year they estimate a 5.4% increase with the population now put at 528 birds! Every five years, they check these annual estimates with a ground survey.

David Medway Scholarship

Sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and named in commemoration of David Medway, this provides financial support to a student studying full-time at post-graduate level on a topic relating to ornithology. One scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of \$5000. Applications open 1st February 2025 and close 30th March 2025. The application form is here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/david-medway-scholarship/>

Marj Davis Scholarship

Established in 2018 in commemoration of Marj Davis, a single scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of \$1500 to provide financial support to a full-time Masters or PhD student conducting research in ornithology. Eligible research projects must clearly be of benefit to NZ ornithology and NZ birds. Preference will be given to proposals for research expected to contribute to a greater knowledge of birds in the Canterbury/ West Coast region. Applications open 1st February 2025 and close 30th March 2025. The application form is here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/marj-davis-scholarship/>

Project Assistance Fund 2024

Each year Birds New Zealand gives grants for bird research and dissemination of information about birds. The maximum is usually \$2000. Individuals or groups who are current members may apply. Applications close **30 March 2024** and are considered at the June Council meeting. Guidelines and application form: www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/paf/



■ Adélie Penguin on Petone Beach: Joss Debreceeny.

Adélie Penguin on Petone Beach

A remarkable find was an Adélie Penguin photographed by Joss Debreceeny on Petone Beach, Lower Hutt, on 12 October. This was the sixth live record of this Antarctic-breeding species in Aotearoa New Zealand. Showing signs of heat stress, the penguin was taken into care at Wellington Zoo Te Nukua, where it recovered. After a failed attempt to release it back into the wild on the coast near Baring Head it was returned to the zoo while a new release plan was organised. Shortly after that, it was taken by boat out to sea off the south Wellington coast on 11 November and successfully released there. The nearest Adélie Penguin breeding populations are in the Ross Dependency with 250,000 breeding pairs at Cape Adare and 170,000 at Cape Crozier.

13th Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)

BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand are excited to announce the 13th AOC will be held in Perth/Boorloo (<https://birdlife.org.au/events/australasian-ornithological-conference-2025/>) from Tues 18–Thurs 20 November 2025 at the University of Western Australia, with side events planned for the days before and after. This is the largest biennial gathering of enthusiastic amateur and professional ornithologists and avian researchers from Australasia, New Zealand and beyond. Key dates will be available soon. Sign up for email updates at: <https://birdlife.org.au/events/australasian-ornithological-conference-2025/>

New Banding Office staff member

We are delighted to welcome Delia Small back to the Department of Conservation Banding Office for six months while Annemieke Hamilton is on secondment to another team. Delia will be familiar to many members, having acted as OSNZ Secretary for three years, and as Regional Recorder for the Wellington branch. Balancing and prioritising the various administrative aspects of the Bird Banding Scheme are well-suited to Delia's adaptable skill set and previous experience. She is very familiar with bird banding and recovery data, through facilitating and supervising the migration and error-checking of the entire dataset (1.3 million records in 2011) from paper to digital records - without this, we would not have the FALCON Bird Banding Database today. She also assisted with managing the banding equipment, stocktaking and sales, and is not a stranger to hands-on bird banding, with over a hundred seabird, penguin and passerine records on FALCON. She will be focusing on the Operator Certification System, running the Banding Office 'shop', allocating bands to operators, processing applications for Radio Transmitter licences and assisting with the administration of the Kiwi Accredited Handler system. As such she will be the main point of contact in the Banding Office, and we hope you will join us in welcoming and supporting her in the role.

MICHELLE BRADSHAW, BANDING OFFICER



▲ Prof Isobel Castro with Kiwi-Nui
North Island Brown Kiwi.



▲ Kakapo: Jake Osborne.



▲ Roroa Great Spotted Kiwi:
Mathias Dehling/NZ Birds Online.

New funder sought for the annual Birds New Zealand Research Fund

Birds New Zealand is looking for a new funder to support the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF). Since 2013 the BNZRF has been funded by the T-Gear Charitable Trust, with the promotion, assessment of proposals, selection of recipients and administration of funds managed by Bird New Zealand. We are grateful for the Trust's support during that time, which saw 124 ornithological research projects receive funding, including many led by researchers starting their ornithological careers. I would now like to invite prospective new funders to contact me via president@birdsnz.org.nz to discuss this new opportunity.

Since 2013, the BNZRF has been a key part of the Aotearoa New Zealand ornithology funding landscape, funding research with a focus on more than 60 bird species, most of which are either At risk of or threatened with extinction, including various penguin, kiwi, albatross and kakariki species plus Kākāpō, Takahē, Kāki Black Stilt, Hihi Stitchbird, Kea, Rock Wren and others. In 2024 alone, the BNZRF received 23 applications, of which 11 were selected for funding.

The research funded has always been of excellent quality, resulting in publications in a range of New Zealand and international scientific journals. BNZRF recipients have included 42 PhD students and 16 MSc students, with about a quarter of them going on to work in conservation. The enthusiasm of these emerging researchers has also contributed to the success of our annual conference.

The research funded has improved the knowledge and understanding of the biology, ecology, breeding success, and vulnerabilities of 63 species across 26 bird families. Of these, about 50% are classed as At Risk, and 33% more are classed as Threatened. This research in turn helps to inform and improve conservation actions and policies.

The research has primarily aimed to learn more about diet and foraging, distribution and abundance, and survival and

recruitment. A wide range of methods have been used, ranging from tagging and tracking (banding, GPS monitoring), population censuses (surveys, mark-recapture), to the use of tools like genetics and environmental DNA for non-invasive species detection, or dietary composition.

For example, 17 NZ penguin research projects have received funds, including Kororā Little Penguin tracking and foraging studies, Tawaki Fiordland Crested Penguin tracking and population studies, Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguin tracking and mortality studies, and a population genetics study of all the crested penguin species that breed in Aotearoa New Zealand (Tawaki, Snares, Erect-crested, Rockhopper).

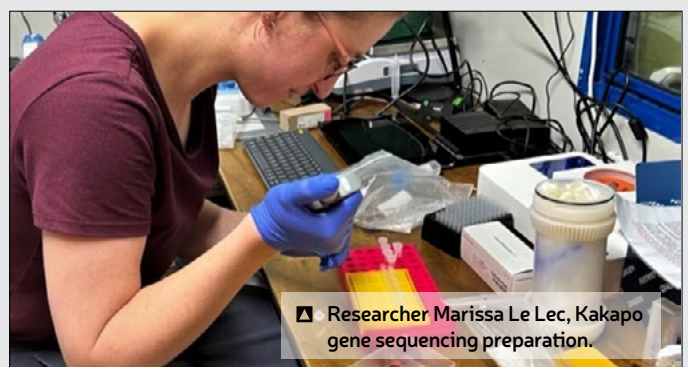
Eleven grants have funded kiwi research, including Roroa Great Spotted Kiwi distribution and abundance, studies of avian diseases that can kill kiwi, and kiwi genetics. Six grants have funded Kuaka Whenua Hou Diving Petrel research, including satellite tracking, a population assessment, and the suitability of new islands for translocations. Four grants have funded Kākāpō research including egg viability, genomics, and portable DNA sequencing. Three grants have funded Tarāpuka Black-billed Gull research including an assessment of breeding productivity and two nationwide censuses.

Two grants have funded research modelling Takahē reintroduction to Kahurangi National Park and genomics. Others have funded studies of kākāriki genetics, Hihi fertility, and the translocation of Toroa Chatham Islands Albatross chicks to establish a second breeding colony. You can read about all 124 BNZRF-funded research projects here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-research-fund/>. The 2024 BNZRF research projects are summarised over the following four pages along with results from some of the 2023 BNZRF projects.

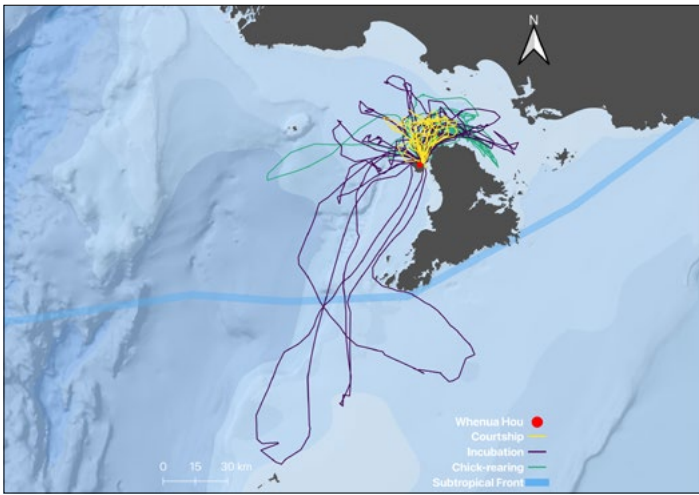
NATALIE FORSDICK, PRESIDENT



▲ Tawaki Fiordland Crested Penguins:
Doug Gimesy/NZ Birds Online.



▲ Researcher Marissa Le Lec, Kakapo
gene sequencing preparation.



GPS tracks of adult kuaka during courtship (yellow), incubation (purple) and chick-rearing (green) during the 2023 breeding season.

Identifying at-sea areas of high conservation concern for Kuaka

The critically endangered Whenua Hou Diving Petrel or Kuaka is a recently described burrow-nesting seabird species, that is a taonga species to Ngāi Tahu. Kuaka were once widespread throughout southern Aotearoa, but now the last remaining colony is restricted to Whenua Hou Codfish Island, with an adult population of about 200 individuals. Threats to this species from commercial fishing around Whenua Hou, such as vessel-based light pollution, which can lead to disorientation and collisions (vessel strikes) of birds, may inhibit population recovery. Kuaka are most at-risk during the breeding period, as they are bound by central-placed foraging with their distribution overlapping with commercial fisheries and marine traffic. With the anticipated installation of offshore aquaculture and wind farms in future, it is crucial to identify at-sea areas of conservation concern to mitigate current threats and prevent future risks for this species.

To achieve this, we GPS-tracked 25 adult Kuaka during the 2023/24 breeding season, deploying 10 GEO-mini loggers. Devices were deployed via the tail mount method, with devices attached to the four central tail feathers using waterproof tesa tape. Retrieval of devices was quite successful with an 86% recovery. We tracked birds during three stages of the breeding period, courtship (6 birds), incubation (10 birds) and chick-rearing (9 birds). Two loggers fell off birds at sea and one bird evaded recapture. The remaining seven loggers will be redeployed in the upcoming breeding season.

During courtship, trip duration was an average of 24.7 ± 22.4 hours (mean \pm standard deviation), with a maximum distance from the colony being 13.4 ± 7.8 km and a total distance travelled 63.1 ± 15.7 km. Incubation foraging trips lasted longer and birds travelled farther from the colony compared to any other breeding stage (duration: 33.9 ± 15.3 hours; maximum distance from colony: 35.2 ± 32 km; Total distance: 135.2 ± 94.3 km). Chick-rearing trips were the shortest compared to other stages (duration: 20.6 ± 1.0 hours; maximum distance from colony: 19.1 ± 13.3 km; total distance: 91.6 ± 38.1 km). Kuaka utilise the eastern Foveaux Strait the most during courtship and chick-rearing. During incubation, Kuaka expand their range utilising both the eastern and western Foveaux, with three birds travelling into Subantarctic waters on a 2-day trip. Incubation shifts last 2–4 days allowing for more exploratory behaviour and increased foraging ranges.

This research marks the first-ever fine-scale tracking of Kuaka and provides valuable information on their at-sea distribution while breeding. A variety of models, habitat and overlap analyses are currently underway. The results feed into Te Awawhetu Waipoua's MSc thesis and are expected to contribute to refining and identifying key marine conservation areas for Kuaka. We wish to thank the BNZRF for its support of this research.

TE ARAWHETU WAIPOUA, PHIL SEDDON,
URSULA ELLENBERG, JOHANNES FISCHER



Australasian Bittern Matuku-hūrepo: Helen Arthurs/NZ Birds Online.

Improving eDNA monitoring of Australasian Bittern Matuku-hūrepo

Native and endemic species face a variety of threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive species, disease, and climate change. Effective monitoring of species is critical to understanding these impacts and the success of mitigations aimed at reducing biodiversity loss. Among the distinctive ecosystems of Aotearoa New Zealand, wetlands are among the most biodiverse and vulnerable to human impacts. Of all wetland species, the critically endangered Matuku-hūrepo Australasian Bittern is one of our most iconic and elusive native bird species. Northland, with its extensive wetland systems, is deemed a crucial habitat for this species.

However, due to its elusive behaviour and infrequent observations, current understanding of Matuku-hūrepo distribution and population trends is limited. Traditional survey methods, including visual and auditory surveys, provide useful information on their locations but are time-consuming and face challenges due to the inaccessibility of the habitat. Further, as only males vocalise, it is also difficult to know if habitats contain breeding pairs or solitary males.

Recent advances in molecular techniques, such as environmental DNA (eDNA) can assist in the identification of rare and endangered species even when their populations are sparse. Such techniques complement traditional survey methods and may enhance detection capability. eDNA technology is considered a potential game changer in conservation; however, to be effective, it requires species-specific genetic sequences and rigorous experimental validation of field methods. Sequences for Matuku-hūrepo are not yet available.

In our study we will 1) extract DNA from archival Matuku-hūrepo tissue samples (University of Auckland), 2) perform genetic sequencing on these samples using various methodologies, and 3) experimentally assess (in the lab) the sensitivity of eDNA methods for detecting bitterns across a range of 'realistic' dilutions and substrates. To verify our findings, we will then test our methodology in the field by employing our sequences and eDNA techniques to detect Matuku-hūrepo at the Tara-iti Wetlands at Mangawhai Heads; a site known to host Matuku-hūrepo throughout the year. At the conclusion of our study, we aim to have developed genetic sequences for the identification of Matuku-hūrepo, evaluated different eDNA methodologies to develop guidelines for eDNA application, and provide recommendations on sample substrates, sampling designs, and the limitations of this technique for monitoring bittern populations. We thank the BNZRF for its support of this research.

PRABU RAJU, PROF. MIKE TAYLOR,
DR ELIZABETH OSTROWSKI & PROF. DIANNE BRUNTON,
UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND



▲ Kiwi-Nui chick during health check: *Whakatane Kiwi Trust.*



▲ Kiwi-Nui probing for prey: *Colin Miskelly/NZ Birds Online.*

eDNA identification of the wild diets of kiwi chicks

Operation Nest Egg (ONE) saves vulnerable kiwi chicks from stoat predation by raising the chicks in captivity. The eggs are collected from kiwi nest burrows in the wild and transported to captive rearing centres. Once hatched, the chicks are raised until they reach their 'stoat proof' weight of 1kg – big enough for them to be released back into the wild.

Rowi Okarito Brown Kiwi (*Apteryx rowi*), Haast Tokoeka (*A. australis* 'Haast') and Kiwi-Nui North Island Brown Kiwi (*A. mantelli*) are raised either in small numbers intermittently (Rowi, Haast Tokoeka), or in large numbers across every breeding season (Kiwi-Nui). While in captivity, chicks of all ages are fed the same artificial diet based on raw beef mince and beef heart, vegetables and commercial cat biscuits.

Lindsey and Claire Travers spent the last few years reviewing this diet's suitability for optimising kiwi chick health. They found each species likely needs their own nutritionally tailored diet, and that the current diet, comprised largely of raw beef, is possibly too high in phosphorus, too soft, too salty, too sticky, and too high in protein for older chicks. So, what should we be feeding chicks instead? To find out, we are going 'back to nature'. No one really knows exactly what wild kiwi chicks eat. We are going to try to work this out, and then refine the foods fed in captivity to better match the composition of their wild diet.

We are delighted to receive support from the BNZRF to begin pursuing this research work. We will be working with the Department of Conservation, Whakatane Kiwi Trust and Tamsin Ward-Smith to collect kiwi chick stools from wild kiwi chicks across Aotearoa New Zealand. These are to be incidentally obtained during routine health checks. We will then work with Landcare Research - Maanaki Whenua and use environmental DNA analysis to determine exactly what the chicks eat, and whether their food item selection changes as they get older. We hope to use this information to create better, tailored diets for all kiwi chicks reared in captivity to ensure that they get the best possible start to their future lives in the wild.

LINDSEY GRAY & MEGAN JOLLY



▲ Koekoeā: *Neil Fitzgerald.*

Koekoeā quest – uncovering secrets of the Long-tailed Cuckoo

Koekoeā numbers are declining, but being a migratory brood parasite may mask the vulnerabilities of this species and challenge common conservation management actions. Decline of their host species – especially Pōpokotea Whitehead in the North Island and Mohua Yellowhead in the South Island – has been followed by decline and local extinction of Koekoeā populations, but when new populations of these host species have been established (through translocation to ecosanctuaries), Koekoeā have not returned. Understanding why, and how to change this, is crucial for Koekoeā conservation. The huge non-breeding range of Koekoeā exposes them to a range of threats, such as habitat loss and extreme weather events. If birds from different parts of Aotearoa migrate to different areas of the Pacific, their loss from part of their range could have cascading effects thousands of kilometres away.

We aim to better understand their habitat selection and movements in Aotearoa, current population size, the degree of migratory connectivity between populations, and whether remaining populations are genetically isolated. These are first steps toward understanding limiting factors for Koekoeā and improving their management. We will tag and track Koekoeā throughout their range and use genomic tools to estimate population size and gene flow between remaining populations. We will collect blood samples from live birds, and samples from freshly dead birds (eg, after window collision). We need public help with this, so for injured Koekoeā, please phone 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468), or contact your nearest DOC office or native bird rescue. Please contact us too so we can liaise with them. For freshly-dead Koekoeā, please put the bird in a plastic bag, freeze it, and contact me via email (fitzgeraldn@landcareresearch.co.nz) as soon as possible. We thank the 2024 BNZRF for its support of this research.

NEIL FITZGERALD, LANDCARE RESEARCH
– MANAAKI WHENUA

Poor Knights Islands Rako survey

This project will repeat the 2016-2018 Poor Knights Islands population survey for the threatened Rako Buller's Shearwater to contribute towards the first accurate population trend for Rako. The previous survey came up with an estimate that was much lower than previously published assessments. While that survey excluded steep, densely burrowed, and inaccessible areas it is a repeatable quantitative study of the Rako breeding population, including breeding activity, thus providing critical baseline data. We will use the same methodologies adopted previously: random plots for burrow density; burrow occupancy - incubating adults (December), and chicks (late March); habitat modelling; permanent plots for breeding activity. Field work will be undertaken in December 2024 and March 2025 on both Aorangi and Tawhiti Rahi, the main Poor Knights Islands. Parties of six will undertake each island survey made up of experienced field workers and Ngātiwai kaimahi. Determining population trends through repeat surveys is vital for the conservation of a species. Our previous surveys (2016-2018) provide a solid baseline from which to repeat to establish the first population trend for Rako. We thank the 2024 BNZRF for its further support of these surveys.

CHRIS GASKIN, NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST

Hoiho early chick mortality post-mortems

Each year about a third of all Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguins that hatch on the mainland die in their first two weeks of life. Given the small and decreasing size of the mainland Hoiho population, these early chick deaths have a

significant negative impact on this species. For the past three years, all early chick mortalities have had a full post-mortem examination so there is now a better understanding of the causes of these deaths, with some very successful management interventions implemented to reduce these deaths, but there is still much to learn.

Post-mortems allow pathological findings to be recorded and samples to be collected for histology and molecular work. One of the aims of this research is to better understand the epidemiology of the novel Hoiho virus described in 2022 by Wierenga et al. I am grateful to Birds New Zealand for providing funding towards these post-mortems and sample collection via the 2024 Project Assistance Fund, allowing this important work to continue. This project is part of a wider PhD project investigating a causative link between the Hoiho-gyrovirus and Respiratory Distress Syndrome, currently the main cause of Hoiho early chick mortality.

HARRY TAYLOR



▣ Hoiho adult and chick: Harry Taylor.

Second consecutive Black-billed Gull nationwide census

The threatened endemic Black-billed Gull or Tarapuka was listed as "Nationally Critical" in 2016 due to suspected large historical population declines. A nationwide census was conducted in 2016/17 (funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and Fruzio) where all rivers in the South Island were flown and surveyed for colonies, and sections of the North Island were flown or surveyed on the ground. The breeding pair estimate from that census was much higher than expected, and it was concluded that the population may be stable but another census after 5-10 years was strongly recommended. Tarapuka were re-assessed in the 2021 NZ Threat Classification as "At Risk - Declining" as a result of the 2016/17 census. With support from the BNZRF, Birds New Zealand members, Environment Canterbury, Environment Southland and the Department of Conservation, the 2026/17 census was repeated in 2023/24 using the same methods.

The result was indicative of a stable population; however, due to the lack of data available to determine long-term trends for this species, annual variability, and the known movement of birds and colonies between river catchments, a second consecutive year of the nationwide census would be highly useful. We are grateful to, once again, receive support from the 2024 BNZRF, Environment Canterbury, and the Department of Conservation (and hopefully Environment Southland) to be able to repeat the census again during the 2024/25 season. We will be relying on Birds New Zealand members once again to find colonies and report them, so we encourage members to please get involved. We thank the 2024 BNZRF for this further funding assistance.

CLAUDIA MISCHLER, MIKE BELL,
TROY MAKAN & TONY HARBRAKEN



▣ Pakahā pair in nest box: Wildlife Management International Ltd.

Monitoring the Pakahā study colony on Kokomohua

Birds New Zealand Marlborough has been undertaking a project establishing a study colony for Pakahā Sooty Shearwaters on Kokomohua/Long Island with support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF), Department of Conservation, Iwi, and Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL). Health Post Nature Trust is also undertaking a five-year translocation project of Pakahā from Kokomohua to Wharariki Ecosanctuary near Onetahua/Farewell Spit.

Pakahā have a well-established colony on the tip of Kokomohua. Birds from here have been transferred to other islands around Marlborough and Wellington and to Onetahua in Mohua/Golden Bay since Pakahā were first transferred to Maud Island in 1991. A team of local Birds New Zealand members spent a day on Kokomohua in November 2023, checking all the artificial burrows, repairing any damaged artificial burrows and banding any adults present in the burrows. The team checked and where necessary replaced several burrows with new structures. New numbered tags were added to each of the artificial burrows. Over 50 burrows had evidence of breeding with adults on eggs or small chicks. Unbanded adults were banded and the breeding status of occupied burrows was recorded.

A January 2024 visit was undertaken by Health Post Nature Trust to collect chicks for transfer to the Wharariki Ecosanctuary near Onetahua. During this trip, 128 chicks were banded, and 92 were transferred to the ecosanctuary. All these chicks successfully fledged from the new colony area. Birds New Zealand Marlborough will continue to monitor the Kokomohua colony and replace broken or damaged artificial burrows as required as part of this long-term study. We thank the BNZRF for its support of this project.

KEEGAN MISKIMMIN, WMIL

Fernbird moult and morphometrics

This project aims to describe the moult and morphometrics of the North Island Mātātā Fernbird *Poodytes punctatus vealeae* (At Risk/ Declining). The sequence, timing and extent of post-juvenile and post-/pre-breeding moult is not well documented and will be the main research objective for this study. Knowledge about the South Island Fernbird moult obtained by the Nelson Birds New Zealand Fernbird study will be shared with North Island Birds New Zealand banders to support population monitoring at several banding sites in the Whangarei region, currently managed for conservation. The first year of the BNZRF North Island project was successful with 46 Fernbirds banded over two visits in November 2023 and April 2024. This study will build on the sample size and continue to assess moult and develop criteria for ageing and sexing Fernbirds.

This endemic threatened subspecies is of particular interest for conservation management as it is vulnerable to habitat loss, disturbance, and predation. An understanding of the timing and extent of moult is fundamental to determining the age of Fernbirds and moult characteristics can be used for conservation management to assess body condition and inform age and sex ratios of discrete bird populations. The Fernbird occurs across a wide latitudinal and altitudinal range and therefore is also a candidate to study the influence of climate on demographics, moult, breeding and response to environmental factors. I would like to thank the 2024 BNZRF for its support of this research.

Dr PAUL FISHER



Spotless Crake: Michael Szabo.

Evaluating the effectiveness of call surveys for Pūweto

Remaining populations of specialist wetland species such as Pūweto Spotless Crake are threatened by introduced mammal predators. For this project, I will use playback surveys in wetlands in the Manawātū to determine how Pūweto calling rates vary with time of day and stage of the spring–summer season, and what factors affect the probability of response to played calls. Presence-absence surveys will be conducted across a range of wetland types and sizes to determine if there are landscape or habitat characteristics associated with the persistence of Pūweto.

The project aims to validate and refine survey techniques for Pūweto on the mainland, and generate a more accurate picture of the status and habitat requirements of the species there. The findings will also provide basic knowledge about vocalisations of Pūweto, an evaluation of the relative merits of two methods of monitoring, help refine best practice guidelines for crake surveys, and provide valuable information on the habitat requirements for crakes there. There is a lack of research on Pūweto in relation to detecting presence, the relative efficacy of using playback surveys (short-term, observer-dependent, time of day), and the financial and logistic benefits to using automated recorders. This project involves Associate Professor Phil Battley (Massey University), Lorraine Cook (Horizons Regional Council), and Emma Williams (Department of Conservation). We are grateful to the 2024 BNZRF for its support.

CHARLOTTE ANDREW

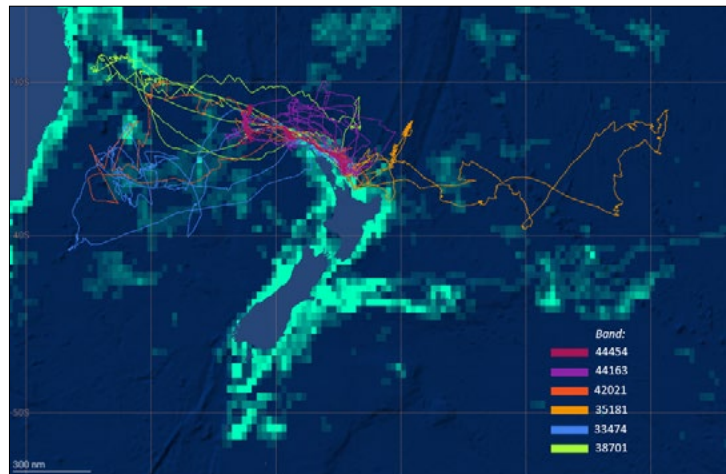
Monitoring the Pakahā study colony on Kokomohua

Birds New Zealand Marlborough has been undertaking a project establishing a study colony for Pakahā Sooty Shearwaters on Kokomohua/Long Island with support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF), Department of Conservation, Iwi, and Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL). Health Post Nature Trust is also undertaking a five-year translocation project of Pakahā from Kokomohua to Wharariki Ecosanctuary near Onetahua/Farewell Spit.

Pakahā have a well-established colony on the tip of Kokomohua. Birds from here have been transferred to other islands around Marlborough and Wellington and to Onetahua in Mohua/Golden Bay since Pakahā were first transferred to Maud Island in 1991. A team of local Birds New Zealand members spent a day on Kokomohua in November 2023, checking all the artificial burrows, repairing any damaged artificial burrows and banding any adults present in the burrows. The team checked and where necessary replaced several burrows with new structures. New numbered tags were added to each of the artificial burrows. Over 50 burrows had evidence of breeding with adults on eggs or small chicks. Unbanded adults were banded and the breeding status of occupied burrows was recorded.

A January 2024 visit was undertaken by Health Post Nature Trust to collect chicks for transfer to the Wharariki Ecosanctuary near Onetahua. During this trip, 128 chicks were banded, and 92 were transferred to the ecosanctuary. All these chicks successfully fledged from the new colony area. Birds New Zealand Marlborough will continue to monitor the Kokomohua colony and replace broken or damaged artificial burrows as required as part of this long-term study. We thank the 2024 BNZRF for its support of this project.

KEEGAN MISKIMMIN, WMIL



Tākoketai tracks overlaying AIS fishing vessel tracks between December 2023 and May 2024 (Global Fishing Watch, 2024).

Tākoketai movements and diving behaviour

The endemic Tākoketai Black Petrel has a population of about 5,600 breeding pairs and faces ongoing threats of incidental capture and drowning in longline fisheries. With assistance from the 2023 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, we deployed time-depth recorders (TDRs) and global position system (GPS) loggers on Tākoketai during the 2023-24 breeding period. We collated these results with TDR and geolocation sensor (GLS) loggers retrieved from closely related Karetai kauae mā (White-chinned Petrels) and Tāiko (Westland Petrels). Our aim is to investigate the foraging behaviour of these three *Procellaria* petrels to further our understanding of seabird ecology and inform measures to reduce fisheries bycatch.

We found that Tākoketai dived significantly deeper than both Karetai kauae mā and Tāiko, with a mean dive depth of 5.9 m, and a maximum dive depth of 38.5 m. This is a record dive for *Procellaria* petrels. Using the GPS and GLS data to calculate the time of day, we found that Tākoketai dived much more frequently during the day than during the night, and that dives during the night were significantly shallower. Specifically, dives tended to be deepest at noon, and shallowest at around midnight. In contrast, Tāiko showed no preference for daytime diving, but their dives were still shallower at night. This trend is likely due to reduced vision in the dark; we found higher lunar luminance increased the night-time dive depth in Tāiko.

The exceptional deep-diving ability of Tākoketai not only increases their own risk of fisheries bycatch, but also enables them to retrieve hooks to the surface which then become available to less adept divers such as albatrosses. So, by protecting Tākoketai, we may be able to reduce fisheries bycatch among other seabird species. Previously, the recommendation was to protect hooks to 10m depth, however, we found a quarter of Tākoketai dives exceeded this depth. This is problematic because the efficacy of tori lines and hook-shielding devices is limited at depths greater than 10m. Since Tākoketai dive more often during the day and to shallower depths at night, night setting hooks could significantly reduce fisheries bycatch in this species.

Tracking five Tākoketai from incubation to early chick-rearing showed an impressive average total distance of 17,100 km travelled in an average of 4.5 trips over the deployment (59-75 days – see map). A single bird tracked from chick-rearing to fledging covered a remarkable 28,700 km in 16 trips during a 67-day deployment. This much greater distance and number of trips is likely due to the high energetic demands of chick-provisioning. The next phase of our study aims to determine whether diving behaviour changes when birds are foraging near fishing vessels. If we observe differences, it could significantly impact how we use diving behaviour to develop mitigation measures, as bycatch risk is specific to dives associated with fishing vessels. We thank the 2024 BNZRF for supporting our research.

MARIA DUSSLER, JOHANNES FISCHER, HEIKO WITTMER – TE HERENGA WAKA VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON



View of about a third of a flock of 737 Royal Spoonbill roosting at Unahi, Awanui, 9 July 2024: Kevin Matthews.

Results of the 2024 nationwide Royal Spoonbill Census

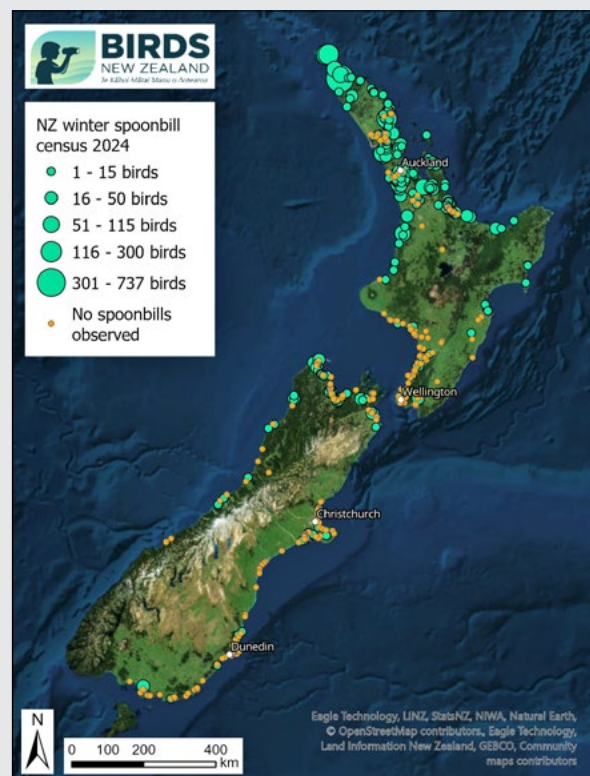
The Kōtuku Ngutupapa Royal Spoonbill is a species that has successfully, naturally colonised New Zealand from Australia, and has become a spectacular addition to our estuary birdlife. It is a strikingly white wading waterbird, with a characteristic long, black spoon-shaped bill. It hunts for small fish and aquatic crustaceans and insects by swinging its extraordinary bill from side-to-side through the water. It is rare that the natural colonisation of a species to a new country can be accurately documented. Birds New Zealand has been studying the growth of the New Zealand Royal Spoonbill population since the first nests were discovered at Okarito in 1949. The numbers here remained low for decades but from 1990 they started to increase markedly.

This winter Birds New Zealand successfully completed another coordinated nationwide census (the twelfth), nearly 50 years

after the first one in 1977. This was truly a nationwide project with enthusiastic support from members in all regions. At least 300 members were out and about this winter on designated days to survey spoonbills at most of the estuaries and wetlands where spoonbills were likely to occur. A few members helped count for both the 1978 census and 2024 census –some achievement! Some regions took the opportunity to get publicity for their survey in local newspapers. An episode of the ‘Tune into Nature’ podcast was made with members of the Canterbury region during their census (<https://www.karthicss.com/podcast/episode/38c20708/counting-spoonbills-will-the-trend-continue>). A grant from Birds New Zealand’s Project Assistance Fund helped with transport costs, but the regions generously covered most costs themselves. A huge ‘thank you’ goes to everyone who took part.

Region	Counts		Percent of total in each region
	2012*	2024	2024
Far North	1061	1142	31.40
Northland	68	359	7.82
Auckland	79	527	11.47
South Auckland	442	1107	24.10
Waikato	143	160	3.48
Bay of Plenty	40	366	7.97
Gisborne	46	26	0.57
Hawkes Bay	37	37	0.81
Taranaki	8	24	0.52
Whanganui	15	4	0.09
Manawatu	40	37	0.81
Wellington	10	17	0.37
Wairarapa	20	44	0.96
Nelson	205	239	5.20
Marlborough	53	63	1.37
Canterbury	52	48	1.05
West Coast	18	62	1.35
Otago	4	13	0.28
Southland	20	18	0.39
Total	2361	4593	

*from Schweigman P. and Thompson M. 2012. Southern Bird 52: 7



Map by Jane Meiforth.



▲ Royal Spoonbills at Te Hapua, Far North, 8 July 2024: Kevin Matthews.

There was very good coverage around the whole country with at least 500 locations surveyed (see map). Most birds were found feeding or roosting around tidal estuaries and river mouth lagoons. Shellbanks and sandbars were also favoured roost sites. A few were spotted on a waterfront lawn and at a water treatment station. Inland lakes where some birds were seen were less than 30km from the coast. Some birds in more remote places may have been missed, but not many. Not all counts could be done on the same date so there is the possibility that some birds could have moved locations and been counted twice.

A grand total of 4,593 Royal Spoonbills was recorded in this census, nearly double the number recorded 12 years ago (2,361). The table shows the totals for the last two surveys for each Birds New Zealand region and the percentage of the total count in each region for 2024. Some regions had a big increase in numbers compared with last census, e.g., Northland, Auckland and Bay of Plenty; it is difficult to know whether this is a true trend or reflects a more thorough coverage of the areas during this census.

The map shows the distribution and numbers of birds in each region at the time of the winter census 2024. Most (86%) of all the Royal Spoonbills recorded were in the north of the North Island from Waikato/Bay of Plenty to Parengarenga (north of 38°S), with 32% in the Far North region and 24% in South Auckland/Firth of Thames region. Only 1.7% of all birds were spotted in Canterbury, Otago and Southland combined, even though these regions have most of the breeding colonies. This is in line with the winter distribution recorded 12 years ago, with even more birds found in northern areas than ever (86% vs 77%).

This winter distribution is also consistent with the seasonal movements determined from the pattern of re-sightings of birds marked with individual colour band combinations (Schweigman *et al.* 2014 *Notornis* 61:177-187). That study found adult Royal Spoonbills undertake repeated seasonal migration from their breeding grounds, which are mainly in the South Island, to the

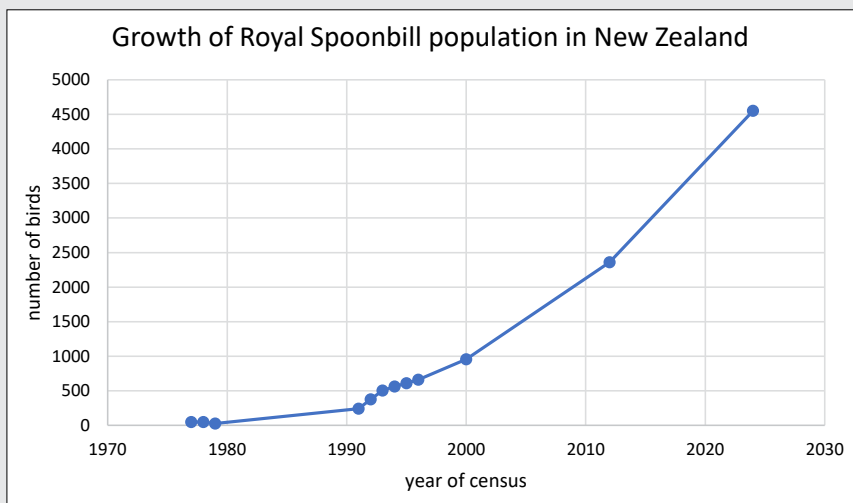
north of the North Island where they remain through winter before heading back south again by summer to nest. A small number of the birds that breed in Marlborough move to the Nelson region/Tasman Bay instead in winter. In this census, Nelson/Tasman Bay had about 5% of the wintering birds, down from 9% 12 years ago.

The Royal Spoonbill population in New Zealand continues to grow. The annual rate of growth over the last 12 years was about 7.8% per year. The graph shows the change in population over nearly 50 years of winter census data obtained by Birds New Zealand. In previous decades (1990 to 2010) the rate of growth averaged 12% per year, so the rate of population growth may have started to slow down. It is likely that the increasing population is the result of successful breeding in New Zealand, but further influxes of Australian birds cannot be ruled out. Birds New Zealand will be undertaking another nationwide survey of colonies and nests this summer.

MARY THOMPSON, CENSUS COORDINATOR



▲ Royal Spoonbill, Waikanae: Michael Szabo.





▲ Tara Iti pair: Darren Markin.

Nelson/Tasman Bird Youth Camp a 'booming success'

The first Nelson/Tasman Bird Youth Camp held at Farewell Spit and Mangarākau Swamp was a 'booming success'! The enthusiasm was amazing, reflected in the final count of 77 species observed and 253 *eBird* checklists uploaded (<https://ebird.org/tripreport/278944>). Among many highlights were viewing a dusk wader roost at Farewell Spit, which is a RAMSAR listed wetland of international importance, and an informative visit to the Cape Farewell predator-fenced enclosure with Health Post Nature Trust representative Marian Milne, with nesting Common Diving Petrels and Fluttering Shearwaters.

Held from 28 September to 4 October, there were also sightings of oystercatchers with leg-flags, Australian Wood Ducks, Shining Cuckoos and Starred Geckos, and memorable views of Australasian Bittern flying over the swamp ridgeline as dusk approached. There was also a coastal sea-watch and we heard the dusk and dawn calls of Fernbird, Spotless Crane, Ruru and Weka, and booming bitterns. All of this was accompanied by good food and company, and a quiz to reaffirm learnings.

Our first stop was to see Australian Wood Ducks while en route to our destination followed by good views of Australasian Grebe. Our first site visit was at the Farewell Spit seabird fenced enclosure managed by the Health Post Nature Trust where mice have recently been removed.

Seeing future birders blossoming and developing their skill set was inspiring. Future entomologist Saryu Mae recorded 150 invertebrate species and 200 plant species, all uploaded to *iNaturalist*. Chris Turton did an excellent job with the nourishing catering and all participants contributed to food prep and domestic duties at both locations.

There were evening presentations on the ecological importance of the two wetland locations visited and former Youth Camp participant Bradley Shields was a great addition, helping with field visits at Mangarākau and his informative presentation on his conservation work with Zero Invasive Predators on the West Coast. Participants also enjoyed learning about the National Bird Banding Scheme with interactive banding and mist-net installation practise. The end of camp quiz was received well with Saul Ward pleased to win a copy of Keith Woodley's Bar-tailed Godwit book.

Organised by Rachel Hufton (Aspiring Biodiversity Trust) and Birds New Zealand Nelson regional representative Mark Ayre, the camp was deemed a success. "It was awesome, I learnt a lot about birds, bugs, and so much more. It was very fun! (Judha, Auckland). "It was good birding in other locations with other people. I gained seven new lifers! The food was great!" (Archer, Wellington). Thanks go to Mark Ayre for his enthusiasm and valuable time, and to the camp's supporters, Birds New Zealand, Nature Quest, Albatross Solutions, Health Post Nature Trust, Over The Fence Produce Reefton, Illuminate Ecology, and Friends of Mangarākau. Future youth camps are planned at Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre 15-20 December 2024, Makarora in January 2026, and possibly in Sept/Oct 2025 (location tbc).

RACHEL HUFTON

New research initiatives to boost Tara Iti conservation

In August the Department of Conservation (DOC) announced the start of several new research projects that aim to close key knowledge gaps in New Zealand Fairy Tern Tara Iti conservation work. The Tara Iti is Aotearoa New Zealand's rarest endemic breeding bird with fewer than 35 adult birds remaining. "We are excited to embark on these critical research projects," said DOC Technical Adviser Ilse Corkery. "The research will concentrate on identifying optimal captive-rearing methods, mitigating climate change impacts, and enhancing genetic health. It is expected to provide valuable insights to improve management strategies and ultimately boost Tara Iti population size and resilience."

Starting in October 2024, a PhD student will research optimal captive-rearing methods for Tara Iti and a master's project will focus on improving nest site protection strategies. In December 2024, another master's student will study the behaviour and habitat use of captive-reared versus wild Tara Iti. In March 2025, a master's student will explore better predator control measures. Other ongoing projects include a study on hatching failure and an examination of nesting site vulnerability to sea level rise. DOC is working with multiple partners including Birds New Zealand.

A long journey for a little bird

On 30/6/22 we banded 84 new Silvereyes including AP-27099 at a regular banding site in Christchurch. On 28/7/22 we banded a further 41 Silvereyes and recaptured three of the 84 birds banded on the 30/6 including AP-27099. Then on 27/8/24, a Silvereye with band number AP-27099 was caught and severely injured by a cat in Auckland (about 750km north of Christchurch). It was taken into care at Bird Care Aotearoa but died. The band number was checked by at least two people there but unfortunately the band was not kept. This is a long journey for such a little bird, including presumably a crossing of Cook Strait. There have been several reported long-distance recoveries of banded Silvereyes in New Zealand including from Kaikoura to Wellington, Rangiora to Greymouth, and Rangiora to Otago. This is possibly one of the longest, if not the longest recorded in New Zealand. When I used to band birds in Wellington, I caught two Silvereyes that must have crossed Cook Strait. One was banded at Ward, the other at Kaikoura. On clear autumn and winter nights, Silvereye flocks have been heard in the South Island flying in a northerly direction. While doing night shifts some years ago this was a regular occurrence.



▲ Tauhou Silvereye in Kohekohe: M Szabo.

PETER REESE

HELP US TO HELP THEM



HOIHO
(Image: Alan Tennyson)



KORORĀ
(Image: Colin Miskelly)



TAWAKI
(Image: Doug Gimesy)

You can join Birds New Zealand right now for just \$1.75 a week.

It costs \$90 a year, and for students it's just \$45 a year:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/>

JOIN US NOW OR DONATE



Fossils reveal how ancient penguins' wings evolved

Fossil bones from a penguin that lived in Otago 24 million years ago have shed new light on the evolution of penguins, according to a new study published in August in the *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*. Named *Pakudyptes hakataramea* by researchers, the penguin was very small – about the same size as the Kororā Little Penguin – with anatomical adaptations that allowed it to dive. Lead author Dr Tatsuro Ando, formerly a PhD candidate at the University of Otago and now at the Ashoro Museum of Paleontology in Japan, collaborated with researchers from the University of Otago, Okayama University of Science, and Osaka University.

Dr Ando says the ancient penguin fills a gap between modern and fossil penguins: "In particular, the shape of the wing bones differed greatly, and the process by which penguin wings came to have their present form and function remained unclear. ... Surprisingly, while the shoulder joints of the wing of *Pakudyptes* were very close to the condition of the present-day penguin, the elbow joints were very similar to those of older types of fossil penguins," he said. "*Pakudyptes* is the first fossil penguin ever found with this combination, and it is the 'key' fossil to unlocking the evolution of penguin wings."

Co-author Dr Carolina Loch said, "Penguins evolved rapidly from the Late Oligocene to Early Miocene and *Pakudyptes* is an important fossil from this period."



■ Reconstructed image of *Pakudyptes*: Tatsuya Shinmura & Ashoro Museum of Paleontology.



■ Dusky Woodswallow: Matt Jones.

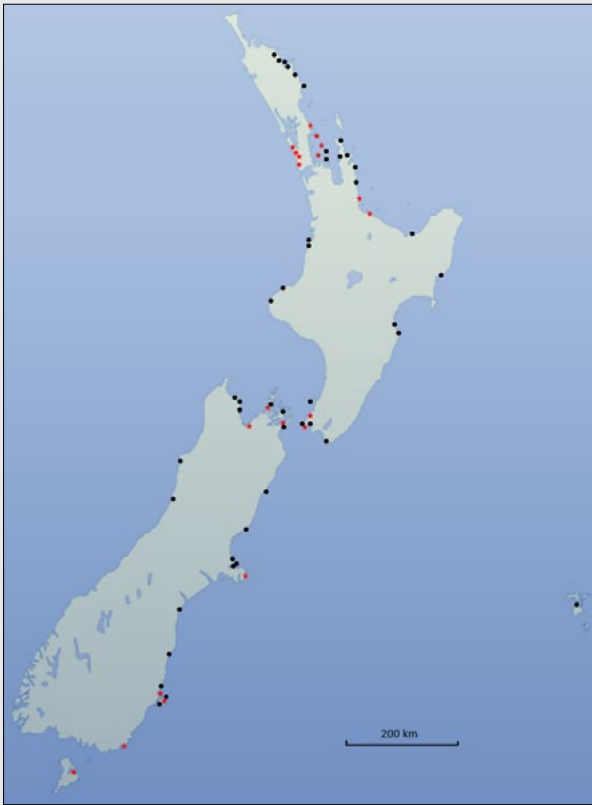


■ Stilt Sandpiper: Sean Jacques.

A pair of second NZ records

September produced two second New Zealand records of Dusky Woodswallow and Stilt Sandpiper, both found in Southland. The Dusky Woodswallow was found in Oban, Stewart Island, on 8 September by Adrian Munro. Over the following five weeks, a steady stream of keen birders kept tabs on it until 14 October, near the local 'Four Square' shop! Remarkably, the first NZ record of this Australian species was found by Satoshi Kakishima at Golden Bay Road, Oban, Stewart Island, on 27 September 2014, almost exactly ten years earlier!

The Stilt Sandpiper was found at Te Wai Parera wetland in Waituna at 9.30am on 14 September by Sean Jacques. Describing the sighting, Sean said that, "... the bird was quite flighty and spent periods feeding on flooded turf edges on both sides of the pool. ... mostly solitary, but loosely associated with a group of pied stilts". The bird was still present when he left at 3.15pm but was not seen again after that, despite plenty of searching. The first NZ record of this North American breeding species was found by Colin Hill at Lake Ellesmere on 9th September 1998, which stayed for six weeks.



▣ Kororā groups in New Zealand affiliated with NZPI denoted by redstars (22), and areas with established projects or some Kororā involvement denoted by black dots (46).



▣ Kororā Little Penguin: *Michael Szabo*.

New Zealand Penguin Initiative – In search of Kororā

Finding Kororā Little Penguins is not easy. Not just because they are nocturnal and live in burrows but because there seem to be fewer around than there used to be. At least that is the impression we have from around the country. Where are they, how many and how they are doing are questions that the New Zealand Penguin Initiative (NZPI www.nzpi.nz) is on a mission to answer. We are a not-for-profit, privately funded organisation and part of the Environmental Law Initiative (ELI www.eli.org.nz) with the aim of seeing New Zealand penguins flourishing around our coasts again. However, we can't do this alone. We need locals who know their coast and where penguins might be, and we want to chat to see if we can help your Kororā thrive, protect them and advocate for them – anywhere in New Zealand.

Kororā feature in the news media sometimes – unfortunately it is usually for the wrong reasons. There have been road kills, dog kills, deaths at construction sites, and they have been found starving or injured. They are intrepid and curious and find themselves underfoot in the strangest places. We can do better and make room for them so they can live with and among us and raise their chicks safely. Making the community aware of where Kororā live and ensuring that they are not in danger from cars or dogs can be accomplished with advocacy and education, and NZPI can help with that. We have free resources on our website and a monthly Kororā Korero (first Wednesday of the month at noon) where we get together for an hour over lunch to talk about penguins. You can join by signing up on our website (www.nzpi.nz/science-advocacy) to receive notification of the meeting and log-in details. It is a casual affair where questions can be asked, stories told, problems solved, connections made, and community created.

We introduced NZPI at the Birds New Zealand annual conference in Nelson, where we asked members to let us know about any Kororā projects they may be aware of, or any ideas of where Kororā might be and in need of looking after. We presented a map of Kororā projects we are aware of and identified gaps along the coast of New Zealand where there appears to be nothing known about Kororā. We were very excited to find out

about some Kororā work being done on the Chatham Islands that includes conservation. Since our previous article published in the March Birds New Zealand magazine, we have added more dots to the map and are now aware of 68 places with either established Kororā projects or with some involvement with Kororā, of which 22 have joined the NZPI family, and many others are contemplating it.

We continue to work on our Database and Dashboard as well as a new monitoring app custom made for all our groups and whatever type of data they are collecting so that it all can be gathered together in the database and presented on the dashboard. This will go towards painting a better picture of Kororā throughout New Zealand and will improve our understanding of the population size and dynamics. All data is important, including historical data. If you have done some monitoring in the past and the notes are lying around waiting to be summarised and analysed, but you just can't find the time, please get in touch. We may be able to help with that. As with all our groups, the ownership of the data stays with those that collected it, and nothing happens to it that you don't agree to. Whatever format your data is in, be it on a spreadsheet or in notebooks, let's get it out there so we understand what is happening with Kororā now but also what was going on in the past.

Another new project we are embarking on is a diet, disease and parasite study of Kororā that involves collecting scats for DNA analyses four times a year in key places around the country. This will fill in our knowledge gap around what Kororā are eating, how it is different in various parts around the country, whether it is changing with the season and over time with climate change. We don't know much about what type of diseases and parasites there may be in the population, and how they are changing with time so this will also be part of the project.

Get in touch and let's talk penguins! You can reach us through our website www.nzpi.nz on the contact page. Drop us a line, we would love to hear from you.

HILTRUN RATZ (PhD), NEW ZEALAND PENGUIN INITIATIVE



▲ View east from Proclamation Island, Bounty Islands with Salvin's Albatrosses and Erect-crested Penguins: Colin Miskelly/Te Papa.



▲ Pair of Fulmar Prions courting, Bounty Islands: Colin Miskelly/Te Papa.



▲ Fulmar Prion on a rock, Bounty Islands. Colin Miskelly/Te Papa.

Bounty Islands – filled with wildlife and frozen in time

There are few places in Aotearoa New Zealand that are as difficult to reach – or land on – as the Bounty Islands Moutere Hauriri. Lying 800km east of Rakiura Stewart Island (and about 500km southwest of Rēkohu Chatham Islands), it took two days of sailing from Ōtepoti Dunedin to reach there.

The islands received their English name from Captain Bligh of HMS Bounty in October 1788 – about six months before he was infamously mutinied off Tonga. They were the first of New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands to be 'discovered' by European explorers. Although remote and lacking soil or vegetation, they soon became a focus for sealing gangs, who took thousands of fur seal skins, and left few survivors. Fortunately, the seals have recovered 200 years later, although their presence adds to the challenge of landing on the steep-sided islands.

The Bounty Islands are only 50 hectares in extent, and every square metre appears occupied by wildlife – all of which are dependent on the surrounding ocean for food. At the time of our visit (mid-October), Salvin's Albatrosses were incubating fresh eggs, Erect-crested Penguins had just started laying, and NZ Fur Seal bulls had started forming harems ahead of pupping and mating in early summer.

These three large species dominated flatter areas, with Cape Petrels, Antarctic Terns and the endemic Bounty Island Shags preparing nest sites on ledges on the coastal cliffs. Fulmar Prions were as abundant as the albatrosses and penguins, and were preparing their nest sites in crevices and under boulders alongside their much larger neighbours.

The reason for my visit was to collect blood samples from Fulmar Prions, for genetic comparisons with other prion populations in the New Zealand region and beyond.

Working with my Te Papa colleagues Lara Shepherd and Alan Tennyson, we have been investigating relationships within this very confusing group of seabirds for more than a decade. Various authorities recognise between three and at least eight species of prions, depending on interpretations of species boundaries.

We had previously shown that the 'fulmar prions' that breed on the Chatham Islands are more closely related to Fairy Prions than they are to Fulmar Prions, and are best treated as a separate species (known as Pyramid Prion, after their main breeding site on The Pyramid Tarakoikoia). The Bounty Islands are the type location for Fulmar Prion, and so genetic samples from this reference population are essential for us to make sense of variation throughout the cluster of populations that have been referred to Fulmar Prion and Fairy Prion.

In addition to collecting blood samples from ten prions, we also collected surveillance swabs for High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza from these same birds, plus swabs from Erect-crested Penguins and Salvin's Albatrosses. The priority given to collecting these samples (to test for a disease not yet known from New Zealand) is a reminder that remoteness in itself does not guarantee long-term security for the wildlife on these remarkable islands.

This text is slightly abridged. Here is the link to the full blogpost: <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2024/10/24/bounty-islands-filled-with-wildlife-and-frozen-in-time/>

With grateful thanks to Thomas Mattern of The Tawaki Project, the Department of Conservation, and Steve Kafka and the crew of SV Evohe for the opportunity to visit the Bounty Islands and to continue Te Papa's research programme on prion relationships.

DR COLIN MISKELLY, TE PAPA CURATOR



▲ Christopher Tuffley's route marked in purple.

Atlasing Kaimanawa Southern Access Corridor

Whenever I looked at the Atlas Effort map for the central North Island, the area to the east of Waiouru stared back at me, blank and largely lacking data. Several Atlas squares lay almost entirely within the Waiouru Military Training Area, a large tract of defence land closed to the public. The NZ Army's environmental monitoring team had been approached and had uploaded some checklists there, but more data was needed - how could we get it? While I was atlasing in the northern Kaimanawa at Easter to fill in some gaps there, I asked a hunter at Boyd Hut where else he hunted, and he told me the Southern Access Corridor. "Where's that? I replied"

It turned out to be a narrow strip of Kaimanawa Forest Park running along the northern boundary of the army training land, giving walking access from the Desert Road to the southern part of the park. The route criss-crossed a north-south Atlas grid square boundary line, passing through six squares, three with no autumn data. Here was my next backcountry atlasing mission! I drove there on a Saturday morning and parked in a small car park just off the Desert Road where a big red billboard shouted "WARNING/DANGER", advising users of the corridor to stick to the route and not stray south into the army training land. I read the smaller print carefully several times before setting off, starting my first checklist of the trip as I departed.

There were Fernbirds tick...tick...ticking near the car park; Rifleman and other forest birds flitting around in the canopy of some beech forest a few kilometres in; and then it was rolling open tussock country. Dropping into a shallow valley I heard the kek-kek-kek of a NZ Falcon somewhere far off and out of sight. Later, I found a camp site in the Moawhango River valley and settled down to cook dinner. After dark, I did a night count while gathering together some gear to take advantage of the nearby grid square corner by walking another kilometre along the corridor, to do night counts in two of the adjacent squares.

After a chilly start next morning, I continued along the corridor to the last two squares. Then the sun crested the skyline and broke through the clouds before the cloud burned off and revealed the world below once more. Ruapehu loomed large over the hills to the west.

On the way back I heard a repeated rat-tat-tat in the distance. Machine gun fire? Whatever it was, it certainly gave credence to the signs declaring live firing could start at any time! I descended back towards the Desert Road, tired but satisfied, with the sinking sun casting a beautiful golden glow across the plain below.

Over two days, I recorded 20 species, including 15 Rifleman, 17 Fernbirds, 52 Bellbirds, 23 Whiteheads, 26 NZ Tomtits, 2 North Island Robins, 90 Silvereyes, 70 Redpolls and 29 NZ Pipits, and uploaded 44 checklists: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/tripreport/223290>

CHRISTOPHER TUFFLEY



▲ Satellite tracks from devices deployed on 35 Southern Royal Albatross in the Col study area on Campbell Island, covering the period from deployment until 11 May 2024.

Tracking albatrosses from Campbell Island

A new Department of Conservation report on seabird population trends, "POP2023-04 Campbell Island Seabird Research Project", published in July 2024 includes results from ongoing monitoring of various seabird species and satellite tracking of two albatross species to gain high-resolution insights into their at-sea distribution and fisheries bycatch risks. The report is authored by Claudia Mischler, Theo Thompson, Peter Moore, Brodie Philp and Chrissy Wickes: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/meetings/2024/twg-14-jun/pop2023-04-campbell-island-seabird-research-draft-report.pdf>

Among the findings, it reports that nest counts for Southern Royal Albatross showed an overall decline of 32.8% since the 1990s and a 26.5% decline since the 2000s. For Campbell Albatross and Grey-headed Albatross photo point counts, the percent change between 2019/20 and 2023/24 showed a decline in the total number of Campbell Albatross of 16.1% and a decline of 27.6% of Grey-headed Albatross. Among its recommendations is deploying tracking devices on Campbell Albatross and Grey-headed Albatross to better understand what is causing the population declines, and on Southern Royal Albatross in other parts of the island to determine if they forage in different areas to those birds already tracked.

Fledgling Fund recipient – Johannes Chambon

I attended the 2024 Birds New Zealand conference in Nelson to present preliminary results from my PhD on the Chatham Island Taiko and Chatham Petrel, with support from Birds New Zealand's Fledgling Fund. This was the second annual conference I have attended and once again I enjoyed a great weekend full of interesting presentations, conversations and observations about birds. I highly recommend this annual event to anyone interested in bird research. The quality of the presentations and posters was impressive, and the range of topics virtually covers all New Zealand bird groups, from albatrosses and migratory cuckoos to Kaka in rural landscapes and Australian Wood Ducks near Nelson. A personal highlight was seeing the results of the NZ Bird Atlas project. The effort made by Birds New Zealand members and New Zealand birdwatchers over the five years of the project is mind-blowing. The conference is the country's number one rendezvous for meeting other bird enthusiasts and researchers from across the country (and beyond). The enthusiasm is contagious. While the content is of a high standard, the atmosphere is very friendly. I highly recommend that fellow Birds New Zealand student members consider presenting their research at this event. It is a great opportunity to gain experience in public speaking, meet other students researching birds, and network with others.

NATIONAL SECRETARY, JOHANNES CHAMBON



█ Auckland RR Ian McLean speaks at the 'Kia Ora Kuaka' event, Ambury Regional Park: *Stefan Marks*.



█ Eastern Barn Owl near Mangawhai, 20/10: *Kel Sanson*.

FAR NORTH

Local members have reported good numbers of spoonbills, egrets and bitterns in our region over the past quarter. Kevin Matthews saw 50 Eastern Cattle Egrets at Unahi including some in breeding plumage on 5/10 and 5 Kōtuku White Herons on the mud flats there on 20/10. He heard 4 Australasian Bitterns booming in the Lake Ngatu area on 15/10, and recorded a high count of 249 Royal Spoonbills roosting in the paddocks at Unahi on 28/10. He also saw 61 Bar-tailed Godwits west of Rangī Point in Hokianga Harbour on 18/10 with 6 Variable Oystercatchers and 6 South Island Pied Oystercatchers.

Cynthia Matthews reported hearing a bittern booming 3 times on 26/10 at Rigden Road in Opuā where 1 was heard earlier this year. She also reported that Weka numbers have increased in Opuā from a single bird a few years ago to now being "all over the area". Bill Campbell reported hearing 3 different bitterns booming at Kaimaumu plus 1 in flight on 15/10. He also heard several Fernbirds at Lake Ohia on 14/10 and at Kaimaumu on 15/10. Mathieu Poot reported 9 Whimbrels, 2,600 Bar-tailed Godwits, 150 Ruddy Turnstones and 60 Red Knots at Walker Island on 21/10, but very few terns there - as yet. Lastly, the role of Far North Regional Representative is vacant. If you are interested to step up into the role, please contact Birds New Zealand Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsNZ.org.nz

- ISABELLA GODBERT

NORTHLAND

Our regular talks have included Heather O'Brien introducing her bird photography in July, Gary Wilson about the birds of Viti Levu in Fiji in August, and Lottie Glover, a visitor from Britain, about her work at various reserves in Britain, including one where Little Terns nest on popular beaches, in September. Members of our branch supported the Bream Bay Trust, helping with surveying their site for North Island Robins and Whiteheads, which have been translocated there. Only 16 robins and 9 Whiteheads were detected. At our September meeting, we also discussed the recent movement of geese to various local wetlands.

Red-billed Gulls using 2 tied-up barges in the upper harbour left 6 weeks later than last season for the CINZ tank farm (old refinery site) and are now breeding there, and at least

20 pairs of Caspian Terns have laid early at Mangawhai, with 3 older fledglings and 17 younger birds present. The Tara Iti NZ Fairy Terns laid their first eggs on 22/10, a month earlier than last year. An unusual report was an Eastern Barn Owl seen by Bream Head Ranger Tom Grinstead on 23/7 at Home Bay near Whangarei Heads. Another sighting of the same species was reported near Mangawhai on 20/10 by Kel Sanson. Scott Brooks continues to organise pelagic birding trips out past the Poor Knights Islands to 'The Petrel Station'. He reported an Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross and a South Polar Skua there on 22/9. Photos showed the albatross with a leg band. Colin Miskelly reported the number to a French colleague who looked it up and replied: "This individual was ringed on Amsterdam Island during the 23/24 season as part of our long-term monitoring programme funded by the French Polar Institute. Based on the pictures it is a chick fledged in 2024".

- TONY BEAUCHAMP

AUCKLAND

Our region has been busy with spring surveys and field trips. One to Okura Bush Walkway on 25/8 had 12 participants who recorded 35 species including an overwintering flock of 23 Kuaka/Bar-tailed Godwits. Our Shakespear Regional Park Survey on 14/9 recorded NI Saddleback, Hihi, NI Robin, Pateke and Shining Cuckoo. We monitored Puweto/Spotless Crake at Orangihina in Te Atatu on 15/9 where we saw 2 plus 12 Fernbirds. A Banded Rail was heard and many footprints seen. Our annual Motutapu Island Survey (5-6/10) had 12 participants who recorded 21 Spotless Crakes, 2 Shore Plovers, 79 Bellbirds and 44 Whiteheads. A pair of NZ Dabchicks was again seen on the Administration Bay pond.

A Kia Ora Kuaka event was held in conjunction with Auckland City Parks at Ambury Park on 22/9 with our speaker, Ian McLean, giving a talk on 'Godwits - Long Haul Champions'. About 40 participants were treated to the sight of at least 1,600 Kuaka in flight at the Shell Island roost. Other species seen included 60 Red Knots, 160 Wrybill, 2 Ruddy Turnstones, 9 Northern NZ Dotterels, 16 VOCs, 520 SIPOs and 135 Royal Spoonbills. We also had a display stall at the Cornwall Park Heritage Day event on 28/9 where our volunteers were kept very busy with many interesting birding questions from members of the public.

A Pakiri Beach Patrol on 27/10 found 11 birds including 5 Cook's Petrels, 1 Fairy Prion, 1 Common Diving Petrel, 1 Pied Shag and 2 Australasian Gannets. A Muriwai Beach Patrol on 7/9 found 1 Fairy Prion, 1 Antarctic Prion and 1 Grey-faced Petrel. A Karekare Beach Patrol on 12/10 found 1 White-headed Petrel, 2 Fluttering Shearwaters, 1 Blue Petrel, 1 prion sp, and 2 Australasian gannets. A most unusual find was a dead 10-metre sperm whale at the Pararaka Stream mouth.

Rarities have included an unwelcome sighting of an invasive Red-vented Bulbul at Pt England on 23/9 reported by Hannah Ballegooy. MPI have been advised. An Eastern Barn Owl was seen in a tree on Ponsonby Road in Auckland by Natalie Barns on 20/8. A Great Crested Tern was found at Muriwai, south of the gannet colony, by Tony Habraken on 24/10. An injured Mottled Petrel was found in a Kumeu garden on 28/10 but despite being taken to BirdCare Aotearoa it did not survive. Lastly, a White-bellied Storm Petrel was found alive on the cruise ship 'Ovation of the Seas' as it was entering the Port of Auckland on 29/10. Upon arrival, the storm petrel was provided to DOC who took it to BirdCare Aotearoa. The cruise ship had most recently visited French Polynesia on 21/10. The bird had most likely been disorientated by artificial lights and landed on board, but where/when this occurred is unknown. - IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

This year we will conduct our regular summer Wader Censuses in November. This project has been running in our region since 1960, and for the last 30 years has been in the very capable hands of Tony Habraken. He has decided to hand over organising the census work, although he will still participate in the counting, as well as all his other many birding activities. I would like to thank him for all the hard work that he has put in over so many years.

In August, our speaker was Dave Houston from DOC, who spoke about his work with the NZ Shore Plover Recovery Programme and described the factors which make this work challenging. In September, John Sumich gave a presentation on the Bittern Conservation Trust and the Matuku Muster. Some of our members took part in listening out for Australasian Bitterns booming on the selected dates in September and October at locations on Awhitu Peninsula and around Clevedon-Maraetai area,



but only 1 bird was heard. However, we have also received a report of a bittern nest in the Whitford region.

An Australasian Shoveller count at Tuakau WTP in August recorded 202 birds (130 males), as well as 6 NZ Dabchicks and 15 Royal Spoonbills. A few sightings of an Eastern Curlew were reported north of Thames in September, and another was seen at Kidd's shell banks, along with 3 Whimbrels, 7 Ruddy Turnstones, 140 Wrybills, 8 Red-Necked Stints and 14 NZ Dotterels.

Two Reef Herons were seen together at Orua Bay in August and 1 at Kawakawa Bay in October. A Little Egret was seen at the Manukau Harbour near Keywella Drive in late September, 16 Cattle Egrets were seen at Piako, and another was seen near Pararekau Island on the Manukau Harbour. A dotterel nest with 3 eggs was found on the island, and dotterels have also started nesting activity on Awhitu Peninsula. Birds are active at Colbeck Spit and Binnies, although nests were possibly lost in recent high tides. There are scrapes at Orua and Wattle Bays, and nests at Big Bay have recently produced 1 and 3 chicks. A White-winged Black Tern found at Wattle Farm Reserve on 28/7 was still present there on 27/10. Lastly, a few members attended the Memorial Service for Hazel Hart, and the funeral of Ken Bond, both long-standing branch members.

– SUE FROSTICK

WAIKATO

In August a small group of Waikato members visited the Marokopa area to look for Australasian Bitterns and were not disappointed. No less than 3 of these cryptic beauties were observed feeding in open paddocks alongside stock. Some local members also took part in the Matuku Muster.

I've been trying to take more time to explore the tracks and river dykes of the western Kopuatai Peat Dome and adjacent wetlands (Hauraki Plains). I have been pleased to find several species in abundance that are considered uncommon to rare elsewhere in the Northern Waikato. These include Australasian Shoveler, which in some areas of the Piako River and peat swamps, is the most common nesting duck, as well as Redpoll and NZ Pipit. Elsewhere, Shining Cuckoos began arriving in full force by mid-September and some members reported the first Long-tailed Cuckoos in early October.

On the weekend of 19-20/10, Waikato members took part in the bi-annual western harbours survey (Kawhia, Aotea, Raglan) with highlights mostly coming from the main Te Motu roost at Kawhia. These included 226 Caspian Terns, 1 Pacific Golden Plover (first eBird record for the Waikato west coast), 1 Wrybill, 2 Red Knots, 2 Ruddy Turnstones and 3 Whimbrels. We are now looking forward to surveying Royal Spoonbills during the coming summer season, with the hope of launching some kayaks around the new breeding colonies to get a better idea of numbers and breeding success.

– RUSSELL CANNINGS

BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

Our Spring wader counts over the 3 harbours at Tauranga, Maketu-Little Waihi and Ohiwa gathered more than 6,000 Bar-tailed Godwits in November. Around 55 Caspian Terns were

in colony mode for the first time in years at Tahunamanu Island (Omokoroa). An Eastern Cattle Egret was present at Maketu and a Little Egret was persisting at Tinopai, Omokoroa. Back a month, an Australian Tern was present at Maketu, on the Global Big Day (12/10) of all days. Teams were flung throughout the region. One got 56 species without going near the open sea, while another got 71. A Karearea NZ Falcon was a feature of the 5-minute bird counts we help out Forest & Bird with in the Kaimai Ranges, along with a Whitehead Popokatea. This is the second year when a falcon has been heard running in the Henderson Tramline area.

Only 3 Oi Grey-faced Petrel chicks were in our study burrows this pre-season check. One hopes the natural burrows have better occupancy rates this December when the season starts proper. Lastly, the National Kiwi Hatchery is offering an open tour free to our members which will be in Rotorua on 21 January (1pm). Please email me if you are keen: birdo@post.com

– PAUL CUMING

GISBORNE/WAIROA

Spring has arrived and we have a Blackbird nesting outside the kitchen window, so it has been fascinating to watch its progress and to send a complete nest record to the Nest Records Scheme Co-ordinator. Local 'Matuku Muster' counts were coordinated by Malcolm Rutherford on behalf of our branch along with the Gisborne District Council Regional Biodiversity Transformation Manager. Eight sites were covered over that weekend, with more listening near Wairoa. Within the Gisborne area, an Australasian Bittern was heard in just 1 spot, but Pūweto/Spotless Crake were heard at 2 sites they have not previously been recorded, and Mātātā/Fernbird were confirmed at 1 of the only known locations in the region. This is an exciting level of interest in bird monitoring for our region, and we hope to build on this with another count in November, and again next year.

A dead Weka was recently found on a road on the outskirts of the city, which was a shame, but the first certain evidence that Weka are making their way back to Gisborne. The Royal Spoonbills we counted earlier in the year seemed to have disappeared all bar 1, so it seems spoonbills currently are not breeding locally. A White Heron has been frequently seen locally. Earlier in October a Long-tailed Cuckoo/Koekoēā crashed into a window at the District Council office but was released later by DOC. Kākā have been regularly seen near Kaiti Hill. The Facebook page 'Tairāwhiti Birds' encourages Gisborne folk to contribute their sightings and for this we thank Malcolm Rutherford for his tireless enthusiasm and knowledge.

– GEOFF & RAEWYNN FOREMAN

TARANAKI

As I write this, I am sitting at Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, a month into my 6-month tenure as a shorebird guide. Among the 5,000 Bar-tailed Godwits, 1,000 Red Knots, 200 Wrybills and 5 Australian Terns seen this morning were 46 Pacific Golden Plovers, 2 Sharp-Tail Sandpipers, 10 Ruddy Turnstones and 1 Red-necked Stint. I have left my fellow Taranaki Birds New Zealand members to their

own devices, with indoor meetings being run by the very capable Rob Wheeler. Thanks Rob. The October field trip was out to my patch at Waiongana where, among other species seen, were 5 Pacific Golden Plovers.

I returned home in mid-October for the Biodiversity forum organised by Wild For Taranaki (WFT). The forum was attended by 3 of us and was a full-on day with a great range of interesting and informative speakers. Many thanks to the team at WFT for organising it. Lastly, for those of you contemplating a trip to Pukorokoro, come up (or down) and see me some time.

– PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

In August, our branch joined with the local Botanical Society, Forest & Bird, and others to participate in a QEII Trust open day at a PanPac-owned covenant in the Esk Valley. While the bush was very quiet, with only 8 species detected, including Tūi, Korimako/Bellbird and Kōtare/Sacred Kingfisher, it was very interesting to see the restoration efforts there. September saw 6 branch members head to Lake Tutira to admire the Tūi in the flowering Kōwhai, stopping along the way at Te Whanganui-ā-Orotū/Ahuriri Estuary to check on the Kuaka/godwits and at the newly reopened White Pine Bush. October saw the annual Welcome the Godwits event in conjunction with the Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society. About 70 people turned out on a perfect day to hear about the estuary and the Kuaka, with circa 200 birds present there plus a couple of Ngutu Pare/Wrybills, Tūturiwhatu/NZ Dotterels and Taranui/Caspian Terns. A group of 4 completed the 5-minute bird counts at Blowhard Bush for our October field trip, where 19 species were detected, including Toutouwai/North Island Robin, Miromiro/NZ Tomtit, Koekoēā/Long-tailed Cuckoo and Pīpīwhararua/Shining Cuckoo.

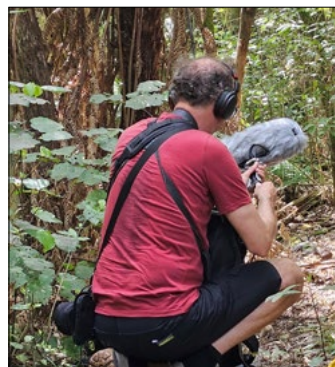
A White-winged Black Tern that appears to have become a local fixture was seen again in August-September at the Tukituki River mouth. A pair of Weweia/NZ Dabchicks was reported from the Waipukurau WTP in August. The apparently seasonal Kōtuku/White Heron was seen at Muddy Creek in Clive and in the lagoon and Grange Creek at Haumoana in September. Denise Fastier spotted a Pīpīwhararua in unusual habitat, hopping along the beach on Waikawa/Portland Island in early October. Kōtuku ngutupapa/Royal Spoonbills are nesting at Anderson Park again, with at least 14 counted in trees around the pond. Four were also seen at Wanstead Lagoon in mid-October, along with a Kōtuku, 3 Pāpango/NZ Scaup and 2 Weweia, and a flock of 9 Kākā was seen in Te Awanga.

The 'Save the Dotterels Hawke's Bay' volunteer team are doing twice-weekly monitoring of birds/nests/eggs/chicks on the coast from Bayview to Clive/Waipureku. Several sites have been surveyed for Matukuhūrepo/Australasian Bittern in Hawke's Bay as part of the Matuku Muster. To date, 5 booming males have been counted at Lake Poukawa, 3 at Pekapeka Swamp, 2 at Lake Oingo, and 1 at Lake Whatumā. None have been detected booming at the other sites surveyed so far. Lastly, a Nankeen Night Heron was photographed at Porangahau on 9/10 and 13/10.

– THALIA SACHTLEBEN



▲ 'Welcome the Godwits' event, Ahuriri Estuary, Napier: *Thalia Sachtleben.*



▲ Christopher Tuffley recording bird song: *Kirsten Olsen.*



▲ Leucistic Blackbird: *Paul Gibson.*

WHANGANUI

During the last quarter, the birding began quietly but ended busy. An all-white Blackbird on private property near Whanganui has been seen well. Visits to Bushy Park have also been rewarding, with sightings of Hihi Stitchbird, Tieke Saddleback, and Titipounamu Rifleman. The recently reintroduced Popokatea Whiteheads are also quite visible. The Umu Kotuku Nankeen Night Herons at the riverside settlement of Upokongaro, 12km upstream from Whanganui city, have become active again, and birds are nesting in trees in the café's backyard. There are at least 5 active nests, and already we have seen chicks, and adult birds sitting on nests.

Peter Frost has travelled into the back country of Whanganui and heard several Koekoera Long-tailed Cuckoos calling. Around Whanganui city, Pipiwhararoa Shining Cuckoos have been seen and heard. Our old friend AJD has returned from Alaska, for the 16th time. As I write, AJD is at Foxton, before coming to Whanganui in the first half of December, where he will stay with other Kuaka Bat-tailed Godwits until he migrates again, on or close to 25 March 2025.

During October, we have had small groups of juvenile Kuaka passing through our estuary, up to 8 at a time, but numbers are well down from last year when each day we had 30-60 young birds present. Also, during October, up to 6 Wrybills have been present (Jim Norris, 9/10). In September we had a Ruddy Turnstone, which is uncommon for Whanganui.

A recent visit to the Turakina River mouth, south of Whanganui, found a NZ Dotterel, uncommon for this location. It was nice to see it at this site, the 3 dotterel species together (NZ, Banded, Black-fronted). There are 8 Eastern Cattle Egrets on the dairy farm along Whangaehu Beach Road, 15 minutes south of Whanganui, are brilliantly coloured up in their orang-tinged breeding plumage and will return to Australia to breed before the end of November. Lastly, please note the role of Whanganui Regional Representative is vacant. If you are interested, please contact Birds New Zealand Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsNZ.org.nz

- PAUL GIBSON

MANAWATU

The waders are returning to the Manawatu River estuary with the highest count to date being 320 Bar-tailed Godwits plus 12

Red Knots, 4 Pacific Golden Plovers and 1 Ruddy Turnstone. There have also been 4 NZ Dotterels at Ohau beach. Five members of our branch went out on 12/10 for the eBird October Big Day 2024 led by RR Kirsten Olsen. The party went to the Manawatu River estuary, Whangaehu Beach Road, Koitiata lagoon and wetland, Tutaenui Reservoir and Hawkstone Golf Course lagoon and collectively saw or heard a total of 57 species. Highlights included 8 Eastern Cattle Egrets, a Fernbird, Banded Dotterels, Black-fronted Dotterels, Wrybill and Shining Cuckoo. The trip report with photos and sound recordings can be found here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/282061>.

Manawatu Estuary Trust held their annual 'Welcome to the birds' event on 5/10, when 90 people turned up, including a good turnout of Birds New Zealand Manawatu members with their binos and scopes. Phil Battley talked about the Bar-tailed Godwit's behaviour and migration. A handful of Manawatu branch members have been helping Nikki McArthur with a survey of the rivers in the Manawatu during October and November. This survey is funded by Horizons District Council and the 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund.

Our monthly meetings are well attended with great interaction among the 10-25 participants and speakers. We resume our meetings on Wednesday 12th February 2025. Please note we have a new Regional Recorder, Neill Haggarty, so please report your Manawatu sightings to him: recorder.mn@birdsNZ.org.nz

- KIRSTEN OLSEN

WAIARAPA

Our August field trip was a wintery walk around the Waiohine River near Greytown including excursions onto the riverbed. Plenty of birds were singing including Dunnock, Skylark and Grey Warbler. We nabbed the full set of possible finches: Green, Gold, Yellow(hammer), Chaff and Red(poll). Also in August, we were bowled over by the colour and glamour of Australian birds in photos taken by Jenny Dey.

September saw 8 of us out and about exploring the Mangatarere Valley near Carterton. We saw far more birds than expected with 23 species noted including Tui, Bellbird, and Little Shag. The highlight was the large number of Kereru, perhaps 20 all up, with some great close-up photo opportunities of birds scoffing Common Broom and Tree Lucerne flowers. Our September talk was a

presentation on 'The origins of NZ birds', or a quick trip through the last 80 million years, delivered by Oliver Druce.

October 12th saw us swarming over the Wairarapa as part of the Big Bird Day. Places visited included Pukaha, Henley Lake, QE2 Park, Fensham, Holdsworth, John's place, Greytown, Underhill Rd, Lake Domain, Tauherenikau Delta, Boggy Pond, Western Lake and Ponui Lagoon. The grand total of birds seen or heard came in at 59 species. The most commonly seen species (by locations) were Common Starling (11) Swamp Harrier (10), Welcome Swallow (10) and Skylark (9). Some interesting discoveries included Shining Cuckoo at 6 sites, spoonbill numbers at Boggy Pond up to 65, and a very photogenic Golden Pheasant at 'Phensham'. Some species we missed out on seeing included Red-billed Gull, Mynah, Rook and Pied Shag.

The following weekend we participated in the 'Matuku Muster' bittern survey. Eight of us were involved in staking out sites around Ponui Lagoons and Lake Onoko where we had a fantastic clear evening to listen out and try to document the evening's booming. There was plenty happening, mostly in the dusky dark well after sunset and we tentatively identified 5 or 6 male bitterns giving their all.

- OLIVER DRUCE

WELLINGTON

Despite the colder months, it is great that Wellington members take the time once a month to meet up to talk about birds and local sightings. We are fortunate to not only have an active and experienced group of birders in our region, but also that Wellington is a popular destination, and those passing through can generally be persuaded to give a talk. Our system of hybrid (in-person/Zoom) meetings also means that speakers do not need to be physically in Wellington to give a presentation.

Our most recent presentations have included Jonathan Rutter on findings from his PhD on seabird interactions with fisheries, Colin Miskelly on every last bird of Te Araroa Trail, and Adrian Riegen on engraved flags on waders. Their presentations sparked a great deal of interest and discussion. Our next speaker is Imogen Foote who will present findings from her PhD on Antipodean and Gibson's albatrosses. Interesting sightings have included a Cirl Bunting pair seen regularly near Moa Point from 11/8 to 28/10, a male Cirl Bunting at the north end of Queen Elizabeth



Park on 17/9, and another pair at Mana Island on 21/9. A NZ Dabchick was seen at Zealandia Ecosanctuary on 28/9 and an Australasian Little Grebe at the Pharazyn Reserve lake, Waikanae, 20-21/10.

Recently, I've been struck by how universal bird watching is. No matter where you are in the world, you can probably find a fellow birder just as excited as you to talk about birds and share avian experiences. Some of my most treasured birding experiences have been bumping into visitors and speaking with them about our birds. I know that they go away with knowledge and an unforgettable experience which they will share with others. Some of this local messaging will hopefully assist in places like Wellington, where fatal dog interactions seem to be increasing for our local Little Penguins. As the opportunities arise, I would encourage more experienced birders to share their knowledge of birds with others, particularly for the benefit of less experienced birders and overseas visitors, and to take the time to see birds through their less experienced eyes.

– ANNEMIEKE HAMILTON

NELSON

Our branch has been busy over the past quarter, including working with the Max Planck Institute on a Banded Dotterel study that is banding and marking birds on the Motueka Sandspit. We marked the annual return of the godwits this year with a public walk, guided by Nelson members armed with their scopes, which attracted 35 people and was supported by a display on godwit migration in the Motueka Library.

Our Australian Wood Duck team has now installed 8 artificial nest boxes in various locations with eggs being laid in 3 of the boxes. Strangely, 1 nest box was found to contain not only wood duck eggs but also Paradise Shelduck eggs and Little Owl eggs! With Red-billed Gulls in decline nationally, we are pleased to report that our local colony on the Nelson Boulder Bank is doing well, with a recent survey recording 1,460 nests. We are continuing with the nationwide Royal Spoonbill survey, monitoring numbers and behaviour. However, to date no breeding has occurred in our area.

Submissions have been made to the Tasman District Council on its proposed dog control policy and by-law. With so many important coastal bird areas there have been obvious clashes of interests and hopefully we will be able to obtain more protection for local birdlife. We also made submissions in response to DOC's request for feedback on future management of Motueka Sandspit. Our monthly meetings have continued with a change of venue to the Headingly Centre. The last 2 meetings have seen a range of speakers mainly updating members about ongoing work and projects in our region. Lastly, please note the role of Nelson Regional Representative is now vacant. If you are interested to step up into the role, please contact Birds New Zealand Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsnz.org.nz

– PAUL BENNETT

CANTERBURY

September and October have brought several notable wader sightings, increased activity and dedicated efforts from the local birding

community here in Canterbury. The Ashley Estuary continues to host a resident pair of Little Egrets which now have their breeding plumes, bringing hope for possible breeding activity (which would be a first for NZ!). Additional excitement at the estuary came with the arrival of a Terek Sandpiper on 27/10 and several Red Knots earlier in the month.

Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora has also started welcoming back migrant waders. Recent sightings include Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, a Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stints, Wrybills, Pacific Golden Plovers and an Australian Tern (a recent split from Gull-billed Tern). Banded Dotterels have started nesting in multiple locations, with a particularly encouraging sight at the Ashley-Rakahuri Estuary sandspit, where a pair has nested for the first time in years. Additionally, several pairs have been observed nesting at Christchurch Airport.

A few unusual records added excitement to recent outings. In late September, a Brown Skua was reported off South Bay in Kaikoura, followed by an Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross seen during an Albatross Encounter pelagic trip on 12/10. A Red-legged Partridge was also seen on one of Bev Alexander's rambles near Greenpark Huts – a lifer for many participants.

In mid-October, Birds New Zealand joined forces with the Ashley Rakahuri Rivercare Group to host an event at the Ashley Estuary. The event aimed to introduce visitors to the incredible local birdlife while advocating for bird-friendly behaviour, including keeping dogs out of the estuary and minimising disturbances around roosting and nesting birds. The Matuku Muster commenced in Canterbury recently, with some of our members contributing their time and observations to help locate and monitor this elusive species.

Local members are looking forward to the arrival of more migratory waders and terns at Lake Ellesmere and the wider region. If local members have sightings to report, articles for our regional newsletter, or an interest in giving a talk, please contact me or our RR Anita Spencer – we appreciate your contributions!

– SAMUEL AMARIS

OTAGO

Spring in Otago produced its usual mix of weather from snowfall to heavy rain to sunshine. The eBird 12/10 Big Day had fine weather with 61 checklists submitted for Otago, totalling 66 species. Records of interest have included a Fiordland Crested Penguin seen swimming off Taiaroa Head on 6/9; Australasian Crested Grebe at Broad Bay; Marsh Crake at Tomahawk Lagoon, Lake Hayes, Sinclair wetlands, and Moke Lake; Australasian Bittern at Papatōwai; Reef Herons in the Catlins (Pūrakaunui Bay, Papatōwai) and at Shag Point, and a Kōtuku at Glenorchy.

Little Black Shags have been seen at Pūrakaunui Bay, Pounaweia and Glenorchy. Karearea NZ Falcons in Dunedin city were upsetting Tūi in the Botanic Gardens and Sth Black-backed Gulls downtown. A very early Shining Cuckoo was reported from Wanaka golf course on 30/8 and the first Long-tailed Cuckoos from Queenstown on 24/10 and 28/10. Two Kea were reported from near Luggate. A Kākā was in a Weston, Oamaru garden in August/September, and 2 were near Tapanui in late September. Waipori Gorge Red-crowned

Kākāriki were recorded again. Two Wrybills were at Aramoana on 21/9, while the 3 seen at Catlins River Estuary in late September included 1 that had been banded as a chick at Makarora in 2023. Bar-tailed Godwits have returned and a Red Knot was at Pounaweia.

Mainland breeding Sooty Shearwaters returned to their colonies with the first birds recorded at Sandfly Bay on 15/9 and St Clair Cliffs on 26/9. A pelagic trip from Port Chalmers out to the Otago Canyons organised by Oscar Thomas recorded a Chatham Albatross, a Grey Petrel and a Brown Skua on 10/8 and a Thin-billed Prion, an Antarctic Prion and 2 Grey Petrels on 11/8.

Events have included a birding workshop for beginners run by our RR Dawn Palmer for Whakatipu Wildlife Trust that 17 people attended. Dawn has since led 2 field trips to sites within the Trust's predator control area with the trip to Lake Moke coinciding with Global Big Day and finding Otago's only Marsh Crake record. The annual Botanic Gardens birding was guided by some of our local members. ORC/BirdsNZ Otago wide bittern survey partnership is in full swing again with acoustic recorders deployed across a range of wetlands from Inland Otago, Maniototo, Eastern Otago and Catlins. Robins Outside Orokonui has been busy with fortnightly nest finding and monitoring trips, with more nests located so far this season than previously. Check out the Birds Otago Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/> and come and join us!

– FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

September was a very interesting month for rare vagrants in Southland with a Dusky Woodswallow reported in Oban, Stewart Island, on 9/9 by Matt Jones that stayed to at least 14/10 (photo on page 15). This was the second NZ record, with the previous 1 also found on Stewart Island but only seen for 1 day, whereas island life seemed to appeal more to this recently arrived individual. Matt Jones also recorded a Black Shag at Mill Creek. Surprisingly, this is a rare species in Southland with most observations turning out to be juvenile pied or bronze morph Foveaux Shags. This is only the 2nd or 3rd Black Shag recorded on the island.

While speaking of Stewart Island birds, Sandy King records when she sees the first Shining Cuckoo of the season at her home. There is a reasonable variation with her first sightings, which are trending to be earlier: 20/10/18, 27/10/19 (but 15/10/19 further up the coast), 11/10/20, 9/10/21, 14/9/22, 24/9/23, 29/9/24.

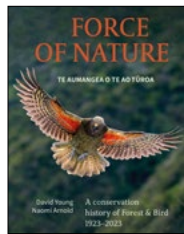
Sean Jacques found yet another rare visitor at Te Wai Parera scrape at Waituna (photo on page 15). He saw a Stilt Sandpiper there on 13/9 but it was not seen again after that. This was also a second NZ record. Sean also found a Little Egret at the same site on 25/9. Lastly, a Blue Petrel was picked up by DOC at Kennington, Invercargill, about 17km inland, on 8/9 and taken into care. Later, the bird was successfully released on the coast.

– PETE McCLELLAND

All of our regional newsletters can be viewed here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/resources/regional-newsletters/>

Reviews

Force of Nature
David Young & Naomi Arnold
Potton & Burton
RRP \$89.99

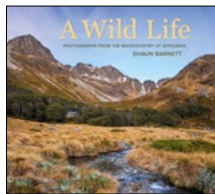


This 364-page, 24 x 30cm hardback which weighs in at 2.6kg is a conservation history of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, commonly known as Forest & Bird. Illustrated throughout, it marks the organisation's recent centenary, starting with the 1914-1919 'gestation period' followed by ten themed chapters that chronicle the period 1923-2023. Each contains stories of the many faces and facets of Forest & Bird, including leaders and prominent members, the practical work of members restoring habitats and controlling introduced predators, and public campaigns for new conservation areas and against destructive native forest logging, mining and fishing.

A quartet of people active in the founding of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) in 1940-41 (Robert Falla, Charles Fleming, Pérrine Moncrieff, Bob Stidolph, Graham Turbott) appear in the first section for their parts in the Forest & Bird story. Robert Falla was the founding president of the OSNZ (1941-46). Both Charles Fleming (1948-49) and Graham Turbott (1954-57) served after him (See: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/A-Flying-Start-1940-1990.pdf>).

The fluent text also describes how public awareness of conservation grew through the 20th century, and how Forest & Bird played a key role in campaigns to protect the last kauri forest left in Northland (1940s-50s), Lake Manapouri (1960s-70s), and native forests elsewhere also threatened by logging (1970s-80s). The book also presents an attractive visual history. The early colour artworks of Lily Daff stand out among the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen of the early 20th century, as do the even more colourful artworks of Rachel Walker and Cathy Hansby among the more casually dressed people seen in photos from the early 21st century. This is all reason enough to pick up a copy and check it out for yourself.

A Wild Life
Shaun Barnett
Potton & Burton
RRP \$59.99



This 216-page, 25 x 31cm hardback that weighs in at 1.9kg is a posthumously published tribute to the landscape photography of leading tramping author Shaun Barnett. For 30 years he wrote about and photographed New Zealand landscapes and backcountry tramping, contributing countless articles to various publications, editing *Wilderness* magazine and the Federated Mountain Club's *Bulletin*, and writing multiple acclaimed books on tramping and backcountry culture.

His photographs are a wonderful evocation of the wild places that he clearly loved, with a strong focus on the axial ranges of the North Island. Among the many striking images of these landscapes there are also beautiful photographs of endemic birds. I especially like the photograph on page 112 which he took after waking up in his sleeping bag in beech forest one morning to find a male South Island Robin hopping onto his head and pulling at a few hairs – presumably for its nest! Look closely at the image and you will see the photographer's silhouette reflected in the bird's eye

Among other birds that he encountered while tramping, there are vivid portraits of Red-crowned Kakariki, Whio, Kaka, Rock Wren and Kea. During a trip to the Subantarctic Islands, he also took some striking portraits of a pair of White-capped Albatross, a Hoiho in rata forest, and a Southern Royal Albatross at the nest. Another outstanding image is of the South Island NZ Dotterel that appears on page 198, photographed in the Tin Range, Rakiura Stewart Island. This book is an eloquent testament to the wildlife and wild places that inspired Shaun Barnett – and a reminder of the singular talent that has been lost with his premature passing.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR

Wild Wellington -
Ngā Taonga Taiao
Michael Szabo
Te Papa Press
RRP \$45



This 272-page, 20 x 15cm book that weighs in at 262g is a handy guide to the wildlife and wild places of Te Upoko-o-te-Ika that showcases the rich and diverse natural worlds of birds, marine mammals, reptiles, plants, insects and fungi found in the wider Wellington area.

The opening chapter introduces Wild

Wellington with the varied geographical features of Wellington City, the Hutt Valley and the Wainuiomata and Kapiti coasts.

These features have been described in more detail in the rest of the guide with each of the 30 chapters being devoted to the natural world at 30 sites in the wider area. The sites described vary from Zealandia Ecosanctuary and its forest birds to East Harbour Regional Park with its native orchids, Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve with its native plants, and Cook Strait with its pelagic seabirds.

Importantly, some of them will be little known even to many Wellingtonians. For each one there is a description of the important native and endemic inhabitants many of which are illustrated with colour photographs. Details are provided of the locations and how many of the sites can be accessed by public transport (including bus route numbers and train station names).

The book mentions over 500 native and endemic species but only a very limited number of introduced species. Included among the many species mentioned are some rare vagrants such as the bewildering tern species recorded at Plimmerton and Waikanae Estuary.

The more than 200 colour photographs in the guide taken by the author include over 100 of the birds and 27 of the most commonly seen marine mammals and reptiles. The rest are of the more commonly seen plants, fish, insects and fungi. These photos will be useful for identifying many species, but readers will need to consult different sources such as field guides or dedicated websites for classifying those species that are not illustrated.

The inclusion of a reference section would have been a useful addition to this book to aid readers in the identification of different species. Website links to public transport providers, including the named tour operators providing access to Mana and Kapiti islands would also be a useful inclusion.

A feature of this book is the involvement of Te Āti Awa and Ngāti Toa in its development. They supplied introductory texts on the culture and history at the start of each of the four major sections covered in the guide. There is also extensive use of te reo Māori for species and location names (alongside English names). Unlike many traditional guides this book features a narrative style with some personal anecdotes from the author, a style no doubt chosen to encourage readers to explore Wild Wellington and appreciate its natural wonders.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Wild Wellington can be ordered online from the Te Papa Store (<https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/te-papa-press/wild-wellington-nga-taonga-taiao>) and both *Force of Nature* and *A Wild Life* from the Potton & Burton website (<https://www.pottonandburton.co.nz/>)

SUBANTARCTIC BIRDING



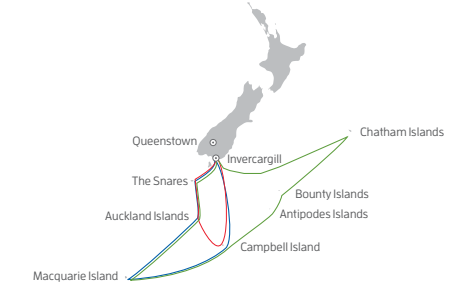
**AS FEATURED IN
CONDE NAST TRAVELER'S
25 BEST PLACES
TO GO IN 2025**



Experience a world-class birding adventure among the remote wilderness of the Subantarctic Islands with New Zealand's pioneering expedition cruise company Heritage Expeditions

Discover the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Australia and New Zealand's remote and wildlife-filled Subantarctic Campbell, Auckland, Snares, Bounty, Antipodes, Macquarie and Chatham Islands on our birding voyages. Explore the 'Albatross Latitudes', home to the world's most diverse collection of seabirds with more than 40 species breeding here including 10 species of Albatross along with rare endemics and elusive list birds aboard 140-guest flagship *Heritage Adventurer*.

- Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Red-crowned Parakeet & Northern Giant Petrel
- Snares, Fiordland & Erect-Crested, Royal, King, Gentoo, Rockhopper & Yellow-eyed Penguins
- Auckland & Campbell Island Shags
- Campbell & Auckland Islands Snipe
- Magenta Petrel & Chatham Albatross
- Snares Tomtit & Fernbird
- Pitt Island, The Forty Fours, The Pyramid & Chatham Islands



BIRDING DOWN UNDER

6–22 Dec 2025

Snares, Auckland, Campbell, Macquarie, Bounty, Antipodes & Chatham Islands
From \$23,475pp

GALAPAGOS OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

26 Nov – 7 Dec 2025 & 31 Dec 2025 – 11 Jan 2026
Snares, Auckland, Macquarie & Campbell Islands
From \$15,450pp

FORGOTTEN ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

21–28 Dec 2025
Snares, Auckland, Campbell, Stewart & Ulva Islands
From \$8,275pp

See our website for more incredible birding voyages!

Freephone 0800 262 8873 info@heritage-expeditions.com

WWW.HERITAGE-EXPEDITIONS.COM

*T&Cs apply, NZ\$, based on main deck triple share accommodation

