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Otago Region Newsletter 1/2025

January 2025



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/>

Ornithological Snippets

A continuing **Mute Swan/Wāna** was at Lake Waihola on 4 December. A **Red-legged Partridge** Queenstown 29th December was unexpected. Groups of 4 **Shining Cuckoo/Pīpīwharaura** were in Queenstown on 21 November and at Waiora Scout Camp on 1st January

A **Weka** of unknown origin was seen at 2nd Beach in Dunedin on 6 & 18 December. There have been several reports of up to 3 **Marsh Crane/Kotoreke** at Glenorchy Lagoon. A **Variable Oystercatcher/Tōrea pango** in the Clutha Valley on 14 December was well away from the coast. A **Whimbrel** was reported from Portobello on 29 November, and a **Far Eastern Curlew** at Karitane from 28 to 31 December, while a **Ruddy Turnstone** was photographed at Warrington Spit 27 November.

Brown Skuas/Hākoako were reported from Wellers Rock on 14 December and Tairaroa Head on 8 January. An **Australasian Little Grebe/Tokitokipio** was present at Diamond

Lake from 27 November to 28 December. Offshore, numerous **Pycroft's Petrels** were reported from the Birding Down Under cruise on 18 December

A **Little Black Shag/Kawau tūi** was claimed from Port Chalmers on 8 January, and 2 **Pied Shag/Kāruhiruhi** were at Reid Lake, Glenorchy on 15 December. **Reef Heron/Matuku** moana was seen regularly at Taiaroa Head, with another at Nugget Point on 4 & 17 January. 2 **Royal Spoonbill/Kōtuku ngutupapa** were on a reservoir near Omakau on 16 January. On 15 November 2 **Little Egrets** were on the Waikouaiti River. An **Eastern Cattle-Egret** was seen on Inchclutha on 24 November. Radio NZ reported a **Australasian Harrier/Kāhu** travelling from Waikato to Otago in less than 2 weeks. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/537171/epic-distance-for-kahu-australasian-harrier-on-first-gps-tracked-flight>

Finally Franny Cunninghame reports a **Little Owl/Ruru nohinohi** hunting on the tarmac at Dunedin airport in November, and Alan Baker found a **Sacred Kingfisher/Kōtare** with 2 young in Dunedin Botanic Gardens on 10 January.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

eBird News

Audio Media Targets for Merlin

In order to make the Merlin app more useful in New Zealand, many more recordings of NZ birds are required – 100 or more recordings of each species are required to train the software to identify bird sounds. As previously mentioned, fancy equipment is not required to record audio, and perfectly acceptable recordings can be made just with a smartphone. Further information on how to go about helping can be found on the NZ eBird home page, or at <https://ebird.org/region/NZ/post/audio-media-targets-for-aotearoa-new-zealand>

Māori Bird Names in eBird

For anyone who is interested, Māori bird names are available as an option when entering data in the app (on Android, at least). The common English name is shown alongside. Just go to Settings > Common Name Language, and scroll down to Māori.

Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com



Birds New Zealand (OSNZ)
[@birdsnewzealand.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/birdsnewzealand)

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa | The Ornithological Society of New Zealand - for all things birds in Aotearoa New Zealand.
www.birdsnz.org.nz

BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

Health & Safety



BirdsNZ Council have asked for Regional newsletters to include a standing request to report on Health & Safety issues.

A reminder to members that when involved with organised BirdsNZ Field Trips and activities, that we should not hesitate to call 111 to respond to medical events or incidents that result in harm.

If anyone has been involved in or is aware of an incident that resulted in harm to any of our activity participants, please contact the Regional Representative, so that the President and EO can be notified immediately

Plan ahead, stay safe while birding everyone.

Dawn: birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz 027 442 7348

February 2025

Our February meeting will be an 'Ornithological Potpourri' - member's summer birding highlights! Please send Oscar a selection of photos or slides (up to 5 or 10 minutes) to include in the presentation before **Tuesday 25 February**.

Oscar Thomas: oscarkokako@gmail.com.



2025 NZ Bird Conference Registration now open

The 2025 Birds New Zealand Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Auckland 31 May to 2 June during King's Birthday weekend.

All events and meals will be at the [Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel](#)

The deadline for early-bird registration is 28th February 2025.

Abstracts must be submitted by 31st March.

Conference details are available [here](#)

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Fledgling Fund Grant

Student members are encouraged to present their projects and apply for a Fledgling Fund Grant birdsNZ.org.nz/awards-and-prizes/notornis-and-conference-awards/fledgling-grant/ by no later than **28 February**.

Notes from the Regional Representative

As we look forward to our next meeting in February, I encourage everyone to get out and enjoy some birding. Birds are dispersing; inland migratory species are returning to wintering/ non-breeding habitats, and we still have cuckoos with us.

In the Tucker Beach Wildlife Management Reserve on the lower Shotover River, 25 banded dotterels, including six fledged young of the year, were seen last night among at least 13 juvenile black-fronted terns. While upstream, the black-billed gull colony had at least 91 juveniles on the beach, plus 14 speckled downy chicks (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S210133930>). Juveniles are being seen around the Frankton area, so these birds are having a great season following the flooding in spring. Find out more about the Tucker Beach Wildlife Trust on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/tuckerbeachwildlifereserve> (I confess I'm a Trustee of said Trust). Most of the South Island pied oystercatchers have left, although small flocks were still present in the Matukituki Valley, Cardrona Valley and lower Shotover over the past few weeks.

Over the summer, I've been travelling to and from Dunedin more than usual and enjoyed taking a moment to do some birding. The Karitane estuary was beautiful with bar-tailed godwits, pied stilts, variable and South Island pied oystercatchers and kingfishers calling in the distance. Inland at a constructed irrigation reservoir on farmland near Blackstone Hill, I saw two Royal Spoonbills! Very unexpected.



Royal spoonbills, Omakau

The ORC-sponsored collaboration with BirdsNZ continued throughout the spring and summer. We've been collecting in the Acoustic Recording Devices listening for Australasian bittern Matuku-hūrepo and marsh crake. The deployment of devices was delayed by spring flooding in places, but with the help of the team from Tiaki Maniototo, Forest and Bird in the Catlins, the team at the Sinclair wetlands, BirdsNZ volunteers and the support of landowners, we managed to get a total 90 ARDs out into wetlands of the Whakatipu, Matukituki Valley near Wanaka, Maniototo, Sinclair wetlands, Tahakopa Valley, Lake Tuakitoto, Catlins Lake, McLennan River, Akatore catchment and the Takitakitoa wetland. ARDs have been supplied through ORC funds, ORC devices on loan, Forest and Bird, and the Sinclair Wetlands. If anyone is interested in helping with data

processing and analysing the night noises using R-Scripts, AviaNZ and Raven Pro, please contact Dawn Palmer and the BirdsNZ Bittern project team by emailing bitterns.otago@gmail.com



Here is a view of the Big Boggy wetland in the Matukituki Valley, opportunistically captured whilst flying down the Matukituki Valley recently.



A view of the West Wanaka Wetlands in the lower Matukituki Valley. Next spring, these habitats will be a focus of increased inventory sampling.

Habitats like this wetland on Matukituki Station alongside the Mount Aspiring Road will also be visited as part of our contribution to the active listening efforts of the Matuku Muster project in Spring.



Dawn Palmer

Black-billed gull colony

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/537068/a-significant-blow-digger-driver-fined-6k-for-destroying-black-billed-gull-nests>

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Local News

Coastal Otago volunteer newsletter

The first Coastal Otago volunteer newsletter of 2025 is coming out on the 1 February. Please let me know of any volunteering opportunities to include in our next newsletter. These need to be with me by Thursday 30 January, 12pm cut off.

Any contributions to this newsletter should be for the months of FEBRUARY and MARCH!



I am always interested to hear what groups have been up to, successes and of course if there are any interesting events coming up, so please keep those coming

Newsletter items:

Just a quick reminder of the categories your newsletter items could come under:

- Events
- Talks and Workshops
- Volunteering
- Participatory and Citizen Science
- Funding available to support volunteer groups

If you would like to promote your event etc. in this newsletter please can you provide me with the following (relevant to your item) information:

- What are you promoting?
- When is it?
- Where is it?
- What do participants need to bring?
- Is there a cost?
- Information on where to look for postponements or cancellations
- Where to register?
- Contact details
- Fitness level required
- Links to websites
- Photos to be attached to item

I am always looking to improve the newsletter, so if you have any awesome ideas or feedback to help spruce it up and make it more engaging, please feel free to send these straight through to me as well

Kā mihi nui,

Hannah Zvalue

Ranger, Community | Kaiwhakahaumarū, Hāpori

Dunedin | Ōtepoti

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www.doc.govt.nz

Conservation Volunteers

We are inviting you to an informal gathering to celebrate the volunteer mahi done in the Dunedin's natural spaces.

It will be a great opportunity to connect with people in the conservation field. We have some exciting guest speakers this time - Colin Davis from Nelson Whakatū Microforest Initiative, Dennis

Enright from NewZealand Biochar Ltd, and Janice Lord from the University of Otago to talk about Miyawaki planting method and soil.

Date: Tuesday 11 February 2025

Time: 1:30pm - 4pm

Meeting location: Petridish (8 Stafford Street)

Light refreshments and coffee/tea are provided.

We would like to know how many people are coming and your dietary requirements, so please RSVP using the link below.

If you have any questions please let me know!

RSVP here: <https://forms.office.com/r/Vv6iwZ9NMS>

Hagino Baker

Hinonga Tūao | Volunteer Projects Facilitator

Pārekareka | Parks and Recreation Services

Dunedin City Council

Overseas



The Seabird Group [@theseabirdgroup.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/theseabirdgroup.bsky.social)

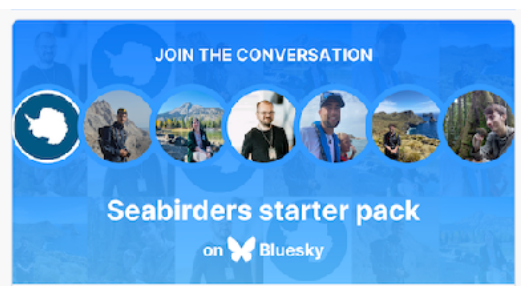
Happy new year everyone! ✨🎉

Our training grant applications are now open!

The deadline for applications is the 28th of February.

To apply for our training grants, click the following link or use the website as stated below: www.seabirdgroup.org.uk/grants

Seabirds



Please follow and retweet this starter pack if you're mad about #seabirds 🐧🌍

go.bsky.app/MPUTnm

BTObirds [@btobirds.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/btobirds.bsky.social)



Oystercatcher populations wintering on the Exe Estuary Special Protection Area in Devon have sadly declined. A study using 45 years of data collected by dedicated volunteers taking part in the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) investigated why. ➡️ bit.ly/Oystercatche...

Programme 2025

Birds NZ Otago Branch meetings for 2025 will be held on the 4th Tuesday of the month (from February to November) in the Benham Seminar Room, 2nd floor of the Benham Building, [Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street](#), starting at 7.30pm. Please arrive prior to this as the doors lock automatically unless someone is there to open them from inside.

Tuesday 25 February	Ornithological Potpourri (Member's summer bird highlights)
Tuesday 25 March	Ela Hunt - Exploring the Subantarctic Islands
Tuesday 22 April	Graeme Loh - Prion People of the St Clair Cliffs (Venue is Barclay Theatre, Tūhura Otago Museum, earlier 7pm start)
Tuesday 27 May	Janina Castro - Reflections on Bird Window Strikes in the Philippines
Tuesday 24 June	Jerusha Bennett - Bird parasites in Otago

Regular Field trips are held, usually on first Saturdays or Sundays. Check for details within the newsletters. We carpool for these trips and share expenses.

Suggestions for locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Dawn birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor by **18 February** sodlin@gmail.com



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