



New Zealand Fledglings

December 2023

The NZ Young Birders Magazine

Summer Vagrants!

Now that it's deep into Summer, there are chances of vagrants on holiday for Christmas on the beaches! If you and your family are planning a sunny Christmas on the beach, keep your eyes peeled for unusual birds!

Gannet colonies, tern roosts, wader flocks, and gulls are all worth checking through. Recently many people have spotted rarities amongst these regular looking flocks.

So make sure that when you're on the beach celebrating Christmas, you keep your eyes peeled for some cool birds, and make sure you have a camera at the ready!

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Recent and Upcoming Events:

Recent:



A Curlew Sandpiper, a wader that's shown up on multiple wader counts this year © Ben Ackerley

Summer wader counts:

Many of our members participated in summer wader counts this season. It's a great opportunity to help out with research and conservation while also seeing these incredible waders. Here's a little report from Saul, who went to the Summer Ōtaki Wader Count:

Alfie and I headed out to the Ōtaki Sewage Ponds to count the birds for the Ōtaki Wader Census. We found some great numbers, including all important wader numbers, we then headed out to the beach to count the gulls and then to the Waitohu Estuary. Here we saw some New Zealand Dotterel (including a chick!), Black-fronted Dotterel, Pied Stilt, and Variable Oystercatcher. See the full article on page 19.

Remember that you too can join these wader counts! Go to <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/> to find out more.

eBird workshops:

Throughout early December, US birders and ornithologists Ian Davies and Tom Auer ran several eBird workshops. They talked about different features of eBird, such as statistics, how to submit data, keeping track of your sightings and how you can use eBird to find rare birds near you. 3 of our members went to one. You can read more about this on page four.

Upcoming:

Late summer wader counts:

If you missed the summer wader counts, then don't worry! BirdsNZ organises wader counts in some areas of New Zealand later on in the summer. By now, all the birds that are going to arrive have arrived, so there are many species to be seen. Go to <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/> if you want to see some of these amazing birds after their incredible journey!

National Spoonbill Count:

Birds NZ is running a spoonbill count, starting in 2024 and running till the end of the 2024/2025 breeding season. The last count was in 2012, with 2361 found. There are now more, but how many more? <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/royal-spoonbill-national-census/> for more details.

Article by Caiden and Saul



FACT SHEET

NEW ZEALAND BIRDS

Australasian-crested Grebe

Winner of the Bird of The Century F&B Election



SPECIFICATIONS:

BIRD ORDER

Podicipediformes

TE REO NAME

Pūteketeke

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Podiceps cristatus

BIRD FAMILY

Podicipedidae

FOUND WHERE

All over the world except
North and South America

LENGTH

48-61 cm

WEIGHT

1100g

NEW ZEALAND STATUS

Native

CONSERVATION STATUS

Nationally Vulnerable

The Australasian Crested Grebe, found in Australia and New Zealand, is a graceful bird known for its diving skills. These birds can be identified by their distinctive crests and plumage. They nest on floating nests made up of aquatic vegetation, they can also carry their babies on their backs.

HABITAT

The Australasian Crested Grebe can be found widely throughout the South Island. Seen in a variety of bodies of water like lakes, ponds and tarns.

BEHAVIOUR

This bird during its breeding season showcases an elaborate courtship dance that involves synchronized movements with their partner.

DID YOU KNOW?

Australasian Crested Grebes are exceptional divers. They can stay submerged for long periods, of time, chasing fish and other aquatic prey with remarkable agility and grace.

Article by Samuel Amaris, Photo © Ben Ackerley

eBird Workshops

In December, eBird held workshops in Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Queenstown and Dunedin. These workshops were run by Ian Davies and Tom Auer, two US birders from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Some of our team members took part in these and really enjoyed themselves.

The workshops were also held at birding locations, like Zealandia, so that you could get in a bit of birding. Caiden had a good time at Ambury, and he's written a little report about that below:

I recently got to take part in one of the eBird workshops, which was great fun! The workshop talked about all sorts of stuff, like plans for things to add to the app, and little known features. I learnt about ways that I could use eBird data for my own research as well! Ian and Tom also talked about the huge process for making sure the data was accurate, which includes 5000 filters! It really shows that they don't just slap the data together, and that they have an entire team working on it at all times.

The next bit was probably the most exciting part! A group of birders headed down to the shorebird roosts. On the walk down I met with fellow YBNZ member Andy, and we had a great chat while watching a male peafowl strut around.

We then headed to the hide, where one of the main goals was to find as many endemic birds as possible for Ian and Tom. We quickly spotted some New Zealand Dotterel flying around and singing, and a Variable Oystercatcher posed on a very close rock. I then spotted a D2 node hybrid Stilt, which gave great views!



We headed further down the coast to the shellbank. A Tūi landed on a Harakeke just a metre or two away, giving splendid views!! About a dozen White-fronted Tern dove in the shallow water just beside us, causing constant splashes. A New Zealand Fantail also landed on a very close by branch, flitting around and catching small insects!

A huge flock of South Island Pied Oystercatchers chilled on top of the shellbank, with Wrybill and New Zealand Dotterel running around their lanky legs. It was like all the birds were showing off! A Grey Warbler sang loudly, some Black-billed Gull flew low overhead and a pair of Paradise Shelduck wandered across the shellbank.

It was a great experience and I learnt a huge amount, and I am very grateful that many people spent their time to make this experience so amazing.

By Saul and Caiden



Old Mill Lane Location Review:

Old Mill Lane. To most people, it's just a boring old street in a relatively remote area, close to Tutukaka. But nestled away at the start of the lane is a boardwalk. And this boardwalk is the story of conservation success.

Access:

Old Mill Lane is a small private street in Ngunguru, Northland. As soon as you turn down the lane you'll see a grass patch for parking. A few signs are clustered around the opening to a boardwalk, which weaves its way through a beautiful native marsh habitat. The boardwalk also leads into a forest trail, which heads into the bush past some mangroves.

Interesting site information:

Old Mill Lane has recorded 53 species of birds. Despite it probably being the best place for marsh birds in New Zealand it is very under visited. It is also located very close to several other great birding locations, such as the Ngunguru Estuary, which has many New Zealand Dotterel, Variable Oystercatcher and Bar-tailed Godwit, and also a local Whimbrel and Reef Heron.

Species found here:

The main attraction at Old Mill Lane is the Fernbird | Mātātā population. These birds are abundant here, and can be found in numbers of up to **20**!! It's all thanks to the incredible work of Hilton and Melva Ward, who own the land the wetland is on and have done huge amounts of pest control.

Australasian Bittern | Matuku-Hūrepo have also been seen regularly at the wetland, and it's become quite famous for providing incredible sightings of them. A trail camera is also set over a small boggy section, and the site owners regularly post videos of cryptic marsh species caught on it on Facebook.

Banded Rail | Moho pererū are also regularly seen and heard at the wetland. Their rusty gate sounding call often fills the marsh in the evening, with a huge population present. Spotless Crake | Pūweto also inhabit the wetland but in much smaller numbers. They are occasionally heard calling, but usually only at dawn.

A small stream runs through the marsh, which can be a great opportunity to see the marsh species. Brown Teal | Pateke also can sometimes be seen paddling along it, sometimes even with chicks! There are many 'Slow for Pateke' signs around the area, which is a really good sign that they are thriving.

North Island Brown Kiwi | Kiwi-nui and Morepork | Ruru are also often heard in huge amounts in the forest at night.

In the daytime, the forest is full of birds as well. Tomtit | Miromiro sing from the treetops, and Dunnock are often heard chirping from the outskirts of the bush. Tūi and Shining Cuckoo | Pīpīwharau are also abundant in summer.

When to visit and what to bring:

Old Mill Lane is by far best for birding at either dawn or dusk. The birds here are most active at these times of day. Locals often like to visit in the very early hours of the day, arriving between 3-4am. They then walk to the forest, to hear and see Kiwi and Ruru, before walking back and listening to the secretive species waking up. These birds often go quiet by 7:30-8am, and afterwards it becomes quite hard to find much.

The birds don't become very active till the evening, where there are still less than in the morning (but usually still heaps of them!)

If you are only planning on walking around the boardwalk, any footwear can be worn. If you are planning on walking up through the forest as well, I recommend you wear hiking boots that you don't mind getting slightly muddy.

By Caiden



North Island Fernbird | Matata © Ben Ackerley

Recent Rare Bird Sightings:

Streaked Shearwater - Tutukaka Pelagic

Recently, the Petrel Station had an amazing find. They spotted the first live New Zealand record of a Streaked Shearwater! Many photos were taken, and the bird hung around for 4 hours! The birders have submitted a UBR, which stands for Unusual Bird Report.

Antarctic Tern - Otago

In the past month, there has been an Antarctic Tern present at Aramoana in Dunedin, a wonderful addition to the multitude of vagrant terns that New Zealand has been experiencing in recent weeks. It was first spotted on the 7th of December, but hasn't been reported since the 10th. Though it may have left, this was still an exciting find for birders who saw it, and a lifer for some!

Wandering Tattler - Tapotupotu and Ocean Beach

The Wandering Tattler is an extremely rare wader in New Zealand. They only show up once every few years, but we've been pretty lucky recently and have had two of these marvellous little birds! One has been around for two years now, bobbing along the rocks of Ocean Beach. The other has just shown up and has now been seen twice on a small beach near Cape Reinga. These birds are great fun to watch with their cute bopping feeding much like dotterel!

Chestnut-breasted Shelduck - Invercargill, Campbell Island and Meremere

These beautiful looking Australian ducks are usually super rare in New Zealand, but heaps have been showing up recently! One was seen by Colin Miskelly, along the Te Araroa trail in Meremere. Four have been seen at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, and an incredible ELEVEN have been seen on Campbell Island! It's definitely worth scanning through flocks of Paradise Shelduck for these rarities this summer.

Pectoral Sandpiper - Meremere

Recently a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was reported in a flooded paddock in Meremere on Facebook. But the photo showed a wader much rarer for New Zealand; a Pectoral Sandpiper. One of our group members, Caiden, went and had a look and found two of them! These waders are normally very wary and hard to find, but these two have been sitting right beside the road, unafraid of the huge trucks passing by.

Recent Pictures:

Take a look at some of the incredible photos the team has been taking of Aotearoa's amazing birds!



A Welcome Swallow | Warou feeds its chick a crane-fly. © Caiden Binzegger



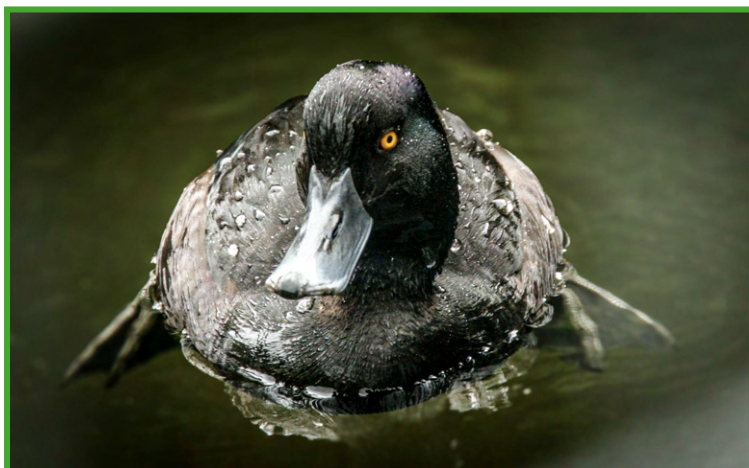
A Tūi in my backyard, taken after its chorus. © Lucy Dean



A beautiful male scaup sits on the Linwood Canal © Ben Ackerley



A White-faced Heron after landing from a flight. © Lauren McCauley



A lovely New Zealand Scaup getting quite close at... Zealandia! © Alfie Benbow



A Stewart Island Fernbird, a rare subspecies of it's mainland relative, perched on a bush. © Abe Reid



Two Mallard x Grey Duck hybrids, Waimanu lagoon. © Ari Ward



A Swamp Harrier glides low over my backyard. © Zion Cooper



A Black morph Fantail perches on a branch at Klondyke Campsite, near Arthur's Pass. © Saryu Mae



A male Paradise Shelduck at Ravenswood Wetland, Christchurch. © Christian Cosgrove



A White-fronted Tern | Tara at Laingholm, a species often seen resting on rocks along the coast. © Andy Xiong



One of the Morepork | Ruru © Lucy Dean

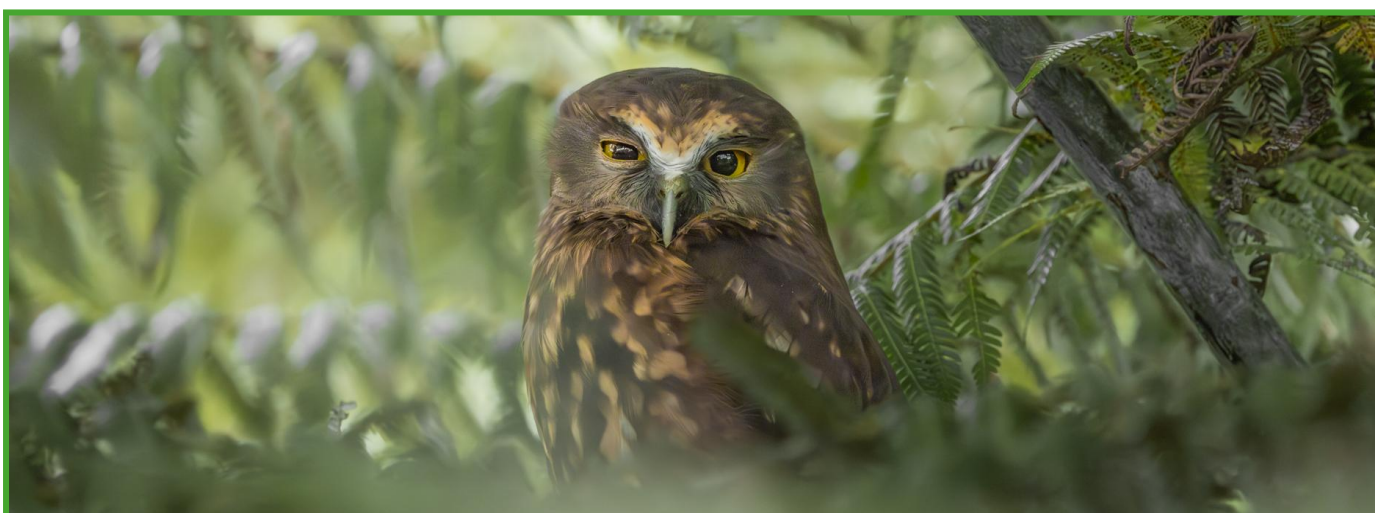
Ruru roost on a cities edge

Located just on the edge of Auckland lies a small patch of bush. To most people, it's just some trees. But hidden away on the top of a fern often sits two magnificent birds, hidden in plain sight.

Since the start of 2023, a pair of Ruru have been using a ponga on a short walk as their roosting spot. However, in the middle of the year, the pair seemingly disappeared. But, in early October, they were spotted again by a member of a local conservation group! Since then, many bike rides have been made to go and find the owls!

There is usually one bird resting there, but there are sometimes two, and other times none at all. Most of the time they sit out in the open, very close to the track, keeping a watchful eye on the viewer. Despite the dark conditions, they are quite easy to spot amongst the green foliage that they roost in.

With their glowing yellow eyes, sharp, pointy beaks and beautifully patterned bellies, they really are stunning birds. Many birders in Aotearoa never get to see them, despite being regularly heard in the evenings. Their distinctive 'MOREPORK' call is a sound that all Kiwis know.



A sleepy Morepork | Ruru staring down from its perch © Caiden Binzegger

Article by Lucy and Caiden

Trapped on Tiritiri

and other adventures around Auckland

During the recent school break, I headed to Auckland for what was meant to be a brief trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island Sanctuary and nearby birding spots. Little did I anticipate that my intended 4-day visit would stretch into an eventful week-long adventure!

Arriving in Auckland on a Tuesday morning, I spent the day exploring the city, visiting the zoo, and enjoying its sights, completely unaware of what was to come. On Wednesday I took a ferry to Tiritiri Matangi Island, enjoying the island's beauty and diverse birdlife. However, our plans hit a snag when we learned that the ferry service for the following day was cancelled. Thankfully, we had already arranged a 3-day stay on the island.

As luck would have it, the horrible weather persisted, leading to the cancellation of our ferry on Friday, and unfortunately, the situation continued on Saturday. Stranded due to the storm, we had run out of our supplies and had to rely on DOC's rations. Despite capturing incredible bird shots, I was definitely eager to leave.

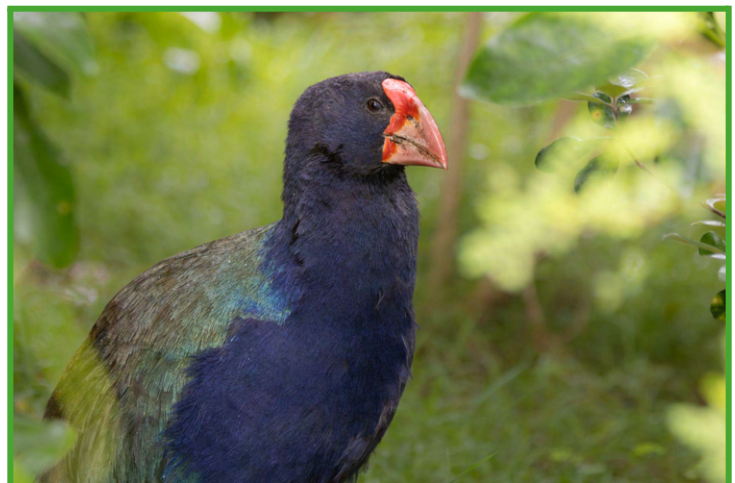
Finally, on Sunday, five days after our arrival, the ferry arrived, finally allowing us to depart from the island and return to Auckland. Adjusting our flights, we found ourselves with an extra day to spare.

This gave me a great excuse to spend it birding at Pukorokoro Miranda with Caiden. We spotted a wide variety of shorebirds, including the rare Gull-billed tern. However, our plans were changed once again as midway through birding, our flights got cancelled once again until the following day.

I decided to end the trip by visiting Ambury, where I saw Barbary Dove and Northern New Zealand Dotterel. In summary, it was an incredible trip filled with unexpected turns and remarkable bird sightings. I'd highly recommend Tiritiri Matangi Island, but would definitely suggest keeping an eye on the weather forecast!



North Island Robin © Samuel Amaris



South Island Takahe © Samuel Amaris

Article by Samuel



White-winged Black Tern, Lake Ellesmere © Ben Ackerley Whiskered Tern © Caiden Binzegger

Terns, terns, and more terns!

Recently New Zealand has been seeing quite high numbers of tern species. We've had unusual terns show up as north as Awanui, and as south as the sea off of Rakiura!

No matter where in New Zealand you're based in, keep an eye out for terns! Scan flocks of White-fronted and Black-fronted Tern and keep your eyes on your local wetland, pond, or river.

One of the highlights of all these birds has been the Whiskered Terns. These normally extreme rarities have been showing up in some places with unbeatable viewing! For example, the Karapiro bird, which was hovering just a metre or so from the road!

The Miranda Whiskered Tern has been quite famous in the New Zealand birding community recently. It was first spotted by travellers from the USA in March, 2023. Since then, hundreds of people have seen it. This species was once one of the most sought-after birds, that only several dedicated New Zealand birders had seen, but now it's a common sight on the list of an NZ birder's life list!

Recent unusual tern records:

Marsh Terns:

- ×4 **Whiskered Tern** - Miranda/Piako,, Lake Ngatu, Kaipara Harbour & Karapiro ×1.
- ×9 **White-winged Black Tern** - Whangarei Heads, Ashley-Okuku confluence, Upper Tasman River, Hawkes Bay & Ashburton ×1, Lake Ellesmere ×4.

Gull-billed Terns:

- ×20 **Australian Tern** - Nelson, Foxton, Wairarapa & North Kaipara Head ×1, Piako ×3, Manukau ×13.

Sooty Terns:

- ×1 **Sooty Tern** - Rangaunu Harbour

Sterna and Sternula Terns:

- ×4 **Common Tern** - Miranda, Ashley Estuary, Bluff & 90 mile beach ×1.
- ×2 **Arctic Tern** - Tory Channel & Bluff ×1.
- ×1 **Antarctic Tern** - Aramoana ×1
- ×22 **Little Tern** - Miranda, Whangaehu River estuary & Southland ×1, Motueka ×2, Rangaunu Harbour & Kidd's Shellbank ×3, Tapora ×11.

By Caiden

Kākāpō on the loose!

You've probably heard about the Kākāpō release at Mount Maungatautari. It's an exciting step towards Kākāpō populations recovering from the brink of extinction. And recently, one Kākāpō has taken a little walk! And little meaning out for about 2 weeks and 3 days, ending up in neighbouring farmland. Imagine being a farmer and finding a Kākāpō in one of your paddocks!

Four year old Tautahi was released from Codfish Island | Whenua Hou (one of the only locations where you can find these magnificent beauties) to Sanctuary Mountain | Maungatautari in September, part of a group of six Kākāpō added to the additional four that were released in June.

When the first group of Kākāpō was relocated to Maungatautari, the predator-proof fence had to be upgraded so that the kakapo (who are very capable climbers) didn't get over. Tautahi was thought to have used a tall tree to get over the fence. The team at Sanctuary Mountain has cleared vegetation from around the base of the fence to stop other Kākāpō from escaping in the future.

Tautahi was safely returned to Maungatautari after his adventure! Post-escape health checks determined that he was in perfect health, but it sounded like he was not happy to be caught! But the good news is that he is healthy and now back in the sanctuary.



Two Kākāpō, Anchor Island © Oscar Thomas

Tautahi was part of a trial group of birds to test the feasibility of having them on the mainland. This incident was good growth for Kākāpō recovery and the team at Maungatautari to build from in the future. They're hoping to introduce more Kākāpō to the mainland, so you never know, there might be a Kākāpō coming to a forest near you!

By Lauren, Caiden, Lucy and Saul

Summer Waders

Now that summer has arrived, many waders will turn up around New Zealand. Lots of rarities are around in the summer, from Pūkorokoro Miranda to Lake Ellesmere!

Hotspots around New Zealand for waders include Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, Lake Ellesmere, Waikanae Estuary, Awarua Bay, and Big Sand Island. They all show a range of different bird species, including the iconic Bar-Tailed Godwit, which will have arrived from Alaska. Also, many Red Knot are spotted around the country at this time. Species such as Ruddy Turnstone, Pacific Golden Plover and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper can be seen from locations around Aotearoa during the spring and summer.

As shorebirds and waders are usually quite far away from the observer, binoculars and/or telescopes are recommended. If you have one, bring a camera in case you see something rare or exciting! So, if you have some free time and the tide is right, head out to the coast and try to find some shorebirds - it's always worth it!

Article by Lucy

Uncommon migrant waders seen in Aotearoa this season:

Godwits:

×3 **Hudsonian Godwit** - Foxton, Little Waihi & Dunedin ×1.

Sandpipers:

×1 **Great Knot** - Big Sand Island ×1.

×15 **Curlew Sandpiper** - Motueka & Mangawhai ×1, Awarua ×2, Tabora ×3, Ellesmere & Miranda ×4.

×22 **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** - Awarua, Waikanae, Whanganui, Miranda, Rangaunu, Maketu, Kidd's Shellbank & Waipu ×1, Molyneux Bay ×2, Piako & Tabora ×3, Lake Ellesmere ×6.

×3 **Pectoral Sandpiper** - Waituna Lagoon ×1, Meremere ×2.

×4 **Marsh Sandpiper** - Invercargill, Marlborough, Whanganui & Ellesmere ×1.

×3 **Terek Sandpiper** - Awarua, Nelson & Ellesmere ×1.

×84 **Red-necked Stint** - Catlins, South Kaipara, Mangawhai & Manawatu ×1, Miranda & Ambury ×2, Tabora ×3, Kidd's Shellbank ×7, Awarua ×20, Ellesmere ×46.

×1 **Sanderling** - South Kaipara ×1.

Tattler:

×2 **Wandering Tattler** - Tapotupotu & Ocean Beach ×1.

×2 **Grey-tailed Tattler** - Ambury ×2.

Curlew & Whimbrel:

×32 **Whimbrel** - Ngunguru, Aotea, Ambury, Kawhia, Foxton, Nelson, Kawakawa Bay, Motueka, Invercargill & Snells Beach ×1, Kidd's Shellbank ×2, Miranda ×3, Rangaunu Harbour ×6, Tabora ×11.

×5 **Far Eastern Curlew** - Kidd's Shellbank, South Kaipara, Invercargill, Okarito & Ashley ×1.

Dotterel, Plovers & Turnstone:

×3 **Greater Sand Plover** - Kidd's Shellbank ×1, Awarua ×2.

If you see a rare wader in Aotearoa New Zealand, report it on birdingnz.net, eBird or iNaturalist!

List by Caiden, Saul and Ben



A young Bar-tailed Godwit, © Lucy Dean

Heaps of immature godwits!

New Zealand has recently seen a huge influx of immature godwits all throughout the country. This is due to there being a great breeding season up north, which is a great sign! In some areas, there are hundreds, even up to a thousand juveniles!

The Bar-tailed Godwit is a migratory shorebird, with the populations that winter in New Zealand and breed in Chukotka and Alaska, being of the *baueri* subspecies. Although birds of the subspecies *menzbieri* and *anadyrensis* have also been reported. (The differences between these subspecies are subtle, *baueri* are dark-backed, with *menzbieri* having white backs similar to Eurasian Whimbrels, and *anadyrensis* differing in smaller size compared to *baueri* [But be sure not to confuse with juveniles!]).

This season's major influx of juveniles is a great sign for Bar-tailed Godwit populations, who have had a rough time during the past few breeding seasons. The main threats for Kuaka are climate change and habitat loss in Asia. Climate change is most apparent in Alaska, where these incredible birds breed. Habitat loss generally affects these birds in China and North Korea, or the Yellow Sea, where the godwits stop to feed and rest on their way to Alaska.

So keep your eyes out at your local beach, mudflat, estuary or floodplain, because you might see a lot more Godwit than you expect! Stay alert for rarities amongst them, like Hudsonian Godwit or Black-tailed Godwit, or maybe some Sandpipers feeding together or roosting with Red Knot nearby. You never know what you'll see, and it doesn't hurt to look!

Article by Andy, Lucy and Caiden



Pūteketeke displaying to each other, © Lucy Dean

Grebes flood the election

290,374 votes strong. I mean, what do you expect from an American comedian? The Pūteketeke or Australasian Crested Grebe has absolutely destroyed this year's Bird of the Century, and has broken records for this competition. Congratulations to the Pūteketeke for winning Bird of the Century 2023!

Many people, including campaign managers in New Zealand don't agree with foreign interference in the competition. Some believe that John Oliver should not be involved in elections in other countries, and that he is using his fame to his advantage. John put up posters and billboards in London, Tokyo, Paris, Mumbai, Ipanema Beach (Brazil) and even a town in the USA! The worldwide views meant that the popularity of the Crested Grebe skyrocketed - and the grebe ended up winning by a landslide!

The winner of Bird of the Year last year was the Rock Wren | Pīwauwau, which won with 2,894 votes. So you can imagine the shock on people's faces when they turned on their computer and saw Forest & Bird had made a Facebook post about their verification system failing! The system had been met with hundreds of thousands of votes, 4× the max capacity it can verify.

But if you look on the bright side, Forest & Bird has raised a huge amount of awareness and over \$600,000 worth of donations! This funding and global awareness will help out Aotearoa's native and endemic wildlife a lot.

Thank you to everyone who voted, and a massive thank you to anyone who donated to Forest and Bird, every dollar matters, especially when a huge amount of wildlife in New Zealand is at-risk or threatened. Voting for rarer birds especially is even better, as it helps more endangered birds

Surprisingly, it wasn't just the Pūteketeke that got thousands of votes. In fact, the entire top ten birds all had more than the amount the Rock Wren had won with! Second place was the North Island Brown Kiwi, with an astonishing 12,904 votes, and the Kea wasn't very far behind, with 12,060 votes,

Article by Lucy, Caiden, Christian and Saul



A White-fronted Tern | Tara nesting on the ground in Miramar © Ben Ackerley

Predator control around Aotearoa

In November, Predator Free Wellington shared some exciting news: the Miramar Peninsula was finally Predator Free!

This was the result of more than 7 years of trapping and monitoring around the area, and it has finally paid off. Bird detections have increased 71% around the area, including a 500% increase of New Zealand Fantail | Pīwakawaka and a 340% increase of Grey Warbler | Riroriro. Lizard | Mokomoko and wētā populations have also significantly increased.

New Zealand Falcon | Karearea are now a common sight on the peninsula. Tūi are also abundant and very regularly seen. White-fronted Tern | Tara and Red-billed Gull | Tarapunga breed around the peninsula, some even nesting on the ground! It's becoming a great haven for native birds, and it's all thanks to the amount of pest control here.

Predator Free Wellington has already made fast progress in phase 2, already clearing 83 more hectares of rats and mustelids.

Meanwhile down south, a new Predator Free NZ group for the Waimakariri District (just north of Christchurch) is beginning trapping in several reserves and backyards.

Thanks to Tūhaitara Coastal Park and the Ashley/Rakahuri Rivercare Group, traps have already been laid among the entire east and north boundaries of the Waimakariri River, and trapping has already begun at Ravenswood, with the Kaiapoi Lakes soon to follow.

There are more traps to place so far, with most of them coming from the Ashley/Rakahuri Rivercare Group. There are also ideas of placing traps in schools such as Kaiapoi High.

With all of this progress, Predator Free 2050 is looking even more viable than before.

By Christian

Birding in Northland

I've recently been on a trip around some places in Northland, such as Vinegar Lake in Whangarei and Old Mill Lane Wetland in Ngunguru. Here's a report of the places we went and birds we saw on the trip!

The first place that my Mum and I stopped at was Vinegar Lake in Whangarei. There were seven Australasian Little Grebe, including one on a nest! There was also a parent feeding a chick - a real highlight. Other notable observations were Australasian Shoveler chicks and a Black Shag. On the way to Tutukaka, we stopped at Old Mill Lane wetland (read this edition's location review for access notes) where there were fernbird calling and a Banded Rail - calling loudly and dashing across the wetland, trying not to be seen!

The next day (13th of November) was the Petrel Station day. You can read about this on page 22, but I'll summarise the trips in general. Leaving Tutukaka Marina in the early morning, this trip goes out past the Poor Knights Islands for an all-day pelagic. Many birds breed in this area, such as Buller's Shearwater, which are usually seen in huge numbers on this trip. Coming back in the late afternoon, it's a great pelagic trip.

The next day, we drove down the Whangarei Heads to Ocean Beach, hoping to find the semi-resident Wandering Tattler there. Unfortunately, there was no tattler, but there were many New Zealand Pipit, Variable Oystercatcher and Northern New Zealand Dotterel. We also made a quick stop at Jim's Wetland, hoping to find Australasian Bittern and White-Winged Black Tern, but unfortunately they weren't there.

On the way home, we decided to make a stop at Ruakaka, in search of the resident Cape Barren Geese, and there they were! Not scared of our presence at all, they were brilliant to watch - a lifer for both my Mum and I!

Northland provides brilliant opportunities for birding, whether you're looking for shorebirds, seabirds or wetland birds, it's a great place to look for all things ornithological!

By Lucy



Cape Barren Goose © Lucy Dean



Australasian Little Grebe with eggs © Lucy Dean

The Big Ōtaki Day

A group of Young Birders organised a trip on the 18th of November to the Ōtaki Sewage Ponds, Lake Karuwha Reserve, Ōtaki Beach and the Waitohu Estuary. Alfie, who was staying nearby, was able to come. We saw 27 different species at the sewage ponds, including Scaup, Stilt, Shoveler + much more. The highlights were the Black Swan cygnets and Grey Teal ducklings!

At Lake Karuwha Reserve, a Little Black Shag perched on the wharf for a brief viewing, then circled overhead and flew away. A fledgling Shining Cuckoo was heard, and a variety of finches were present, along with some Mallard hybrids.

At the Beach we saw lots of Red-billed gulls, some Black-backed Gulls, and a couple of Blackbirds, finches and a Skylark were also seen.



Red-billed Gull, Ōtaki Beach Carpark © Alfie Benbow

Ari and Ben joined us and we headed down to the Waitohu Estuary where we saw Black-fronted Dotterel, Canada Goose, Black Swan, Mallard hybrids, Mallards, Northern New Zealand Dotterel, Pied Stilt, Variable Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt x Black Stilt (hybrid,) quite a few finches and other birds. The highlight was certainly the Black-fronted dotterel pair, and the Northern New Zealand Dotterels, a pair that have nested for the second season and have successfully hatched one chick! But it hasn't made it yet, the wee bird has to fledge (fly) to successfully survive, when it will be able to avoid capture from predators!

Overall the trip was great and we saw a very good variety of birds, thanks to Saul and Ari for organising the trip. If you wish to view the trip report on eBird, go to:

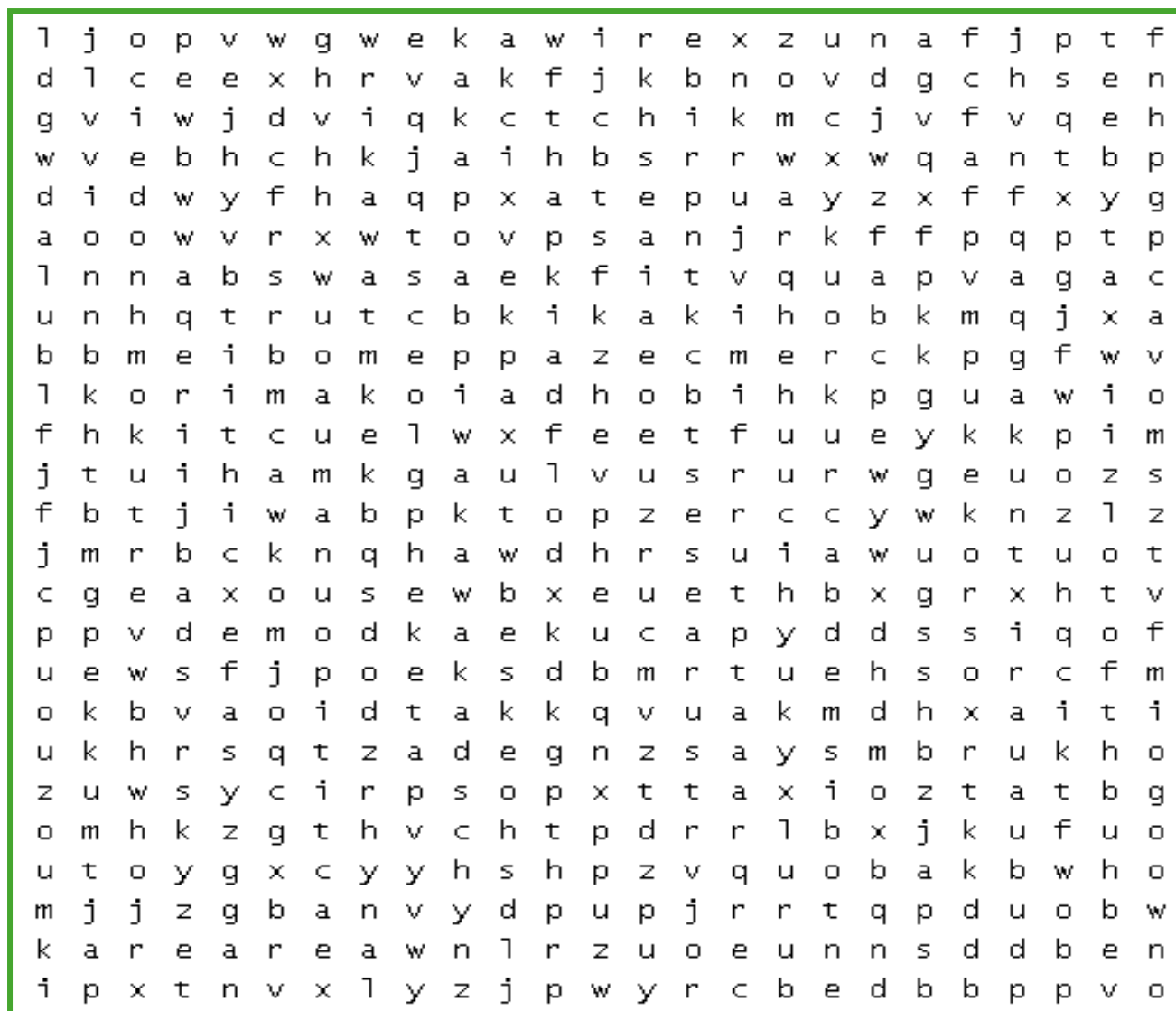
<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/tripreport/172451>



Black-fronted dotterel, Waitohu Estuary © Ben Ackerley.

By Saul, Alfie, Ari and Ben

New Zealand Bird Word Search:



<input type="checkbox"/> Hoiho	<input type="checkbox"/> Kaka	<input type="checkbox"/> Kakapo
<input type="checkbox"/> Kakariki	<input type="checkbox"/> Kaki	<input type="checkbox"/> Karearea
<input type="checkbox"/> Kea	<input type="checkbox"/> Kereru	<input type="checkbox"/> Korimako
<input type="checkbox"/> Pateke	<input type="checkbox"/> Piwakawaka	<input type="checkbox"/> Pukeko
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruru	<input type="checkbox"/> Takahe	<input type="checkbox"/> Tauhou
<input type="checkbox"/> Tawaki	<input type="checkbox"/> Tieke	<input type="checkbox"/> Titipounamu
<input type="checkbox"/> Tomtit	<input type="checkbox"/> Toutouwai	<input type="checkbox"/> Tui
<input type="checkbox"/> Weka	<input type="checkbox"/> Weweia	<input type="checkbox"/> Whio

Recent Pelagics

New Zealand is known as the seabird capital of the world. Some of our team have been out and seen these birds in action recently!

The Petrel Station, Tutukaka:

November the 3rd, 2023

On the 3rd I had my first ever 'proper' pelagic, at the Petrel Station, the trip leaves from Tutukaka early in the morning, then meanders out through the Poor Knights to the oceanic shelf. It's an amazing trip which I can't do justice with just a short blurb but I'll summarise the highlights.

GIANT feeding workups of Buller's Shearwaters and Fairy Prions, a cacophony of sound and wing surrounded the boat, the water also churned by giant schools of trevally working the surface, dipping up and down.

At the shelf the birding got even better, here came the flocks of Flesh-footed Shearwaters, and most exciting for me, NZ Storm-Petrels! (with White-Faced mixed in, and a Wilson's that'd show up every now and then). We also had at least 2(!) Chatham Mollymawks come in the back of the boat for a while, as well as a few Mottled Petrels streaming past (Had a great view of one of these).

So a fantastic birding trip, that I'd highly recommend.

By Andy

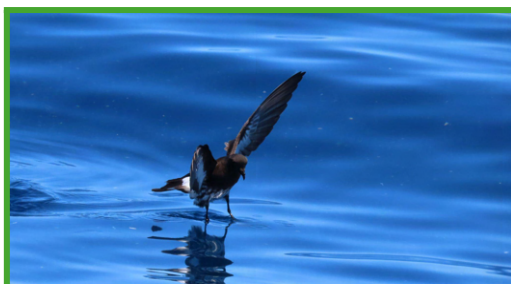
November the 13th, 2023

Monday the 13th of November was a great day out on the Petrel Station filled with heaps of seabirds!

Within a few minutes of leaving the Tutukaka Marina there were thousands of Fluttering and Buller's Shearwater flying past. Also a small pod of Common Dolphin on the way to the Poor Knights. At the Pinnacles Rocks was a workup of thousands of Buller's Shearwater and Fairy Prion.

Out at the Petrel Station, there were lots of Flesh-Footed Shearwater feeding around the boat, as well as lots of little White-faced Storm Petrel. A few New Zealand Storm Petrel as well which is always wonderful. Not only the birds came to visit. A tiny blue shark, just days old, came for a swim at the back of the boat. In the afternoon, a Salvin's Albatross sat near the boat and two Mottled Petrels flew past, although they were distant. Lots of Cooks Petrels and Sooty Shearwater flew past briefly, too.

And a workup of mostly Fairy Prion at the end was a sure highlight to the trip. Seeing nearly 50,000 of these amazing birds made me really amazed. It was a fantastic day on the water!



New Zealand Storm Petrel © Lucy Dean Salvin's Mollymawk © Lucy Dean

By Lucy

December the 16th, 2023

Birds whirled through the air around the boat. The water splashed with trevally. Thousands of Fluttering Shearwater and Fairy Prion sped into the action. Suddenly I spotted a bird sitting on the water, with a darker hood than the nearby Fluttering Shearwater. 'Get onto that one!' I yelled. Cameras pointed towards it and photos clicked. It flew up, showing off its lack of saddlebags. Hutton's! And suddenly there was another - and then one more!

We headed to the Poor Knight's. A few Grey Noddy hid on the rocks, and thousands more Fairy Prion flew across the ocean. The huge Poor Knights loomed overhead, and a few Kakariki bounced along the flowering Pohutukawa treetops. A White-capped Mollymawk soared across the picturesque scene.

When we got to the chum spot it was unusually quiet. But soon the birds started rolling through. A White-chinned Petrel soared past, a lifer for me! The first New Zealand Storm Petrel and Black Petrel took a while to come in, but they did eventually and gave spectacular views. One Pycroft's Petrel also gave a quick but close pass.

With SD cards nearly full, we pulled into Sugarloaf as we could see many Fairy Prion. And we weren't disappointed, with 60,000 swirling around!!

Over the day we saw 120,000 birds, and 25 seabird species!

By Caiden



Fairy Prion feeding workup © Caiden Binzegger



Pycroft's Petrel © Caiden Binzegger

BirdsNZ Wellington Pelagic:

On the 4th of November, I had the opportunity to embark on my first BirdsNZ regional birding trip. This happened to be a pelagic trip out through Wellington Harbour and into the Cook Strait. A large number of birds, and a small pod of dolphins all helped to make the pelagic worthwhile.

My favourite part was seeing a Cape Petrel, a common sighting but still one of my favourite seabirds. A single Little Penguin bobbing about between the waves was also a wonderful sight. Overall the birds were plentiful, especially Salvin's Albatross, and Westland Petrel. It was a great experience, despite being splashed by a couple of waves!

Below are some of my photos of Salvin's Albatross that got quite close.

By Alfie



Salvins Albatrosses in the Cook Strait - © Alfie Benbow

Advertisements

Get in touch with youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com to feature your own birding related ads in the next edition of the Fledglings magazine!

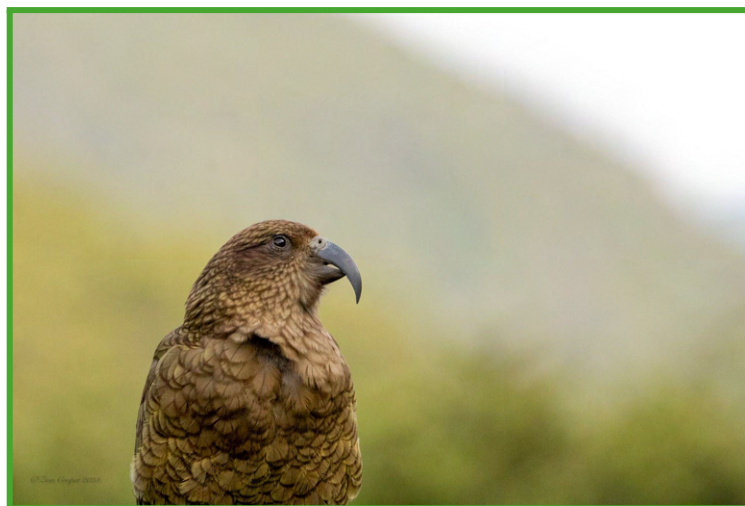


2024 Calendar, By Samuel Amaris:

Samuel Amaris has recently created a calendar, full of beautiful images from all across Aotearoa. He's hiked through thick native forest and across sprawling, seemingly endless mudflats to achieve this professional result.

All money made goes towards buying new camera gear, so that Sam can continue to bring these calendars to you in the future.

This is the perfect gift for a loved one. Head to samuelamarisphotography.com to find out more about them, and how you can order one.



A cheeky Kea, notorious clowns of the mountains © Zion Cooper

Zion Cooper Photography:

Hi, my name is Zion, and I am a wildlife photographer from Christchurch, New Zealand.

I first picked up a camera at 12 and haven't left it ever since. Wildlife photography is incredibly addicting! My job is to portray the beauty of my home, Aotearoa, and the inhabitants that also call it home. I've been to some pretty cool places, like Tiritiri Matangi Island, photographing the amazing Kokako. Or the Ashley Estuary, where I've laid on the rocks photographing Wrybills.

Go to zioncooper.com to find out more.

Thank you for reading!

If you would like to get involved in the action, and you're between the age of 10-18, don't hesitate! Whether you just want to supply a drawing, photo or article for a magazine or become a full-time member of the team, there's a place for you!

Thank you for reading this article in the Young Birders New Zealand Fledglings Magazine! If you are interested in birds or nature and live in New Zealand, contact us for some fun and easy-going conversations and adventures - all to do with birds. It's a great opportunity to connect with other passionate young people who love Aotearoa's wildlife!

Contact us at: youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com



Little-black shag, Waimanu Lagoons © Saul Ward

Cover Photo, Juvenile Tomtit © Ben Ackerley

Opinions shared in an article may not be shared by all team members.

Thank you for reading Fledglings Issue No.3, 2023.
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