



# New Zealand Fledglings

The NZ Young Birders Magazine

## February 2024

### Welcome to 2024

As summer is drawing to an end, the waders will soon be off to their respective breeding sites, and our coastlines will be empty of many birds.

The Young Birders New Zealand members have all had some incredible adventures this summer - which you'll read all about in this magazine!

Makarora has been a host for many adventures this summer, with lots of YBNZ members attending the 2024 Makarora Field Camp organised by Aspiring Biodiversity Trust and Birds New Zealand.

From pelagics to epic hikes, it's been a busy summer for birding within the group!

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# Recent and Upcoming Events:

## Recent:

### Makarora Field Camp:

Recently, many of our members attended the Makarora Field Camp for young birders. You can read more about this on page 5 and learn about the activities, fun times and educational experiences at the camp. We encountered lots of birds, ranging from the tiny Rifleman to the huge wings of flying Kaka.

## Upcoming:

### 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 spoonbills found. There are now more, but how many more?

Visit <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/royal-spoonbill-national-census/> for more details.

### Global Big Day 2024:

Global Big Day will be happening some time in May. eBird are yet to release the date, so keep your eyes on their website for the info and make sure you get out and do some birding over the day! Even if you can only go birding in your backyard, it's still lots of useful data, and every bird counts!

### Birds NZ Conference:

The details are out for the 2024 Birds NZ Conference! This will be held in Nelson, with lots of field trips to find amazing birds, such as Blue Duck | Whio, Brown Teal | Pateke, Kaka, Orange-fronted Parakeet and more!

Conference details:

[2024 NZ Bird Conference](#)

### Farewell to the godwits

It's coming up to the time of year where Farewell to the Godwits events are coming up! Some of the places that run these events include Christchurch and the Miranda Shorebird Centre. Get in touch with your local Birds NZ regional representative to find out about any farewell godwit events near you!



An endangered Orange-fronted Parakeet © Ben Ackerley

*Article by Caiden and Saul*



FACT SHEET

## NEW ZEALAND BIRDS

# New Zealand Pipit

A Lesser-Known Country Bird of New Zealand



### SPECIFICATIONS:

#### BIRD ORDER

Passeriformes

#### TE REO NAME

Pihoihoi

#### SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Anthus novaeseelandiae*

#### BIRD FAMILY

Motacillidae

#### FOUND WHERE

New Zealand

#### LENGTH

18 cm

#### WEIGHT

35 g

#### NEW ZEALAND STATUS

Endemic

#### CONSERVATION STATUS

Naturally Uncommon

The New Zealand Pipit is a small passerine bird, endemic to New Zealand. These birds are found all throughout the country, in a variety of habitats. They can be identified by their streaked brown plumage and distinctive long tail. They usually lay about 2-4 eggs in nests made of woven grass.

### HABITAT

The Pipit thrives in habitats such as beaches, mudflats, alpine shrublands, and open grasslands. These birds are commonly spotted along coastlines, rivers and farmland.

### BEHAVIOUR

This bird has an approachable nature, often seen running short distances in front of people before flying away. They have a diet of grains, seeds and small invertebrate.

### DID YOU KNOW?

New Zealand Pipits are known for their characteristic 'tail flicking' behaviour. As they walk or run, they frequently flick their long tails up and down.

*Fact File By Samuel Amaris - Photo Credit: Ben Ackerley*



## Makarora Field Camp 2024

This January, the Aspiring Biodiversity Trust organised an incredible biodiversity camp based out of Makarora and the Mount Aspiring National Park. Eight of our members attended this camp, and had a great time learning how to do various conservation practices. These included activities such as bird banding, 5 minute bird counts, camera trapping and more!

### 5 Minute Bird Counts:

Attendees participated in 5-minute bird counts in the bush behind the Wonderland Lodge at dawn on the second day. Species such as New Zealand Fantail, South Island Tomtit, Tui, Bellbird, Kereru, Grey Warbler, and Redpoll were abundant, most notable species were Yellow-Crowned Kakariki, Kaka and Brown Creeper.



A Kererū © Caiden Binzegger



Experts banding a Bellbird © Ben Ackerley

## **Banding:**

On the first morning of camp we woke up at the crack of dawn. The beautiful dawn chorus of Bellbird and Tui filled the air. We walked through an overgrown field and over to a patch of forest, where our head bird bander waited with a whole lot of mist netting equipment.

Brown Creepers sung from the trees, and a Kaka screeched from overhead. To set up the nets we had to clear some branches out of the way. After that we put the net onto the two poles, and it was then time to wait.

It didn't take long! Soon we had caught three Bellbirds, a Tui, a Tomtit, and a Grey Warbler. We managed to successfully band most of them, but one of the Bellbirds was already banded! Note that the banders are all incredibly qualified and the birds being banded were not under stress.

## **Forest by night:**

For the forest by night session we had a lepidopterist named Carey Knox come in (read more about him below in the interesting talks section). He set up two sheets with UV lights to attract moths. While we waited for dark we ran around with nets and managed to catch out first two species, the Common Grass Moth and an Arrowhead.

Over the night we slowly built up an impressive 70 species of moth. We then headed out to do the Makarora Nature Trail, where we found several new moth species and a very friendly Ruru! It was also interesting to see a Kererū at night, roosting high up in a tree. We had counted 19 coming in to roost earlier, when it was still light.



A Dark Coprosma Moth © *Saul Ward*



A Whio, a bird featured in a talk © *Ben Ackerley*

## **Talks and lectures:**

In between these amazing activities and adventures, and in the evenings, there were plenty of interesting talks. We learnt about the geophysiography of the Makarora Valley and entire environment, eBird and Inaturalist, moths and lizards, the Ridge to River Conservation programme, predator control, conservation dog training, and Whio Conservation!

## **Predator Control:**

An exciting part of the camp was the camera trapping and tunnel trapping, which involved going out to the paddocks behind the campsite (near the bird banding location) and setting up camera traps and tunnel traps.

Although the camera trapping didn't spot anything, it was a really educational experience that none of us will forget. The trapping tunnels were another story - every single tunnel (minus one) was full of mouse footprints and several rat prints in a few!

One of the talks we had on the second to last day was about predator control. We learnt about the incredible work that Aspiring Biodiversity Trust does that contributes to eradicating predators from the area. Trail cameras, traps and tracking tunnels are just a few of the tools necessary for predator eradication. The ABT puts hundreds of hours into predator elimination, helping to protect our native and endemic species in Makarora.



Controlling gull numbers © *Saul Ward*



An elusive Mohua © *Alfie Benbow*

## **The search for the Mohua:**

A notable species in the Makarora area is the rare Yellowhead | Mohua. These bright yellow forest birds are endemic to the South Island, and a difficult bird to locate. They are distributed across select areas of mature native south island forest, most often beech forests.

During the camp, there were various opportunities to search for Mohua, but none were found. It took until the second-to-last day of camp to find one. We had just finished walking a section of the Bridle Track without any Mohua sightings, so a stop on the drive back was necessary for a last-ditch effort. A short walk at Cameron Creek produced one brief and distant Mohua call.

But unfortunately one group had gone to the wrong place and had ended up at Cameron Flat instead of Cameron Creek. They ended up having an equally special encounter, with a female Falcon soaring low over their heads and landing in a tree which appeared to have a nest!

## Braided Rivers:

Not once but twice we visited the braided river, both times enchanting attendees. Birds such as Wrybill | Ngutu Pare, Banded Dotterel | Pohowera, Black-Fronted Tern | Tarapirohe and Black-Billed Gull | Tarāpuka were seen on the river bed - a real treat.

One of the highlights was on the second trip, where a young Wrybill fledgling was seen! We also saw a large resting flock of 42 Black-fronted Tern, and learnt about the unique braided river plants. There were also several friendly New Zealand Pipit | Pīhoihoi hopping around the rocks, which are always a treat to see.

We also learnt how to attempt a river crossing correctly, and managed to cross many times - in groups. This was an important lesson and many of us went away with useful knowledge for future river crossings.



A Pipit on the Makarora River © Ben Ackerley    A Wrybill on the river © Lucy Dean

## Birds around the lodge:

The location of the lodge provided great opportunities for spotting birds, and the easily accessible Makarora Nature Walk was often explored during periods of downtime. Many native birds were abundant around the campsite, such as Kereru, Yellow-crowned Kakariki, Tui and occasionally Morepork | Ruru could be heard at night. Tomtit | Miromiro, Rifleman | Titipounamu, Grey Warbler | Riroriro, Bellbird | Korimako, and other forest birds were common sights along the Makarora Nature Walk, which could be directly accessed from the campsite. And, if we were lucky, a New Zealand Kaka or New Zealand Falcon | Karearea would fly overhead, screeching loudly.

It was interesting to see the abundance of Yellow-crowned Parakeets around camp. We regularly had them feeding on the ground right next to our cabins! We managed to count 7 at once.

And another interesting sighting was the huge amount of Kereru around the lodge. Huge flocks, usually of 20+, would fly into the trees around our cabins in the evening to roost. It gave some awesome photo opportunities! The birdlife around the lodge was one of the highlights of the camp, and having such an abundance of native and usually quite rare birds so close by was an awesome experience.



A Tomtit in Makarora © *Alfie Benbow*



A Tomtit at Blue Pools © *A Xiong*

### **Blue Pools:**

The Blue Pools track is a well-known walking track in Makarora that attracts many people, locals and tourists. On the afternoon of our second day at camp, we visited there in search of Mohua. Although the Mohua search was unsuccessful, we found many interesting birds - including dozens of Rifleman and Tomtit. At the end of the walk many heard a Koekoeā | Long-Tailed Cuckoo - but the elusive bird was not seen.

Even though the search for Mohua may have failed, it was still a beautiful walk with incredible scenery, and there was a lovely spot to pick raspberries at the end of the walk! If you are ever visiting Makarora or just passing through, a stop at Blue Pools is highly recommended, whether you are swimming, walking, birdwatching, or just keen to get some fresh air and see some stunning scenery.

By Abe, Alfie, Andy, Audrey, Ben, Caiden, Lucy, and Saul.



'Beauty and the Beast' a highly poisonous yet beautiful Foxglove flower © *Caiden Binzegger*



# Location Review: Makarora Nature Walk

Located in Makarora, this short walk is underappreciated due to its birdlife, and its beautiful beech forest setting. It is a very short track, only taking the average walker around 15 minutes to complete. The trail is flat and well-maintained, and provides benches throughout the walk for those in need of a rest, or if you would like to sit down and listen to the birdsong.

## Access:

Access is at a carpark just past the Makarora DOC visitor centre, or alternatively there is access via the Wonderland Makarora Lodge. The Makarora Lodge access is recommended if you're staying there, as it adds on another part of the track where we've seen great birdlife (including a falcon and rifleman feeding young).

## Interesting Site Information:

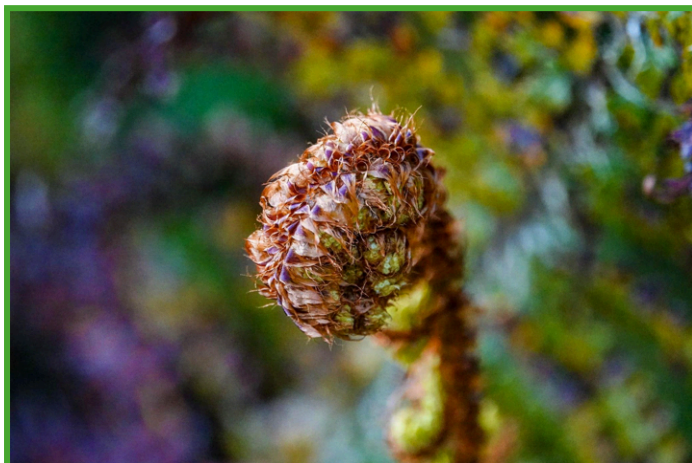
The track passes through a beautiful silver beech and podocarp forest, with mataī, rimu, kahikatea and miro trees all present. 35 species of bird have been recorded here so far, and there will certainly be many more to come!

## Species found here:

Yellow-crowned Parakeet are undoubtedly the star of the track. These often rare species are abundant, with us seeing up to seven at once! There are also many other species, with an abundance of Tui, Bellbird | Korimako, Rifleman | Titipounamu, Kereru, Grey Warbler | Riroriro, Brown Creeper | Pipipi, Tomtit | Miromiro, and New Zealand Fantail | Piwakawaka. There were also several New Zealand Falcon | Karearea and New Zealand Kaka seen or heard there by everyone, and some lucky few also heard Long-tailed or Shining Cuckoos (more would be heard and possibly seen earlier on in summer). Morepork | Ruru were commonly heard here at night.

## When to visit and what to bring:

You can visit this track all year round, although Makarora can get cold during winter. Make sure to check the weather forecast and dress appropriately, and be prepared, as the weather can change suddenly. The forest is relatively sheltered from wind and rain, but a jacket is recommended, even if you may not need it.



A fern © Alfie Benbow



A Tomtit © Caiden Binzegger

# Recent Rare Bird Sightings:

## **Long-toed Stint - Southland**

On the 14th of January, a rare wader was spotted at Waituna in Southland. This was a Long-Toed Stint, an incredibly rare visitor to New Zealand. One was also seen the year before at Lake Ellesmere near Christchurch, although they are unlikely to be the same bird. Though seen by many birders, some missed out on this rarity. Other birds of note at this location were 2 Marsh Sandpipers, 2 Pectoral Sandpiper, 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and at least 3 White-winged Black Terns.

## **Sanderling - Ashley Estuary**

Sanderling are a rare migrant to New Zealand, with one or two turning up annually and usually at hard to access sites. This year we've had one turn up at an easy to access spot - the Ashley River Estuary. It has been quite elusive but eventually has allowed for some good photographs.

## **Common Tern - Ashley Estuary, Foxton, Bluff, Thames, Plimmerton and Boulder Bank**

Despite their name, Common Tern are incredibly rare in New Zealand! There have been a few reports dotted around the country which are incredibly exciting for birders in New Zealand! The Common Tern at Ashley Estuary has been seen by many members of the Young Birders NZ team which is incredible considering its status as a vagrant to New Zealand shores!

## **Far-Eastern Curlew, Ashley Estuary**

A beautiful wader has recently been seen and photographed by members of the group at the Ashley Estuary in Canterbury - a Far-Eastern Curlew! With a magnificent bill and stunning plumage, it's hard to not want to see this bird.

## **Little Curlew - Invercargill**

An extremely rare species of wader recently showed up in Invercargill; a Little Curlew. They only show up every 2-3 years in Aotearoa, so it's always a treat when one does turn up.



Far-eastern Curlew © Samuel Amaris



Common Tern © Samuel Amaris

*By Caiden, Saul, Lucy and Alfie*

# Recent Pictures:

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



A Rifleman | Titipounamu in Arthur's Pass.  
© Christian Cosgrove



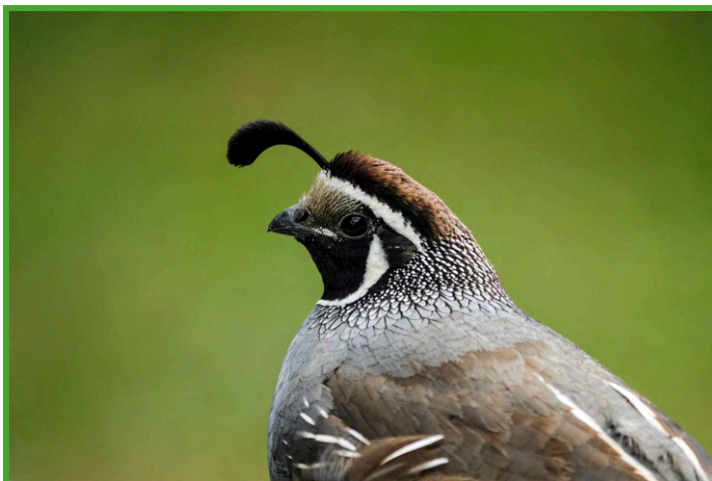
A Tieke at Rotoroa Island. © Lucy Dean



A White-capped Mollymawk off the Bluff Coast. © Audrey Austin



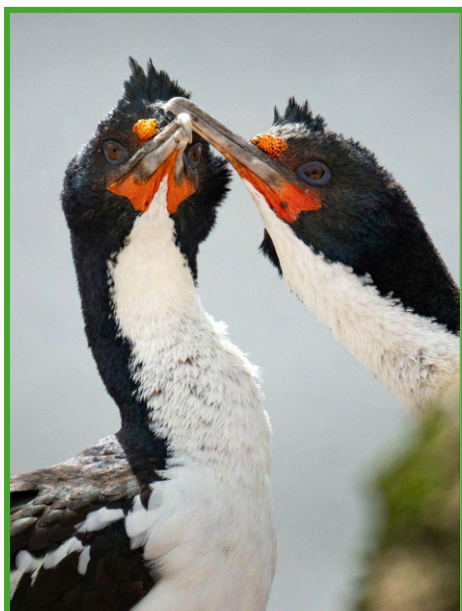
A Ruddy Turnstone at the Ashley Estuary.  
© Samuel Amaris



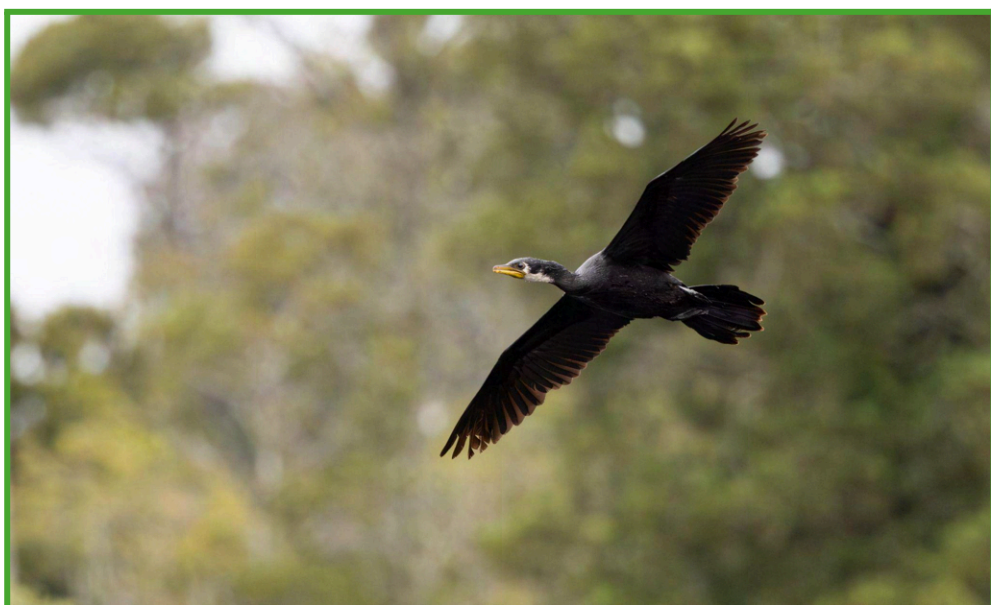
A California Quail, an introduced species.  
© Alfie Benbow



A friendly Wrybill at the Waitohu Estuary.  
© Saul Ward



Two Chatham Island Shags preen each other. © Saryu Mae



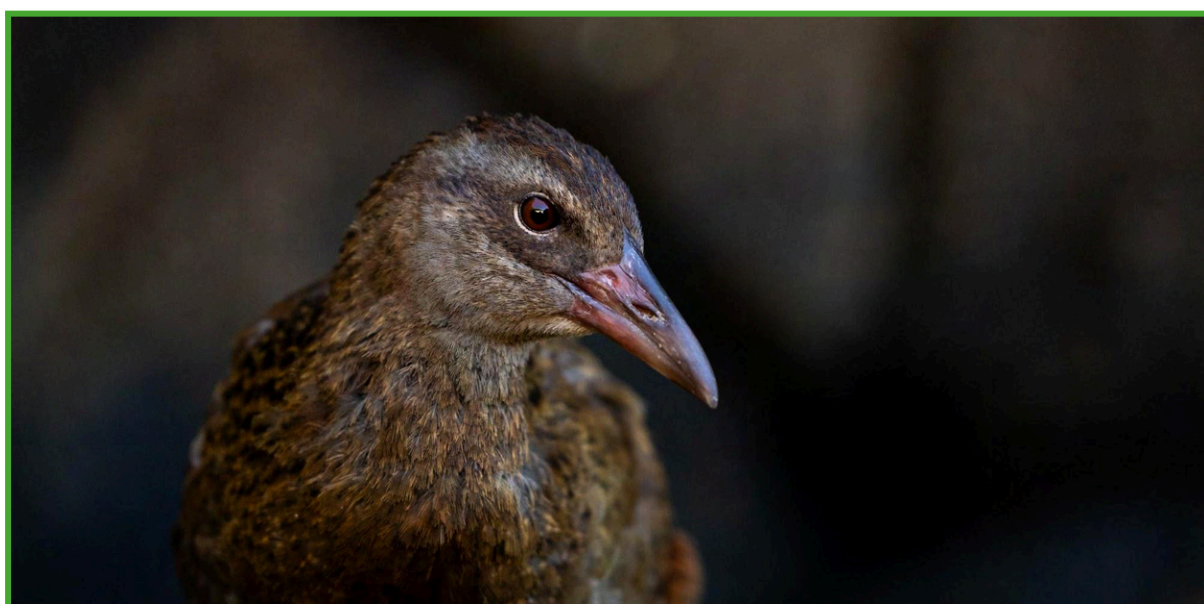
A Little Pied Shag soaring over Okarito. © Caiden Binzegger



A rare Shore Plover on Motutapu Island. © Andy Xiong



An Arctic Skua flying over shore and disturbing roosting birds. © Ben Ackerley



A curious Weka in the Abel Tasman. © Zion Cooper

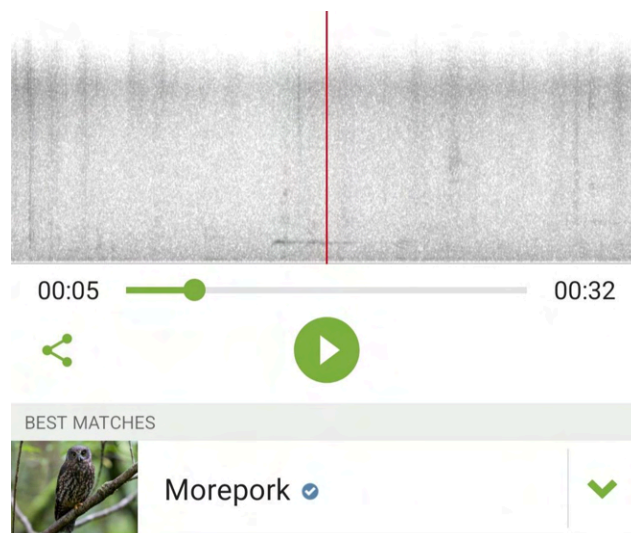
# Merlin Bird ID

Do you ever have trouble identifying birds? Everyone does, even the very best birders ornithologists. But with Merlin Bird ID, identifying a bird only takes a few steps!

Merlin Bird ID is a free, easy to use app that can identify birds by photo, audio, or a description of the bird's size, colour, behaviour and location. It also has a description of each bird, complete with range maps and audio, which is helpful while you are out birding and don't have a bird guide with you.

Currently, Merlin Bird ID contains photo, audio, maps and descriptions for over 10,000 different bird species worldwide.

The audio ID detecting feature is extremely useful. You just open the Merlin app and click the Audio ID button, and it'll listen to birds around you. As they call it'll pop up with the identification. These recordings will be saved in your Merlin and can be accessed at any time. It is also recommended that you add your recordings to your eBird list if you have one running at the time.



The audio feature picking up a Morepork | Ruru calling at night

Merlin Bird ID relies on your eBird data to recognise species by photo or audio identification, so some species with limited data and information may not be represented as an option when you are using the app to identify a bird.

Although the app does not cover every bird yet, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (the app creators) are working towards covering more species, even more accurately. You can help them out with this goal as well! Merlin Vision was created so that people like you and me can annotate recordings by highlighting the bits where the birds are calling. They only need 100 recordings of each species to be able to annotate, and there are still many common NZ species that have less than 100 recordings.

*Article by Alfie and Caiden*

# Birding on the ferry

## Cook Strait:

Have you ever been on the Cook Strait Ferry, sitting inside bored? A great option is to step outside, and watch for seabirds! What's special about the Cook Strait is that it's the meeting point of the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean, with the currents from both seas pushing against each other creating an upheaval of food for seabirds. It's also a place for seabirds to pass through North to South or vice versa. Here are some types of seabirds often seen, petrels, albatrosses, shearwaters, terns, and skuas. The open ocean section provides great opportunities for the more interesting seabirds, while the sheltered waters of Wellington Harbour and the Marlborough Sounds are a great place to spot penguins, shags, gannets and shearwaters!

### Common Cook Strait seabirds:

*Little Penguin*

*Northern Royal Albatross*

*Wandering Albatross*

*White-capped Mollymawk*

*Salvin's Mollymawk*

*Northern Giant Petrel*

*Fairy Prion*

*Cape Petrel*

*Cook's Petrel*

*Westland Petrel*

*Flesh-footed Shearwater*

*Buller's Shearwater*

*Sooty Shearwater*

*Hutton's Shearwater*

*Fluttering Shearwater*

*Australasian Gannet*

*Arctic Skua*



A White-capped Mollymawk © Zion Cooper

## Foveaux Strait:

Another New Zealand ferry crossing is the Foveaux Strait, the strait that connects Stewart Island | Rakiura to the mainland. This is another great opportunity to find seabirds, including some different birds to what you might find on the Cook Strait Ferry crossing. It's common to see large numbers of mollymawk on this crossing, often 15 or more. Also, make sure to keep your eyes peeled on the islands close to Rakiura. There are often resting Foveaux Shags Brown Skua on the rocks and sometimes penguins on the islands!

### Common Foveaux Strait seabirds:

*Yellow-eyed Penguin*

*Little Penguin*

*Fiordland-crested Penguin*

*Buller's Mollymawk*

*White-capped Mollymawk*

*Salvin's Mollymawk*

*Northern Giant Petrel*

*Cape Petrel*

*Mottled Petrel*

*Cook's Petrel*

*Sooty Shearwater*

*Hutton's Shearwater*

*Fluttering Shearwater*

*Common Diving-Petrel*

*Brown Skua*



White-capped Mollymawk - © Alfie Benbow



A Cape Petrel - © Alfie Benbow

You'll often see large flocks of Sooty Shearwater on the Foveaux Strait, and these are usually the most common seabird species. Make sure to keep an eye on the water for penguins and diving petrels! You may also see White-faced or Grey-backed Storm Petrels, but these are quite rare from the ferry.

*Article by Alfie, Caiden and Saul*



A Southern Royal Albatross showing off the largest wings of any bird © Caiden Binzegger



A Black morph New Zealand Fantail © Samuel Amaris

## Colour Morphs of birds

Throughout New Zealand, strange and often unexpected morphs of birds appear. These are always an exciting addition to a birding trip - be it a Black Morph Fantail or a Leucistic Blackbird!

The Black Morph Fantail (pictured above) is much more common in Te Waipounamu, but there are small amounts in Te-Ika-A-Maui. With their almost entirely jet black plumage - except for a white patch behind the eye - they truly are a miracle to see. One theory for this plumage is that the black morph was a South Island subspecies of Pīwakawaka - and the 'North Island Pied Morph' migrated to the South Island - which then bred with the black morph.

A rare morph of Tūi can be found throughout Aotearoa - a partially or fully white type of bird. This is due to leucism - a condition that causes discolour in particular birds. This is due to a defect in colouration during development - the cells that are responsible for feather development cause the plumage to lack melanin - the substance that causes colouration in skin and feathers. It is also sometimes due to progressive greying - a more common occurrence with a pretty self explanatory name! Look out for leucistic or white Tūi while out birding!

Other interesting morphs include melanism, which causes birds to become darker in colouration, and albinism, where birds lose all pigments and become pure white. This is often confused with leucism.

Partially leucistic blackbirds are not a rare sight around New Zealand, but like other birds with interesting colour morphs, they are always thrilling to see! These blackbirds often have speckled white heads - an incredibly interesting sight to see!

Partially leucistic oystercatchers are sometimes seen along coastal areas of the North Island. One was around for a long time near Kaiaua that was fully white.

*Article by Lucy and Caiden*





A Common Chaffinch at Kakanui Beach © Alfie Benbow

## Birds at Kakanui

Just over an hour's drive north from Dunedin, lies a small beachside town called Kakanui. While the sheltered bays and great swimming beaches are often what attracts visitors, the birdlife there is surprisingly plentiful.

The Kakanui River estuary is home to a colony of White-fronted Terns | Tara, and Welcome Swallows are often seen flitting around. Multiple species of shags inhabit the lagoon, and Variable Oystercatchers | Torea Pango can be seen on the island in the lagoon, sometimes with chicks. Another notable species is the introduced Lesser Redpoll, a treat for North Island residents that don't see them very often.

*Article by Alfie*



A White-fronted Tern | Tara (left) and a White-faced Heron (right) at Kakanui Beach © Alfie Benbow

### Likely Birds List:

- *Australasian Harrier*
- *Australian Magpie*
  - *Bellbird*
  - *Black Shag*
  - *Black Swan*
- *Canada Goose*
- *Caspian Tern*
- *Common Chaffinch*
  - *Dunnock*
- *Eurasian Blackbird*
- *European Goldfinch*
- *European Greenfinch*
- *European Starling*
  - *Grey Teal*
  - *House Sparrow*
  - *Lesser Redpoll*
  - *Little Pied Shag*
  - *Mallard*
- *Paradise Shelduck*
  - *Pied Shag*
  - *Pied Stilt*
  - *Pukeko*
- *Red-billed Gull*
- *Rock Pigeon*
- *Royal Spoonbill*
  - *Silvereye*
  - *Song Thrush*
- *Southern Black Backed Gull*
- *South Island Pied Oystercatcher*
  - *Spur-winged Plover*
    - *Tui*
- *Variable Oystercatcher*
  - *Welcome Swallow*
  - *White-faced Heron*
  - *White-fronted Tern*
  - *Yellowhammer*

# 100 species in a month

With the new year comes a new year list, and a lot of intense birding to get to the top 100, even if just for a short time. One difficult challenge here in NZ is to find 100 species in a month. But I am, of course, trying for it.

I started the New Year at Timaru's penguin colony, which unfortunately was disturbed by the fireworks. Other birds included Variable Oystercatcher, Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls, and a rather calm Spotted Shag. Some additional places in Timaru got me to 54 species overall, including uncommon birds like Black-fronted Dotterel and Cape Barren Goose.

After beginning to head home, I somehow managed to find a Kererū in the Waimakariri District, normally quite rare on the coast there. I also went around the area, finding some rarer species that are locally common such as Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swan and Little Egret, and after birding around Christchurch I was at 70 species after 5 days.

However, surprisingly it turns out I was able to go to both Arthur's Pass and Kaikoura on the weekend, so obviously I went to both of those places starting with Arthur's Pass where I quickly found Kea, as well as Tomtit, South Island Robin and Rifleman on the walking track. Some other places gave me a few extra birds, including 2 lifers, Rock Wren and Yellow-crowned Parakeet.

At Kaikoura, I managed to find 6 more seabird species for the year list, including my lifer Sooty Shearwater, and I also found Cirl Bunting, Ruddy Turnstone and Reef Heron, giving me 86 species after a week. For the next 10 days, I found 10 more year list species, mainly waders but also a few introduced species such as Peafowl and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

Finally, it was time for my planned Otago trip, but before that I found 2 more Timaru species, including New Zealand Falcon, my nemesis bird for my list last year. I started at Otago with Orokonui, where I found Takahe, and then I found Rosella at the Dunedin Botanic Gardens - species 100! But that didn't mean the competition was finished; and I headed straight to the Royal Albatross centre (which gave me Northern Royal Albatross) and the wildlife cruise giving me 3 more. Then I had an idea to go to Orokonui at night, and it actually worked, giving me Morepork and my first ever wild Kiwi. Now it was time to head back home, but not before seeing a few more species on the way there.

Finally, I went to Ellesmere 1 more time to get 2 more species and reach 111, and then the last species was at Charing Cross - the local Spotted Doves.

I ended with 112 species across NZ and 101 species in Canterbury alone.

*Article by Christian*

# 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!

## Stewart Island Pelagic

During my Stewart Island Trip, I had the opportunity to go on a pelagic out in the waters surrounding Stewart Island. This was a wonderful trip, producing a load of interesting birds, and a lifer! (Brown Skua). We set out from the Halfmoon Bay wharf in Oban, and boated out past several small islands. Brown Skua and Foveaux Shag inhabited the rocky cliffs of these small islands, and a Yellow Eyed Penguin | Hoiho was seen on the shore of another.



Brown Skua off Stewart Island | Rakiura © *Alfie Benbow*

Various albatross species showed up, White-capped Mollymawk being the most plentiful. Buller's Mollymawk, Salvins Mollymawk, and a Southern Royal Albatross were also spotted among the other seabirds.

Overall, it was a great trip, and a must do for anyone with an interest in seabirds visiting Stewart Island | Rakiura.



White-capped Mollymawk (left and below) and Cape Petrel (right) - © *Alfie Benbow*



## Foveaux Strait Pelagic

Two of our members had the opportunity to go on a Foveaux Strait pelagic. These full day trips depart from Bluff and cruise along the coast of Stewart Island. Unfortunately the day was very calm, which meant that there were very few birds around.

On the journey to Rakiura it was rougher, so we had lots of birds. Nearly 2000 Sooty Shearwater cruised through, 6 each of Fluttering and Hutton's Shearwater, some Little Blue and unidentified penguins on the surface of the water, 30+ Common Diving-Petrel, 2 Cook's Petrel, several Cape Petrel, a White-faced Storm Petrel, 15 White-capped Mollmawk, and a Buller's Mollmawk.

We stopped by a large fishing boat which had attracted a variety of seabirds. 27 White-capped Mollmawk, some Salvin's and Buller's Mollmawk, and 3 Southern Royal Albatross sat on the water. A dozen Cape Petrels whizzed through, and a random Gull grabbed a bit of chum we chucked off. Our rarest species of the day then came through, the Antarctic subspecies of Cape Petrel. This was the third record for the entire area.

We then decided that we'd spend the day looking along Rakiura's coast for penguins moulting instead of chumming out at sea. We spent several hours scanning the coastline, but there weren't even Weka on the rocks and beaches! However we did see a few more Mollmawk and Cape Petrel.

Just before we headed back to Bluff we headed out slightly to Whero Rock - the largest breeding colony of Foveaux Shags in the world! Here we chummed a bit and attracted a few birds, including several Brown Skua, some White-capped Mollmawk and a Southern Royal Albatross. There were also loads of fluffy young shags being fed by parents on the rock, and a few seal pups nearby.



A Gull steals a Mollmawk's lunch! © Audrey Austin



A majestic Southern Royal Albatross © Audrey Austin



A Common Diving Petrel © Caiden Binzegger



Battle of the birds! © Caiden Binzegger

# Trip Report: Waikanae Beach

On Saturday, the 17th of February, we (Alfie and Saul) took a trip around Waikanae, birding at the Waimanu Lagoons, Pharazyn Reserve, and more! Here is our eBird trip report from the day packed full with exciting birds: <https://ebird.org/newzealand/tripreport/204058>

Read more about our adventure down below!

The day started off at Waimanu Lagoons, where we located some Brown Teal and other waterbirds in the rainy weather. We carried on round the lagoon, passing shags, swans and scaup, and a Grey Duck!

We then headed around to the Waikanae Estuary and Sandspit where we saw Variable Oystercatcher, Bar-tailed Godwit, lots of gulls, Wrybill, a White-fronted Tern colony and New Zealand Dotterel!

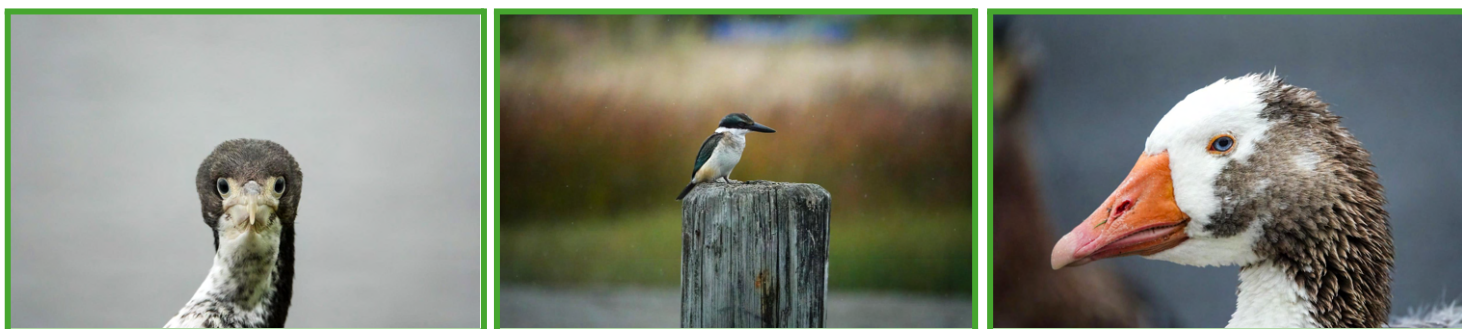
We then walked back past the lagoons, spotting a White-faced Heron and some California Quails. We carried on walking and eventually arrived at Waimeha Lagoon, where some coot, dabchicks and another Grey Duck were spotted from the hide.

Next, we caught a bus, then walked to Pharazyn Reserve, in search of an Australasian Grebe that was seen there recently. Arriving at the hide, we started scanning through the New Zealand Dabchicks, and there it was! The rarity was exciting to see, though sadly not very close up. Exploring the rest of Pharazyn Reserve, we caught a glimpse of a stoat with a half-eaten eel.

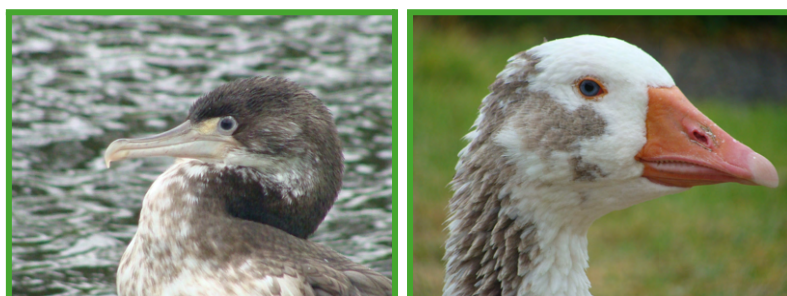
After Pharazyn, we had a short search at the Waimeha Stream River mouth for any interesting birds, but some Variable Oystercatchers were the only birds of excitement.

The last stop was the Waikanae Train Station, with a couple of Kereru flying overhead putting a nice end to the great day out.

*By Alfie and Saul*



*A Pied Shag (left), Sacred Kingfisher (middle) and a Greylag Goose (right) © Alfie Benbow*



*A Pied Shag (left) and a Greylag Goose (right) © Saul Ward*

# 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!

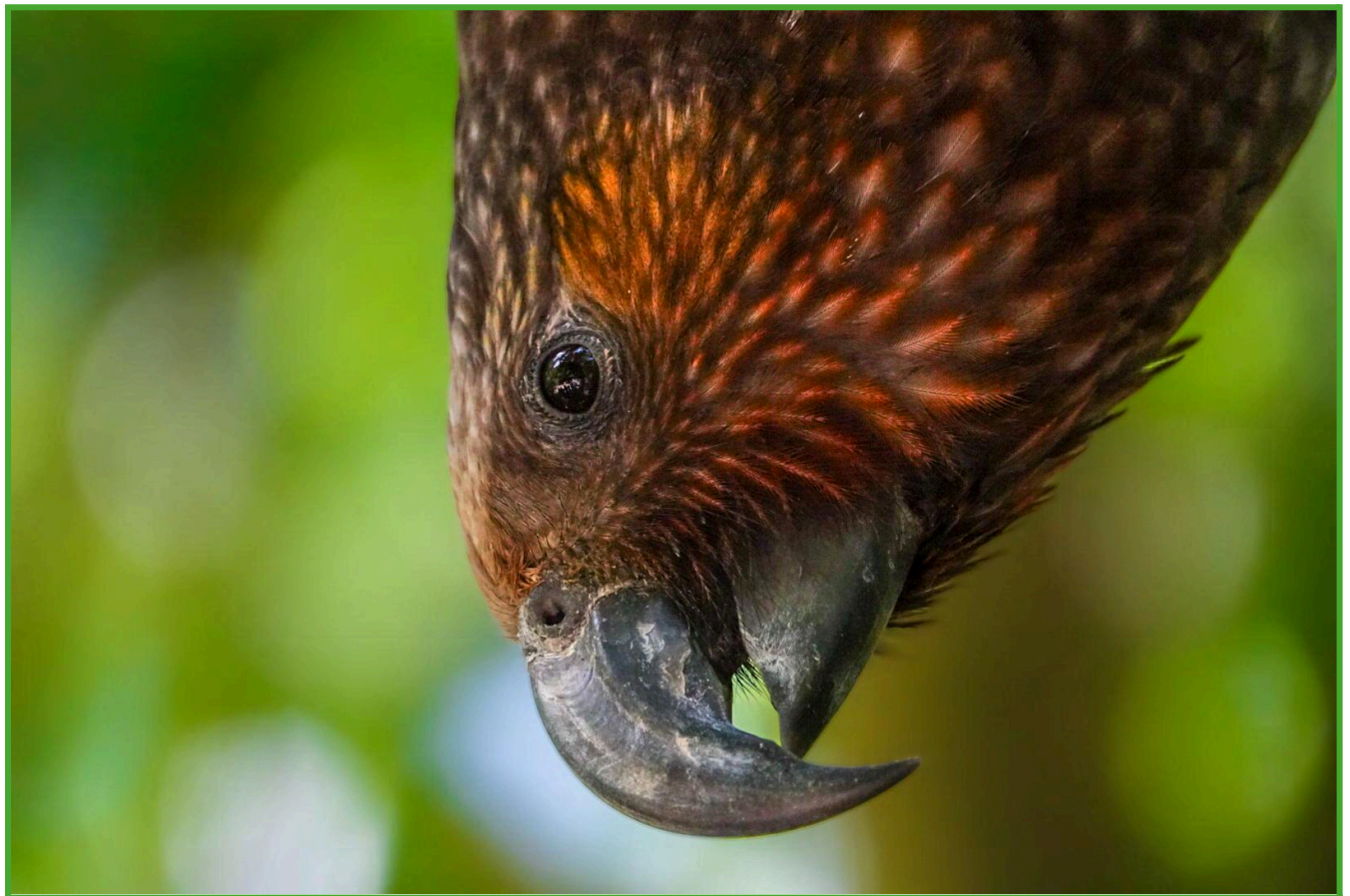
Thank you for reading this article in the Young Birders New Zealand Fledglings Magazine! If you are interested in birds or nature and live in New Zealand, contact us for some fun and easy-going conversations and adventures - all to do with birds. It's a great opportunity to connect with other passionate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

Contact us at: [youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com](mailto:youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com)

Cover Photo, Juvenile New Zealand Dabchick © *Lucy Dean*

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

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A cheeky North Island Kaka at Zealandia Ecosanctuary © *Alfie Benbow*