



New Zealand Fledglings

October 2023

The NZ Young Birders Magazine

It's the Middle of Spring!

If you haven't gone out birding before, or haven't had the time to, now's best! Spring is the most exciting time of the year for birders. The birds are very active and starting to build nests, lay eggs and raise chicks.

The first migratory species are also starting to arrive, like Godwits and Knots. And all the flowers are starting to bloom, meaning that you can find lots of native and endemic species feeding on them, particularly Tui, Bellbird and Silvereye.

So get out there and see some birds, because you never know, you might find something rare!

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Recent and Upcoming Events:

Recent:

Global Big Day:

On the 14th of October, the eBird Global Big Day was held. It was full of new world records, rarities and birds! 36,490 people contributed 84,343 checklists, documenting an incredible 7,525 species! 48,749 photos and 1,247 audio recordings were submitted to the Macaulay Library! New Zealand helped out with 133 species, many of them endemic, but unfortunately bad weather restricted many people from getting outside. As a group, our team saw 72 species and submitted 40 checklists.

Mark your calendars for the 11th of May, 2024, the next Global Big Day!



A Morepork | Ruru, seen and photographed on Global Big Day © Caiden Binzegger

Waders Return!

This month also marked the return of the godwits and other migrant species, a safe migration looks to have occurred, with lots of immatures birds seen also indicating a good breeding season. Many rarities have also been seen amongst the more common species.

Upcoming:

Summer wader counts:

Summer is on its way and birders are getting excited! Migratory birds fill the sky heading from the arctic down to us. Amongst them are sometimes rare species which have come along for the ride. BirdsNZ organise wader counts to some of the country's most remote yet bird-filled places. Go to <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/> if you want to see some of these amazing birds after their incredible journey!

The Petrel Station Pelagic Seabird Tours:

The Petrel Station is a pelagic birding tour in Tutukaka that goes out to the Poor Knights Islands and about an hour further. 67 seabird species have been seen so far and more are being seen regularly! The rare New Zealand Storm Petrel, also the Buller's Shearwater (which only breeds on the Poor Knights) is incredibly common and often seen in the tens of thousands and it's one of the best chances to see the easily scared Little Shearwater closer than you can anywhere else in the world, plus so many more species. The trips have turned up some incredible rarities, and also provide great views of many New Zealand birds. The trips also often see lots of other marine wildlife, from huge sunfish basking in the heat to playful dolphins jumping around the boat, and also provide amazing views of huge fish schools getting worked up by thousands of birds. Spring is the best season for the trips, but any time of year will bring unique birds. Book a trip and never forget this unique experience! The website is at <https://www.thepetrelstation.nz/>

Article by Caiden, Lucy and Saul.



FACT SHEET

NEW ZEALAND BIRDS

Southern New Zealand Dotterel

A New Zealand Wader on the Brink of Extinction



SPECIFICATIONS:

BIRD ORDER

Charadriiformes

TE REO NAME

Tūturiwhatu

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Charadrius Obscurus

BIRD FAMILY

Charadriidae

FOUND WHERE

New Zealand

LENGTH

25 cm

WEIGHT

160 g

NEW ZEALAND STATUS

Endemic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Critically Endangered

The Southern New Zealand dotterel is the South Island subspecies of the New Zealand dotterel. This shorebird is in a National Critically Endangered state with less than 150 individuals left (as of October 2023). These birds mate for life, nesting in hollows of cushion plants or between rocks, usually having clutches of about 1-3 eggs.

HABITAT

This bird prefers beaches and mudflat areas. To our knowledge the bird breeds only on Stewart Island, but a flock usually overwinters at Awarua Bay, Southland.

BEHAVIOUR

The Southern New Zealand dotterel is often found in small flocks on beaches. They feed on a variety of invertebrate like mussels, crabs or flies.

DID YOU KNOW?

New Zealand Dotterels use 'distraction displays' to protect their nests and chicks. They pretend to be injured to divert intruders away, then swiftly return to safety.

Article by Samuel Amaris, Photo © Oscar Thomas

eBird and iNaturalist - A Guide

eBird and iNaturalist are two awesome wildlife and nature websites/apps that you can use when going out birding! They're both free, easy to use and helpful tools that most birders use. We highly recommend you try them!

eBird

eBird is an amazing online bird-sighting submissions website that collects data from all over the world on all species of birds. You can use it to list what birds you've seen, where you can find certain birds and to identify birds you can't recognise.

eBird can be accessed either by a browser like Google or Safari but you can also download it onto your phone as an app.

eBird is free and to sign up all you need is an email address. With an account you can submit bird reports and checklists, add photos or recordings of birds you have seen and check out bird hotspots! This is a great source of information, as you can use the explore tap to see what species have been seen in a region that you haven't seen, where certain species have been seen around an area, bird ID quizzes and so much more!

eBird also runs monthly challenges where you can win the snazziest new binoculars, helpful bird ID courses and interesting field guides!

If you are in New Zealand you can use the New Zealand Bird Atlas, it's still part of eBird, but its data is used for more local purposes!

Visit: ebird.org/atlasnz/home to learn more!

iNaturalist

iNaturalist isn't just birding, it's everything nature!

You can submit and identify any wildlife, whether it be plants, birds, fish, even the strangest insects! iNaturalist is a worldwide app that has different branches for each country that uses it. Best of all, it's completely free!

You can use iNaturalist on any browser but you can also download it is an app on your phone. Signing up is easy and all you need is an email address. Submissions can be done anywhere, all it takes is a photo.

Even if you aren't sure what you may have seen, other people can give suggestions and help identify the creature or fauna you saw. You can also suggest and help people identify things they may have observed as well!

iNaturalist has some cool features like: Picture identifier, species info, challenges and competitions.

iNaturalist also helps out with scientific research with species population and invasive species.

To find out more go to inaturalist.nz

By Lauren, Saul, Samuel and Caiden

Kapiti Island Location Review:

Located off the Kapiti Coast, just north of Wellington, lies a spectacular island full of wondrous flora and fauna. It goes by the name of Kapiti Island. It is accessible by approved operators with a permit only, and you can book a tour, or just book transport and explore it yourself! There is plenty of wildlife, and a lookout at the top of the island provides 360-degree views across the coastline and out to the open ocean.

Kapiti Island was first identified as a possible bird sanctuary in 1870 and later reserved for that purpose in 1897. Though back then, most of the habitat was cut down and completely run over by many feral animals. Later in 1928, goats were eradicated, followed by a number of other invasive mammal species. Today it is far different than what it was in the 1800s, covered in a blanket of native forest, and flourishing with native species.

If you travel to Kapiti Island, there are two main areas you can visit; The North End, with the amazing Okupe Valley (a large wetland and coastal lagoon), or the Central Part of the island. In the central area there is Rangatira Point, where you can access the Summit and other walking tracks. Both locations offer large numbers of birds, but we would recommend the Okupe Lagoon area as you will see a better variety of species, including the Okupe Lagoon Royal Spoonbill colony.

It is definitely a place worth visiting, whether or not you are a birder, hiker, or just a casual nature enjoyer. There are several tracks to choose from, all of which will give you the opportunity to see nature in its purest form. Have a look below at some birds you may encounter there!

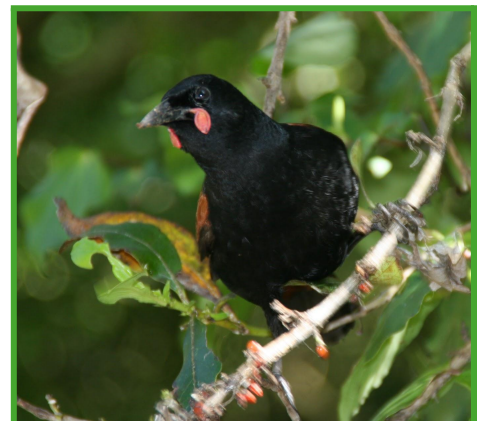
Birds of Interest:



North Island Robin - © Alfie Benbow



North Island Kokako - © Zion Cooper



North Island Saddleback - © Alfie Benbow

You can find: North Island Robin, North Island Saddleback, North Island Kokako, South Island Takahe, Red Crowned Parakeet, Weka, Whitehead, Stitchbird and a whole lot more! There is a large variety of birds to be found there, all of them making the trip worthwhile!

Article by Alfie and Saul

Recent Rare Bird Sightings:

Whiskered Tern - Pukorokoro Miranda

The Whiskered Tern is an incredibly rare bird that shows up in New Zealand occasionally, usually every few years. Normally they are in remote locations which are hard to access, but one has shown up at Pukorokoro Miranda. It's probably the best opportunity possible to see one of these in New Zealand! It moves between the Stilt Ponds and the main hide in a loop. It has very distinct bright red feet, a black mottled eyestripe and the flight of a marsh tern.

Australian Terns - Piako, Manawatu, Ellesmere, Manukau, Wairarapa and Nelson.

There have been a number of Australian Terns seen around the country, and birders are starting to refer to it as an invasion! With an incredible thirteen birds on the Manukau, three birds seen at Piako Wader roost, and one at all the other locations. It seems like we're getting quite a few currently, which is pretty cool because they're normally very rare. You can see the Piako terns plus many other birds in our recent video on YouTube, go check it out!

Glossy Ibis - Ellesmere and Pūkorokoro Miranda

Two Glossy Ibis have been seen around the country, one at Miranda and one at Lake Ellesmere. The Ellesmere bird was sighted at Embankment Road on the 27th of August by two of our members! It was only observed for a few minutes before it flew towards Lake Forsyth and was never seen again. Luckily they managed to get some record shots. The Miranda bird has been sticking around the ponds and paddocks but is only occasionally seen, three of our members have managed to see it!

Terek Sandpiper - Ellesmere

The Terek Sandpiper is an extremely rare bird in New Zealand, only showing up once every few years. We're lucky to have had one show up super close to some of our members! Ben and Sam got good views of this stunning little bird at Embankment Road, Lake Ellesmere. First in Canterbury since 1988!



Terek Sandpiper at Lake Ellesmere - © Ben Ackerley



Glossy Ibis - © Samuel Amaris

By Caiden, Ben, Saul and Sam

Recent Pictures:

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



This Tīeke photo was taken at Tāwharanui in September. A group of three birds flew and called for about 5 minutes, an experience.

Photo © Lucy Dean



A beautiful Northern New Zealand Dotterel, or Tūturiwhatu. I saw two pairs and one immature at the Waitohu Estuary in September. In the photo, you can see the male, which is moving from winter to breeding plumage.

Photo © Saul Ward



This North Island Robin was seen and photographed at Zealandia, on the 4th of October.

Photo © Alfie Benbow



The very unique Wrybill, seen at the Ashley estuary. I was lucky to have an perfect opportunity to get some good shots.

Photo © Lauren McCauley



Pied Shag, commonly seen nesting or roosting at Zealandia, where the photo was taken.

Photo © Alfie Benbow

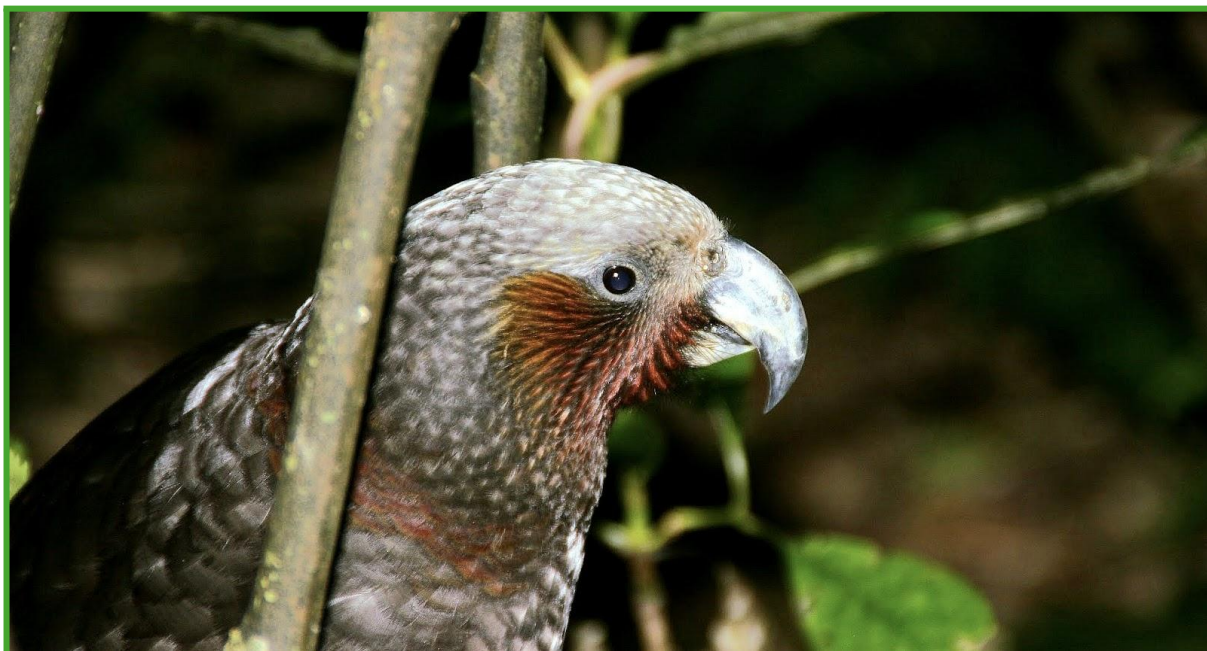
The South Island Takahe is the world's largest living rail, a family of birds. Other birds included in the genus are the endemic Weka and the native Pukeko. This Takahe was seen on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

Photo © Samuel Amaris



A Curlew Sandpiper seen at Embankment road, Lake Ellesmere. These small sandpipers fly all the way from Siberia in small numbers every year to feed on estuaries and coastal mud flats.

Photo © Ben Ackerley



A Kākā, now a common sight throughout Wellington © Alfie Benbow

Bird numbers soar in the capital!

When somebody says the word 'Wellington', what do you think of? I bet it's not a paradise for native birds! But our capital city has a few secrets not obvious from the outside. For example, the Garden Bird Survey has reported a 260% increase in Kākā, a 200% increase in Kererū, an 85% increase in Tūī and a 49% increase in Piwakawaka! These 4 species are now abundant and seen daily by Wellingtonians! This is largely due to predator control and the huge efforts of conservation in Zealandia. Rifleman have also been reported on several occasions in the Botanical Gardens!

Another species which is now becoming a common sight is the New Zealand Falcon | Karearea. Along the waterfront, people are seeing them daily, and the birds are participating in epic aerial chases trying to catch Pigeons. They've adapted very well to city life!

Zealandia is a hotspot for birds. With Takahe, Kakariki, Tui, Bellbird, Pateke, Hihi, Tieke, Kaka, Kereru, Titipounamu, Whitehead, Scaup, nesting Pied Shags and an abundance of Robin, it's an amazing place. There are two dams in the sanctuary, and they're surrounded by dense native forest. There are also guided night tours, where the Little-spotted Kiwi | Kiwi Pukupuku can be seen and heard, as well as many Morepork | Ruru.

Kakariki have also been adding a pop of colour to Wellington's windy days. These birds are a lot rarer than Kākā, but can still be seen along the streets. Best of all, 15 Kiwi-Nui were released near Wellington city! One of them has been found on the brink of the city, just off the Skyline Walkway! Other unusual birds include a Cattle Egret at a Wellington school, which stayed around long enough for many people to see, and a Cirl Bunting in Prince of Wales Park. Wellington is the place to be!

Article by Caiden and Saul



Wrybill © Simon Binzegger

Whiskered Tern © Lucy Dean

It was an extremely windy day, and there was also a king tide at Miranda. We met at the carpark and walked out on the boardwalk, looking at the very flooded limeworks to see if there were any birds of interest. There were many birds resting on the Salicornia. After a few minutes, we spotted a few Pacific Golden Plover. It was very exciting to see them, as they aren't too common! A White-faced Heron walked past, catching crabs just a few meters away! Among the flock were Red Knot and Variable Oystercatcher, which stood out from the rest. The rusty gate call of a Banded Rail was heard from the mangroves, an exciting addition to our birding!

When we got to the hide, we could already see hundreds of birds. Sheltering from the heavy wind we peeked out of the hide. A few spoonbills and shags dotted the shellbank, and just under a thousand Godwit and Knot hunkered in the vegetation lining the mudflats. And when we thought that nothing would appear from the dull weather, the Whiskered Tern flew past! Whiskered Tern are an extremely rare species to be seen in Aotearoa, with only around a dozen birds having visited our shores. One has shown up at Pūkoro Miranda, giving great views to many birders of this very elusive bird. We had perfect looks as it flew actively around in a loop, hunting for small bits of food in the water. It stayed around for about another ten minutes before whizzing off in the wind.

After some interesting chats with fellow bird-nerds in the hide, we heard a sharp song. This was a New Zealand Dotterel, and looking out we could see at least three of them bouncing around. One landed up close to the hide for about a minute, before taking off and chasing another. These were some great views of such beautiful endemic birds!

We walked down the grassy path to the Stilt Ponds. On our way, we listened to the sing-song of Skylark flying overhead, and we spotted three charming little Grey Warbler. They sat amongst the mangroves, giving us great views of this usually extremely secretive but commonly heard species. A godwit sped past, getting blown along by the huge winds, looking faster than a race car! We happily took shelter in the (much warmer than outside) hide. Wrybill darted under the legs of several thousand Godwit, but still no sandpipers.

After a while, we drove down the road to a small beach named Ray's Rest. At the Taramaire creek mouth there were Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and Wrybill. We were hoping to see Red-Necked Stint, which had been previously spotted here, and Common Tern, which, despite its name, is very rare for Aotearoa. But, they did not turn up at the beach, however much we scanned the flocks. The White-fronted Tern flock wasn't even there! So, we decided to call it a day, and head home. A great day filled with many amazing birds - including the rare Whiskered Tern and Pacific Golden Plover!

Article by Lucy and Caiden

The Extinct Birds of Aotearoa

Normally when you think of the extinct birds of New Zealand you think of the huge Moa, the unusual Huia, and the Laughing Owl, the classics, but New Zealand has a lot of extinct birds that most people probably don't know about. For example, did you know about the New Zealand Musk Duck? What about the North Island Takahe, quite similar to the non-extinct South Island Takahe? Or the Piopio, or New Zealand Thrush, a type of oriole which would've had the same role as Blackbird and Song Thrush nowadays, scouring through the leaf litter for tiny critters? These aren't the only extinct species, there are many more. Overall, New Zealand has 53 extinct bird species, making us one of the countries with the most extinct birds in the world.

There are still palaeontologists working around New Zealand digging up fossils of old species, even from back when the dinosaurs were around, so the number of extinct species we have is still growing. This is why we should support predator-free 2050 so that there shall be no more extinctions of our native species in Aotearoa.

Article by Lauren and Saul



Tara Iti | Fairy Tern - A bird truly on the brink of extinction © Lucy Dean

H5N1/Bird Flu Reaches Antarctica

The H5N1/Bird Flu has reached Antarctica, raising concerns for isolated populations of penguins and seals that have never been exposed to the deadly virus before. The entire impact of the virus's arrival is not yet known, scientists are concerned about possibly “catastrophic breeding failure” of the fragile wildlife populations. The virus was found in a group of Subantarctic Skua on Bird Island, South Georgia. These migratory birds probably brought it with them from South America, where the virus is widespread and has already killed a shocking 570,000 Seabirds and Sea Lions in Peru and Chile. Bird Island is an important wildlife site, covered in large colonies of penguins and fur seals on the island.

Many are concerned that New Zealand will be next. It would have a huge effect on our endemic coastal birds, such as the highly endangered Black Stilt | Kākī, the Southern New Zealand Dotterel | Tūturiwhatu, or the Wrybill | Ngutu Pare. These birds are all critically endangered and are at risk of extinction.

A recent study has shown that Northern Gannets which have survived the H5N1 virus have black instead of blue irises. Scientists are not sure whether this impacts the bird's eyesight or health at all, and more research is in progress.



Black Stilt | Kākī, the rarest wader in the world, Ashley Estuary © Ben Ackerley

Article by Saul and Caiden

Activities Page!

This page is for answers from the last edition's activities and for new activities.

Monthly Bird Identification Quiz

This issue we have a bird Identification quiz, can you Identify the bird below? If you think you've got it, send your guesses through to

youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com

If you want to take part in the quizzes that occur during opposite months go to:

<https://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewforum.php?f=18>



Mystery Bird! - © Ben Ackerley

Answers!

Here are the answers for the last edition crossword, New Zealand Birds and their Habitats in English and Māori!

Down:

1. Kereru
2. Tui
5. Tūturiwhatu
6. Parera
8. Kakapo
9. Canopy
11. Alpine
12. Kakapo
13. Forestfloor

Across:

3. Ruru
4. Estuary
7. Bittern
8. Kea
10. Piwakawaka
14. Toroa
15. Godwit

By Saul

Bird of the Century 2023

Voting has begun for Bird of the Century! This year, Forest and Bird are hosting Bird of the Century. Previously known as Bird of the Year, Forest and Bird have changed it just this year to Bird of the Century to celebrate their 100th Anniversary! Congratulations and thank you to Forest and Bird for protecting and conserving New Zealand nature for 100 years, an incredible achievement worth celebrating.

Young Birders New Zealand are campaigning for the Southern New Zealand Dotterel | Tūturiwhatu for our first vote, the Antipodean Albatross | Toroa for second, the Grey Duck | Parera for third, Fiordland-crested Penguin | Tawaki for fourth and the Yellow-eyed Penguin | Hoiho for our fifth and final! Please, consider giving your votes to at least one of these birds. They are all very much at risk, so voting for them will help them recover. They are constantly at risk from predators, climate change and the possibility of the H5N1 avian Influenza.

Out of all five, the Southern New Zealand Dotterel | Tūturiwhatu is the most endangered. They only breed on the remote Alps of Rakiura and constantly face the risk of predation by cats, stoats, or any other pests. Their numbers are constantly falling, with only 125 birds remaining.

<https://www.birdoftheyear.org.nz/>

Article by Lucy, Caiden and Saul



Yellow-eyed Penguin | Hoiho, Sandy Bay, Enderby Island - © Lauren McCauley

Meet the New Members!



Silvereye | Tauhou © Samuel Amaris

Andy Xiong

Heya, I'm Andy, I only really started getting into birding/listing specifically around 2021 (though I've held an interest in all of the natural world ever since I can remember, and still do!). I'm currently 16 years old and from Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), mainly birding around places I can get to on public transport (so usually Mangere WTP and the islands in the gulf)

Lucy Dean

Kia Ora! My name is Lucy and I am a passionate 12-year-old birder from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. I love to photograph, count and watch birds. My favourite bird is the Weweia or New Zealand Dabchick, they're simply amazing birds. You can follow me on Instagram at [lucydeannz](#).



Banded Black-billed gull, Picton Waterfront © Saul Ward

If you would like to get involved in the action, and you're between the age of 10-18, don't hesitate! Email youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com. 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!

Thank you for reading this article of the Young Birders New Zealand Fledglings Magazine! If you are interested in birds or nature and live in New Zealand, contact us at youngbirdersnewzealand@gmail.com 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!



Australasian Bittern | Matuku-hurepo, Long Bay - © Lucy Dean

Cover Photo, *Mallard Duckling* © Samuel Amaris

Thank you for reading Fledglings Issue No.2, 2023.
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