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Banding Banter

Herewith the 6th *BirDBanD*, continuing our tradition of sharing all kinds of banding banter with you, the banding community. Thank you for all your contributions and feedback.

Previous newsletters can be downloaded from the bird banding webpages of the [Department of Conservation](#) and [BirdsNZ](#).

Couched in mystery



Band 13-70808 was issued to Murray Neilson in 1987 and used to band a female Paradise Shelduck at Diamond Lake, Otago, in January 1988.

30 years later, the band mysteriously emerges from a couch... in Wynne, Arkansas!

Tanya Brewer contacted the Banding Office about a New Zealand metal bird band that suddenly appeared under a couch: “It isn’t a new couch. It was new to my ex-husband, Duane Brewer. He is the one that found the band on the floor underneath the couch. And, his aunt bought the couch many years ago from a used furniture store. So, there is no telling how it got there or how long it had been in the couch before finally working its way out. What’s so great about it is that Duane is a well-known waterfowl guide in this area. We live in Wynne, Ar. You can imagine his surprise to see it was from New Zealand. He asked me to try and find out what I could about it.”

The question was asked: “Would it be possible that a duck hunter from New Zealand (that had kept the Paradise Shelduck band as a memento after hunting

here) had travelled to Arkansas and at some point, sat on the couch (losing said band) while visiting Duane? Can he recall any hunter that might have hailed from or travelled to New Zealand?”

Tanya replied: “No ma’am, he didn’t acquire the couch until years after guiding. His aunt bought the couch in 2010 at a used furniture store in Mountain View, Ar. I asked the aunt if she had anyone that was a duck hunter sitting on the couch and she said not that she was aware of. It’s a mystery to us all how the band ended up in the couch.”



The couch from which a New Zealand band emerged in the USA

Long live banding – and banders!

Manaaki Barrett, from [Kāpiti Island Nature Tours](#), recently reported sighting a metal banded kākā. A nice story was made even more interesting when the Banding Office records showed that this male kākā (L-26822) was banded as a juvenile on 23/04/1991 at Kāpiti Island.

Maanaki replied: “Being based on Kāpiti Island we're very accustomed to life with Kākā. This often means reminding those that turn up at the house at lunchtime that our food is not healthy for them! This banded individual has been seen very occasionally by us over the last 7 years that I can recall. Our lunch must have been particularly tempting this day, as the Kākā came close enough to read the band as it inspected my plate. It's amazing for us to hear from the Banding Office some of the details of these individuals. To think this Kākā has been exploring the island for almost three decades is fantastic!”

Ron Moorhouse, the bander, was pleased to receive this longevity record. “I banded this bird while I was doing my PhD research on kākā on Kāpiti Island from 1989 to 1992. My work was focussed on measuring the nesting success of kākā on an offshore island nature reserve without stoats or possums to provide a comparison for the information obtained from Peter Wilson's Landcare (then Ecology Division DSIR) team on the South Island mainland. The productivity of kākā on the island was much higher than that recorded by Peter Wilson's team in Nelson beech forests; although some eggs and nestlings were lost to rats (since eradicated), these, unlike stoats and possums, are incapable of killing nesting adult females so their impact on the population was much less.

I was also interested in what kākā ate on the island and particularly the foods that they raised young on. To this end I captured and radio-tagged adult birds so that I could find these in the forest to observe what they were feeding on at different times of the year. I banded all the kākā I caught, including nestlings which I carefully extracted from nest cavities in trees, sometimes while dangling from a rope many metres above the ground.

This record of a kākā that was banded in 1991, 27 years ago, highlights the value of banding birds. Although there are many anecdotal stories of extreme longevity in parrots, without banding, or some other way of unambiguously identifying individuals, most of these can't be verified. For example, there was a kākā on Kāpiti known as “Ringy” that reputedly lived to 27 years of age.

However, because “Ringy's” band had been removed it was impossible to be sure that the bird called “Ringy” was, in fact, the same bird. In contrast we can be absolutely sure of the age of the bird wearing band L-26822. This kind of information is very useful for modelling the growth of kākā populations in the presence of different predators, or with different frequencies of mast-seeding.

It's always great when these records turn up, although, when you're dealing with a long-lived species like kākā they do rather make you feel your age! At least in this case it brings back happy memories of following kākā on Kāpiti and finding and monitoring their nests. Kāpiti has always been a kākā stronghold and the remarkable longevity of “L-26822” is consistent with that.

Banding Advisory Committee

Representing various groups within the banding community, the Banding Advisory Committee (BAC) plays a vital role in supporting and advising the Banding Officer in the management of the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme. The BAC provides advice on banding certification applications, animal welfare, training standards, documents and processes.

The combined expertise within the BAC is in the order of several hundreds of years of banding experience. The Committee members hold a total of 61 Level 3 and 12 Level 2 certifications for various species groups and capture methods.

The Committee members freely provide their time, and it is an honour and a privilege to have access to their combined extensive expertise.



From left to right: Isabel Castro, Graeme Taylor, Matu Booth, John Stewart, Matt McDougall, David Melville, Paul Sagar. Insets: Hugh Robertson, Paul Scofield

Paradise... duck?

It is about this time of year when some (human) Kiwis start thinking/dreaming of a Pacific Island holiday. One duck has not waited for flight deals and has made its own way to a duck's paradise – warm weather, friendly people with food, and no duck shooting season.

Alphonse, from Maré Island, New Caledonia, kindly sent an email reporting the finding of a very tired duck with band number 27-286942. "We give him a rest and some food. What can I do for you and this duck?" Well, Alphonse had already done the best thing by reporting the band number, location and condition of the bird. From banding data, it was discovered that Alphonse was now the caregiver to a female Mallard duck banded by Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game at Opuatia in January 2018. Craig Shepherd ('Duckman' – Wellington Rehabilitation Bird Trust) provided some excellent advice to Alphonse on how to care for it and get it back to a fit state to be released. So, the duck is living the good life because it wears a special band. As a regular traveller to the islands said: "I'll have to band myself next time I go to get VIP treatment".



Heroic journeys – John Dyer

With the May-June gamebird season upon us, it is perhaps topical to consider duck banding. By far the great majority of ducks banded in New Zealand are stay-at-homes recovered locally, usually within 25km of where they were banded, even some years later. While smaller numbers travel a little further than this, and fewer still travel a couple hundred kilometres away, odd birds take it into their heads to make absolutely heroic journeys. Exactly why they should

do so is just one more mystery for science (and banding!) to unravel.

Most recently an adult female mallard we banded at Opuatia near Lake Whangape on 20/01/2018, #27-186942, decided to take an OE and was recovered just over 2 weeks later by orchardists on Mare Island, one of the Loyalty Island group off New Caledonia. The bird completed this incredible 1,900km journey and was recovered "exhausted" by locals who have since fed it back to health. How does a mallard duck find an island that, at its widest, is just 42km across, in a vast Pacific Ocean? Was it lost, blown off course or being quite deliberate? And what caused it to make such a journey when seemingly it had everything it needed in terms of major wetlands, lakes and rivers, right on its doorstep where it was banded in the Waikato?

This is not the first Waikato banded mallard to turn up in New Caledonia. #27-79497, a juvenile male banded Opuatia 24/01/2005 was also found alive by a farmer in Noumea in August 2005. Another bird #27-83497, a juvenile female banded Pipiroa 15/01/2006, was shot by a farmer in Paita, New Caledonia in October 2006 and then eaten! How's that for food-miles?

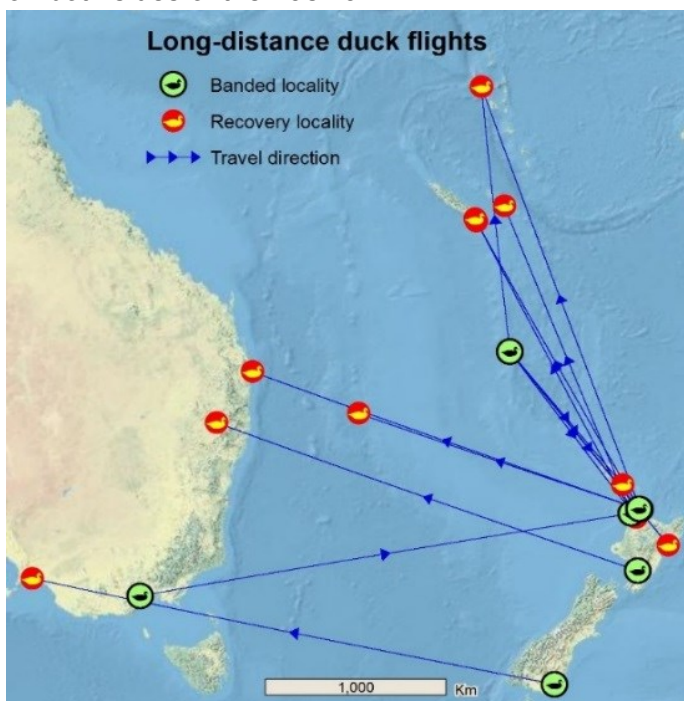
Yet another bird, #27-72141, a juvenile male also banded at Pipiroa on 16/01/2005 made it to Lord Howe Island off the coast of New South Wales, Australia, to be recovered February 2009. Again the question arises, how does a mallard find an island just 10km long x 2km wide, 600km off the Australian mainland and 1,500km away from New Zealand where it was originally banded, while flying in a vast Pacific Ocean? Another bird, a juvenile male grey x mallard cross, #120024, banded at Turua 12/01/2013 was recovered just 2 weeks later in Vanuatu 28/01/2013. They seem to know their way around the Pacific pretty well considering it is not any sort of migration route.

Despite these epic journeys, as mentioned by far the majority of banded mallard ducks are recovered within 25km of home, which is a good thing when hunters turn up at their maimai in May expecting them to be there. Nor are all these birds leaving. One adult female mallard, #270-02447, turned up in New Zealand from Norfolk Island. It was banded by the late Mr Owen Evans on 28 September 1982 and recovered 1,175km away in Gordonton, in the Waikato, May-June, 1985 or 86. The proud owner of this particular band had a disagreement with his young son who then took the treasured band and hid it under the carpet. It lay there 20 years undiscovered until the carpet was replaced, and its forgotten hiding place revealed.

Some of the other mallards banded that same day in Norfolk Island also made it to NZ. One was shot near Waipu 8 months after banding. Another was shot on the Northern Wairoa 5, 1/2 years later and a third shot on the Piako nearly 3 years later. One of the other Norfolk Island mallards flew to Vanuatu besides.

Mallards have also flown from New Zealand into Australia. One from Lake Tuakitoto in Otago, banded 22 February 1961, was shot in Narrung Narrows, South Australia, 24 months and 2,814km later. Another banded 21 February 1989 at Karere Lagoon, near Palmerston North, was found attacked by a wild bird at Bandameer, New South Wales, 3 months and 2,435km later. Lastly a mallard banded in Pipiroa in the Hauraki Plains in 2012 was found dead nearly 3 years and 2,245km later at Broken Head, south of Byron Bay in New South Wales.

Interestingly there are apparently no banded grey ducks that have been recovered that have flown either from NZ to Australia or visa-versa. However, a grey teal banded by the Fish & Game Department in Melbourne did make it. Banded as an adult male, #OBS 615358, at Lara Lake in Geelong Australia on 12 May 1957, and was "recovered" 2,690km later on Lake Whangape, 7 May 1959. It is the only one known to have done so since (in either direction), despite many thousands of grey teal being banded on both sides of the Tasman.



Auckland-Waikato Fish & Game Council would like to thank the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme and Department of Conservation Wellington for their assistance in supplying these records.

Duck band recoveries can be reported on DOC's online form: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/reporting-a-bird-band/gamebird-band-report-form/>

Jimi and his rehabilitation band - Fiona Powell

Native Bird Rescue is a small volunteer driven rescue and rehabilitation centre for native birds on Waiheke island. One of the goals of the organisation is to initiate a Banding Programme for rehabilitated birds in partnership with the Department of Conservation and other wildlife rehabilitators, in order to learn more about rehabilitated birds once they are returned to their wild environment.

Native Bird Rescue recently rescued an injured kākā (conservation status: 'At risk') on Waiheke Island. The kākā was taken directly to Dr Bryan Gartrell for initial treatment and stabilisation for a fractured wing and transferred to Auckland Zoo the next day. After ten weeks and several operations by the Auckland Zoo Veterinary team to pin the wing, 'Jimi' the kākā was returned to Native Bird Rescue on Waiheke Island for flight rehabilitation. He was housed in a purpose-built flight aviary, funded by community donations. On November the 12th Jimi was declared fit for release and banded by a Level 3 DOC certified bander. Jimi was banded with a distinctive Zealandia rehabilitation band, so he can be recognised as a rehabilitated bird. Jimi was then released back into his wild environment to 'fly free again'.



Local media followed the story and the Waiheke community is keeping an eye out for Jimi and his yellow leg band.

Follow Native Bird Rescue on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NativeBirdRescue



My Memories – Jack Taylor



Photo:
Bill Cash

Jack Taylor, of Ward, Marlborough, has just had his 89th birthday and is still involved in banding.

When asked to write about bird banding it is hard to know where to start. Do you start with the birds you have helped to band or the people you have met while banding? They are both very important.

Brian Bell would have to be one of our exceptional ornithologists. His family also follow in his footsteps and their knowledge of birds is amazing.

Probably one of my first serious experiences was when Brian organised a senior summer school for a week on our family farm. People like Dick Sibson, Hugh Robertson and many others who I can't think of at the moment. What an honour and a privilege it was to have them here for a week.

Another exciting week was when Brian organised a junior O summer school which took banding passerines, pied stilts and a few harriers.

I really believe that the way to encourage young people into birding is for them to hold a bird in their hand. To me that is exciting.



Also exciting is when you have a result such as the harrier we banded at Ward getting recaptured in Auckland. Here in Ward we get a lot of open country birds, quite common birds, which we suddenly realise how little we know about. The birds I mention

are birds such as red polls, yellow hammers, greenfinches and even house sparrows.

I once banded a house sparrow while we had two young ornithologists staying here from Norway. This sparrow eventually turned up in Picton. My wife, who writes very neatly, informed this young couple how well it had done getting as far as Picton. The young man eventually replied saying how well the sparrow did getting to Pitcairn.



Another event which I thought was funny at the time was when we were banding in a paddock of peas with a lot of weeds that I had purposefully left unsprayed to attract birds. About 150 yards away several birds hit the mist nets. Then two of our number, one was Ralph Powlesland, the other I can't remember, but they were both at that time I was told, training for long distance running. They reached the mist net in quick time passing a large hare hiding in the weeds. The hare at this stage decided to run the other way which was towards us. The hare had a desperate look on his face. Then one of the spectators said, "That animal didn't want to compete with Ralph and his friend on a straight run. That will be why he came this way".


My experience of banding had mostly been with passerines and harriers. Then one weekend a group – organised by Claudia Mischler – was to band black billed gull chicks on the Wairau River bed. There were 20+ helpers for the task in hand. To my surprise Claudia had a small yard organised. The next surprise was herding the young birds into the yard ready for banding – and there were a lot. I thought we would never get these done today as there seemed to be a mighty lot of birds, but with a highly organised group and a lot of helpers the job was soon done.

These are a few of my memories from quite a few years spent enjoying birds.

Answer to previous puzzle

Word Ladder

	→	BIRD	
Poet	→	BARD	
Pubs	→	BARS	
Heads of corn	→	EARS	
Messes up	→	ERRS	
Units of work	→	ERGS	
		EGGS	



Ducks and Pukeko as “Homing Pigeons”- John Dyer

According to the banding chapter in a NZ Ornithological Society publication, the first people to band birds with modern type metal bands in NZ were the Southland Acclimatisation Society. However, there is more to this story: They'd obtained 10 mallard ducks from London onboard the ship *SS Mamari* in 1896 for a breed and release programme. For their 1911 release they obtained metal bands from America, marked “S” and 1-100 to attach to the 100 birds they'd raised that year. These birds were reared at the Mataura Hatchery. In fact, they had never known life outside of their pen. They were then taken 60km away by rail to be released on Mr Foster's lagoons at Thornbury. However, within a few weeks a pair of them had found their way back to the hatchery. Being the only banded birds then of any kind in NZ, there wasn't much doubt as to their origin.

Banding mallard and grey ducks began in earnest in 1947 when many thousands of these birds were banded by the Wildlife Service working with Acclimatisation Societies. Such work with gamebirds is now done by NZ's Fish & Game Councils. For instance, in the last decade or so the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council have banded a record approx. 50,000 mallard and grey ducks in this region.

The homing instinct is still alive and well in modern mallards. One was captured on a nest in Hillsborough, Auckland, where every year its ducklings would get trapped in the vertical sided swimming pool adjoining the nest site. This bird was caught, banded and taken over 30km away to Ramarama where it was penned and its eggs put into an incubator. However, it escaped, flew back and laid a new clutch of eggs in exactly the same nest. How it managed to find that backyard among so many thousands of other similar looking houses is quite incredible. It was then recaptured and relocated to Bethell's Wetland but this time a wing tip was clipped. That slowed it down. The second clutch of eggs was also delivered to the incubator and all eggs hatched out.

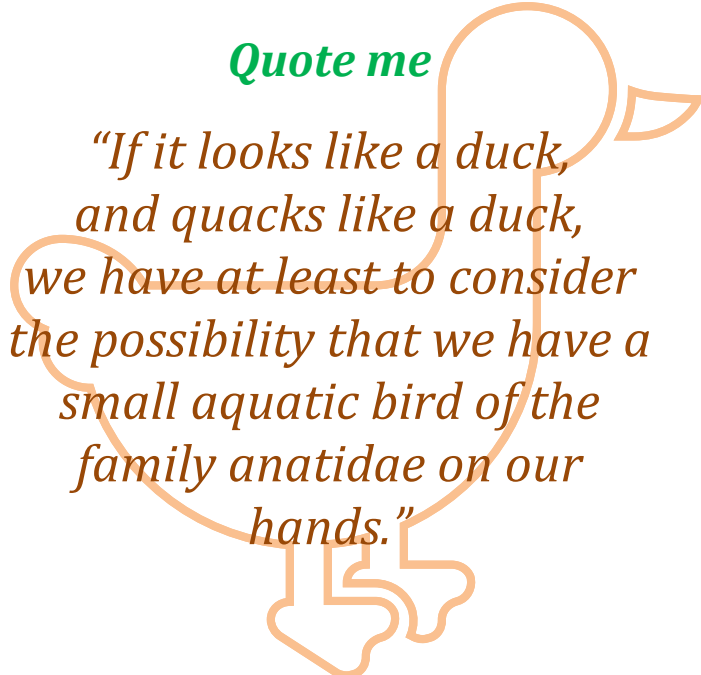
Around 60 mallards were also collected from a Silverdale residence north of Auckland. These were rescue birds that had outgrown their pen. The only “swamp” they knew was a meat dish filled with water in a typical lifestyle block setting. These were captured, banded and taken 110km north to be released on an ideal farm pond there. However, those that were left free-winged took off and flew around in 3 circles much like racing pigeons, then

headed south. By the next morning they were already beside that same meat dish in Silverdale. Being now banded, it was clear these were the very same birds.

The distances and in some cases the numbers involved demonstrate that these relocated birds have a very good GPS in their heads and can find their way home often quicker than we can drive back. In one instance, volunteers caught up mallard ducks with a net that were being a nuisance at the NRM poultry foods factory in Massey, Auckland. For some reason they were all given a spray of orange paint across their backs. These were liberated 33km away at Straka's Wildlife Refuge in Wairewa. The organiser drove straight home and said that the phone was ringing as he walked up to his back door. It was the NRM manager. He said, “You guys did a great job but unfortunately these funny coloured ones have taken their place”.

Attempts to relocate pukeko over quite long distances, 80km or more, have similarly been defeated by this innate homing ability. Once again leg bands proved these were the same birds that had been taken away and relocated to what seemed like an ideal new home. However, their strong social ties meant they returned to re-join the flock just like homing pigeons to “their” farm paddocks.

Quote me



*“If it looks like a duck,
and quacks like a duck,
we have at least to consider
the possibility that we have a
small aquatic bird of the
family anatidae on our
hands.”*

Douglas Adams (1987). *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*

Reports from yesteryear

Reprinted from *Notornis*, Vol. 7 No. 5, July 1957, pp. 123-135

7TH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND RINGING COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 1957

Compiled by F. C. KINSKY, Ringing Convener

AUSTRALIAN GANNET (*Sula bassana serrator*)

Sixty Gannets have been recovered this year, 25 of which were recovered in Australia and the rest in New Zealand.

Two Gannets were recovered dead on or in the vicinity of their nesting colonies, 12 and 23 days after ringing. A number of adult Gannets originally ringed as chicks on Cape Kidnappers and Horuhoru, were retrapped, reringed and released again this year.

Two Gannets, 28702 and 17049, were recovered in an unusual way. The first was taken from a tiger shark, and the second was caught on a spinner and released without any harm having been done to the bird.

Banding sub-Antarctic skua on Enderby Island

As a follow-up to an article written by Sarah Michael in the [August 2017 issue](#) of *BirDBanD*, Sarah has provided the following feedback on the use of reflective tape on 44 skua banded at Sandy Bay on Enderby Island this past summer.

"I found the reflective tape on the bands to be really good for individual identification! The silver/grey tape was a different material - stretchy on application and I found that this one rubbed off more readily - also the colour was very similar to the metal of the band, so I probably wouldn't use that type again. The other colours did well and held up to all the things that skuas put their legs in. The yellow, orange and light orange were quite similar from a distance (so didn't use light orange until I ran out of other colours), but it did the job for me."



Quiz – What do you know ...?

Take our quiz and find out how well you know the Banding Office. All the information you need to find the answers is on our website – go to Department of Conservation, Bird Banding (<http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/>). Answers in next newsletter.

<p>1. What is the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme’s email address?</p> <p>A. brandingoffice@doc.govt.nz B. wellington@doc.govt.nz C. bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz D. museum@tepap.govt.nz</p>	<p>2. What is the price of a Hip Pocket Spiral All-Weather Notebook no. 146 (excluding GST)?</p> <p>A. \$10.00 B. \$7.00 C. \$12.00 D. \$9.00</p>
<p>3. How many BirDBanD newsletters have been produced (excluding this one)?</p> <p>A. 0 (April 2018 is the first issue) B. 5 C. 4 D. 2</p>	<p>4. How many different types of colour band/marks are listed in the Colour Band Survey (excluding ‘other’)?</p> <p>A. 11 B. 10 C. 3 D. 6</p>
<p>5. What banding certification level do you need to have to be able to purchase bird bands from the NZNBBS?</p> <p>A. Level 1 B. Level 2 C. Level 3 D. Anyone can purchase bands</p>	<p>6. The Banding Advisory Committee is made up of:</p> <p>A. Department of Conservation staff only B. There is no such committee C. Representatives of the banding community (DOC, Universities, Museums, Fish & Game, CRIs and Birds NZ) D. Members of the public</p>
<p>7. If you find a live banded bird, you should</p> <p>A. Capture it B. Remove the band C. Do nothing, who cares? D. Report it using the online reporting form or email the Banding Office</p>	<p>8. How often do banders need to submit their Banding Schedules?</p> <p>A. At least annually B. Never C. Every five years D. Monthly</p>
<p>9. What is the code used for the first marking (the primary mark) of a banded bird on the new data template (the template that replaces the previous Banding Schedule and Banding Recovery spreadsheets)?</p> <p>A. 0 B. 1 C. 2 D. X</p>	<p>10. In the new data template, Latitude and Longitude should be recorded using</p> <p>A. Degrees, Minutes, Seconds B. Decimal Degrees C. Map Grid Reference D. AA Road Map</p>
<p>11. There is a photo of a non-game bird band – what is the band number?</p> <p>A. 13-82351 B. R-44205 C. 13-82357 D. R-44502</p>	<p>12. In what year did all New Zealand banding schemes merge into a single New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme?</p> <p>A. 1950 B. 1967 C. 1987 D. 1953</p>