



Banding Newsletter 21



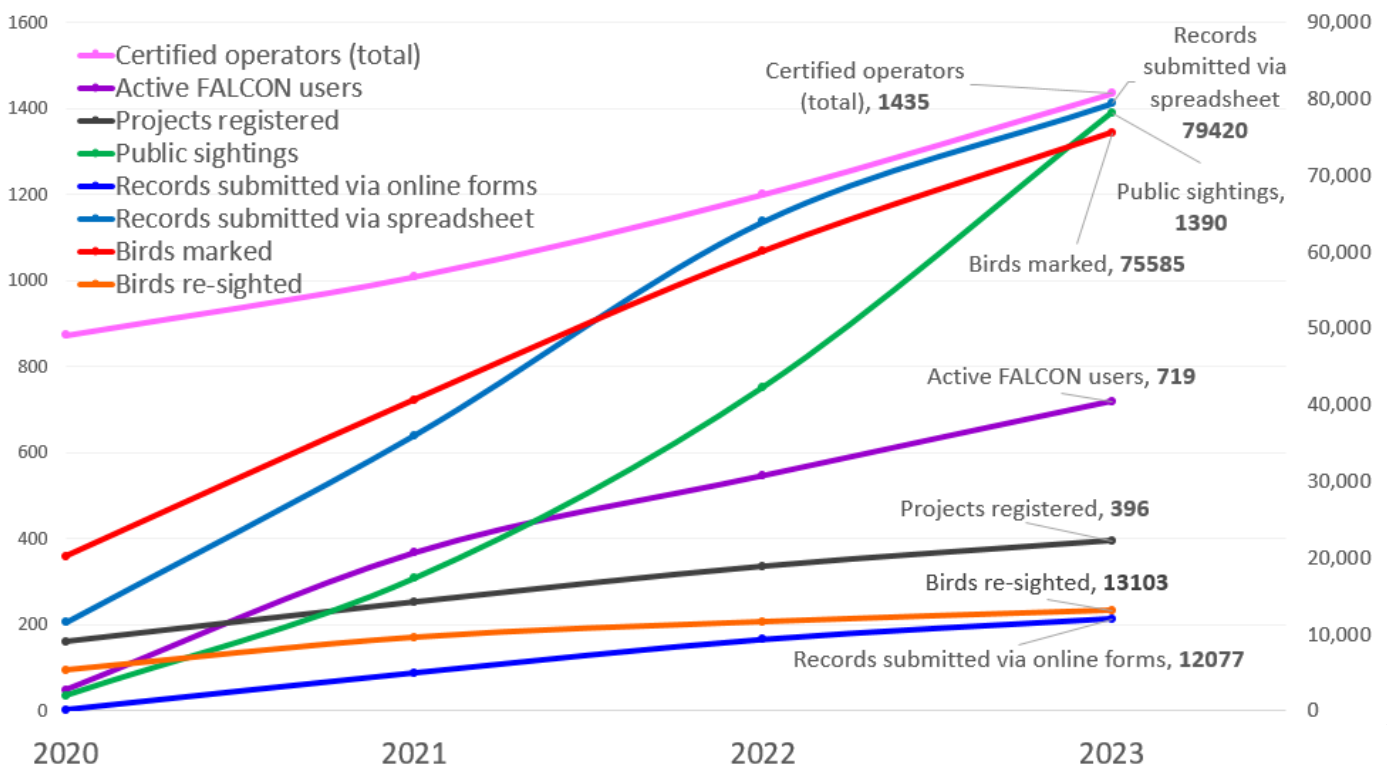
New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme NZNBBS

Tiakina ngā manu tā ia ripanga, tā ia ripanga
Saving the birds (and bats) one spreadsheet at a time

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Cumulative FALCON statistics

We would like to thank all participants that continue to contribute to the growth and success of the Banding Scheme. Numbers in **bold** in the graph below show cumulative FALCON totals for the past four years.



Do you use transponders or transmitters to mark wildlife?

Transponders / Microchips / PIT tags / RFID tags...

There have been lots of changes in transponder availability in recent years, with some projects having to resort to single use applicators. Suppliers have dropped out of the market or changed focus to pet products only. Changing chips has affected read distances and equipment needs for some projects. Best Practice Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures also need to be changed to reflect this. The Banding Office oversees the competency assessment and certification of operators that undertake transponder insertion; however, we do not currently stock transponders or associated equipment such as inserters or readers. To assess whether we should consider a more centralised and coordinated management of stock in terms of international sourcing and providing a local supply and/or become a source of information in this regard, we would like to obtain details from project managers and participants regarding their use of this marking technique.

Please download and complete [this spreadsheet](#) and send it to the [Banding Office](#).

Take a video!

Transponder insertion is a risky marking method that some consider to be quite invasive. Just like with banding and other marking methods, it is important that operators who become certified are competent at this skill before being awarded Level 2 or Level 3 Certification. In addition to [trainer endorsements](#), we encourage operators to demonstrate their competency by submitting a video demonstrating the technique being applied according to Best Practice. For guidelines on the requirements, please refer to this [assessment checklist](#).

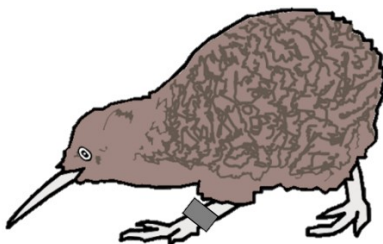
VHF Radio transmitters

As part of the Department of Conservation's statutory responsibility to manage marking of wildlife, the Banding Office oversees the use of VHF transmitters – in particular through issuing of sub-licences for use of *restricted frequencies*. If you use VHF radio telemetry to track animals, please provide the [Banding Office](#) with the following information regarding the number of transmitters deployed using:

- General User Licence frequencies 160.1 to 160.6 MHz (channels 00-47)
- Restricted frequency range 160.6 to 161.11 MHz (channels 48-99)

Please complete the [Radio Transmitter Survey](#), and also [apply for a sub-licence](#) (if applicable).

Fun FALCON fact



@mieke_masterpieces

Kiwipukupuku (or the Little Spotted Kiwi) is the smallest kiwi in the world. According to the [FALCON database](#), 1033 individuals have been marked. The earliest first marking event for a Little Spotted Kiwi in FALCON is from 7 October 1969 at Mount Bruce and the most recent marking event was 02 May 2022 on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

If you have any Kiwi marking data (bands or transponders), and you are unsure if it is in FALCON please get in touch!
bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz

Need to order bands or banding equipment? Hurry!

Reminder: We shut down the shop during December (and June). This year Annemieke is off on a short sub-Antarctic adventure at the end of November, so we are asking that all shop orders be submitted **before 20 November 2023**. Any orders received after this date will likely only be processed upon our return from the Christmas break (from 8 January 2024).

Please also remember that orders should be placed well in advance of requiring the items. Due to on-going global supply chain issues, we recommend planning for at least a 3-month turnaround time (or longer) if you order something that we do not have in stock.

Update: Avian influenza advisory

[Avian influenza: Wildlife health \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is monitoring the international situation concerning highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus (H5N1). We are lucky to be isolated from other land masses, we are not on migratory waterfowl pathways, and we have good border biosecurity which reduces the risk of arrival of HPAI.

Monitoring of bird populations is part of DOC's core work. We encourage anyone who observes an unusual outbreak of disease to report it to Biosecurity New Zealand on 0800 80 99 66 or via an online form. See [Report a pest or disease](#) Biosecurity NZ.

If the HPAI virus arrives in New Zealand, we have a mitigation options guideline to help protect native species. This plan uses good biosecurity to reduce or prevent the spread of the virus. We will implement a range of actions to reduce the impact of the virus on vulnerable native species.

Measures such as disinfection and biosecurity are paramount. They should be undertaken routinely when working with animals.

Biosecurity New Zealand, an arm of the Ministry for Primary Industries, will lead any response to the virus. DOC will work closely with them to protect our native species.

[Avian Influenza - advisory for wildlife managers and bird banders September 2023 \(PDF, 806K\)](#)

You can help

- Maintain a heightened awareness of disease risk when working with wildlife.
- Always maintain good biosecurity and hygiene practices to prevent spread and protect yourself.
- Scrub and disinfect all your equipment, boots and clothing between sites/species, including equipment used for capture, handling, marking, holding, e.g. transport boxes.
- Use clean bird bags for each bird to avoid faecal contamination.
- Clean your hands and equipment between handling each bird, e.g. alcohol wipe.
- Employ good personal hygiene.
- For captive birds, undertake the measures above and exclude wild birds from access to aviary or food/water sources, and/or treat water sources.

HPAI is a notifiable disease and must be reported to MPI

- If a significant number of birds are observed in a group sick or dying, report it to the Biosecurity New Zealand Exotic Pest and Disease hotline: **0800 80 99 66**.
- Biosecurity New Zealand will take details and an incursion investigator will be in contact with you.
- Record a GPS reading or other precise location information.
- Take photographs and/or videos of sick and dead birds.
- Identify the species and estimate the numbers affected.
- Note how many sick or freshly dead are present as well as total number present.
- Follow Biosecurity New Zealand instructions for handling of sick or dead birds.

Recent [research](#) has found that HPAI has been confirmed in Brown Skua and Giant Petrel populations on Bird Island, South Georgia – the first known cases in the Antarctic region. If you are operating in the Pacific or Sub-Antarctic it is more important than ever to be vigilant.

Banding Office out-and-about – NZ Birds Conference 2023

It was marvellous to catch up with operators at the conference. Birds NZ hosted another excellent weekend, with the Devon Hotel being a lovely venue.

A particular highlight for this year's conference was bander, Biz Bell, being presented the prestigious [Birds NZ Robert Falla Memorial Award](#). This award recognises Biz's significant and long-term contributions to ornithology and avian conservation in New Zealand.

Further information on Biz's avian & conservation involvement can be read about in a recent [Guardian article](#).

Reminder that the next Birds NZ Conference will be hosted in Nelson from 1 to 3 June 2024.



Biz receiving Falla Memorial Award from Bruce McKinlay – BirdsNZ President (and fellow bird bander).

Banding Office out-and-about – National Kiwi Hui 2023

It is a special occasion which starts with a Pōwhiri (traditional welcome), and the 2023 Kiwi Hui was no exception. We were graciously hosted at Muru Raupatu marae in Ngāmotu (New Plymouth). It was another annual reminder of the excellent and dedicated operators we have working with taonga species. It was great to do a short presentation for Kiwi operators and the Banding Office's relevance in their monitoring and marking. This mainly focused on transmitter sub-licences (160.6 MHz to 161.11 MHz; channels 48 – 99) and transponder (microchip) insertion.

Hugh Robertson also demonstrated how to correctly close kiwi bands, and several keen handlers took up the opportunity to practice for themselves. "Horokiwi" (one of the Kiwi puppets which can be loaned out for marking practice) also made his annual appearance and was duly practiced on too.



Hugh demonstrates Kiwi band closure, while Horokiwi sleeps on the floor at Kiwi Hui 2023.

Banding Office out-and-about – Annemieke Hendriks

Something I parrot on about quite a bit is the value of meeting operators in person and in the field. Nothing can beat face-to-face meetings. Recently, I've had the honour of presenting in person to the Whangarei Birds NZ group, and virtually to Wild for Taranaki Webinar. It's really exciting to see the enthusiasm from community groups and interest in monitoring and research outcomes of following banded birds. It is a thrill to think that some of the conversations we have turn into tangible projects and outcomes. It is also valuable for me to learn from the wealth of knowledge within our community and it is always a privilege to sneak into the field to learn more about your species of interest or marking techniques. Thank you all for your contributions and feedback, we look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the system to ensure positive bird welfare outcomes and an enjoyable operator experience.



Annemieke (third from left) with the Whangarei BirdsNZ branch. Image supplied by Annemieke Hendriks

An update for lovers of Plovers

Perhaps the most exciting part of the Banding Office is finding out the coming and goings of birds.

PAP (famous from [previous newsletters](#)) has AGAIN completed another winter season in New Caledonia. Again, he didn't take PEY, his partner, but judging from their nesting attempt, she doesn't seem to mind. This little bird has now chalked up at least 18,000 km of flying over five known consecutive winters!

Other Pohowera (Banded Dotterels, aka double-banded plover) were seen with PAP in New Caledonia, so he doesn't seem to go alone. As of yet, it is unclear where these other birds migrate from as they are unbanded.



PAP 28 September 2023. Image by Annemieke Hendriks



Maddy the Long-distance Shore Plover. Image supplied by DOC

Evidently jealous about PAP's trips, Shore Plover "Maddy" (WR-WB) decided that she too wanted a getaway. She was hatched at the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust and translocated to Motutapu in August 2022. After a short trip to Miranda, she has since been a familiar sight on Motutapu at Pig Bay or West Point. However, that all changed sometime between 3-11 September 2023 when Maddy spread her wings and went for a Southern odyssey. She was seen and photographed on 20 and 21 September in Foxton! She has subsequently turned up again back on Motutapu, having flown some 800 kilometres, pretending as if nothing happened. It's the longest known return trip for a Shore Plover within the limited period of a month.

Since the last [BirDBanD](#) newsletter, Fish has been re-sighted.

Fish and Chip the Tūturiwhatu (New Zealand Dotterel aka Red-breasted Plover) banded in January 2023 have both been sighted again in June 2023 together.

"Chip" the bird with a yellow tibia band is certainly receiving more reports than sibling "Fish" with a green tibia band. Chip has thus far been reported at least five times up and down the Kapiti coast, and Fish just once.

Without marked birds (and keen birders with photographic evidence), it would be difficult to believe that these small birds are capable of such great journeys. So, keep an eye peeled, you might just spot a plover. And if you do, be sure to report it:

<https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/>



DP-10352 (Chip) 29 April 2023. Image by Neill Haggarty

From the Archives – Angus Fordham

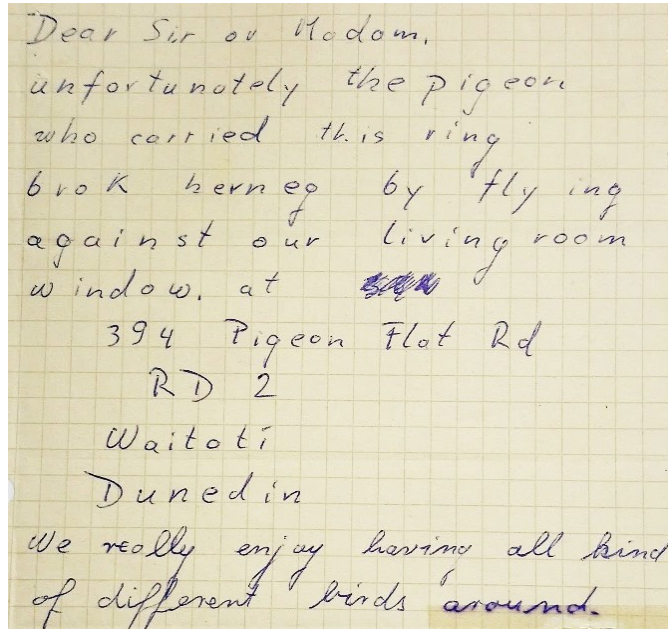
An ironic report: the Pigeon of Pigeon Flat Road:

“Dear Sir or Madam,

Unfortunately, the pigeon who carried this ring brok(e) her wing by flying against our living room window at 394 Pigeon Flat Road.

We really enjoy having all kind of different birds around.”

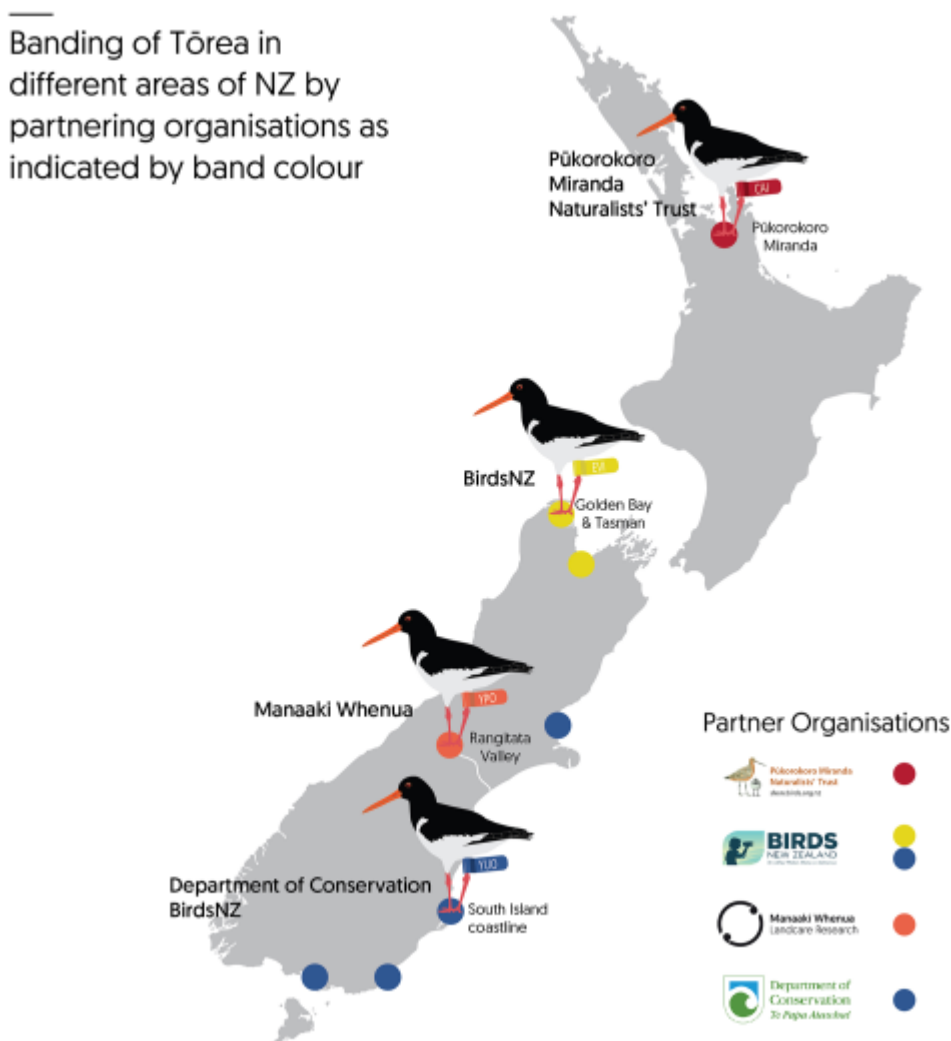
This bird (S-87260) was reported dead 01 February 2013 and was banded a year prior just 5 km away.



Did you catch a glimpse of an Oystercatcher catching oysters?

Keeping an eye out for marked birds means looking for more than just bands! Some birds are marked with other marks such as transponders, transmitters or flags. A national project using different coloured flags to denote where the bird was marked is the South Island Oystercatcher monitoring project. Further information about the project can be found [here](#).

You can report all sightings of marked birds (and bats) to: <https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/>



Nest Boxes: Choosing the right nesting material – John Dyer

This is primarily about grey teal, but mallards will sometimes accept nest boxes and the same advice applies. Using hay is not recommended because nest boxes are not dry places and rotting straw can quickly develop aspergillus spores that will kill young ducklings. Hygiene is important. Ducks don't bring their own nesting material so usually around pegging day I remove all last year's material and replace it with new.

The first grey teal usually start nesting around King's Birthday. If boxes are subsequently flooded, and the eggs inside spoil, I throw out the saturated nest material and start again. The teal will be back in there laying in just a few days. Annual servicing makes a much safer environment, for instance, by removing any old infertile or unhatched eggs that can potentially explode sending their rotten contents over the good eggs. It also removes the many insects for example any myna-mites left from their rubbish added to nests.

One thing specific to grey teal is that they will only accept nest boxes over water. I have had some success with mallards using nest boxes, typically on islands including moored floating islands. They need a different style of box as their ducklings do not climb. Boxes mounted on poles have had less acceptance by mallards. Overseas, mallards readily accept nest-baskets made from woven willow, especially in Holland where this is a popular habitat enhancement. However, it is likely the ducklings hatched in these then look for the same thing as adults, so use there is high.



Left: Grey Teal nest with Wood wool shavings – Yes, teal have LOTS of eggs! (image by Annemieke) Right: Grey Teal nest with Pin Oak Leaves (image by John Dyer).

Woodwool is long thin spaghetti-like wood shavings, pine or sometimes poplar. It comes as a small compacted bale that can be teased apart as required. Putting it in a large black rubbish sack will minimise mess in storage or in the boat. The only manufacturer I know of in the North Island is Woodtex in Ngaruawahia but this product is used as packing and can sometimes be picked up free from users when its job is done. I buy direct from Woodtex to avoid punitive mark-ups. Grey teal and mallard readily accept woodwool and weave it into a nest bowl shape. When they add their own breast down you know they've moved into the incubation stage. This year I've experimented with dried out pin oak leaves collected at a local park which teal seem happy to accept.

Overseas publications talk about using cedar shavings and also sawdust. Teal don't like either and on a windy day sawdust can blow out the entrance hole leaving nothing behind.

When the first eggs start hatching the ducklings stay inside the box initially until they've all popped out and then dried off. Then, when Mum thinks the moment is right, she'll make a special quiet quack on the water just beside the nest-box pole. The ducklings respond by peeping back, "wait for me" and heading for the light at the opening. A small ladder of wire-mesh allows them to climb up to this and then jump flapping their tiny wings. When the peeping stops Mum assumes she has all of them and she's immediately off into the safety of cover before the hawks and pukekos catch on.

These photos are from a recent banding trip to nest boxes near Pokeno. Annemieke from the DOC Banding Office assisting. Treated-ply boxes last 25-30 years so the cost per duckling produced must be just cents.

John Dyer (Fish & Game) wrote this article. Our thanks to Ducks Unlimited Flight magazine, for allowing us to re-print this article in the BirDBand Newsletter.

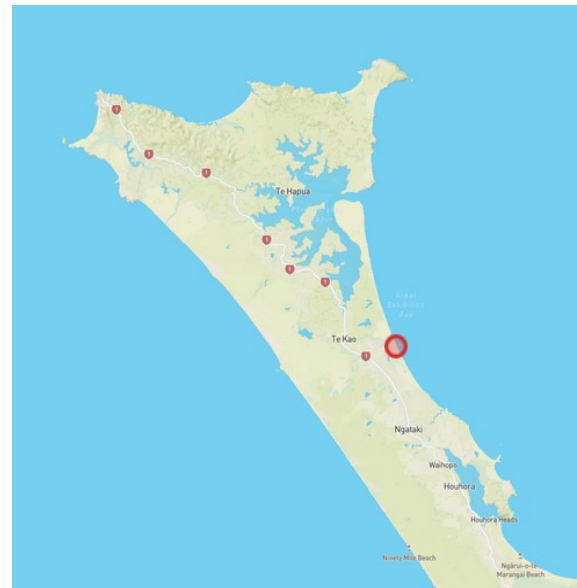


Left: Annemieke sneaks into the field – holding a female Grey Teal (image by John Dyer) Right: Grey Teal chicks in nest (image by Annemieke).

X marks the place – reporting re-sightings

In the past, we often received some vague indications of where a banded bird was re-sighted, or in some cases even detailed hand-drawn maps.

You can now use the handy zoom-and-click map on our online [Sightings Form](#), which will populate the latitude and longitude and enable us to work out how far the bird has travelled.



LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
-34.6624	173.0294

X marks the place in the sand

Dear Scientists...

The bands from two red-billed gulls were found by an eight-year-old who kindly reported these to the Scientists to increase their data. One bird was almost twice as old as the reporter!

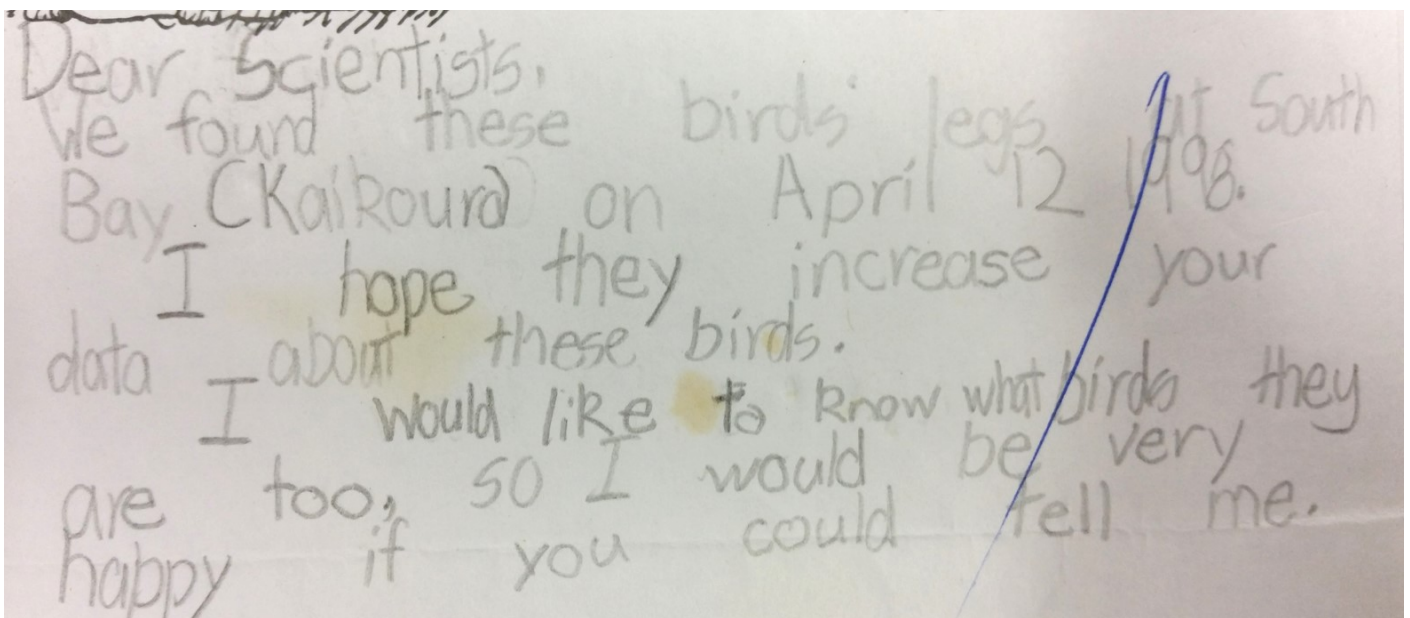


Photo competition for next Birds NZ Conference

The 2024 annual conference to be held in Nelson (1-3 June) will include a photo competition with two technical categories which require more than just taking a photo.

"A bird in moult" – this is to publicise the society's [moult recording scheme](#) and highlight the value of photographs (especially of birds in flight). Only birds that have had a [moult card](#) submitted qualify for entry.

Hudsonian Godwit in wing moult, Awarua Bay, Southland, 28 August 2016 – New Zealand Birds Online – Glenda Rees/ © Glenda Rees by Glenda Rees



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nzsamphotofanatic/><https://www.facebook.com/NZBANP/>



"A marked bird" – this is to encourage photographers to report marked birds to the Banding Office. Only records [submitted](#) to the Banding Office qualify for entry.

Variable Oystercatcher with engraved leg flag NC – originally banded as a chick on Bell Island 8 January 2011; subsequently re-sighted at Mapua several times; photographed at Rabbit Island, 1 February 2021 with 2 chicks – photo © Rebecca Bowater

Native bird whakatauki

Ka hauora ngā manu,
ka hauora ngā repo

The translation of this whakatauki (saying) is: The birds will be healthy, when the wetlands are healthy.

This whakatauki is therefore used as a reminder that animals do not live in isolation, and that everything is connected. It clearly has a conservation flavour, encouraging people to care for both fauna, flora and landscapes.



@mieke_masterpieces

“He aha tēnei?” / “what is this?": Metal Alpha-numeric

The mysteries continue. When rifling through boxes of Banding Office stuff, we came across some M-sized aluminium alpha-numeric bands. Which species were these used on and why aren't they used anymore?

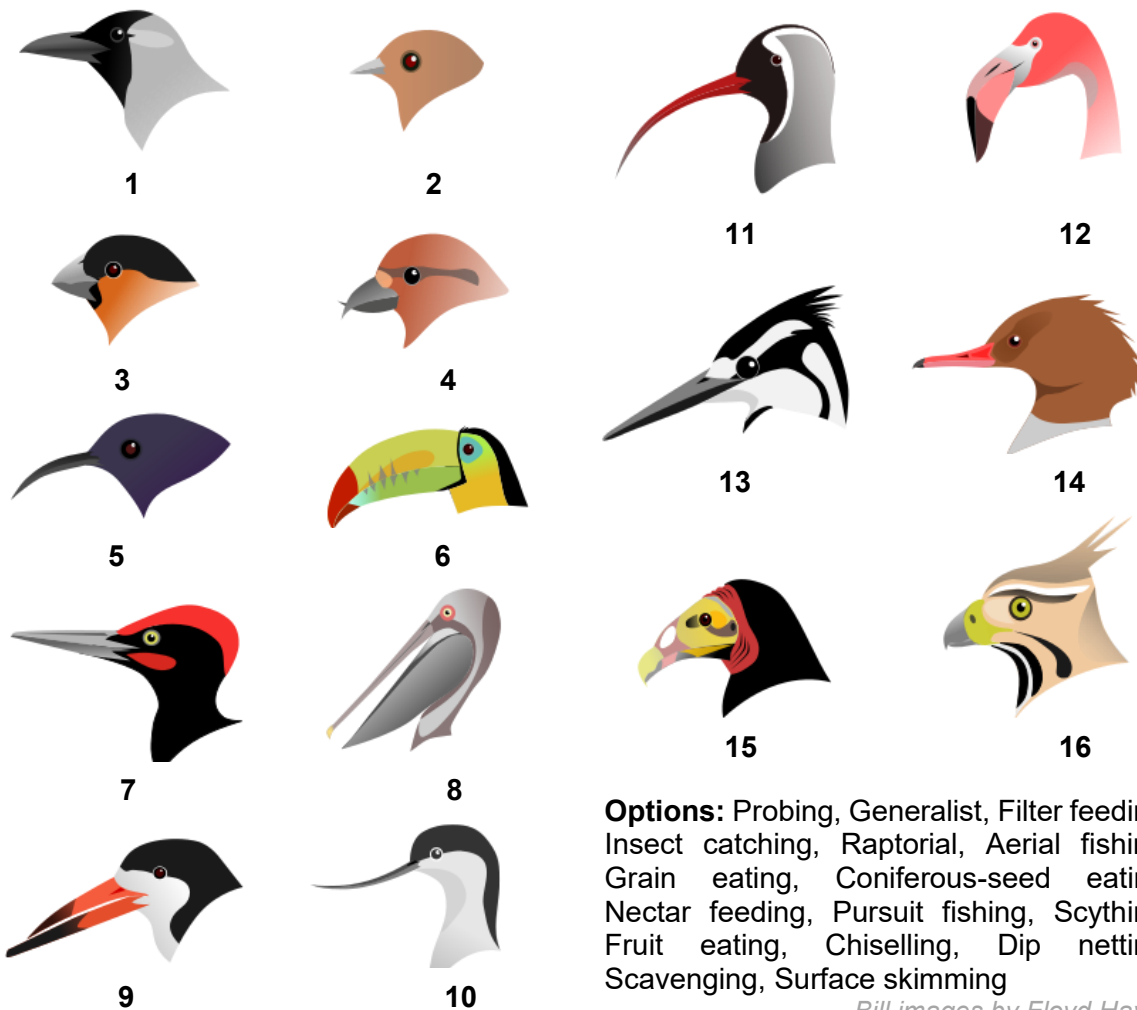


Answer to: “He aha tēnei?” – the letter vs. number prefix series bands

Historically there were two banding schemes: gamebirds and non-gamebirds. Gamebirds used number prefixes. Bands are still generally used with this number/ letter prefix distinction.

Puzzled: Put it on the bill

Can you identify the diet of the bird by looking at the shape of the bird's beak?



Options: Probing, Generalist, Filter feeding, Insect catching, Raptorial, Aerial fishing, Grain eating, Coniferous-seed eating, Nectar feeding, Pursuit fishing, Scything, Fruit eating, Chiselling, Dip netting, Scavenging, Surface skimming

Bill images by Floyd Hayes

Puzzled: Answers to Avian “Eye” spy

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A. Kererū | I. Rakiraki Mallard |
| B. Fantail | J. Eastern Rosella |
| C. Ruru Morepork | K. Chatham Island Snipe |
| D. Miromiro Tomtit | L. Shore Plover |
| E. Australian Coot | M. Red-crowned Parakeet Kākāriki |
| F. South Island Pied Oystercatcher | N. Pāteke Brown Teal |
| G. Pipiwharuroa Shining Cuckoo | O. Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguin |
| H. North Island Brown Kiwi | |



New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme

Tiakina ngā manu tā ia ripanga, tā ia ripanga

Saving the birds and bats one spreadsheet at a time

History

1911: First gamebird banding in NZ; 1930s: non-gamebirds
 1950: Ornithological Society inaugurates National Bird Banding Scheme
 1961–1987: under Dominion Museum, Wildlife Branch, Wildlife Service
 1987–ongoing: Department of Conservation; ~25k birds marked per year

Purpose

Fulfil DOC's Statutory responsibility to manage marking of wildlife

National coordination of marking of wildlife through a clear purpose, competent people, a valid permit outlining the conditions and the best practice, and centralised data curation

Marks

- ✦ Bands (metal, colour, flags, alphanumeric, etc.)
- ✦ Transponders (PIT tags, microchips, RFID tags)
- ✦ Radio Transmitters (sub-licences for restricted frequencies)
- ✦ Tracking & logging devices (GPS, GLS, PTT, etc.)
- ✦ Any other mark (paint, clip, camera, tag)

Functions

Data curation: FALCON

Nationally significant database

Central repository of marking and re-sighting data

Accessible to externals

Data ownership held by Project Managers

Marks & equipment

Source and provide unique marks (e.g. metal bands)

Ensure high-quality equipment are available at reasonable prices

Provide advice on marking projects

Sales revenue used to purchase stock

Certification of operators

Best Practice Guidelines

Ensure animal welfare

Evidence of competency assessed by experts

Facilitate training, maintain standards

Administration | Communication | Technical advice

National Banding Office