

Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the OSNZ Records Appraisal Committee 2011-2012

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Abstract We report Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) decisions regarding Unusual Bird Reports received between 1 Jan 2011 and 31 Dec 2012. Among the 137 submissions accepted by the RAC were the 1st New Zealand record of Pacific gull (*Larus pacificus*), the 2nd record of emperor penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*), and the 3rd & 4th records of a crane (*Grus* sp., unidentifiable to species). Other notable records included the 1st accepted sighting of a South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*) since 1967, the 1st record of New Zealand dabchicks (*Poliiocephalus rufopectus*) breeding in the South Island since 1941, and the 1st records of Snares crested penguin (*Eudyptes robustus*) from the Auckland Islands, sooty albatross (*Phoebastria fusca*) from the Chatham Islands, white-faced heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) from Antipodes Island, and Australian coot (*Fulica atra*) and common sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*) from Stewart Island. In addition, notable influxes of plumed whistling ducks (*Dendrocygna eytoni*), great shearwaters (*Puffinus gravis*), Australian pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), gull-billed terns (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) and Arctic terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) occurred during 2011-12.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) requires sightings of vagrant or extra-limital bird species, or species otherwise considered to be extinct, to be verified by the Records Appraisal Committee

(RAC) before the records can be presented in *Notornis* and books published by the OSNZ.

Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) are received and collated by the RAC secretary (E.A. Bell) and sent to RAC members in batches every 2 months, with members having 2 months to provide comment on each case. The collated comments are forwarded to the convenor (C.M. Miskelly) to draft a response to

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the submitter. Depending on the date that a UBR is received within this cycle, submitters should receive responses within 3-5 months of submitting a UBR.

We here report RAC decisions made on UBRs received between 1 Jan 2011 and 31 Dec 2012, following on from the last report of the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2011). These included submissions based on sightings made up to 50 years ago. For significant sightings (*e.g.*, 1st, 2nd or 3rd sightings for the country, or rediscoveries of 'extinct' species), we encourage the observers who first found or identified the bird(s) to submit an article for publication in *Notornis* or *Birds New Zealand* (formerly *Southern Bird*).

The RAC convenor maintains a database of verified sightings of vagrant birds in New Zealand. Information from this database is presented below (sourced as "C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*") if it conflicts with or augments information from Gill *et al.* (2010). Each UBR is given a number whereby the first 4 digits represent the year the record was assessed and the last 2 digits the chronological sequence of receipt within that year. These reference numbers are given under each entry for each species. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow Gill *et al.* (2010).

Where images of birds reported here have been published on New Zealand Birds Online (NZBO, www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz, viewed 21 Jul 2013) this is mentioned in the text.

DECISIONS ON SUBMITTED SIGHTINGS

Accepted records of species vagrant to New Zealand

Plumed whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*)

Seven at Clearwater Farm, Fox Glacier, 1 Apr 2011 and the following 2 months; Peter Halford (UBR 2012/44). Three at Taradale, Napier from 23 Sep 2011 to at least Dec 2012; Neil Fitzgerald & Graeme Taylor (UBR 2012/97; 7 images on NZBO). Three at Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham I, on 3 Oct 2011; Igor Debski (UBR 2012/64). Three at Barrytown flats on 9 Feb 2012; Robyn Langridge (UBR 2012/40). There are 10 previous records of flocks of up to 14 birds (Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

A male and a female at Coopers Lagoon, Canterbury, on 5 Jun 1995; Andrew Crossland & Scott Butcher (UBR 2012/73). A male at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 12 Feb 2003; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/59). A female at Kaiapoi oxidation ponds, North Canterbury, on 13 Feb 2003; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/60). A male at Lake Ellesmere on 24 Feb 2007; Philip Crutchley & Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/64). After a major influx in 1983-86, and few records in the 1990s (Heather

1987; Gill *et al.* 2010), chestnut-breasted shelducks were recorded about once per annum from 2000 (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

Australian wood duck (*Chenonetta jubata*)

A male at Nelson sewage ponds, Whakapuaka, on 11 Jun 2010; Peter Frost (UBR 2012/65). A female at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 16 Jan 2011; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/48). A male at Horseshoe Lake Reserve, Burwood, Christchurch, 5-18 May 2011; Michael Holmes & Grahame Bell (UBRs 2011/32 & 2011/37; 2 images on NZBO). Six previous records accepted (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

Australian white-eyed duck (*Aythya australis*)

A male at Kaiapoi oxidation ponds, North Canterbury, on 3 Apr 2012; Beverley Alexander (UBR 2012/42; 1 image on NZBO). Six previous records accepted since 1973 (Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Hoary-headed grebe (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*)

One at Big Lagoon, Taramoa, Southland, on 5 May 2012; Pete McClelland (UBR 2012/51). Hoary-headed grebes were widely reported in low numbers from the Snares Is to Northland 1975-91; this is only the second record since then (Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Emperor penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*)

An immature ashore on Peka Peka Beach, Kapiti coast, 21-24 Jun 2011; Colin Miskelly & Alan Tennyson (UBR 2011/51; 11 images on NZBO). This was the 2nd emperor penguin recorded from New Zealand (*vide* Henderson 1968); it received more media attention and was seen by more observers than any previous vagrant bird in New Zealand's history. After 72 days in care, it was released at sea north-east of Campbell I on 4 Sep 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2012).

King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*)

One moulting at Porpoise Bay, Catlins coast, on 2 Mar 2012 (Ros Cole, Pete McClelland & Jo Hiscock; UBR 2012/49) was the 8th mainland record. Two different birds at Anchorage Bay, Antipodes I, on 8 Dec 2009 & 7-12 Jan 2010 (Dave Boyle; UBRs 2012/82 & 2012/83; 2 images on NZBO) were the 4th & 5th records from Antipodes I. One at Port Ross, Auckland I, on 21 Jan 2010 (John Woods & Bill Abbott; UBR 2012/81; 1 image on NZBO) was the 4th record from the Auckland Is (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*)

One at Shag Point, North Otago, on 23 Oct 2011; Rowan Holt (UBR 2011/79). There have been 6 previous mainland records, most recently in 1993 (Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Macaroni penguin (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*)

One at Penguin Bay, Campbell I, on 21 Jan 1993; Alan Tennyson (UBR 2011/62; 3 images on NZBO). Fifth record from New Zealand, and 2nd from Campbell I (Kinsky 1969; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). The 3 other records were from the Snares Is (Miskelly *et al.* 2001).

Royal penguin (*Eudyptes schlegeli*)

One just north of Kaikoura in Mar 1997 (reported via Bruce Menteth & Alan Tennyson; UBR 2011/63) was the 10th mainland record (there have been 4 since; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). One moulting at Anchorage Bay, Antipodes I, on 8-20 Mar 2009 (Dave Boyle; UBR 2012/84; 3 images on NZBO) was the 1st record from Antipodes I.

Sooty albatross (*Phoebastria fusca*)

One off Little Mangere I, Chatham Is, on 30 Dec 2006 (Detlef Davies; UBR 2012/93) was the 1st record from the Chatham Is and the 4th accepted record from New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Juan Fernandez petrel (*Pterodroma externa*)

One at sea 32 km off Oamaru on 14 Mar 2012 (Colin Miskelly & Kate McAlpine; UBR 2012/46) was the 6th New Zealand record and the first seen at sea. Previous records were one storm-killed from the Waikato, and birds ashore on or over 3 of the Chatham Is (Reed 1976; Miskelly *et al.* 2006). A bird reported from Pegasus Bay, Canterbury in Jun 2005 (Howell & Esler 2007; Gill *et al.* 2010) was a misidentified white-headed petrel (*Pt. lessonii*) (CMM & AJDT, *pers. obs.*).

Gould's petrel (*Pterodroma leucoptera*)

Four *c.* 350 km north-west of Milford Sound on 8 Mar 2012 and one 1.5 km off the entrance to Doubtful Sound on 9 Mar 2012 (Colin Miskelly & Kate McAlpine; UBR 2012/47) fitted the seasonal occurrence pattern that Imber & Jenkins (1981) reported for Gould's petrel in the south-east Tasman Sea. All other accepted New Zealand records were of storm-wrecked birds (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Blue petrel (*Halobaena caerulea*)

Three between Campbell I and Macquarie I on 25 & 26 Nov 2011 (Detlef Davies; UBR 2012/92; 1 image on NZBO) were the first at-sea sightings reported to the RAC (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Great shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*)

One off Edwards I, Foveaux Strait, on 4 Apr 2011; Anita Spencer & Fraser Maddigan (UBR 2011/40; 4 images on NZBO). One 50 km south-east of Puysegur Point on 14 Apr 2011; Janet Houston (UBR 2011/75). One *c.* 35 km south-east of Dunedin on 19 Apr 2011; Janet Houston (UBR 2011/76). One 90 km offshore from mid-Canterbury on 22 Nov 2011; Danica Stent (UBR 2012/04). These were the 3rd to 6th accepted records for New Zealand (Gaskin *et al.* 2009; Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

White-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon lepturus*)

Two immature birds found dead and now in Auckland Museum: Tawharanui Regional Park, Northland, in Feb 2011; Lois Clayton via Brian Gill (UBRs 2012/25 & 2012/54), and Tauranga Harbour on 2 Jan 2012; Sharon Jones via Brian Gill (UBR 2012/26). There are 15 previous records (Gill *et al.* 2010), nearly all of beach-wrecked immature birds.

Australian pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)

One at Kerikeri Inlet on 7 Aug 2012; Detlef Davies (UBR 2012/91; 1 image on NZBO). Fourteen at Ruawai, Kaipara Harbour on 22 Aug 2012; Erik Forsyth (UBR 2012/78). This is the largest flock recorded in New Zealand. There were 4 previous records of up to 3 birds, 1890 to 1978, and Australian pelicans appear to have been vagrant to New Zealand in prehistoric times also (Sagar 1978; Gill *et al.* 2010).

Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

Single immature birds at the Muriwai gannet colony on 29 Jan 2011 (Shane McPherson & Mia Jessen; UBR 2011/34) and on 10 Mar 2012 (Julie Alexander & Michael Franklin; UBR 2012/35; 6 images on NZBO). An adult off Rabbit I, Nelson, on 20 May 2012; Don Cooper (UBR 2012/56). This species probably reaches New Zealand every year (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)

An adult female at Northcote, Auckland, on 19 Jan 2011; Nathaniel Holman & Mel Galbraith (UBRs 2011/25 & 2011/29). There are about 40 previous records from New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Plumed egret (*Ardea intermedia*)

Four at Lake Ellesmere on 18 Jun 2011; Nick Allen (UBR 2011/44). There are 16 previously accepted New Zealand records (Scofield 2008; Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

One at Lake Ellesmere on 5 & 24 Jun 1995, 23 Jul 1995, 15 Jun 1996 and 29 Jun 1997; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/08). One at Hutt estuary, Petone, 3 May to 17 Jun 2007; Caroline & Geoff Chambers, and Reg & Shane Cotter (UBR 2012/88). Up to 5 little egrets are present in New Zealand most years, though few are reported to the RAC (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

At least one present in the Christchurch area (Bexley and Travis wetlands and Brooklands Lagoon) from Aug 1999 then annually to Aug 2011; Andrew Crossland, Scott Butcher, John Skilton & John Stewart (UBRs 2011/39, 2011/55, 2011/68 & 2012/15). One at Ohiwa Harbour, Bay of Plenty, on 16 Nov 2011; Linda Nuttall & Mark Chojnacki (UBR 2012/03). One at Falls Road, Whangamarino, on 11

& 13 Dec 2011; Nigel Milius (UBR 2012/05). This species is expected annually in New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Black kite (*Milvus migrans*)

One near Inglewood, Taranaki, on 22 Mar 2009; Bob Green (UBR 2012/41). There are 6 previous records (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

One near Te Puna turn-off from SH2, Bay of Plenty, on 7 Sep 2011; Melissa Whitby (UBR 2011/67). One at Awarua Bay, Southland, on 9 Apr 2012; Matt Jones (UBR 2012/77). One at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 27 Jul 2012; Anita Spencer & Fraser Maddigan (2012/72). An infrequent straggler to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Black-tailed native-hen (*Gallinula ventralis*)

One near Ashburton on 8 Dec 2011 (Darryl Butterick; UBR 2012/37) was the 6th New Zealand record (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Pectoral sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)

Three at Hapupu, Te Whanga Lagoon, on 10 Dec 2012 (Tansy Bliss; UBR 2013/06) was the 5th record from the Chatham Is (Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

Asiatic dowitcher (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*)

One at Farewell Spit on 1 Jan 1988 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2012/52) becomes the 3rd of 5 accepted records (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Little whimbrel (*Numenius minutus*)

One at Miranda, Firth of Thames on 21 Jan 2012; Tansy Bliss, David Melville and 12 others (UBR 2012/24). Possibly an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Wandering tattler (*Tringa incana*)

One on the south side of Kaikoura Peninsula on 27 Feb 2007; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/89). One at Waitare Beach, Horowhenua, on 25 Oct 2010; Craig Steed & Ian Saville (UBR 2011/24; 2 images on NZBO). Probably an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Grey-tailed tattler (*Tringa brevipes*)

One at Kaingaroa on 10 Nov 2012 (Tansy Bliss; UBR 2013/05) was the 3rd record from the Chatham Is (Freeman 1994).

Common sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

One at the Waipara River mouth, North Canterbury, on 29 Sep 1993 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2012/21) was possibly the same bird as that seen on the Ashley River, near the SH1 bridge, on 6 Nov 1993 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2012/20). One at The Neck, Paterson Inlet, on 30 Nov 2005 Andrew Crossland; UBR 2011/47) was the 1st record from Stewart I. One at Big Muddy Creek, northern Manukau Harbour, on 23 & 27 Dec 2011; Phil Hammond (UBR 2012/16;

1 image on NZBO). There are 36 accepted records from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Common greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

One at Jordans farm, Kaipara Harbour, on 20 Feb 2011; Erik Forsyth & Phil Hammond (UBR 2012/28). Formerly a regular vagrant to New Zealand, there have been just 4 greenshanks reported since 2002 (Medway 2002; Scofield 2005, 2008).

Grey phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*)

One on the coast south of Napier on 5 Jul 2012; Rod Dickson (UBR 2012/74; 3 images on NZBO). This is the 10th accepted record for New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010; Scofield 2006).

Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

One at Charlesworth wetland, Christchurch, on 19 Dec 2003; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/21). Grey plovers were reported annually from 2001 to 2005, but there have been no subsequent records submitted (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Semipalmated plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

One at Kidds Beach, south Manukau Harbour, on 5 & 8 Dec 2009 (John Woods; UBR 2011/49; 2 images on NZBO) and subsequently at Miranda, Firth of Thames on 5 Oct 2010 (Mike Turner; UBR 2011/22; 1 image on NZBO) is believed to be the same bird already accepted as UBR 2011/06 (Miskelly *et al.* 2011), *i.e.*, the 2nd accepted New Zealand record.

Lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)

One at Lake Ellesmere on 14 Jan 1994; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/54). This species is considered an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

One hit by a plane at 13,000 ft, above the Coromandel Peninsula on 5 Nov 2010 (UBR 2012/48; Galbraith *et al.* 2013). This was about 3,000 m higher than the summit of Mt Moehau (892 m). Long-tailed skuas are regarded as scarce annual migrants to New Zealand, with more than 25 accepted New Zealand records (C.M. Miskelly *et al.* 2008; Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Pacific gull (*Larus pacificus*)

An immature seen south of Glinks Gully, Dargaville Beach, on 17 Jan 2010 (Paul Godolphin; UBR 2010/03) was the first New Zealand record of this Australian endemic species.

Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

A major influx of gull-billed terns occurred (or began) in winter 2011, only a few of which records were reported to the RAC. For example, the only North I record submitted was a single bird at Waikanae Estuary, when unofficial reports exist of flocks of up to 16 birds at multiple other North I localities (and see 7 images on NZBO).

Localities from where birds were reported included 1-2 at Lake Ellesmere on 18 & 19 Jun 2011 (Nick Allen, Niall Muga, Phil Crutchley & Scott Butcher; UBRs 2011/45 & 2012/17); 1 at Brooklands Lagoon, Christchurch, on 26 Jun 2011 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2012/07); 1 at Waikanae Estuary on 16 Jul 2011 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2011/52; 2 images on NZBO); 2 at Bells I, Waimea Inlet, Nelson, on 17 & 19 Sep 2011 (Don Cooper & David Melville; UBRs 2011/71 & 2011/73); 1-2 at Moutere Inlet and Motueka Sandspit from 18 Sep 2011 to 17 Mar 2012 (David & Julia Melville; UBRs 2011/70, 2011/78, 2012/27, 2012/29, 2012/31, 2012/32, 2012/36); 1 at Southshore, Christchurch, on 6 Feb 2012 (Graham Bell; UBR 2012/30); and 1-7 at Lake Forsyth, Banks Peninsula, between 28 Mar & 30 Jun 2012 (Andrew Crossland & Niall Muga; UBR 2012/66). The Waikanae record was accepted as a juvenile of the Australian-breeding subspecies *G. n. macrotarsa*, based on the heavy bill and the large black eye patch extending to the ear and below the eye (Rogers 2004; Rogers *et al.* 2005). This is the first time that the subspecies of a New Zealand gull-billed tern has been formally identified (see Gill *et al.* 2010). The most recent previous New Zealand gull-billed tern records were in 2002 (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)
One in breeding plumage at Opawa River mouth, Marlborough, on 8 May 2012; Will Parsons (UBR 2012/63; 2 images on NZBO).

Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)
One on the lower Rakaia River on 29 Nov 2009; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/58). Four at Manawatu Estuary on 18 Sep 2010; Alan Tennyson (UBR 2011/56; 6 images on NZBO). One c. 50 km south of Campbell I on 6 Mar 2011; Bruce McKinlay (UBR 2011/77, photograph submitted as white-fronted tern *S. striata*). One at Aramoana Mole, Otago, on 29 Oct 2011; Glenda Rees (UBR 2012/01; 1 image on NZBO). Two at Wakatapu Beach, Southland, on 4 Nov 2011; Glenda Rees (UBR 2012/02). Two different birds at Aramoana Mole on 29 & 30 Nov 2011; Roy Hargreaves (UBRs 2012/22 & 2012/23). The Arctic tern is considered a passage migrant to New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2008; Gill *et al.* 2010), with most birds apparently passing offshore.

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)
One at Ashburton River mouth on 12 Feb 2006; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/61). One at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere on 9 Feb 2008; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/65). There are about 30 records of common terns from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). They probably occur annually (Gill *et al.* 2010), but many are not reported to the RAC, and it is likely that many more are overlooked due to their similarity to non-breeding white-fronted terns.

Crested tern (*Sterna bergii*)

One dead at Whatipu, north head of Manukau Harbour, on 19 Jul 2011; Mike Graham (UBR 2011/53). One off Southshore Spit, Christchurch, on 23 Jan 2012; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/69). There were 10 previous accepted records (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*)

One photographed at Renwick, Marlborough, on 16 Apr 2011 (Keren North; UBR 2011/41; 2 images on NZBO) was reported as an unknown bird. There are about 33 previous records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2011; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*)

An immature at Horseshoe Bay, Stewart I, on 27 May 2011; Matt Jones & Brent Beaven (UBR 2011/42). This is the 2nd record from Stewart I (Gill *et al.* 2010); there are 18 previous accepted records nationwide (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

ACCEPTED RECORD OF A SPECIES REGARDED AS POSSIBLY EXTINCT

South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*)

One seen among red beech/rimu forest at Rainy Creek, Upper Inangahua Valley, Reefton, on 21 & 22 Mar 2007 (Len Turner & Peter Rudolf; UBRs 2009/10 & 2013/01e) was the first record of South Island kokako accepted by the RAC or its predecessor the Rare Birds Committee since their establishment in 1974 (Kinsky 1975). The previous last accepted sighting was in Mount Aspiring National Park in 1967 (McBride 1981; Gill *et al.* 2010). As the record is so extraordinary, we here include an excerpt from the submission:

On 21 March 2007 at 0945 hours Len Turner heard a call he described as a haunting resonating call (“an eerie call like an Aboriginal wailing”) that he had not heard before. About 15 minutes later he saw at close range (10-15 metres) an unusual bird with the following description. The plumage of the bird was steely grey with a bluish tinge. Most distinct were the wattles on the sides of its bill. The base of the wattles was a deep matt blue and the remainder (the larger part) ochre (“fleshy orange-brown”). The bird appeared to be curious, looking at Len, turning its head from side to side. He viewed the bird for about 30 seconds then it glided away with some heavy dull wing flapping. Len noted the rounded edge of the wings in flight, and described the flight as clumsy.

Further evidence of the presence of kokako was obtained the following day

when Peter Rudolf (an experienced North Island kokako observer) and Len re-visited the site. At 1040 hrs very distinctive kokako-like heavy wing beats were heard about 60 m from the observers. Soon after this Len saw a bird making giant leaps up the trunk of a rimu. Unfortunately identification wasn't possible due to the position of the sun. Peter didn't see the bird hopping up the trunk but saw the bird glide off from a branch. Peter identified the bird as a kokako due to its size, colour (a light grey), its wingspan and flight. "The bird did a very shallow glide 3° approx.". "As it glided it produced a few intermittent very shallow wing beats (no sound)." The two observers attempted to get a closer view of the bird but were not successful.

ACCEPTED EXTRA-LIMITAL RECORDS OF NEW ZEALAND BREEDING SPECIES

Blue duck (*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*)

Three at Camelot river estuary, Gaer Arm, Bradshaw Sound, Fiordland National Park, on 31 Aug 2012; Ray Goldring (UBR 2012/79). An unusual record due to the estuarine habitat.

Brown teal (*Anas chlorotis*)

One at Horseshoe Lake, Burwood, Christchurch, on 30 Sep 2009 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2012/09) and one at Petone on 27 Dec 2012 (Robert Hanbury-Sparrow; UBR 2013/08) were both near known release sites (Travis Wetland and Karori Sanctuary; Miskelly & Powlesland 2013).

New Zealand dabchick (*Poliiocephalus rufopectus*)

A pair with 2 young at Lake Killarney, Takaka, on 19 Mar 2012 (Murray Gavin, Richard Stocker, Gerald Hindmarsh & Willie Cook; UBR 2012/59, and see Petyt 2012) was the 1st South I breeding record since 1941 (Heather 1988). There have been 4 previous records from the South I since 1987, all from Nelson or Marlborough (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

Australasian little grebe (*Tachybaptus novae-hollandiae*)

One at Harewood Rd shingle pit, Christchurch, on 30 Apr 2004; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/06) was the most recent South I record reported to the RAC. Little grebes are now mainly reported from the Auckland region or further north (Robertson *et al.* 2007).

Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*)

A subadult c. 10 km north of Amberley Beach, North Canterbury, on 15 Nov 2012 (Ian Roxburgh & Helen Harkness; UBR 2013/04) was a bird in pre-moult

condition. Although earlier than most records, there are many records of Fiordland crested penguins moulting on the east coast of the South I, mainly during Jan-Feb (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Snares crested penguin (*Eudyptes robustus*)

One at Stella Bay, Antipodes I, on 13 Feb 2008 (Dave Boyle; UBR 2012/85) and another nearby at Reef Point on 12 Feb 2009 (Dave Boyle; UBR 2012/86). One at Carnley Harbour, Auckland Is, on 11 Dec 2008; Paul Sagar, David Thompson, Leigh Torres & Henk Haazen (UBR 2012/71). One at Penguin Bay, Campbell I, on 31 Dec 2011; Kyle Morrison (UBR 2012/61). These comprise the 1st record for the Auckland Is, the 2nd record for Campbell I, and the 4th & 5th records for Antipodes I (Marchant & Higgins 1990; Tennyson *et al.* 2002; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Erect-crested penguin (*Eudyptes sclateri*)

One at Purau Bay, Lyttelton Harbour, on 1 Mar 2010 (Department of Conservation via Andrew Crossland; UBR 2011/69), one at Magnet Bay, Banks Peninsula, c. 16 Feb 2011 (Kenny Rose via Andrew Crossland; UBR 2011/74), and one at Bushy Beach, Oamaru, on 13 Feb 2012 (Mark Binns & Kerry Fletcher; UBR 2012/50). At least one erect-crested penguin is reported moulting on the east coast of the South I during Feb-Mar most years.

Yellow-eyed penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*)

One south of Kaikoura Peninsula on 16 Apr 2011; Phil Crutchley & Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/12).

White-naped petrel (*Pterodroma cervicalis*)

One or 2 in the outer Bay of Plenty on 1 Feb 1991; Jean-Claude Stahl (UBR 2012/34). One in the outer Hauraki Gulf on 10 Mar 2007; Martin Sanders & Chris Gaskin (UBR 2012/80; 1 image on NZBO). One north-northeast of Whangaroa Harbour on 17 Jan 2010, and one north of Whangaroa Harbour on 5 Jan 2011; Detlef Davies (UBRs 2012/95 & 2012/96; 1 image on NZBO). One off the east coast of Stewart I on 15 Feb 2011; Matt Jones (UBR 2011/28). One north of the Mokohinau Is on 20 Feb 2012; Jean-Claude Stahl, Chris Gaskin & Brett Rathe (UBR 2012/33; 1 image on NZBO). These observations suggest that this Kermadec Is breeding species is a regular visitor to northern New Zealand waters in low numbers in Jan-Mar, but the Stewart I record was exceptionally far south. The previous mainland New Zealand records were of 4 storm-wrecked birds (Brash 1982; Dowding 1987) and 2 off Tolaga Bay, East Cape on 22 Mar 1997 (Tennyson & Lock 1998).

Wedge-tailed shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*)

One north of Stephenson I, Northland, on 10 Jan 2012 (Detlef Davies; UBR 2012/94; 4 images on NZBO) was the 1st accepted sighting for New Zealand coastal waters of this Kermadec Is breeding

species, but it is regularly seen further north in New Zealand waters (Jenkins 1979). At least 12 wedge-tailed shearwaters have been found beach-wrecked on mainland coasts (Gill *et al.* 2010), none of which has been confirmed to be of the Kermadec Is subspecies. All beach-wrecked wedge-tailed shearwaters should be sent to a museum to ensure that they are correctly identified to subspecies.

White-faced heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*)

One at Antipodes I on 17 Apr 2009 (Dave Boyle; UBR 2012/87) was a new record for the island.

Nankeen night heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

An immature at Dillons Point, Blenheim, on 20 Mar 2012 (Will Parsons; UBR 2012/39; 2 images on NZBO) was about 200 km south-west of the only known breeding site (Whanganui River; Marsh & Lövei 1997).

Australian coot (*Fulica atra*)

One at Ringa Ringa Golf Course, Stewart I, on 1 Dec 2012 (Matt Jones; UBR 2013/07) was a new record for Stewart I.

Subantarctic skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)

One off Birdlings Flat, Banks Peninsula, on 7 Jan 2010; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/11). One off Kaikoura on 16 Apr 2011; Phil Crutchley, Andrew Crossland & Niall Mungan (UBR 2012/38). One c.10 km north of Mt Maunganui on 4 Jun 2012; Alan Tennyson & Colin Miskelly (UBR 2013/02).

ACCEPTED RECORDS OF SPECIES LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN RELEASED OR ESCAPED FROM CAPTIVITY

Red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

One at Charlesworth Wetland Reserve, Christchurch, on 29 Sep 2009 and the following 4 months; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/72).

Cape Barren goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*)

One at Te Kuiti sewage ponds 5-6 Mar 2011; Dale Williams (UBR 2011/30). One at Hokitika sewage ponds on 9 Apr 2012; Bruce McKinlay (UBR 2012/43; see also Scofield 2008).

Barbary dove (*Streptopelia risoria*)

One at Brooklands, Christchurch, on 10 Aug 2001; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/14).

Crested pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*)

At least 4 birds, Styx Mill, Christchurch, 13 Apr 2008 to early 2010; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/70). Up to 7 birds were reported; they have not been seen since 2010 and are presumed to have died out.

Sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*)

One at Catlins Lake, Otago, on 20 Nov 2005; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2012/10).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

Some of the following records may have been genuine, but were insufficiently documented to be accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee. A few were considered to be misidentifications.

Brown teal/mallard hybrid (*Anas chlorotis* x *A. platyrhynchos*)

One reported from Styx Mill basin ponds, Christchurch, on 9 Jul 2012 (UBR 2012/67).

New Zealand dabchick (*Poliiocephalus rufopectus*)

One reported from Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 7 Jan 2011 (UBR 2011/23).

Great shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*)

One reported 80 km north of the Auckland Is on 9 Apr 2011 (UBR 2011/35).

Magellanic diving petrel (*Pelecanoides magellani*)

One reported aboard a vessel in Auckland Harbour on 29 Nov 2011 (UBR 2012/62) was identified from photographs as a fledgling common diving petrel (*P. urinatrix*).

Lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)

One reported offshore north of the Ngakawau River, North Westland, on 18 Jan 2012 (UBR 2012/76) was considered likely to have been an Arctic skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).

Plumed egret (*Ardea intermedia*)

One reported from the head of Milford Sound in Feb 2012 (UBR 2012/58) was identified from photographs as a white heron (*A. modesta*). The RAC were split on the identity of this long-staying, semi-tame egret, which was widely reported as being a plumed egret. Three Australian experts who were sent the images all confirmed its identity as a white heron.

Little bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*)

One reported from Lake Kereta, South Kaipara Head, on 25 Apr 2010 (UBR 2011/46) was considered likely to have been an Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*).

Yellow bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*)

UBR 2012/45 was a request for the RAC to reconsider the unusual bittern seen at Meremere in 1963 (Howard 1963; Falla 1964; Howard & McKenzie 1965), with yellow bittern suggested as an alternative identification. The committee agreed that some features of the description were consistent with yellow bittern, but that there was insufficient evidence to support accepting this as a record of a species not otherwise known from New Zealand.

Sarus crane (*Grus antigone*)

One reported from Te Anau Downs on 17 Feb 2012 (UBR 2012/57) was accepted as being a crane (*Grus* sp., either sarus crane or brolga *G. rubicundus*).

Reassessment of a report of a brolga from Mossburn, Southland, on 8 Mar 2009 (UBR 2009/07; see Miskelly *et al.* 2011, where the year was incorrectly given as 2008) resulted in this also being accepted as an unidentified crane. It is possible that this bird had been resident in northern Southland for the intervening 3 years. There are 2 previous accepted records of cranes in New Zealand, also considered to be unidentifiable to species (Scofield 2005; Gill *et al.* 2010).

Great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*)

One reported from Lake Ellesmere on 15 Jan 2007 (UBR 2011/57).

Buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*)

One reported from New River Estuary, Invercargill, on 5 Mar 2007 (UBR 2011/43).

South Polar skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*)

One reported from Campbell I on 31 Dec 2010 (UBR 2012/60).

South American tern (*Sterna hirundinacea*)

One reported from Waitangi River mouth, Hawke Bay on 9 Jul 2011 (UBR 2011/66) was considered more likely to have been an Arctic tern.

Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*)

One reported from Thames on 4 Aug 2012 (UBR 2012/75).

Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*)

One reported from Hinewai, Banks Peninsula, on 16 Mar 2011 (UBR 2011/31).

Laughing kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*)

One reported from Oxford, North Canterbury, on 30 May 2012 (UBR 2012/53).

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

One reported from Birkenhead, Auckland, on 19 Jul 2011 (UBR 2011/50).

Tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

One reported from Kapiti I on 23 Feb 2011 (UBR 2011/27).

Yellow wagtail (*Motacilla tschutschensis*)

One reported from Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 10 Aug 2011 (UBR 2012/90).

South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*)

Two reported from the head of Lake Matiri, Murchison District, *c.* 1990 (UBR 2013/01c). One reported from Catlins Forest *c.* Jan 1995 (UBR 2013/01h). One reported from Abut Head, South Westland, on 24 Oct 1996 (UBR 2013/01a). One reported from Parapara Ridge, Kahurangi National Park, on 7 Jul 1997 (UBR 2013/01g). One reported from above Deep Bay, Tennyson Inlet, Marlborough Sounds, on 27 Jul 1999 (UBR 2013/01i). One reported from Kenepuru, Mahau Sound, Marlborough Sounds, *c.* 2003 (UBR 2013/01f). Two reported from Waimahaka Forest,

Catlins, on 15 Oct 2006 (UBR 2013/01k). One reported from Iron Stone Creek, Kahurangi National Park, on 4 Feb 2008 (UBR 2013/01b).

One reported from Waikawa, Picton, in Mar and Jun 1997 (UBRs 2013/01d & j) was considered more likely to have been a North Island kokako (*C. wilsoni*).

RECORDS OF SPECIES NOT REQUIRING RAC VERIFICATION

A North Island saddleback (*Philesturnus rufusater*) was reported from Tawharanui Regional Park in Dec 2012 (UBR 2013/03), 9 months after they were released there (Miskelly & Powlesland 2013). A grey-backed storm petrel was found at Franz Josef on 7 Feb 2011 (UBR 2011/26), a pomarine skua (*Coprotheres pomarinus*) was seen at North Beach, Christchurch, on 18 Mar 2009 (UBR 2012/13), a New Zealand pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) was reported from Manurewa East (UBR 2012/19), and a black morph New Zealand fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) was seen near Dannevirke on 15 Apr 2011 (UBR 2011/33). Two UBRs submitted of unidentified birds were considered to refer to common species: UBR 2011/36 = common redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*); UBR 2011/38 = Eurasian blackbird (*Turdus merula*). A request to reassess the identity of the 1983-85 'ringed plover' photographed by Geoff Moon (and others) at Miranda (UBR 2012/55) had already been acted on and resolved (Scofield 2005, case 33/05).

A report of a greater sand plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*) at Ashley - Saltwater Creek, North Canterbury on 17 Feb 1993 (UBR 2012/68) was the same as the accepted UBR 1993/37 (Medway 2000), and a report of an oriental pratincole (*Glareola maldivarum*) at Lake Ellesmere on 25 Feb 2002 (UBR 2012/18) was the same as the accepted UBR 2002/25 (Medway 2002).

DISCUSSION

Between Jan 2011 and Dec 2012, the Records Appraisal Committee received or considered 175 Unusual Bird Reports. Excluding 2 UBRs of 'unknown' common birds where the RAC was asked to provide an identification, and 7 other 'non-reportable' species, 137 of 166 submitted UBRs were accepted (83%).

The number of UBRs received during 2011-12 (7.3 month⁻¹) greatly exceeded the 2.6 month⁻¹ received during 2008-10 (Miskelly *et al.* 2011). This was partly due to the large number of old records received. Also, greater effort was made to encourage submission of UBRs, particularly when images were posted on the BirdingNZ.net web forum (www.birdingnz.net) or submitted to New Zealand Birds Online (www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz), with submission of UBRs made easier by the development of an online reporting form (www.osnz.org.nz/webforms/online-reporting-form). While the 281% increase in the rate

at which UBRs were received was encouraging, many significant sightings remain unreported, and are therefore absent from the official record of vagrant birds in New Zealand. Submissions of historical records are encouraged, particularly where supported by photographs, sketches or field notes taken at the time.

South Island kokako

The most significant record accepted among those submitted during 2011-12 was the sighting of a South Island kokako at Rainy Creek, Upper Inangahua Valley, Reefton, in 2007, 40 years after the last accepted sighting of this endemic species. There is a complex background to the assessment (and acceptance) of sightings of South Island kokako, influenced by the conservation status of the species, the absence of photographs or other firm evidence to support claimed sightings, and the terms of reference of the RAC. For species otherwise considered extinct, RAC members must unanimously accept a record for it to be considered as verified (the same standard is applied for vagrant species new to New Zealand). If a species is considered to be extant and is already on the New Zealand list, then majority acceptance by RAC members is sufficient (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

There have been 4 iterations of New Zealand bird conservation status rankings: in 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2012 (Hitchmough 2002; Hitchmough *et al.* 2007; Miskelly *et al.* 2008; Robertson *et al.* 2013). The status of South Island kokako has changed each time. In 2002, it was considered 'Nationally critical', but 3 years later this was changed to 'Extinct' as there had been "no confirmed sightings for 45 [sic] years", and "the additional 3 years of no records, despite searching, sufficiently increased the confidence that the taxon was extinct" (Hitchmough *et al.* 2007). The New Zealand Threat Classification System was reviewed in 2007, resulting in a new manual (Townsend *et al.* 2008) where 'Extinct' was defined as "There is no reasonable doubt, after repeated surveys in known or expected habitats...throughout the taxon's historic range, that the last individual has died". The 2008 bird conservation status ranking panel did not believe this criterion had been met for South Island kokako. However, as no new information had been presented to suggest that the bird survived, Miskelly *et al.* (2008) kept its classification of 'Extinct', but added the qualifier 'Designated'. This qualifier covers taxa "that [do] not fit within the criteria provided, and which the Expert Panel [have] designated to the most appropriate listing without full application of the criteria" (Townsend *et al.* 2008).

New evidence for the ongoing survival of South Island kokako was presented at the 2012 OSNZ conference (Milne 2012), about a month before the bird conservation status ranking panel reconvened.

As a result, the panel changed the status of South Island kokako from 'Extinct' to 'Data Deficient' (Robertson *et al.* 2013). This latter category is available for taxa "where information is so lacking that an assessment [requiring population size and trend data] is not possible" (Townsend *et al.* 2008). This designation meant that the RAC subsequently required only majority acceptance (*cf.* unanimous support) to verify a claimed sighting of South Island kokako.

The Rainy Creek South Island kokako sighting (UBR 2013/01e) had previously been assessed by the RAC (as UBR 2009/10) in 2009, when the taxon was considered extinct (*i.e.*, unanimous acceptance was required); the record was not accepted (Miskelly *et al.* 2011). The same sighting was resubmitted along with 10 other claimed South Island kokako sightings in Dec 2012. All were included within UBR 2013/01, with suffixes a-k. UBR 2013/01e was the only sighting that received majority acceptance. Key points from the submission compared to other (not-accepted) South Island kokako submissions were the level of detail in the description, 2 sightings being made over consecutive days, and the presence on 2 observers on the 2nd day, one of whom was familiar with North Island kokako.

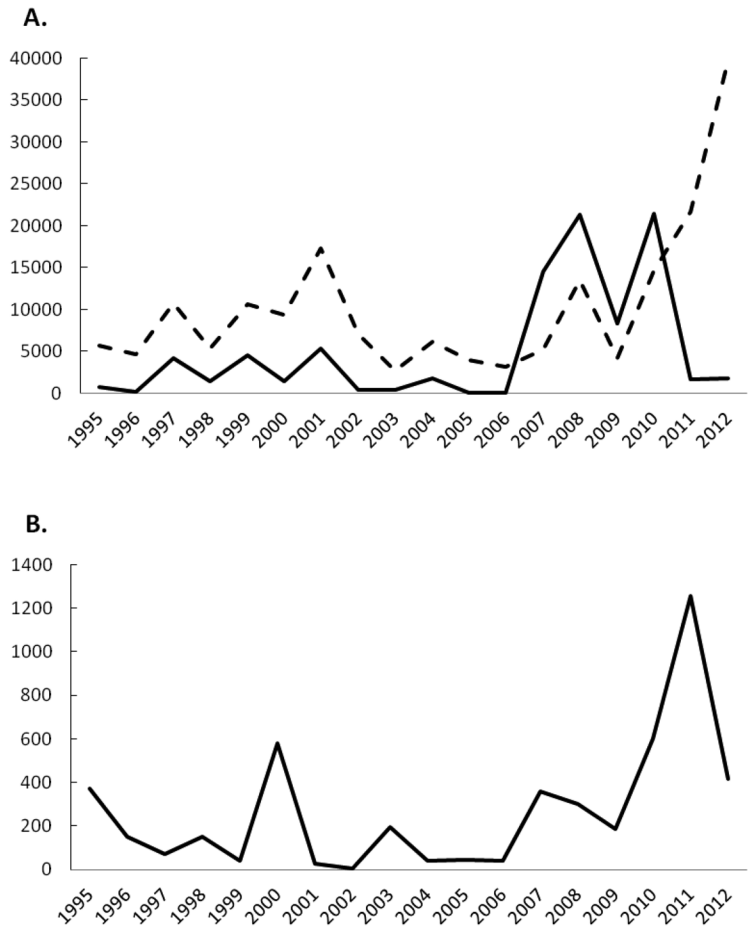
Vagrant species

The acceptance of a sighting of Pacific gull brings the number of bird species recorded naturally from New Zealand since 1800 to 346 (Miskelly *et al.* 2008; Gill *et al.* 2010). Of these, 15 are considered extinct, including 2 since 1960 (South Island snipe [*Coenocorypha iredalei*], and bush wren [*Xenicus longipes*]). In addition, 36 introduced species are currently considered established in the wild in New Zealand, making the current avifauna 367 species (including 26 migrant species and 132 vagrant species).

Of the 45 vagrant species accepted by the RAC in 2011-12, 17 species (37.8%) were holarctic breeding migrants, 15 species (33.3%) breed in Australia, 6 species (13.3%) were from subantarctic islands beyond the New Zealand geopolitical region (including 4 species that breed on Macquarie I), 4 species (8.9%) were tropical Pacific-breeding seabirds, and single species were from Antarctica (emperor penguin), Chile (Juan Fernandez petrel) and the South Atlantic (great shearwater).

Notable influxes of 5 vagrant bird species occurred during 2011-12. Four flocks of plumed whistling ducks were recorded in 2011 or early 2012, compared to about 10 flocks over the previous 140 years. The numbers of gull-billed terns and Australian pelicans that arrived in mid 2011 and mid 2012 respectively were also unprecedented. All 3 species had high breeding success during the period 2010-12 (Fig. 1) following record high rainfall

Fig 1. Aerial counts of 3 bird species from eastern Australian wetlands, 1995-2012. A = plumed whistling duck (solid line) and Australian pelican (dashed line); B = gull-billed tern. All 3 species had population peaks before or concurrent with influxes in New Zealand in 2011 (plumed whistling duck and gull-billed tern) or 2012 (Australian pelican). Data provided by Richard Kingsford and John Porter, Australian Wetlands, Rivers and Landscapes Centre, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales (see Kingsford & Porter 2009 for methods).



in eastern Australia. Driven by the extreme 2010-11 La Niña event, 2010 was the wettest year on record for both Queensland and the Murray-Darling Basin (Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/history/ln-2010-12/rainfall-flooding.shtml, viewed 18 Jul 2013). As the wetlands receded, the breeding flocks dispersed, with some birds crossing the Tasman Sea.

The multiple sightings of great shearwaters in Apr 2011 were part of a larger event, with unprecedented sightings off south-eastern Australia also (Dooley 2011). Several Arctic tern records were from southern New Zealand in Oct-Nov, and it may be that they are regularly present there if searched for at the right time of year.

While variable reporting rates over time makes it difficult to compare rates of occurrences, it is apparent that many of the rarer migratory wader species are being recorded at lower frequencies than 2-3 decades ago. Notable among these are Terek sandpiper (*Tringa cinerea*), common greenshank, grey plover, lesser sand plover and greater sand

plover. Many wader species have experienced large declines in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) due to habitat loss at key staging points in East Asia (Hollands & Minton 2012). These population declines may explain the lower numbers reaching New Zealand, at the extreme margin of the EAAF, and will inevitably result in further wader species (*e.g.*, curlew sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and eastern curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*) being added to the OSNZ reportable species list.

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