

Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee 2017–2018

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Abstract: We report Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) decisions regarding Unusual Bird Reports received between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2018. Among the 160 submissions accepted by the RAC were the first New Zealand records of Macquarie Island shag (*Leucocarbo purpurascens*) and Cox's sandpiper (*Calidris x paramelanotus*), and the first accepted at-sea sightings of blue petrel (*Halobaena caerulea*), Salvin's prion (*Pachyptila salvini*), Antarctic prion (*P. desolata*), and thin-billed prion (*P. belcheri*) from New Zealand coastal waters. We also report the second accepted breeding record (and first successful breeding) for glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), and the second accepted records of red-footed booby (*Sula sula*) and laughing gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*). Other notable records included the first record of nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*) from Campbell Island, and at least 5 northern shovelers (*Anas clypeata*) simultaneously present in June 2018.

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INTRODUCTION

Birds New Zealand (Birds NZ) 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 as accepted New Zealand records in the periodicals *Notornis* or *New Zealand Birds*, or in books and websites published by Birds NZ.

We here report RAC decisions made on Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) received between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2018, following on from the last report of the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2017). These

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include a submission based on historic records 118 years old, but submitted only during the current reporting period.

Results of RAC decisions are posted on the Unusual Bird Report website (<http://rare.birds.org.nz/>) every 2 months. The website was launched in mid-2016, and provides a means for observers to determine whether a UBR has already been submitted for any vagrant bird seen or reported, and (within 2–4 months) to see the RAC decision on the UBR. This biennial report provides more detail about sightings than what is presented on the website, including providing context for the significance of each sighting.

Each Unusual Bird Report received is given a number whereby the first 4 digits represent the year the record was received and the last 3 digits the chronological sequence of receipt within that year. These reference numbers are given for each record below. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow Gill *et al.* (2010), apart from where we follow Heidrich *et al.* (1998) in placing large shearwaters in the genus *Ardenna*, and Pons *et al.* (2005) in using the genus name *Leucophaeus* for laughing gull (*L. atricilla*). Where images of birds reported here have been published on New Zealand Birds Online (NZBO, www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz, viewed 8 Jun 2019) this is mentioned in the text.

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. data*”) if it conflicts with or augments information from published sources. For significant sightings (e.g. 1st or 2nd sightings for the country), we encourage the observers who first found or identified the bird(s) to submit an article for publication in *Notornis*.

DECISIONS ON SUBMITTED SIGHTINGS

Accepted records of vagrant and rare migrant species to New Zealand

Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

An immature female at Miranda stilt pools, Firth of Thames, on 14 May 2017 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2017/039). A female at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, on 1 Nov 2017 (Tim Barnard, Neil Robertson, & Phil Rhodes; UBR 2017/082), with 2 females at nearby New River Estuary on 25 Mar 2018 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2018/039).

There are about 33 accepted records since 1973 (Heather 1987; C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*). Apart from records of single birds from Auckland and the Kapiti coast, the 4 other previous records (of up to 9 birds each) since 2014 were from Canterbury (Miskelly *et al.* 2015, 2017).

Northern shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

All records were of males in full or partial breeding plumage. One at Kaituna Lagoon, Lake Ellesmere on 17 Oct 2017 (Eleanor Gunby & Sandra Wallace; UBR 2018/069); one at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, on 23 Oct 2017, with 2 there on 28 Oct 2017 (Richard Schofield + 7 others; UBR 2017/079; image on NZBO). One at Miranda stilt pools, Firth of Thames, on 19 May 2018 (Russell Cannings + 5 others; UBR 2018/054), with 2 off the Miranda shellbanks on 17 Jun 2018 (Paul Godolphin & Grahame Brind; UBR 2018/068). One at Nelson wastewater treatment plant on 16 Jun, 5 Jul, and 16 Oct 2018 (Nikki McArthur, Rebecca Bowater, and others; UBRs 2018/061, 061A & 104; 6 images on NZBO). One at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 17 Jun and 5 Nov 2018 (Andrew Crossland; UBRs 2018/067 & 111), with 1 on the opposite side of Lake Ellesmere at the same time on 17 June (Matthew Rose + 7 others; UBR 2018/090). One at Porangahau Estuary, Hawke’s Bay on 23 Jun 2018 (Colin Shore & Joanna McVeagh; UBR 2018/063).

The timing of these sightings at widely scattered locations indicate that at least 5 northern shovelers were present in New Zealand during 16–17 Jun 2018. This influx was the most notable vagrant bird incursion during 2017–18. Before this period there were 9 accepted records of northern shoveler from New Zealand, and never more than a single record (of up to 2 birds) per annum (Gill *et al.* 2010, and C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*).

Hoary-headed grebe (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*)

One at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 20 May 2015 (Sandra Wallace + 3 others; UBR 2018/064). One at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 12 Jan 2018 (Peter & Charmaine Field; UBR 2018/005), with 11 birds (4 adults and 7 juveniles) there on 27 Jan 2018 (Matthias Dehling and others; UBR 2018/028). Two at Lake Ellesmere on 17 Jun 2018 (Andrew Crossland & Phil Crutchley; UBR 2018/121).

At least 2 pairs of hoary-headed grebes bred in Southland in the late 1970s (Jardine & Miskelly 2017). No records of hoary-headed grebes were received from New Zealand from 1991 until 2012 (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2013) but they have been recorded from four sites since then. They were first reported at Lake Elterwater in August 2014 (3 birds; Miskelly *et al.* 2015), and breeding has now been confirmed. There are 7 images taken at Lake Elterwater in September 2018 on NZBO.

King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*)

One at Barrytown Beach, West Coast, between 26 Jan and 3 Feb 2005 (Andrew Crossland and others;

UBR 2018/118). One at Taieri River mouth, Otago, on 30 Dec 2017 (Dave Irving; UBR 2018/055). These are the 4th and 6th accepted records from the South Island (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Royal penguin (*Eudyptes schlegeli*)

One at Boulder Beach, Otago Peninsula on 20 Jan 2017 (Ben Smith; UBR 2017/033) is the 11th accepted record from the South Island, and the first since 2006 (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Indian Ocean yellow-nosed mollymawk (*Thalassarche carteri*)

One off Kaikoura on 27 Jul 2007 (Richard Schofield & Gary Melville; UBR 2017/075) and 1 offshore from Golden Bay on 26 Feb 2017 (Steve Wood & Rob Schuckard; UBR 2017/047) were the 2nd and 4th reported sightings of this species from coastal waters near the New Zealand mainland since a pair was reported to be nesting on The Pyramid, Chatham Islands, in 1998–2000 (Medway 2002; Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

Shy mollymawk (*Thalassarche cauta cauta*)

An adult off Stewart Island on 17 Feb 2017 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2017/027; image on NZBO) was the 3rd accepted record of this Australian subspecies in New Zealand, and the 2nd record of a live bird (Medway 2003; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Blue petrel (*Halobaena caerulea*)

One off Otago Peninsula on 14 Jul 2017 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2017/064; image on NZBO) and 1 east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (Oscar Thomas + 5 others; UBR 2018/072; image on NZBO) were the 1st and 2nd accepted at-sea sightings of this species from New Zealand coastal waters. Blue petrels are frequently found dead on New Zealand beaches in winter (e.g. 343 in 1981; Powlesland 1983).

Salvin's prion (*Pachyptila salvini*)

One off Otago Peninsula on 27 Mar 2017 (Matthias Dehling & Graeme Loh; UBR 2017/045; 2 images on NZBO) was the 1st accepted at-sea sighting of this species from New Zealand waters. Salvin's prions are frequently found dead on New Zealand beaches in winter (Powlesland 1989).

Thin-billed prion (*Pachyptila belcheri*)

One off Otago Peninsula on each of 26 Mar and 13 Jul 2018 (Matthias Dehling & Graeme Loh; UBRs 2018/036 & 089), and 1 east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2018/088) were the 1st to 3rd accepted at-sea sightings of this species from New Zealand waters. One was also found alive on Ninety Mile Beach, Far North, on 24 Jul 2018 (Les Feasey + 3 others; UBR 2018/096; image on NZBO). Thin-billed prions are frequently found dead on New Zealand beaches in winter (Powlesland 1989).



Figure 1. Pink-footed shearwater off Kaikoura, 12 Feb 2018 (image by Matt Anderson).

Pink-footed shearwater (*Ardenna creatopus*)

One off Kaikoura on 12 Feb 2018 (Gary Melville, Matt Anderson, + 4 others; UBRs 2018/018 & 059; Fig. 1 and image on NZBO) was the 6th accepted New Zealand record of this South American species.

Red-footed booby (*Sula sula*)

One first observed at the Muriwai gannet colony, West Auckland, on 18 Jan 2017 (Blair Outhwaite & Zoe Lilley; UBR 2017/004) stayed until at least 24 Feb 2017 and was observed and photographed by many people (14 images on NZBO; Fig. 2). This was the 2nd record from New Zealand and the 1st from the mainland (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

The Muriwai bird was a white morph bird with a dark tail, indicating that it was of the eastern tropical Pacific form *S. s. websteri* (Nelson 1978; Harrison 1983; del Hoyo *et al.* 1992).

Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

One photographed off Kapiti Island on 16 Apr 2017 (Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop, & Peter Hodge; UBR 2017/034). Brown boobies probably reach New Zealand every year, with most records from the northern North Island (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Macquarie Island shag (*Leucocarbo purpurascens*)

An adult and an immature collected at the Auckland Islands on 4 and 9 Jul 1901 by Commander John Rolleston of HMS *Archer* were correctly identified at the time (Ogilvie-Grant 1905, where they are listed as '*Phalacrocorax traversi*', which is a junior synonym of *Leucocarbo purpurascens*) and remain in the care of the Natural History Museum, Tring, United Kingdom. The log of the *Archer* and contemporary newspaper articles reveal that the vessel never visited Macquarie Island, and was at the Auckland



Figure 2. Red-footed booby at Muriwai gannet colony, West Auckland, 28 Jan 2017 (image by Paul Kettel).

Islands on the dates that the birds were collected (evidence presented as UBR 2018/115, and see Miskelly & Cooper accepted ms). The specimens were overlooked by all four editions of the checklist of the birds of New Zealand (Fleming 1953; Kinsky 1970; Turbott 1990; Gill *et al.* 2010), and so this is an addition to the New Zealand list.

Lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)

One west of Tiritiri Matangi Island, Hauraki Gulf, on 7 Jan 2018 (Matthew Crawford & Qin Huang; UBR 2018/010). There have been about 40 previous New Zealand records (Gill *et al.* 2010, and C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*), although this was the 1st since 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

Frigatebird sp. (*Fregata* sp.)

A frigatebird of uncertain specific identity (probably a lesser frigatebird) was seen at Takou Bay, Kaeo, Far North, on 19 Feb 2017 (Ian Lawson, Jason & Karen McCondack; UBR 2017/020).

Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

One at Lake Ellesmere on 27 Jun 1987 (George Watola, Paul Sagar, & others; UBR 2017/077), 1 at Lake Forsyth, Canterbury, on 30 Jun 2013 and 15 Oct 2016 (Nick Allen, Peter Reese, & Trevor Raines; UBRs 2017/028 & 016), 1 at Manawatu estuary on 22 Apr 2017 and 31 May and 26 Oct 2018 (Peter Hodge, Imogen Warren, & Lisa Fraser; UBRs 2017/036, 2018/058 & 110, 3 images on NZBO), one at Unahi, Northland, on 10 Jul 2017 (Scott Brooks & family; UBR 2017/057), with 3 there on 11 Aug 2017 (Les Feasey & Kevin Matthews; UBR 2018/095), 3 at Kaimaumu, Northland, on 2 Aug 2018 (Les Feasey; UBR 2018/094, image on NZBO).

Up to 5 little egrets are present in New Zealand most years (Miskelly *et al.* 2013, 2017).

Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

One on Campbell Island on 9 and 10 May and 16 Aug 1942 (Jack Sorensen & Bill McDougall via Colin Miskelly; UBR 2018/102) was the 1st record from any of New Zealand's subantarctic islands. One on Te Werahi Lagoon track, near Cape Reinga, on 8 Jun 2018 (Graeme Loh & Sue Maturin; UBR 2018/066). The nankeen kestrel is an infrequent straggler to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

One on Enderby Island, Auckland Islands, on 5 Feb 2008 (Richard & Suzanne Schofield & others; UBR 2018/106) was the 1st record from any of New Zealand's subantarctic islands (Miskelly *et al.* accepted ms). One at Lake Ellesmere, on 21 Feb 2015, 17 Dec 2016, 23 and 29 Jan and 26 Sep

2017, and 17 Feb 2018 (Philip Crutchley, Michael Ashbee, Matthias Dehling, Kieran Rowe, & Richard Schofield + 4 others; UBRs 2017/058, 049 & 090, & 2018/049), 1 at Ashley-Saltwater Creek estuary, Canterbury, on 15 Dec 2018 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2018/119).

One or 2 sanderlings reach New Zealand most years (Saunders 2015; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Cox's sandpiper (*Calidris x paramelanotus*)

One at Embankment Road, Lake Ellesmere, on 28 Nov 2016 (Eleanor Gunby, Sandra Wallace, & Mike Ashbee; UBR 2017/013), was the 1st record from New Zealand of this enigmatic sandpiper (a stereotyped hybrid between a male pectoral sandpiper *C. melanotus* and a female curlew sandpiper *C. ferruginea*; Christidis *et al.* 1996; Gunby 2018). Four images on NZBO and 2 in Gunby (2018).

Little whimbrel (*Numenius minutus*)

One at Lake Ellesmere, on 1 Dec 1985 to April 1986, with 2 birds present for part of this period (Andrew Crossland + 7 others; UBR 2018/120). One at Miranda, Firth of Thames on 15 Jan 2018 (Russell Cannings + 13 others; UBR 2018/007, 2 images on NZBO). At least 1 little whimbrel reaches New Zealand most years (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Grey-tailed tattler (*Tringa brevipes*)

One at Waitangi West Beach, Chatham Island, on 18 Feb 2017 (Tansy Bliss & Johannes Chambon; UBR 2017/018) was the 4th record from the Chatham Islands (Freeman 1994; Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

Wilson's phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*)

One between Whakaki and Te Paeroa Lagoon, Wairoa, on 18 Mar 2017 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2017/052) was the 5th record from New Zealand, but was likely to have been the same bird that was present at Ahuriri estuary, Napier, from November 2016 to late January 2017 (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

One at Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 17 Jan 2018 (David Melville + 14 others; UBR 2018/009). Grey plovers were reported annually from 2001 to 2005; this is the 3rd record since then (Miskelly *et al.* 2013, 2015, 2017), but postings on BirdingNZ.net suggest that this species is under-reported to the RAC. They were not a reportable species before 2001, with up to 12 birds reported per annum (Saunders 2013).

Red-capped plover (*Charadrius ruficapillus*)

One at Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 9 Jan 2018 (Paul Godolphin + 3 others; UBR 2018/004) was the 1st recorded from New Zealand since 1981 (Lake Ellesmere; C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*). Red-capped plovers were regularly reported, and occasionally bred, in North Canterbury between 1947 and 1981 (Gill *et al.* 2010).

South Polar skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*)

One off Otago Peninsula on 27 Mar 2017 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2017/046) was the 18th accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

Long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

One off Nelson Boulder Bank on 19 Feb 2017 (Steve Wood; UBR 2017/048). Long-tailed skuas are scarce annual migrants to New Zealand, with more than 27 accepted records, including at least 17 birds in 1983 (Melville 1985; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Laughing gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*)

One in breeding plumage photographed 3 km east of Opotiki on 14 Dec 2017 (John & Sue McLennan; UBR 2017/095, image on NZBO) was most likely the same bird that was present around Opotiki the previous summer (i.e. New Zealand's 1st laughing gull; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

The most frequently reported unusual bird species during 2017–18. A major influx of gull-billed terns began in 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013), and a few birds have apparently remained in the country since. All 2017–18 reports were from the South Island: 2 at Awarua Bay, Southland, on 19 Jan 2016 and 22 Apr, and 5 Aug 2017 (Lindy Schneider, Glenda Rees, & Phil Rhodes; UBRs 2017/030, 037 & 074, 2 images on NZBO); 1 at Motueka sandspit on 13 Jan 2017, and 31 Jan and 5 Feb 2018 (Matthias Dehling, Glenn Kincaid, & David Melville; UBRs 2017/006 and 2018/014 & 015); 2 at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 18 Apr 2017 (Grahame Bell; UBR 2017/041); 1 at Lake Forsyth, Canterbury, on 31 May 2017 and 7 May 2018 (Andrew Crossland; UBRs 2017/042 & 2018/117); 3 (possibly 4) at Lake Ellesmere on 17 Jun 2017, with 1 there on 4 Apr 2018 (Eleanor Gunby, Kenny Rose, & Andrew Crossland + 4 others; UBRs 2017/053 & 094 and 2018/024); and 1 at Bell Island shellbank, Waimea Inlet, Tasman District, on 24 Nov 2017 and 28 Jan 2018 (David Melville + 3 others; UBRs 2017/091 & 2018/011).

Gull-billed terns were frequently reported since the 1970s, with individuals apparently staying in one location for up to 14 years (Southey 2017).

White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)

One at Nelson Boulder Bank on 5 Oct 2009, up to 5 birds there 6 Dec 2014 to 31 Dec 2015, and 26 Jan 2017 (Peter & Charmaine Field, & Ian Faulkner; UBRs 2017/071, 070 & 073, 6 images on NZBO), and 3 birds (1 in breeding plumage) at Motueka River bridge on 7 May 2016, with 2 there on 3 Aug 2016 (Peter & Charmaine Field; UBR 2017/072).

White-winged terns are not reportable in the eastern South Island. At least 10 were present on Canterbury coastal wetlands and braided rivers during 2018 (A. Crossland *unpubl. data*) with 6 birds (including 3 in breeding plumage counted on a census of the lower Waimakariri River on 1 Nov 2018 (Popenhagen 2019). Elsewhere in New Zealand a few white-winged black terns are recorded each year (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*)

One at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, on 30 Oct 2017 (Paul Jacques & Finlay Cox; UBR 2017/088), 1 at Lake Rotoiti, Rotorua, on 22 Dec 2017 (Les Feasey + 3 others; UBR 2017/097, 3 images on NZBO), and 1 at Tongariro River mouth, Lake Taupo, on 21 Jan 2018 (Russell & Lisa Cannings; UBR 2018/013, 2 images on NZBO). There are 8 previous accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

One at Ashley estuary, Canterbury, on 30 Nov 2015 (Eleanor Gunby, Sandra Wallace, & Mike Ashbee; UBR 2017/059), one at Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island, on 20 Nov 2016 (Glenda Rees; UBR 2017/002), 1 at sea east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (Matthias Dehling + 7 others; UBR 2018/085), and 1 at Foxton Beach, Manawatu, on 14 Nov 2018 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2018/113).

The Arctic tern is a passage migrant to New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2008; Gill *et al.* 2010), with most birds presumably passing offshore.

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

One at Foxton Beach, Manawatu, on 20 Nov 2016, 31 Oct 2017, and 23 Feb, 4 Mar and 14 Nov 2018 (Imogen Warren, Matthias Dehling, & Phil Battley; UBRs 2017/010 & 080, and 2018/027, 021 & 112; 7 images on NZBO, including 3 of a bird in breeding plumage on 4 Mar 2018). One at Waikanae River estuary on 11 Nov 2017 (Alan & Sam Tennyson; UBR 2018/003, image on NZBO), 1 at Waitangi, Hawke's Bay, on 20 Apr 2018 (Wayne & Margaret Twytle; UBR 2018/046), and 1 in breeding plumage at sea off Otago Peninsula on 6 Oct 2018 (Lei Zhu & Hamish Spencer; UBR 2018/124).

There are about 42 accepted records of common terns from New Zealand, with about a quarter of

these being from the Manawatu estuary/Foxton Beach (C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*).

Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*)

One at Greytown, Wairarapa, on 14 Oct 2018 (Kate Clark; UBR 2018/103). There are about 35 previous records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2017; C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*).

White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)

One photographed at sea offshore from Gisborne on 9 Jan 2018 (Amanda Dubuque & Rebecca Lindsay via Matthew Harris; UBR 2018/080). White-throated needletails are frequent vagrants to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Australian tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

One at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 5 Feb 2017 (Andrew Crossland + 4 others; UBR 2017/043) was the 1st accepted mainland record since 2004 (Scofield 2008). There are about 50 accepted records from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*).

Accepted extra-limital records of New Zealand breeding species**Cape Barren goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*)**

One at Waimauku, Auckland, on 28 Jan 2017 (Amy Robertshaw; UBR 2017/012), and 2 at Omata, New Plymouth, on 5 Jul 2018 (Faye, Rose & Kura Crawford; UBR 2018/071). There are at least two small feral populations of Cape Barren geese in New Zealand, and they are widely held by wildfowl enthusiasts (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Australian wood duck (*Chenonetta jubata*)

Eight at Bell Island oxidation ponds, Waimea Inlet, on 28 Jan 2018 (David Melville + 3 others; UBR 2018/012) and 1 at Westdale Road, Tasman, on 2 Aug 2018 (David Melville; UBR 2018/076). Two images taken in the Waimea district in October 2017 and September 2018 are on NZBO.

These birds are part of the small colonising population that has established in the Waimea Inlet catchment since 2014 (Cook *et al.* 2016; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

New Zealand dabchick (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*)

One or 2 present annually at Nelson oxidation ponds, Wakapuaka, during autumn and winter from 2013 to 2018, with representative UBRs submitted for 26 May – 3 Aug 2013, 27 Apr – 11 Aug 2014 (2 birds

on 17 May, 14 Jun, & 11 Aug 2014), 27 Apr – 4 Jul 2016 (2 birds on 23 May, 6 & 20 Jun, & 4 Jul 2016), 26 Mar – 24 Jun 2017, & 27 Feb – 18 May 2018 (Peter & Charmaine Field + 3 others; UBRs 2017/066 to 069 & 2018/56). A record from June 2015 was reported by Miskelly *et al.* (2017). Two at Lake Killarney, Takaka, on 4 Oct 2017, with 5 there on 27 Aug 2018 (Ken George; UBRs 2018/081 & 081A). Two at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 27 Jan & 17 Feb 2018 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2018/029).

New Zealand dabchicks are widespread in the North Island and have a small population established in the Nelson and Marlborough regions, with breeding at Lake Killarney reported from 2012 (Petyt 2013), and suspected at Blind River irrigation dam, Seddon, in 2015 (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Australasian little grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)

One at St Annes Lagoon, Cheviot, on 26 Apr 2018 (Oscar Thomas & Mike Ashbee; UBR 2018/051) and 1 at Lake Killarney, Takaka, on 28 Jun 2018 (Ken George; UBR 2018/077) were the 1st and 2nd South Island records since 2008 (Miskelly *et al.* 2015). This rare breeding species is now mainly recorded from Northland and Auckland (Miskelly *et al.* 2015; Beauchamp 2019).

Eastern rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes filholi*)

One moulting at Cape Palliser, Wairarapa, on 30 Jan 2017 (Colin Miskelly & Alan Tennyson + 5 others; UBR 2017/019, 3 images on NZBO) was the 1st record from the North Island, and only the 3rd confirmed record from either of the 2 main islands (C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*). Within the New Zealand region, eastern rockhopper penguins breed on Antipodes and Campbell Islands, and the Auckland Islands.

Erect-crested penguin (*Eudyptes sclateri*)

Single birds moulting at Waitangi Beach, Chatham Island, on 24 Jan 2017 (Tansy Bliss; UBR 2017/025), Kaikoura on 29 Jan 2017 (David Seibel & Bob Gress; UBR 2017/017), Mangere Island, Chatham Islands, on 23 Feb 2017 (Tansy Bliss, Johannes Chambon & Gemma Green; UBR 2017/024), and at Akaroa, Canterbury, on 13 Feb 2018 (Rich & Nanette Armstrong; UBR 2018/017).

Erect-crested penguins breed on the Bounty and Antipodes Islands, with at least 1 bird reported moulting on the east coast of the South Island and on the Chatham Islands during January–March each year (Miskelly *et al.* 2006, 2015).

Snares crested penguin (*Eudyptes robustus*)

One on Bench Island, Stewart Island, on 18 Apr 2018 (Ian Southey + 24 others; UBR 2018/047). Two

previous records from on or near Stewart Island were listed by Marchant & Higgins (1990), and there are several records of birds moulting along the east coast of the South Island (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

Yellow-eyed penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*)

One found dead at Waikawa Stream, Horowhenua, on 26 Apr 2018 (Hugh Robertson; UBR 2018/050) was north of their usual range (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

Grey-headed mollymawk (*Thalassarche chrysostoma*)

One found alive at Te One, Chatham Island, in September 1975 (Neil Hutchison via Colin Miskelly; UBR 2018/020) becomes the 1st of 4 records from the Chatham Islands (Imber 1994; Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

Chatham Island mollymawk (*Thalassarche eremita*)

One off Cape Saunders, Otago, on 16 Oct 2016 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2017/005, image on NZBO), and 1 off Mahia Peninsula, Hawke Bay, on 22 Oct 2017 (Matthias Dehling + 3 others; UBR 2017/083). There are 4 earlier records from New Zealand (mainland) coastal waters in the RAC database, and at least 10 earlier unreported records (C.M. Miskelly *unpubl. data*).

Chatham Island taiko (*Pterodroma magentae*)

One at sea c. 40 km west of the Bounty Islands on 19 Oct 2018 (Paul Sagar; UBR 2018/108) is the 1st accepted record away from the Chatham Islands. Several other reports of Chatham Island taiko seen south-west of the Chatham Islands (including 3 images on NZBO) have yet to be submitted to the RAC.

Kermadec petrel (*Pterodroma neglecta*)

One off Piercy Rock, Bay of Islands, on 24 Dec 2000 (George Watola; UBR 2017/081) becomes the 2nd of 3 accepted records from coastal waters around the New Zealand main islands (Medway 2001; Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

Soft-plumaged petrel (*Pterodroma mollis*)

One east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (Oscar Thomas + 5 others; UBR 2018/073) was the 6th accepted record of a free-flying bird north of Cook Strait (Miskelly *et al.* 2017). The only known breeding site in the New Zealand region is on Antipodes Island (Imber 1983).

White-naped petrel (*Pterodroma cervicalis*)

One at sea south of Kaikoura Peninsula on 5 Jan

2018 (Gary Melville, Amrit Kannan, & Kathleen Jogan; UBR 2018/053) was only the 2nd accepted record south of Gisborne (Tennyson & Lock 1998; Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

Broad-billed prion (*Pachyptila vittata*)

Seven east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (Matthias Dehling + 7 others; UBR 2018/086, 3 images on NZBO) were the northernmost record of live birds at sea. Broad-billed prions are regularly recovered from New Zealand beaches, including in Northland (Powlesland 1989).

Antarctic prion (*Pachyptila desolata*)

One off Cape Saunders, Otago, on 13 Nov 2016 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2017/007, image on NZBO), 1 off Otago Peninsula on 29 Jun 2017, 4 there on 26 Mar 2018 (Matthias Dehling; UBRs 2017/061 & 2018/030 to 033), and at least 21 east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (Matthias Dehling + 7 others; UBR 2018/084, 4 images on NZBO). These were the 1st to 3rd accepted at-sea sightings of this species from New Zealand coastal waters. Within the region they breed only on the Auckland Islands (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Black petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*)

One photographed at sea south of Kaikoura Peninsula on 15 Dec 2017 (Alex Berryman; UBR 2018/057) is the southernmost record of black petrel recognised by the RAC.

Stewart Island shag (*Leucocarbo chalconotus*)

Four records from Ashburton River mouth, South Canterbury, during Mar–Jul 2018: 1 on 26 Mar, 3 on 23 Apr, 9 on 22 Jun, and 3 on 21 Jul (Andrew Crossland; UBRs 2018/023, 048, 062 & 070), and 2 at Timaru Harbour on 21 Jul 2018 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2018/074). These records add to the growing evidence of this southern New Zealand species ranging into Canterbury waters (i.e. north of the Waitaki River) (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2015; Crossland 2012).

Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

Two fledglings at Blenheim oxidation ponds, near Wairau Lagoon, on 22 Dec 2016 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2017/008) was the 2nd attempted breeding record and the 1st successful breeding recorded for New Zealand (see Thompson 2015). A record of 3 fledglings at the same Blenheim site in 2015-16 has yet to be submitted to the RAC, but was reported in the March 2016 issue of *Birds New Zealand* (Anon. 2016). In addition to the breeding record, there was 1 at Cape Farewell, Golden Bay, on 16 Dec 2016 (Jo

Shepherd; UBR 2017/014), and 1 found dead at Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island, on 24 Jun 2017 (Matt Jones; UBR 2017/056).

Banded rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*)

One at Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve, Porirua, Wellington, on 28 Jun and 8 Oct 2018 (Graeme Ludlow, Lisa Fraser & Nan Lynn; UBRs 2018/065 & 100) was an unusual record for the southern North Island (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Black stilt (*Himantopus novaeseelandiae*)

A colour-banded bird at Te Awaiti Road, Sandy Bay, South Wairarapa, on 2 Dec 2017 (Diana Chetwin; UBR 2018/006) was beyond their usual range (Marchant & Higgins 1993).

New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*)

One at Ashley River estuary, Canterbury, on 5 Dec 2015 and 28 Aug 2016 (Matthias & Maximilian Dehling, and Beverley Alexander; UBRs 2017/087 & 065). A pair on a nest at Waikanae River estuary, Kapiti coast, on 31 Dec 2017 (Alan & Sam Tennyson; UBR 2018/002) was the 1st recorded breeding from the Wellington region.

Subantarctic skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)

One at Kaikoura Peninsula on 8 Apr 2016 (Ric Else; UBR 2017/032), and 1 at sea off Tutukaka, Northland, on 21 Jul 2018 (Matthias Dehling + 10 others; UBR 2018/107). Within the New Zealand region, subantarctic skuas breed on the Chatham Islands and the subantarctic islands, with a few in Fiordland and the Stewart Island region (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Brown noddy (*Anous stolidus*)

At least 20 at the Kermadec Islands (various locations from L'Esperance Rock to and including Raoul Island), 29 Mar – 3 Apr 2016 (Tim Barnard + 4 others; UBR 2017/054) confirms the ongoing presence of this rare New Zealand breeding species at the Kermadec Islands (Veitch *et al.* 2004).

Black noddy (*Anous minutus*)

One at the Chicken Islands, Northland, on 18 Dec 2018 (Edin Whitehead + 3 others; UBR 2018/122). Within the New Zealand region, black noddies breed only on the Kermadec Islands (Veitch *et al.* 2004).

Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscata*)

One roosting on Rosemary Rock, Three Kings

Islands, on 23 Nov 2017 (Peter Frost, Neil Fitzgerald, & Richard Robinson; UBR 2018/060). Within the New Zealand region, sooty terns breed only on the Kermadec Islands (Veitch *et al.* 2004).

Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittata*)

One east of Cape Saunders, Otago, on 30 Sep 2018 (Steve Wood, Tim Barnard & others; UBR 2018/105) is the 1st accepted record of this subantarctic species north of Foveaux Strait. A published record from the Chatham Islands was not accepted by the then Rare Birds Committee (Medway 2000; Bell & Bell 2002).

Barbary dove (*Streptopelia risoria*)

One at Seadown, Timaru, on 23 Jan 2017 (Peter Dovey; UBR 2017/011). There have been numerous sightings of Barbary doves around Christchurch, but no others from South Canterbury (eBird, viewed 8 Jun 2019).

Sacred kingfisher (*Todiramphus sanctus*)

One at Kairakau, Chatham Island on 5 Mar 2018 (Colin Miskelly + 5 others; UBR 2018/045) was the 5th record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

Common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*)

One at New Brighton, Christchurch, on 9 Apr 2018 (John Stewart; UBR 2018/043), and 2 at Westmorland, Christchurch, on 4 Oct 2018 (Cheryl Skene; UBR 2018/099). Mynas are common in the northern North Island, but are not recognised as having an established population in the South Island (Higgins *et al.* 2006).

Cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*)

One at Church Road, Kaitaia, on 5 Mar 2018 (George & Julia Watola; UBR 2018/022) is the northernmost accepted record of cirl bunting in New Zealand.

Records not accepted

Some of the following records may have been genuine, but were insufficiently documented to be accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee. At least 22 were considered to be misidentifications.

Little spotted kiwi (*Apteryx owenii*)

One reported calling from Wellington (between Karori Cemetery and Skyline Walkway) on 14 Mar 2018 (UBR 2018/041) was considered more likely to be a morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*).

Chukor (*Alectoris chukar*)

One photographed at Coatesville, North Auckland, on 10 Sep 2018 (UBR 2018/091) was identified from images as a red-legged partridge (*A. rufa*).

Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)

A teal at Tutaki Road, Palmerston North, on 28 Oct 2016 (UBR 2018/083), and 1 at Little Waihi estuary, Bay of Plenty, on 6 Feb 2017 (UBR 2017/015) were probably chestnut teals.

Northern pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Two reported from Washdyke, Timaru, on 12 Nov 2017 (UBR 2017/089).

Northern shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

One reported from Kaituna Lagoon, Lake Ellesmere on 17 Oct 2017 (UBR 2017/086). Images showed this bird to be a pale male Australasian shoveler (*A. rhynchosotis*); however, a male northern shoveler was seen at the same location on the same date. Multiple observers visited on this date and over subsequent days, noting the presence of more than 10 pale male Australasian shovelers, including this bird.

Western rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes chrysocome*)

One reported at sea south of Stewart Island on 10 Mar 2018 (UBR 2018/079) was identified from images as a Fiordland crested penguin (*E. pachyrhynchus*).

Erect-crested penguin (*Eudyptes sclateri*)

One reported from Point Kean, Kaikoura Peninsula, on 6 Feb 2013 (UBR 2017/093) was identified from images as a Fiordland crested penguin. One reported at sea south of Stewart Island on 22 Feb 2018 (UBR 2018/078) was identified from a photograph as a Snares crested penguin.

Chatham Island mollymawk (*Thalassarche eremita*)

One reported from Cook Strait on 11 Dec 2015 (UBR 2017/084), and 1 reported off Otago Peninsula on 26 Mar 2018 (UBR 2018/038) were both identified from photographs as Salvin's mollymawks (*T. salvini*).

Antarctic petrel (*Thalassoica antarctica*)

Several birds reported 300 km south-west of the Chatham Islands on 4 Jan 2016 were probably Antarctic petrels (UBR 2017/029).

MacGillivray's prion (*Pachyptila macgillivrayi*)

A prion photographed off Otago Peninsula on 29

Jun 2017 (UBR 2017/061) was assessed to be an Antarctic prion.

Salvin's prion (*Pachyptila salvini*)

Prions reported off Otago Peninsula on 27 Mar and 14 Jul 2017, and 26 Mar 2018 (UBRs 2017/044 & 085 and 2018/037), and up to 5 reported east of the Poor Knights Islands on 7 Jul 2018 (UBR 2018/087) were either Salvin's prions or Antarctic prions.

Antarctic prion (*Pachyptila desolata*)

One reported off Kaikoura Peninsula on 11 Jun 2017 (UBR 2017/051) was identified from images as a fairy prion. Prions reported off Otago Peninsula on 29 Jun and 14 Jul 2017, and 26 Mar 2018 (2 birds) (UBRs 2017/060 & 062 and 2018/034 & 035) were probably Antarctic prions.

Thin-billed prion (*Pachyptila belcheri*)

One reported off Otago Peninsula on 29 Jun 2017 (UBR 2017/063).

Fulmar prion (*Pachyptila crassirostris*)

One reported off Otago Peninsula on 29 Apr 2018 (UBR 2018/052).

Manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*)

A distant shearwater photographed off Gisborne on 21 Oct 2017 (UBR 2018/001) was probably a Manx shearwater.

White-bellied storm petrel (*Fregatta grallaria*)

A storm petrel photographed off Cape Brett, Far North, on 3 Apr 2017 (UBR 2017/050) was too distant to identify conclusively, but was probably a white-bellied storm petrel.

New Zealand king shag (*Leucocarbo carunculatus*)

A *Leucocarbo* shag on Barney's Rock, Kaikoura on 6 Nov 2011 (UBR 2018/075) was considered most likely to be this species, but the information provided was insufficient to rule out pied morph Stewart Island shag.

Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

An egret reported at Blueskin Bay, Otago, on 12 Sep 2018 (UBR 2018/092) was probably a little egret.

Reef heron (*Egretta sacra*), white morph

A 'white' heron at Kohukohu wharf, Hokianga Harbour, 9 May 2014 (UBR 2017/096) was identified from photographs as a white-faced heron (*E. novaehollandiae*) with aberrant pale plumage.

Haast's eagle (*Aquila moorei*)

One reported at Bethell's Road, Waitakere Ranges, in 1964 (UBR 2017/023).

Unidentified bird of prey

An unidentified bird of prey at Urupukapuka Island, Bay of Islands, on 5 Jan 2017 (UBR 2017/001) was considered to have been a swamp harrier (*Circus approximans*).

Black kite (*Milvus migrans*)

One reported at Waitiki Landing, Parengarenga Harbour, on 7 Apr 2018 (UBR 2018/042).

Black falcon (*Falco subniger*)

One reported at Diamond Lake, Wanaka, on 22 Jan 2018 (UBR 2018/008).

Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

One reported in the Hauraki District on 19 Jan 2017 (UBR 2017/022).

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

One reported at Point Kean, Kaikoura Peninsula, on 27 Mar 2004 (UBR 2017/092).

Subantarctic skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)

A large skua reported off Kaikoura Peninsula on 17 Mar 2018 (UBR 2018/097) was probably a subantarctic skua.

Pacific gull (*Larus pacificus*)

Two reported from Punakaiki on 15 Feb 2018 (UBR 2018/019) were identified from a photograph as southern black-backed gulls (*L. dominicanus*).

White tern (*Gygis alba*)

One reported at Petone Beach on 28 Feb 2017 (UBR 2017/021).

White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)

One reported from Otago Harbour on 2 Mar 2018 (UBR 2018/044) was identified from photographs as an immature black-fronted tern (*C. albobristatus*).

Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittata*)

One photographed off Otago Peninsula on 6 Oct 2018 (UBR 2018/109) was identified from the images as a common tern, and was resubmitted as UBR 2018/124 (common tern, accepted record).

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

One reported at Motueka on 13 Jan 2017 (UBR 2018/025), single birds reported from Ashley River estuary, Canterbury, on 3 Oct 2017 and 6 Nov 2018 (UBRs 2018/026 & 123), and 1 reported from Foxton Beach on 7 Apr 2018 (UBR 2018/040) were all identified from photographs as immature or non-breeding white-fronted terns.

Crested tern (*Sterna bergii*)

One reported from Waikanae Beach on 7 May 2017 (UBR 2017/040).

Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*)

One probable record from the Longwood Range, Southland, on 28 Jun 2017 (UBR 2017/055) provided insufficient detail for full acceptance.

White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)

One reported from Takamatua, Akaroa, on 25 Sep 2018 (UBR 2018/093).

Fork-tailed swift (*Apus pacificus*)

One reported from Hillsborough, Christchurch, on 18 Jul 2017 (UBR 2017/076).

Rock wren (*Xenicus gilviventris*)

One reported at Cape Palliser, Wairarapa coast, on 2 Feb 2017 (UBR 2017/038).

South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*)

One reported on the Heaphy Track, between Lewis and Heaphy huts, on 2 Jan 2017 (UBR 2017/003).

Stitchbird (*Notiomystis cincta*)

One reported on the Hollyford Track, Fiordland, on 1 Mar 2017 (UBR 2017/026) was identified from a photograph as a male tomtit (*Petroica macrocephala*).

Regent bowerbird (*Sericulus chrysocephalus*)

One reported from Welcome Bay, Tauranga, on 23 Apr 2017 (UBR 2017/035) was considered most likely to be a common myna that had lost its head feathers, revealing the yellow skin underneath.

Black currawong (*Strepera fuliginosa*)

One reported from Maraenui, Napier, on 12 Nov 2018 (UBR 2018/114) was identified from a photograph of the hand-held bird as being a soot-stained common myna.

Satin flycatcher (*Myiagra cyanoleuca*)

One reported from the Turanganui River bank, Gisborne, on 23 Aug 2018 (UBR 2018/082) was considered likely to have been a welcome swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*).

Fernbird (*Bowdleria punctata*)

One reported from Flat Point, Wairarapa, on 18 Feb 2018 (UBR 2018/016) was identified from a photograph as a juvenile yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*).

Cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*)

One reported from Kumeu, Auckland, on 28 Apr 2017 (UBR 2017/031). Cirl buntings are not a reportable species in the eastern South Island; however, 1 reported from Lake Hawea, Otago, on 1 Oct 2017 (UBR 2017/078) was identified from a photograph as a female yellowhammer.

Records of species not requiring RAC verification

A Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) was at Matahui Point, near Katikati, Bay of Plenty, on 26 Dec 2016 (UBR 2017/009), a bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*) was at Tapu Bay, Kaiteriteri, Tasman Bay, on 4 Dec 2018 (UBR 2018/116), 2 cirl buntings were at Aniseed Valley, Richmond, Nelson on 2 Oct 2018, with 1 at Angelus Ave, Richmond, on the same date (UBRs 2018/098 & 101).

DISCUSSION

Between January 2017 and December 2018, the Records Appraisal Committee received 221 Unusual Bird Reports. Excluding 5 reports of 'non-reportable' species, 160 of 216 submitted UBRs were accepted (74%). This compares with an acceptance rate of 84% for 506 submissions during April 2008 to December 2016 (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017). The number of UBRs received during 2017–18 (9.2 month⁻¹) was considerably higher than the 5.8 month⁻¹ received during 2015–16 (Miskelly *et al.* 2017), and the total of 124 submissions in 2018 was the most ever received by the RAC in a calendar year. The lower acceptance rate in 2017–18 was partly due to the large number of misidentified common species reported by inexperienced birders, no doubt facilitated by the ease of online reporting on the publicly accessible Birds NZ website. These records are welcomed, and fortunately the high proportion of photographs submitted aided the correct identification of many of these common species.

The most notable records assessed during 2017–18 were the addition of 2 further taxa to the

New Zealand list (Macquarie Island shag and Cox's sandpiper). The shag record was based on 2 extant specimens collected in 1901 and correctly identified in a publication in 1905 (Ogilvie-Grant 1905; Miskelly & Cooper accepted ms), and it is not known why the record has been overlooked subsequently. This record increases the number of bird species recorded naturally from New Zealand since AD 1800 by 1 to 353 (Miskelly *et al.* 2017; Gill *et al.* 2010). Of these, 15 are considered extinct. In addition, 36 introduced species are currently considered established in the wild in New Zealand, making the current avifauna 374 species (including 26 migrant species and 139 vagrant species).

Cox's sandpiper is a hybrid between two species that regularly reach New Zealand (pectoral sandpiper and curlew sandpiper), therefore the acceptance of this record does not alter the total number of species recorded from New Zealand. Cox's sandpiper received much attention in Australia during the 1980s (e.g. Parker 1982; Cox 1987, 1989). However, interest in the birds waned following genetic confirmation of their hybrid origin (Christidis *et al.* 1996). They are not considered reportable by the Birds Australia Records Committee (<https://www.birdlife.org.au/conservation/science/rarities-committee>; viewed 29 May 2019), and so the rate at which they occurred or were detected in Australia in recent decades is unknown. The occurrence of a Cox's sandpiper in New Zealand in 2016 is particularly surprising when one of the parent species (curlew sandpiper) has undergone a substantial decline since the 1980s (Dawes 2011; Riegen 2017). However, it is unknown whether declining parent populations would increase the rate of hybridisation (e.g. if there is a shortage of potential mates at a site) or lead to a decreased rate of hybridisation (e.g. if contracting core ranges lead to non-overlapping breeding distributions of the parent species).

New Zealand's 2nd red-footed booby record followed less than a year after the 1st (Miskelly *et al.* 2017), and the single bird involved was much more accessible to birders. The 2017 bird was not only at a much-visited public viewing site (the Muriwai gannet colony), but was consistently present for more than 5 weeks. This resulted in it being one of the most viewed and photographed vagrant birds ever to reach New Zealand, possibly 2nd only to an emperor penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri* at Pekapeka Beach in 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2012). The 2017 bird was also notable in apparently being *Sula sula websteri* from the eastern tropical Pacific, rather than *S. s. rubripes* from Polynesia and northern Queensland, and so represents an example of extreme vagrancy.

The most notable incursion during 2017–18 was the arrival of at least 5 northern shovelers

(there were likely to have been more, as only the easily-recognised drakes in nuptial plumage were reported). Birds were 1st reported in October 2017 (at Lake Ellesmere and Invercargill), the incursion peaked in June 2018, and the last reported sighting was at Lake Ellesmere in November 2018. At least 2 birds were reported from South Australia during the same period (Birdlife Australia Rarities Committee Index of Cases, viewed 29 May 2019), and 1 from Norfolk Island in June 2017 (AJDT pers. obs., 6 images on NZBO), and so there is some evidence that the incursion was part of a wider Australasian phenomenon.

Another feature of the 2017–18 reporting period was the 1st accepted at-sea sightings of blue petrel, Salvin's prion, Antarctic petrel, and thin-billed prion from New Zealand coastal waters. All these species are frequently wrecked on New Zealand beaches (Powlesland 1989). The records of live birds at sea is partly due to multiple pelagic birding trips being undertaken in autumn and winter and, particularly, the use of modern photographic equipment to capture high quality images allowing the subsequent identification of difficult species such as prions.

Of the 35 vagrant species accepted by the RAC in 2017–18, 10 species (28.6%) were Holarctic breeding migrants (3 Eurasian, 1 North American, 6 either), 8 species (22.9%) breed in Australia, 5 species (14.3%) were probably from the southern Indian Ocean, 3 species (8.6%) were from south-east Asia, and a further 3 species were from Macquarie Island. Two species (brown booby and lesser frigatebird) were probably from the tropical Pacific. Single species arrived from Antarctica (South Polar skua), Chile (pink-footed shearwater), the eastern tropical Pacific (red-footed booby), and North or Central America (laughing gull). This continues the pattern of Holarctic migratory species, followed by Australian species, being the main sources of vagrant bird records in New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017).

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