

## Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee 2013-2014

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**Abstract** We report Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) decisions regarding Unusual Bird Reports received between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2014. Among the 126 submissions accepted by the RAC were the 1<sup>st</sup> New Zealand records of buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tringites subruficollis*) and dusky woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*), the 2<sup>nd</sup> accepted record of American golden plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*), and the 3<sup>rd</sup> accepted record of Franklin's gull (*Larus pipixcan*). Other notable records included a breeding record of white-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) from Marlborough, the 1<sup>st</sup> accepted records of little black shag (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) from Stewart Island and the Snares Islands, the 1<sup>st</sup> accepted records of nankeen night heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) and Australian coot (*Fulica atra*) from the Snares Islands, and the 1<sup>st</sup> accepted record of eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*) from Campbell Island. In addition, notable influxes of Pacific heron (*Ardea pacifica*), little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and white-winged black tern occurred during 2013-14. The RAC also reconsidered New Zealand's only previously accepted sighting of black falcon (*Falco subniger*, reported from Gisborne in 1983), and determined that the record can no longer be accepted and that this species should be removed from the New Zealand list.

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### INTRODUCTION

Birds New Zealand (BNZ) 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 BNZ.

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

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each case. Each UBR is given a number whereby the first 4 digits represent the year the record was received and the last 2 digits the chronological sequence of receipt within that year. These reference numbers are given under each entry for each species below. Collated comments from RAC members are forwarded to the convenor (C.M. Miskelly) to draft a response to 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 January 2013 and 31 December 2014, following on from the last report of the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). These included submissions based on sightings made up to 30 years ago. 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 published sources. For significant sightings (*e.g.*, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> sightings for the country), we encourage the observers who first found or identified the bird(s) to submit an article for publication in *Notornis*.

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](http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz), viewed 30 March 2015) this is mentioned in the text.

## DECISIONS ON SUBMITTED SIGHTINGS

### Accepted records of species vagrant to New Zealand

In addition to vagrant species, the following list also includes 2 skua and 1 tern species regarded as migrants through or to New Zealand seas, individuals of which rarely reach our coasts.

#### Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

A female at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 2 February 2005 and a male there on 27 December 2005; Andrew Crossland (UBRs 2013/88 & 2013/86 respectively). A female at St Annes Lagoon, Cheviot, on 27 February 2007; Andrew Crossland, Niall Mugan & Brendon Kircher (UBR 2013/89). A female at Queen Elizabeth Park, Raumati, on 8 November 2014; Tony Fluerty (UBR 2014/61). A female at Mangere, Auckland, on 26 December 2014; Oscar Thomas & Kathleen Thomas-Moore (UBR 2014/72; 2 images on NZBO). After a major influx in 1983-86, and few records in the 1990s (Heather 1987; Gill *et al.* 2010), chestnut-breasted shelducks were recorded 15 times from 2000 to February 2007, mainly from Canterbury (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2013). There was a gap of more than 7 years before the last 2 sightings reported here.

#### Australian white-eyed duck (*Aythya australis*)

A male at Kaiapoi Lakes, North Canterbury, on 20 March 2013; Beverley Alexander (UBR 2013/31). This is likely to be the same bird that was present at the site in April 2012 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). Seven previous records accepted since 1973 (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### Hoary-headed grebe (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*)

Three at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 10 August 2014; Ian Williams (UBR 2014/55; 2 images on NZBO). Hoary-headed grebes were widely reported in low numbers from the Snares Islands to Northland 1975-91; this is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record since then (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### Providence petrel (*Pterodroma solandri*)

An estimated 5 seen at sea between Macauley and Curtis Islands, Kermadec Islands, on 26 July 2002 (Paul Scofield; UBR 2014/04). Fifth accepted record for New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

#### Juan Fernandez petrel (*Pterodroma externa*)

One at sea 20 km off East Cape on 18 February 2013 (Tony Crocker; UBR 2013/26) was the 7<sup>th</sup> accepted New Zealand record and the 2<sup>nd</sup> seen at sea (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### Great shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*)

One off Mayor Island on 10 November 2013 (Blair Mcleod; UBR 2013/71) was the 7<sup>th</sup> accepted record for New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### Australian pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)

Seven at Te Atatu Peninsula, Waitemata Harbour on 11 March 2013; Bridget Mintoft (UBR 2013/23); 1 flying over Whangarei Harbour on 11 April 2013; Nigel Miller (UBR 2013/38); 1 flying over Ruakaka River on 11 September 2013; Alvin Setiawan (UBR 2013/62). At least 14 pelicans arrived in New Zealand in August 2012 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013), with 18 reported together in April 2013, and at least one surviving until at least March 2015 (ACC, *pers. obs.*).

#### Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

An immature bird at the Muriwai gannet colony on 12 December 2014 (Geelen Niels; UBR 2014/67). This species probably reaches New Zealand every year (Gill *et al.* 2010).

#### Pacific heron (*Ardea pacifica*)

One at Otapiri/Hedgehope, Southland, on 26 May 2013; John Hawkins (UBR 2013/43); 1 at Wayby Valley Road, near Wellsford, on 12 September 2013; Phil Hammond & Eric Forsyth; (UBR 2013/67; 5 images on NZBO); 1 at Athol, Otago, on 8 December 2013; Sue Bryer (UBR 2014/03); 1 in the Oreti River Valley, Southland, on 27 April 2014; Neil Robertson (UBR 2014/34); 1 in 88 Valley, Wakefield, Nelson,

on 7 May 2014; Don Cooper and L. Greuber (UBR 2014/35). These are the 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> accepted records (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*), although 2 or all of the Southland and Otago sightings may have been of the same bird.

#### **Plumed egret (*Ardea intermedia*)**

One at Tomahawk Lagoon, Dunedin, on 7 & 10 November 2014; Bruce McKinlay & Andrew Austin (UBR 2014/69). There are 17 previously accepted New Zealand records (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*)**

One at Ambury Park, Mangere, Auckland, on 14 April 2013; Scott Fowler (UBR 2013/35); 1 at Tomahawk Lagoon, Dunedin, on 4 May 2013; Dave and Janet York via Jim Wilson (UBR 2014/37); 1 at Balclutha on 17 March 2014; Richard & Suzanne Schofield (UBR 2014/22); 1 at Lake Forsyth, Canterbury, on 12 June 2014; Philip Crutchley (UBR 2014/45); 1 at Wattle Downs, Manukau Harbour, on 27 August 2014; Jampa Kalden (UBR 2014/57). There was an influx of little egrets and white herons *Ardea modesta* (the latter not a reportable species) into New Zealand from mid-2013, of which only these 5 were submitted as UBRs (note 4 images of a further 3 birds at 2 locations on NZBO). Up to 5 little egrets are present in New Zealand most years, though typically few are reported to the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)**

One at Ohiwa Harbour, Bay of Plenty, on 11 April 2013; George Herman (UBR 2013/40); 2 at Little Waihi, near Maketu, on 26 October 2013; Tim Barnard & Loretta Garrett (UBR 2013/83); 2 at Wainono Lagoon, South Canterbury, on 20 December 2013; Mary Thompson via Jim Wilson (UBR 2014/39); 1 south of Picton on 31 March 2014; Ben Bell (UBR 2014/23). In addition to these 4 sightings, glossy ibises were regularly present at Wairau Lagoons, Blenheim (up to 4 birds), and the Bexley and Travis wetlands in Christchurch (a single bird; 7 images on NZBO taken during 2013-14).

#### **Great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*)**

One at Little Waihi, near Maketu, on 1 April 2013; Tim Barnard (UBR 2013/37; 2 images on NZBO). This is the 19<sup>th</sup> accepted record from New Zealand and the first since 2006 (Scofield 2008).

#### **Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)**

One at the tip of Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 23 October 2012; Philip Crutchley & Andrew Crossland (UBR 2013/09); 1 at Crescent Island, Lake Ellesmere, on 7 December 2013, with 2 there on 9 & 15 January 2014; Philip Crutchley & Andrew Crossland (UBR 2014/51); 1 at Ashley-Saltwater Creek estuary, North Canterbury, on 28 December 2013; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2013/85). One or



**Fig. 1.** Buff-breasted sandpiper at South Kaipara Head, 1 April 2014. Photograph by Ian Southey.

two sanderlings reach New Zealand most years (Saunders 2015), though few of these are reported to the RAC.

#### **Pectoral sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)**

Two at Hapupu, Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham Island, on 7 February 2013, and 7 there on 7 April (Tansy Bliss & Nicki McArthur; UBRs 2013/33 & 2013/34). There were 3 present at the same site on 10 December 2012 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013), and therefore these early 2013 sightings are an extension of the 5<sup>th</sup> record from the Chatham Islands.

#### **Buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*)**

One at Papakanui Sandspit, South Kaipara Head, on 20 March 2014 (Helen Smith & Gwenda Pulham; UBR 2014/27, see Fig. 1, plus 7 images on NZBO). This is the first accepted record from New Zealand.

#### **Eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*)**

One at Tucker Cove, Campbell Island, on 1 January 2013 (Caitlin Kroeger & Rachael Orben via Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/53); 1 at Bather's Beach, Stewart Island, on 12 March 2013, then at nearby Mill Creek 14-19 March (Angela Oliver & Matt Jones; UBRs 2013/27 & 2013/51). First accepted record for Campbell Island, and 2<sup>nd</sup> for Stewart Island (specimen OR.022684 in the Te Papa collection was found on Ernest Islands, Stewart Island, in November 1976).

#### **Common sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)**

One at Little Waihi, Bay of Plenty, on 23 March 2013 (Tim Barnard; UBR 2013/36); 1 on the Oreti River north of Lumsden, Southland, on 20 December 2014; Glenda Rees (UBR 2014/66; 2 images on NZBO). There are now 38 accepted records from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).





Fig. 2. American golden plover at Little Waihi, Bay of Plenty, 12 January 2011. Photograph by Tim Barnard.

#### **Common greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)**

One at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 22 October 2012; Andrew Crossland, Philip Crutchley & Niall Mugan (UBR 2014/50); 1 at Manawatu River estuary on 17 January 2013; Alan Tennyson (UBR 2013/80; 5 images on NZBO); 1 at Lake Ellesmere, on 9 September 2013, 15 January and 16 & 22 February 2014; Philip Crutchley, Andrew Crossland, Beverley Alexander, Kenny Rose, Sheila Petch, Jan Walker, Tom Hitchin, Robbie Hewson & Niall Mugan (UBR 2014/49). Formerly a regular vagrant to New Zealand, there have been just 6 greenshanks sightings accepted since 2002 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013 and data presented here).

#### **Terek sandpiper (*Tringa cinerea*)**

One at Waipu Cove, Northland, on 18 November 2004 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2013/87); 1 at Awarua Bay, Southland, on 9 March 2013 (Phil Rhodes; UBR 2013/22); 1 at Motueka sandspit, Tasman Bay, on 19 March 2014 (David Melville; UBR 2014/19). Formerly a regular vagrant to New Zealand, these are the first sightings accepted since 2003 (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

#### **American golden plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*)**

One at Little Waihi, Bay of Plenty on 4 January 2011 (Tim Barnard; UBR 2013/82, see Fig. 2, plus 7 images on NZBO). This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> accepted New Zealand record (see Guest 1992).

#### **Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)**

One at Farewell Spit on 14 June 2014; David Melville & Ken George (UBR 2014/43). Grey plovers were reported annually from 2001 to 2005; this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> record since then (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)**

One at Farewell Spit on 15 February 2014; David Melville (UBR 2014/15). This species is considered an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

#### **Greater sand plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)**

One at Awarua Bay, Southland, on 25 March 2014; Phil Rhodes (UBR 2014/21). This species is considered an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

#### **Oriental dotterel (*Charadrius veredus*)**

A juvenile at Port Waikato on 29 September 2013 (Karen Opie; UBR 2013/65; 5 images on NZBO) was the 18<sup>th</sup> record from New Zealand, but the first since 2000 (Medway 2001a).

#### **South Polar skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*)**

One c. 5 km off Nancy Sound, Fiordland, on 25 February 2013; Tony Crocker (UBR 2013/25). This is the 17<sup>th</sup> accepted record from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

#### **Long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)**

One at Foxton Beach on 24 April 2014; Imogen Warren (UBR 2014/29; 2 images on NZBO). Long-tailed skuas are regarded as scarce annual migrants to New Zealand, with more than 25 accepted New Zealand records (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Franklin's gull (*Larus pipixcan*)**

One in breeding plumage at Tuamarina, Marlborough, on 5 July 2013 (Mike Bell, Brian Bell, Biz Bell, Paul Garner-Richards, Andrew & Dianne John, Heather Smithers, Will Parsons & Beverley Alexander; UBR 2013/63). This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> accepted New Zealand record (see Onley & Schweigman 2004; Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

#### **Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)**

A major influx of gull-billed terns occurred (or began) in winter 2011, with records throughout the country, including flocks of up to 16 birds (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). South Island sightings continued into 2013 & 2014, and included the following: 2 at Crescent Island, Lake Ellesmere, on 30 January 2013 (Andrew Crossland & Tom Hitchon; UBR 2013/12); 2 at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 30 July 2013 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2013/57); 4 at Crescent Island and Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 9 & 15 January & 4 February 2014 (Andrew Crossland; UBRs 2014/05 & 2014/16); 1 at Motueka sandspit on 14 February 2014 (David Melville; UBR 2014/20); 1 at Te Oka Bay, Banks Peninsula, on 29 May 2014 (Matt Rose, Paul Devlin & Nick Singleton; UBR 2014/48); 1 at Farewell Spit on 7 November 2014 (Don Cooper, Steve Wood & Willie Cook; UBR 2014/65). There was also an earlier sighting reported of a bird at Miranda on 12 December 2007 (George Watola; UBR 2013/66), which becomes the 13<sup>th</sup> accepted record for New Zealand.

#### **White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)**

A pair bred on the Upper Acheron River, Marlborough, between 10 & 31 December 2012 (Mike Bell; UBR 2013/61); the 2 eggs present on 29

December were taken by a predator by 31 December. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> breeding record for New Zealand (Stead 1927; Pierce 1974). Other sightings included 1 in breeding plumage at Mararoa/Waiau weir, Southland, on 27 October 2013 (Mary Thompson via Jim Wilson; UBR 2014/40); 1 at Lake Onoke, Wairarapa, on 4 January 2014 (Joanna McVeagh & Colin Shore; UBR 2014/01); 1 at Tomahawk Lagoon, Dunedin, on 9 November 2014 (Jason Wilder; UBR 2014/60).

#### **Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

One at Manawatu estuary on 25 March 2010 (Phil Battley; UBR 2013/50; 3 images on NZBO), and another there on 14 November 2014 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2014/62). 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 Manawatu estuary on 29 December 2012 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2013/81; 5 images on NZBO, including 3 taken in January 2013), presumably the same bird was still there on 9 February 2013 (Robert Handbury-Sparrow; UBR 2013/21), and another on 28 November 2014 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2014/68). There are about 33 records of common terns from New Zealand, with about a quarter of the records being from the Manawatu estuary (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). They probably occur annually in New Zealand (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 at Waipu estuary, Northland, on 25 March 14 (Susan Steedman; UBR 2014/24) stayed until at least January 2015 and was seen by many observers (4 images on NZBO). There are 12 previous accepted records (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*)**

The fragmentary remains of a beach-wrecked bird found on Waikanae Beach on 9 June 1984 were identified 29 years later by Te Papa staff using DNA techniques (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2013/79; Te Papa specimen OR.29845). The sequence was identified using the identification engine on the Barcode of Life Data System (BOLD; Ratnasingham & Hebert 2007), where it was 99.6% identical to the reference sequence for *C. novaehollandiae*. There are now 20 accepted records nationwide (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

#### **Dusky woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*)**

One at Oban, Stewart Island, on 27 September 2014 (Satoshi Kakishima & Tomoe Morimoto; UBR



**Fig. 3.** Dusky woodswallow near Oban, Stewart Island, 27 September 2014. Photograph by Satoshi Kakishima & Tomoe Morimoto.

2014/58, see Fig.3, plus 3 images on NZBO). This is the first accepted record from New Zealand.

### **ACCEPTED EXTRA-LIMITAL RECORDS OF NEW ZEALAND BREEDING SPECIES**

#### **Brown teal (*Anas chlorotis*)**

One at Whakanewha Regional Park, Waiheke Island, on 10 October 2013 (George Lyle; UBR 2014/09); 1 at Little Waihi, Bay of Plenty, on 22 December 2013 (Tim Barnard; UBR 2013/84).

#### **New Zealand dabchick (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*)**

An immature bird at Motupipi River estuary, Golden Bay, on 18 June 2014 (Ken George; UBR 2014/46) was most likely produced by the South Island's only known breeding pair at nearby Lake Killarney, Takaka (see Petyt 2013).

#### **Australasian little grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)**

A pair at a shingle pit 5 km southwest of Tinwald, mid-Canterbury, 21 September to 16 December 1996 had 3 chicks with them on 16 December, with the 3 fledged juveniles present by themselves on 12 January 1997; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2013/91). A pair at a shingle pit on the north side of Kennels Road, The Levels, Timaru, on 22 April 2007, with a single bird there on 8 October 2008; these birds were considered to be resident and breeding at the site up to 2007 (Andrew Crossland & Niall Mugan; UBR 2013/90). These records are contra the mid-1980s cessation of breeding in the South Island suggested in Gill *et al.* (2010). The October 2008 sighting is the most recent South Island record reported to the RAC. Little grebes are now mainly reported from the Auckland region or further north (Robertson *et al.* 2007).

**Rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes* sp.)**

A moulting immature near Nugget Point, Catlins coast, on 11 April 2012 (Lun Cheong Wong; UBR 2013/60) could not be identified to species. Three species of rockhopper penguin were recognised by Gill *et al.* (2010). Most mainland records of vagrant rockhopper penguins have not identified which of the 3 forms the birds belonged to. Consequently, Moseley's rockhopper penguin (*E. moseleyi*) is the only 1 of the 3 confirmed from mainland coasts (see Moors & Merton 1984; Gill *et al.* 2010).

**Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*)**

An immature bird moulting at Pyramid Point, Kaikoura, on 9 February 2013 (Bev Elliott; UBR 2013/18); another immature moulting on the south side of Rakaia River mouth, Canterbury, on 23 February 2013 (Susan Sandys via Andrew Crossland; UBR 2013/19). There are many records of Fiordland crested penguins moulting on the east coast of the South Island, mainly during January-February (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

**Snares crested penguin (*Eudyptes robustus*)**

An immature at Breaksea Point, Western Harbour, Auckland Islands, on 4 February 2013 (Dave Hansford via Colin Miskelly; UBR 2013/59) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> record from the Auckland Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). An adult at Purakaunui Bay, Catlins, on 8 January 2014 (Robert Cameron; UBR 2014/11). Considered an uncommon visitor to coasts of the South Island and Stewart Island (Marchant & Higgins 1990; Gill *et al.* 2010); this is only the 4<sup>th</sup> mainland record accepted by the RAC or the preceding Rare Birds Committee (Medway 2002; Scofield 2006; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

**Erect-crested penguin (*Eudyptes sclateri*)**

An immature bird at Beeman Base wharf, Campbell Island, on 12 February 2013 (Pete McClelland; UBR 2013/17); an immature moulting at Decanter Bay, Banks Peninsula, 9-11 Feb 2013 (David Miller; UBR 2013/20). At least one erect-crested penguin is reported moulting on the east coast of the South Island during February- March most years (Miskelly 2013).

**Kermadec petrel (*Pterodroma neglecta*)**

One in the outer Hauraki Gulf, 20 km east of the Mokohinau Islands, on 22 January 2014 (Philip Hammond, Terry Cloudman & Dave Howes; UBR 2014/52) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> accepted record of this Kermadec Islands breeding species from coastal waters off the New Zealand mainland (see Medway 2001b).

**White-naped petrel (*Pterodroma cervicalis*)**

One in the outer Hauraki Gulf on 21 February 2014; Neil Fitzgerald (UBR 2014/41). This Kermadec

Islands breeding species is apparently a regular visitor to northern New Zealand waters in low numbers in January-March (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

**Little shag (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*)**

One pied morph in Boat Harbour, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 12 April 2013 (Paul Sagar, David Thompson, Leigh Torres, Phil Battley, Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/48) and again on 26 September 2013 (Paul Sagar & Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/74) was the 8<sup>th</sup> record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2001; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). It was present until at least 9 December 2013 (CMM & AJDT, *pers. obs.*). All Snares records since 1976 have been of pied morph birds, assumed to have arrived from Australia (Sagar 1976; Miskelly *et al.* 2001).

**Black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)**

One in Boat Harbour, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 12 April 2013 (Paul Sagar, David Thompson, Leigh Torres; UBR 2013/49) was the 6<sup>th</sup> record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2001; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). It was present until at least 10 December 2013 (CMM & AJDT, *pers. obs.*).

**Little black shag (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)**

Two at Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, on 13 November 2011 (Andrew Crossland & George Armistead; UBR 2014/70) was a new record for Stewart Island. One in Boat Harbour, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 12 April 2013 (Paul Sagar, David Thompson, Leigh Torres, Phil Battley, Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/47) and again on 26 September 2013 (Paul Sagar & Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/75) was a new record for the Snares Islands. It was present until at least 7 December 2013 (CMM & AJDT, *pers. obs.*).

**Stewart Island shag (*Leucocarbo chalconotus*)**

One bronze morph at Washdyke Lagoon beach, South Canterbury, on 1 August 2014 (Andrew Crossland & Phil Crutchley; UBR 2014/53).

**White heron (*Ardea modesta*)**

One at Boat Harbour, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 18 April 2013 (Paul Sagar, David Thompson, Leigh Torres, Phil Battley, Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/45) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> record from the Snares Islands (Horning & Horning 1974).

**White-faced heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*)**

One at Enderby Island, Auckland Islands, on 2 January 2014 (Graham Barwell; UBR 2014/44) was the 6<sup>th</sup> record for the Auckland Islands (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

**Nankeen night heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)**

An adult in Boat Harbour, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 9 October 2013 (Paul Sagar & Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/76) was a new record for



the Snares Islands. Another adult was at Thomson Creek, Sawyers Bay, Dunedin, on 13 December 2013 (Anne Marris via Jim Wilson; UBR 2014/38). Both records were well to the south of the only known New Zealand breeding site (Whanganui River; Marsh & Lövei 1997), and are more likely to have been independent arrivals from Australia.

#### **Australian coot (*Fulica atra*)**

One in Station Cove, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 13 April 2013 (Paul Sagar, David Thompson, Leigh Torres; UBR 2013/46) was a new record for the Snares Islands. One had been seen on Stewart Island on 1 December 2012 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Black stilt (*Himantopus novaezelandiae*)**

A dark hybrid (with pied stilt *H. himantopus*) at Masterton sewage ponds on 1 November 2013 (Nikki McArthur, Colin Shore & Susanne Govella; UBR 2013/70); 1 at Waikanae estuary on 23 August 2014 (Lena Berger; UBR 2014/56).

#### **New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*)**

A pair at Riversdale Beach, Wairarapa, between 1 September 2012 and 15 January 2013 had a nest on 16 November and fledged 2 chicks on 15 January (Ros Batcheler, Robyn Smith, Nikki McArthur & Steve Playle; UBR 2013/28); 1 at Ohau estuary, Horowhenua, on 28 October 2013 (Nikki McArthur & Susanne Govella; UBR 2013/69); 1 at Tora, Wairarapa, on 27 November 2013 (Joanna McVeagh & Colin Shore; UBR 2013/77); 1 at Baring Head, Wellington, on 24 November 2014 (Joanna McVeagh; UBR 2014/64). The Riversdale, Tora and Baring Head records continue to document the spread of this species down the east coast of the North Island south of Hawke's Bay (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

#### **Spur-winged plover (*Vanellus miles*)**

One at Northwest Bay and Camp Cove, Campbell Island, on 4 occasions between 22 November 2012 & 15 April 2013 (Kyle Morrison, Phil Battley & Robb Dunn; UBR 2013/52) was the 3<sup>rd</sup> record from Campbell Island (Bailey & Sorensen 1962; Scofield 2005). A fresh carcass in a skua-midden at Sinkhole Flat, North East Island, Snares Islands, on 3 October 2013 (Paul Sagar & Kyle Morrison; UBR 2013/73) was the 3<sup>rd</sup> record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2001; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*). Two on Enderby Island, Auckland Islands, on 30 December 2014 (Chris Cutler; UBR 2014/71) comprised the 6<sup>th</sup> record from the Auckland Islands (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

#### **Subantarctic skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)**

One off Cuvier Island, Hauraki Gulf, on 5 May 2013; Nikki McArthur (UBR 2013/41).

#### **Welcome swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*)**

One at Beeman Base, Campbell Island, on 12 February 2013 (Richard White & Pete McClelland; UBRs 2013/14 & 16) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> record from Campbell Island (Bailey & Sorensen 1962).

#### **Cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*)**

Six (including 5 males) seen at Oneroa, Waiheke Island, on 9 October 2014 (Brian Grenville-Smith & Patricia Smith; UBR 2014/59).

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

#### **Cape Barren goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*)**

Two at Hokitika sewage ponds 11 February 2013; Jay & Diane Nicholson (UBR 2013/13). Previous records from this site were reported by Scofield (2008) and Miskelly *et al.* (2013).

#### **Barbary dove (*Streptopelia risoria*)**

One at Puaha Valley, Banks Peninsula, on 20 October 2011; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2014/07).

### **RECORDS HELD IN SUSPENSE**

There were 2 UBRs submitted for which the RAC was unable to reach a decision.

#### **Storm petrel sp. (Family Hydrobatidae)**

One 2 km out from Pahaoa, Wairarapa, on 2 February 2013 (UBR 2013/11). Insufficient information provided to allow species to be determined.

#### **American golden plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*)**

One reported at Manawatu estuary on 27 & 28 October 2013 (UBR 2013/68) had a mix of characters of American golden plover and Pacific golden plover (*P. fulva*), and should be reassessed if more information becomes available on variation in the 2 species when in non-breeding plumage.

### **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.

#### **Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)**

One reported from the tip of Farewell Spit, on 2 February 1994 (UBR 2013/58).

#### **Red shoveler (*Anas platalea*)**

A flock of 9 photographed at Mangere, Auckland, on 11 March 2013 (UBR 2013/24) were considered to be Australasian shovelers (*A. rhynchotis*).

#### **Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*)**

One at South New Brighton Beach, Christchurch, in autumn 1985 (UBR 2013/32) was considered more likely to be an erect-crested penguin.

**South Georgian diving petrel (*Pelecanoides georgicus*)**

One reported off the Snares Islands on 11 November 2008 (UBR 2013/64).

**White-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon lepturus*)**

One reported at Spirits Bay, Northland, on 10 April 2013 (UBR 2014/12).

**Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*)**

One reported at Cascade Creek, South Westland, on 28 April 2014 (UBR 2014/30).

**Lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)**

One reported at Black Swamp beach, Te Arai, Northland, on 13 February 2014 (UBR 2014/14) was accepted as a frigatebird of indeterminate species.

**White heron (*Ardea modesta*)**

One reported at Tucker Cove, Campbell Island, on 14 April 2013 (UBR 2013/54).

**Common sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)**

One reported at Parau, West Auckland, on 2 February 2014 (UBR 2014/10). One was seen at the same site in December 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013)

**Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)**

One reported at Riversdale Beach, Wairarapa, on 19 November 2014 (UBR 2014/63).

**Oriental dotterel (*Charadrius veredus*)**

One reported at Taharoa Beach, Waikato, on 11 February 2014 (UBR 2014/18); 1 reported at Ruapuke Beach, Waikato, on 25 February 2014 (UBR 2014/13).

**Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*)**

One reported between Waiheke Island and Eastern Beach, Auckland, on 27 December 2013 (UBR 2014/02).

**Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

Three reported at Wakapatu Beach, Southland, on 22 December 2013 (UBR 2014/33).

**Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*)**

One reported at Te Aroha on 14 February 2014 (UBR 2014/17).

**Pacific koel (*Eudynamis orientalis*)**

One reported at Cape Campbell, Marlborough, on 10 March 2009 (UBR 2013/10); 1 reported heard near Rangiora, North Canterbury, in September or October 2013 (UBR 2014/31).

**Laughing kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*)**

One reported near Rangiora, North Canterbury, on 6 April 2014 (UBR 2014/26).

**South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*)**

One reported heard at Rainy River ridge, upper Inangahua River, on 29 July 2002 (UBR 2013/56).

**Stitchbird (*Notiomystis cincta*)**

Three reported near Taumaranui on 25 June 2013 (UBR 2014/08).

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

One reported on the coast at Maioro, South Auckland, on 24 May 2014 (UBR 2014/47).

**North Island robin (*Petroica longipes*)**

One reported above Otaki Forks, Tararua Ranges, on 26 February 2014 (UBR 2014/36) was considered more likely to have been a tomtit (*P. macrocephala*).

**Cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*)**

One reported at Whitestone River bridge, near Manapouri, on 9 June 2013 (UBR 2013/44) was considered more likely to have been a yellowhammer (*E. citrinella*).

**RECONSIDERATION OF HISTORICAL RECORDS****Black falcon (*Falco subniger*)**

A reassessment of New Zealand's only previously accepted sighting of black falcon (from Gisborne, 21 November 1983; UBR 1984/36, see Blackburn 1984) determined that the record can no longer be accepted and that this species should be removed from the New Zealand list (reassessment based on UBR 2014/54). The RAC concluded that there was insufficient information presented in the original UBR to eliminate juvenile New Zealand falcon (*F. novaeseelandiae*) as an alternative identification.

**Brolga (*Grus rubicundus*)**

A reassessment of New Zealand's original crane sighting (Clevedon districts, March-May 1947; UBR 2014/32) concluded that there was insufficient evidence to identify the bird beyond genus level, as concluded by Scofield (2005), and see Gill *et al.* (2010).

**RECORDS OF SPECIES NOT REQUIRING RAC VERIFICATION**

A North Island brown kiwi (*Apteryx mantelli*) was reported from Russell Holiday Park on 5 April 2013 (UBR 2013/30); 2 cattle egrets (*Ardea ibis*) were seen at Upper Moutere, Nelson, on 5 May 2013 (UBR 2013/42); an eastern curlew was seen at Hutt River estuary, Wellington, on 29 March 2013 (UBR 2013/29); single marsh sandpipers (*Tringa stagnatilis*) were reported from Miranda on 12 January 2013 (UBR 2013/15) and near Waihopai estuary, Invercargill, on 3 December 2013 (UBR 2013/78); 2 Caspian terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*) were seen 3 km below the Waimakariri River gorge bridge on 24 April 2013 (UBR 2013/39); single sulphur-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*) were seen at Blakes Road, Marshlands, Christchurch, on 16 January 2014 (UBR 2014/06) and at Styx Mill Basin Reserve,



Christchurch, on 27 February 2014 (UBR 2014/25); and 8 galahs (*Eolophus roseicapillus*) were seen at Mangatawhiri, South Auckland, on 30 May 2014 (UBR 2014/42).

Three partially leucistic individuals of common species were reported to the RAC during 2013-14: 2 grey-faced petrels (*Pterodroma macroptera gouldi*) c. 700 km east-northeast of Chatham Island on 2-3 March 2014 (UBR 2014/28), and a house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) at Oxford, Canterbury, on 22 November 2013 (UBR 2013/72).

## DISCUSSION

Between January 2013 and December 2014, the Records Appraisal Committee received or considered 154 Unusual Bird Reports. Excluding 11 reports of 'non-reportable' species, 126 of 143 submitted UBRs were accepted (88%). This compares with an acceptance rate of 83% for 232 submissions during April 2008 to December 2012 (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2013). The number of UBRs received during 2013-14 (6.4 month<sup>-1</sup>) was slightly below the 7.3 month<sup>-1</sup> received during 2011-12 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). While the rate of submissions to the RAC is commendable, many significant sightings remain unreported, and are therefore absent from the official record of vagrant birds in New Zealand.

The most notable sightings of 2013-14 were the addition of 2 further species to the New Zealand list. Both buff-breasted sandpiper and dusky woodswallow had been reported from New Zealand previously (Miskelly *et al.* 2013 and 2001 respectively), but the records were either not accepted by, or not submitted to, the RAC. The buff-breasted sandpiper breeds in northern North America and north-east Siberia, and migrates to South America (mainly Argentina). There have been more than 20 Australian records since the first in 1962 (Hollands & Minton 2012), and so the species has long been expected to occur in New Zealand. The dusky woodswallow is a common bird in eastern Australia, with a mix of resident and migratory populations (Higgins *et al.* 2006). Most notably, birds that breed in Tasmania migrate to mainland Australia for the winter, returning south across Bass Strait in spring (Higgins *et al.* 2006), which matches the timing of the bird observed on Stewart Island.

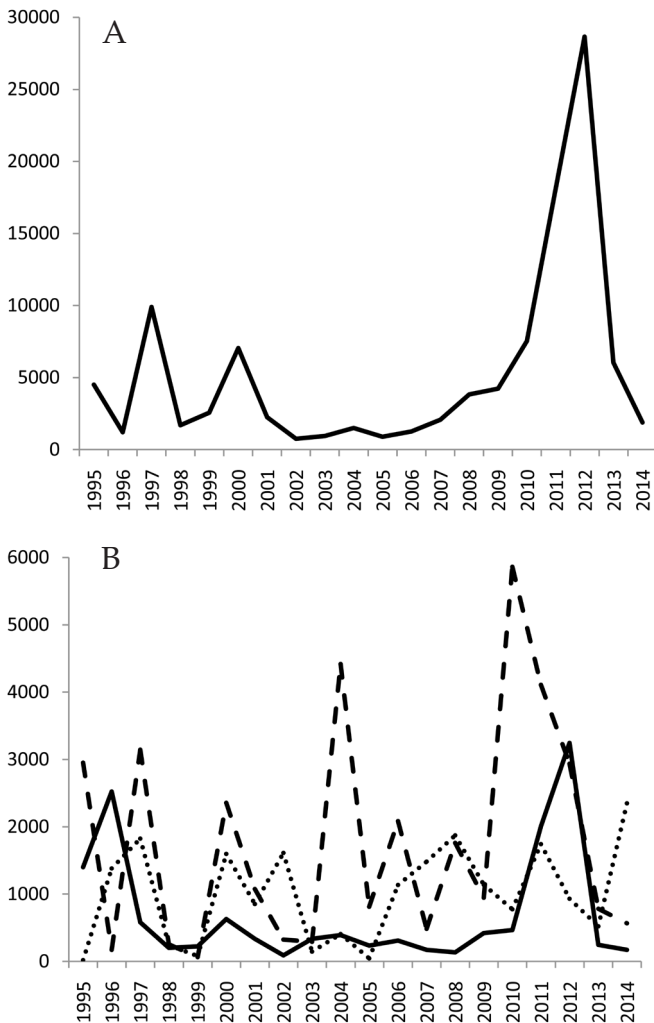
The acceptance of sightings of buff-breasted sandpiper and dusky woodswallow, and deletion of black falcon, brings the number of bird species recorded naturally from New Zealand since 1800 to 347 (Miskelly *et al.* 2008, 2013; Gill *et al.* 2010). Of these, 15 are considered extinct. In addition, 36 introduced species are currently considered established in the wild in New Zealand, making the current avifauna 368 species (including 26 migrant species and 133 vagrant species).

Of the 32 vagrant species accepted by the RAC in 2013-14, 16 species (50%) were holarctic breeding migrants, 13 species (40.6%) breed in Australia, and single species were from Lord Howe I (providence petrel), Chile (Juan Fernandez petrel), and the South Atlantic (great shearwater). Two species (brown booby and crested tern) may have arrived from either Australia or the tropical Pacific. This continues the established pattern of holarctic migratory species, followed closely by Australian species, being the main sources of vagrant bird records in New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2013).

Notable influxes of 4 vagrant bird species occurred during 2013-14. There were 5 sightings of at least 3 individuals of Pacific heron, compared to 7 accepted records in the 60 years since the first sighting (Stidolph 1952). The numbers of little egrets, glossy ibises and white-winged black terns that arrived in 2013-14 respectively were also unusually high. The 3 heron/ibis species all had high breeding success in eastern Australia during the period 2010-12 (Fig. 4) following record high rainfall there. As the wetlands dried out, the flocks dispersed, with some birds apparently crossing the Tasman Sea. There was no apparent peak in Australian numbers preceding the arrival of white-winged black terns in New Zealand, but variation in their numbers may have been obscured by the aerial count methodology requiring similar species to be lumped together (in this case Pacific gull *Larus pacificus*, silver gull *L. novaehollandiae*, gull-billed tern, Caspian tern, white-winged black tern, whiskered tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, crested tern, and lesser crested tern *Sterna bengalensis*; John Porter, *pers. comm.*).

Receding wetlands in eastern Australia was the same reasoning as was given for the influx of Australian pelicans, plumed whistling ducks (*Dendrocygna eytoni*) and gull-billed terns in New Zealand during 2011-12 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). Perhaps the heron, egret and ibis species were able to utilise smaller and shallower wetlands for longer before needing to disperse.

The record of a pair of white-winged black terns attempting to breed in inland Marlborough raises the possibility that this species has a small established breeding population in New Zealand. Most white-winged black terns in New Zealand are believed to be migrants from the northern hemisphere. However, a small proportion of birds develop breeding plumage during the southern summer ('southern cycle' birds; Pierce 2013), where they are mainly seen in the eastern South Island, between Marlborough and Southland, associating with breeding colonies of black-fronted terns (*Chlidonias albostratus*). The original record of white-winged black terns from New Zealand was a pair in breeding plumage shot on the Waihopai River, Marlborough, in December



**Fig. 4.** Aerial counts of 2 bird species groups from eastern Australian wetlands, 1995-2014. A = small egret species (plumed egret, little egret, and cattle egret *Ardea ibis*); B = Pacific heron (solid line), glossy ibis (dashed line) and terns & gulls (8 species; dotted line). Small egrets and Pacific heron had Australian population peaks in 2012, and glossy ibis in 2010, preceding the arrival of unusually high numbers of Pacific herons, little egrets and glossy ibises in New Zealand during 2013-14. There was no comparable major peak for terns and gulls. Data provided by John Porter and Richard Kingsford, Australian Wetlands, Rivers and Landscapes Centre, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales (see Kingsford & Porter 2009 & 2012 for methods).

1868 (Buller 1873). Previous breeding records include a pair that fledged 3 chicks on the lower Rakaia River in January 1917 (Stead 1927; Edgar Stead diaries, C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*), and a pair that produced a chick that disappeared before fledging at the mouth of the Opihi River, South Canterbury, in February 1974 (Pierce 1974).

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