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## Banding Banter

I would like to thank everyone for their enthusiastic response to the previous [BirDBand](#) – it certainly seems to have generated a sense of community amongst banders and birders alike.

You are encouraged to circulate this newsletter widely, and to make use of the opportunity to tell your own stories regarding banded birds.

## Welcome to the Banding Community!

The Banding Office aims to provide a service to the banding community through the various functions outlined in the Oct 2016 newsletter. But who comprises the banding community? *You do!*

Every person that reports a banded bird contributes to our knowledge of the survival, movement, population size and distribution of birds. Such knowledge is fundamental to sound conservation management and policy decisions.

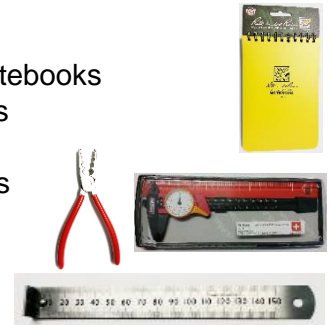
Therefore, the banding community extends beyond the 427 banders currently registered with the NZNBBS (and all of those yet to register), to everyone that is keeping an eye out for bird bands, even if it is only a band picked up on the beach somewhere. This includes the general public, community groups, iwi, museums, universities, zoos, sanctuaries, rehabilitation centres, environmental consultants, BirdsNZ, Forest and Bird, Fish and Game, Crown Research Institutes, and the Department of Conservation, amongst others.

So... welcome to the Banding Community, and thank you for your valuable contribution!

## Bird bands and banding equipment

The Banding Office stocks and sells the following:

- \* Metal bands
- \* Coloured butt bands (Acetate/Darvic/Celluloid)
- \* Material (Darvic/Salbex) for making wrap-around colour bands
- \* Mist-nets
- All weather pens and notebooks
- Bird bags / mist-net bags
- Pesola scales
- Banding and circlip pliers
- Wing rules
- Dial plastic calipers
- Bird Bander's Manual
- Reflective tape



*\* note that bands and mist-nets can only be ordered by Level 3 certified banders / mist-netters*

Download the new [NZNBBS Price List](#) and [Order Form](#) from the Banding Office website. The Order Form is fillable – download and save the document, and ensure that you are in “edit” mode in order to complete the form (switch to print layout so that you can make changes to the document).

## Colour band surveys

Thank you to everyone that completed the colour band surveys – we have received over 70 responses so far! If you know of a colour banding project (past, present or future), or have any preferences or insights regarding the use or limitations of different types or colours of bands, please assist the Banding Office by completing these surveys:

- [Colour banding projects](#)
- [Colour banding feedback](#)

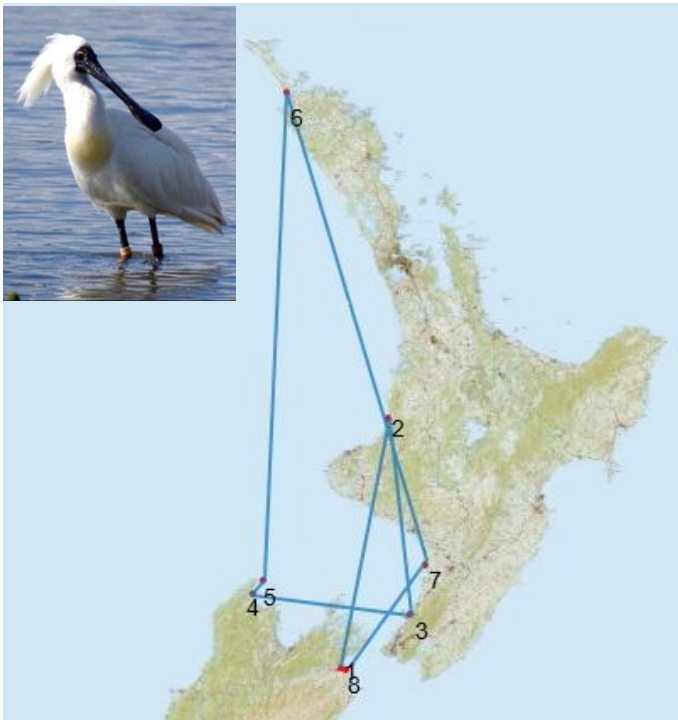


## Royal Spoonbill - Bill Cash

On 31.10.16 at the Wairau River mouth in Marlborough I spotted a Royal Spoonbill feeding on the out-going tide, it was close – real close! After taking a few photos I suddenly realised it was colour banded. *Forget the head shot, concentrate on those legs.*

RED/metal, YELLOW/RED. On checking my records, I discovered I in fact banded this bird as a chick in the Wairau Lagoons in January 1995 – that's over 20yrs ago! I am positive it was this bird as in one of my photos I can read first four numbers out of the five. The actual metal band is: **O 33011**.

This bird was resighted several times during the 1990s, and then disappeared for over 19 years before being seen close to where it was initially banded:



Point	Date	Location	
1	24/01/1995	Wairau Lagoon	banded
2	1/05/1995	Awakino River	resighted
3	30/12/1995	Waikanae	resighted
4	20/03/1996	Collingwood	resighted
5	8/04/1996	Farewell spit	resighted
6	10/06/1996	Far north	resighted
7	19/01/1997	Tangimoana	resighted
8	30/10/2016	Wairau River mouth	resighted

## Kaikoura Red-billed Gulls - Jim & Deb Mills

Work has continued on the red-billed gull colony at Kaikoura in spite of the earthquake. We were a little apprehensive the first time out because of the potential of falling rocks or even worse, a tsunami, resulting from aftershocks. However, this is the 53<sup>rd</sup> year of the study and we were not ready to give up.

There have been massive changes to the seabed and the rock formations, but the gulls have not abandoned their nests. The peninsula and the previously tidal platforms have risen almost a meter. The tsunami that occurred after the quake did not affect the gulls.



Over the past two seasons, the birds have abandoned some traditional breeding sites and have consolidated in a large area on the beach and some surrounding rocky areas. The gulls are struggling this season because of a lack of food. This started prior to the earthquake and has continued throughout the season. The birds were only seen to have regurgitated euphausiids on two occasions. The main food this season has been earthworms and fish larvae, which are not ideal for raising chicks. Euphausiids are essential for successful breeding. Consequently, the birds are laying later, the eggs are considerably smaller and the chicks have a lower likelihood of survival. This lack of food cannot be attributed to the earthquake because it started prior to the quake.

The changes in the peninsula will create challenges for the red-billed gulls and white-fronted terns. The seabed and the foreshore have risen and some areas which could only be reached at low tide are now above sea level at all times. Consequently, predators will have access to the nesting sites twenty-four hours a day. There has historically been an issue with predators, particularly cats, and it is possible that this will increase with additional access.

## Chatham Islands - Oscar Thomas

Spending two weeks in New Zealand's remote Chatham Islands is more like spending two weeks in another world. Rolling hills of dark peat and flowering gorse make for a colourful yet empty landscape on the main island, dotted with sheep and buff weka. Luckily for us, we were off to South East (Rangatira) Island to count some of the planet's rarest species. Back in 1980, Rangatira was mostly regenerating bush, growing from the scarred farming landscape on the island for dozens of years prior. It is the stronghold for four endemic birds: The Chatham petrel, Chatham snipe, shore plover and black robin. Luckily today these species are thriving, and can be found on other islands in the Chatham Archipelago.

Every plover and robin is banded as soon as possible. The plovers are given a metal band, and some birds a lime band. These mark the individuals



whose blood sample will be taken. Around 30 plovers on Rangatira have a 4 band colour combination – these are known as sentinel birds. This way, if some or many of the sentinel plover are not seen during a census, it will indicate the incursion of a

mammalian predator on the island. Brown skua will take the odd plover, but not enough to damage the population. To our dismay, we found a shore plover leg with a lime band on it, as well as blue and yellow plover bands in a skua den.



The black robins are all given a unique colour combination. Due to breeding success in recent years, DOC Chathams have run out of possible combinations with the given colours and had to import species varieties including purple, and hot pink. However, there is a small window in which chicks can be banded in the nest, usually between 8 and 12 days after hatching. If they are too old, they



may jump out the nest, and thus band application is not risked. Because of this, some of the robins and crafty shore plovers can be seen without bands.

Our job was to count all the shore plover on Rangatira before the 2016-17 breeding season. Averaging the number over 3 days, we found 152

individuals. Only one of these birds was unbanded, and unusually enough, it was a leucistic (mostly white) bird, one of four seen since 2010. This is a good population for Rangatira, however the growth has stabilised over time and juvenile birds struggle to find a territory. Some answer this by flying over to neighbouring Pitt Island, and are then predated. Hopefully this can be remedied by continued pest control over the Chathams, and translocations to new areas, establishing more populations throughout New Zealand.



## Gannet immortalised - Roz Bannon

Hi there,

I found a banded gannet washed up on our beach at Camel Rock in NSW Australia. (Near Bermagui).

The code number on the gannet was M-68861.

I painted it and photographed it and this afternoon we buried it.

Looking forward to hearing where this bird was originally banded.



Hi Roz

The banding details for the banded bird that you found are as follows:

Band number: M-68861

Species: Australasian Gannet (*Morus serrator*)

Banded on: 16/02/1997

At: White Island, New Zealand

(Latitude 37°29'54" S; Longitude 177°10'01" E)

Age when banded: Juvenile

Time between banding and recovery:

19 years 3 months 27 days



Hi Sandy thanks for the information great to hear he made 19 years and interesting that he ended up in Australia.  
I haven't done it justice but I have attached my painting of the gannet.  
Regards  
Roz

## Flickr did it - Lance Kevey

It was whilst visiting Wellington Zoo last March that I unwittingly started a process that would ultimately lead me to the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme. There was just one small problem: at the time, I'd never heard of the organization! My introduction to Bird Banding started just after I'd taken some photos of the Lions basking in the morning sun; just as I was about to leave the enclosure, a Sparrow landed on the fence in front of me – so I took its photo!



That evening, as I loaded some of the photos I'd taken at the Zoo onto my Flickr photo-sharing web site, I noticed that the

Sparrow had Bands on one of its legs, but... so what??? However, by the following evening, people from California, Florida, Texas, England, Australia, Finland and New Zealand were all asking the same question: why had a common Sparrow been banded? A Wellington Flickr friend provided a web site address and suggested I should contact the Department of Conservation...

This, as it turned out, was my first contact with the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme, but alas: although we could determine that it was banded by the Wellington Banding Group, we were unable to narrow it down to an individual bird – which was a little disappointing for them and for me, but that, I thought, was that...! End of story... Except, it wasn't the end at all...

The months rolled on and the Tagging incident drifted into the hazy mists of Time. So when in late August I captured a photo of two rather smartly dressed Red Billed Gulls and a Black-Billed Gull with Tags on its legs near the Seaview Marina, I have to admit: I never gave the Bird Banding Scheme a thought. The smart-looking Red Billed Gulls were duly posted to my Flickr site; the Black Billed Gull ended up in the Archives File!



In October, a new Newsletter arrived from the New Zealand National Bird Banding office, and one of the articles that caught my eye was a story about endangered Black Billed Gulls, and how they were being banded in an effort to trace their movements... Two things happened as a result of the article: The

Black Billed Gull finally had her or his moment of fame on Flickr, and once again, I made contact with the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme! I don't know if they'll be able to read the Tags (Birds tend to be rather uncooperative during photo shoots), but hopefully the colour of one of the Bands will give someone a clue as to where this bird came from...

So there we are! This was my Introduction to Bird Banding, but be assured: I'm now keeping both eyes open for birds who are wearing Bands on their legs...

## Roaring Forties, Furious Fifties - Michelle Bradshaw

Unconcerned albatrosses soaring in gale force winds, their wing-tips just skimming the 8-11m swells, while concerned humans brace themselves as the *Spirit of Enderby* tilts at 40 degrees...



What an adventure! Visiting the Auckland and Campbell Islands in the Subantarctic on a Heritage Expeditions cruise, representing BirdsNZ and keeping an eye out for banded birds.

These Nature Reserves are steeped in mystery and history, and support rare and special life – they were listed as a World Heritage Area in 1998 for their 'superlative natural phenomena'. Albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, teals, pipits, falcons, snipe, tomtits, parakeets, sealions and elephant seals, and an amazing diversity of plants.



Definitely worth the queasy discomfort, lack of sleep and many boat-bruises!

## *"White", the tame Kereru – Peter Stevens*



The kereru pictured has been well known to me for 8 or 9 years and has produced offspring every year.

This bird visits more than once every day, rain or shine, and brings its mate most times except when (I suspect) they are sitting on eggs.

Every year they bring their off-spring which after a while come on their own. The young ones squabble a lot between themselves. They turn up at any time from 7am till 5 pm. The reserve in Wellington where they live is bordered by Amapur Drive at the lower side and runs up the ridge from Simla Crescent to Mt KauKau. Possums were eradicated from the area about 15 years ago and the regeneration is good. The bird will sit on my arm and she is keen to come inside the house but I'm careful to prevent that.

*I would also add some serious advice to anyone who feeds pigeons. Cats are their biggest threat in the urban environment. Do not leave food out unattended. We only feed them when we are present to deter cat attacks.*



Monica Awasthy provided some background to her research and this particular kereru:

"White" was marked as part of my PhD research on kereru living in urban areas, in particular a chapter examining rehabilitated birds. As part of this work, I monitored 11 kereru in Wellington and Waikanae to look at how various factors, such as level of urbanisation, type of injury, pest control and interactions with other kereru (to name a few!)

influenced early post-release behaviour. Results suggested that the time spent in captivity and the level of urbanisation do not effect a kereru's ability to "settle", and that negative interactions with other kereru and the type of injury sustained are likely the most important factors to consider.

S-53676 is a female bird that was banded as a juvenile at Karin Wiley's rehabilitation centre in Ngaio, Wellington, on the 8th of May 2009. At the time of banding, she was also given a tail-mounted transmitter and a white jess on her left leg for easy identification, as kereru have short feathered legs and bands are impossible to see or read! She had been in care with Karin for 30 days and was 652 grams at the time of release. The last time I re-sighted her as part of my PhD research was during radio-tracking on the 6th of June 2010, so it is wonderful to hear that she is still being seen around town six years later! "White" as she was known, is a very friendly bird who regularly visited families in the Ngaio/Khandallah area and was seen interacting with other kereru. I used to get occasional emails from DOC staff who had enquiries from the public asking me about her, along with photos of her relaxing on washing lines and back decks. She was our unofficial Kereru Discovery Project mascot!

### *Quote me – "A tiny strip of metal"*

*"Who would have thought that one tiny strip of metal could convey so much information? It isn't a microchip; in fact, it is not electronic at all. It is a rather low-tech, simple instrument: the metal bird band.*

*The presence of that tiny strip of metal (or plastic) tells an astute observer that someone wants to know something about this organism, which leads to reporting of observations. It also leads to discussion and awareness of wildlife monitoring."*

- Lauren Gilson & Nic Dunlop  
(quote from [westernweb.net](http://westernweb.net))

### *Did you know?*

Sooty shearwaters, or titi (*Puffinus griseus*), are one of the most abundant bird species and make some of the longest migrations of all birds. The Banding Database holds over 22,000 records of titi banded in New Zealand since 1952.

A PIT tag implanted in a juvenile salmon in Canada was retrieved from a titi chick two years and over 12,000 km later:

[http://php.ptagis.org/images/1/1a/NOAA\\_NZ\\_recove ry\\_press\\_release.pdf](http://php.ptagis.org/images/1/1a/NOAA_NZ_recove ry_press_release.pdf)

## Reports from yesteryear

(Reprinted from "Notornis," Vol. 5, No. 5, July, 1953.)

ALBATROSS, Light-mantled Sooty (*Phoebetria palpebrata*).

49, ringed as an adult by J. H. Sorensen at Campbell Is. on 20/12/42, was reported nesting there during the 1952-53 season.

ALBATROSS, Royal (*Diomedea epomophora*).

A5, ringed as an adult by J. H. Sorensen at Campbell Is. on 10/2/43 was reported nesting there during the 1952-53 season.



## The Magellanic Mystery

Every band tells a story, and this one required a bit of detective work! As it turns out, this band (mentioned in the [previous newsletter](#)) was never used on a penguin. Dee Boersma gave it to John Darby in the 1980s as an example of the bands used on Magellanic penguins – Dee conducted a double-banding study for 15 years, and noted that flipper bands, if *designed and applied correctly*, did not harm the birds. John had passed the band onto Rod Cossee, the Banding Officer at the time, as an example of quality – it's been a long time in a drawer!



Dee noted: *"I gave him the 10,000 number because I figured if that band ever came back to haunt me I would remember I gave it to John. I did see a double banded female in Feb 2015 so at least a few penguins with double bands did as well or better than many penguins without bands."*



Have a look at [www.penguinstudies.org](http://www.penguinstudies.org) if you are interested in finding out more about Dee Boersma's penguin research.

## How to weigh a swan... using a stuffed elephant

We discovered an interesting piece of canvas with Velcro and loops, but couldn't quite figure out what it was for, until Murray Williams explained that it is a restraint for weighing swans. Not having a swan in the office, a stuffed elephant was pressed into service to demonstrate.



# Puzzled?

DIRECTION	WORDS	CLUES (from previous newsletter)
ACROSS		NZNBBS...
DOWN		... Banding Officer
DOWN		end up with ... bird bands
ACROSS		Building and maintaining a ...
ACROSS		Providing ... advice
BACKWARDS		declined ...
DIAGONAL		emphasising the ...
ACROSS		followed by parrots and ...
DOWN		even if it is ... feet and bands
DOWN		The ... was reported by Mr J. J. Malin
BACKWARDS		about ninety boxes ... "keep"
ACROSS		there's something very ... here
ACROSS	conservation	I love the ... side of bird banding
UP		caused a ... of excitement
DOWN		from light ... data we know
DIAGONAL		The ... response was as follows
DIAGONAL	flipper	How did a penguin ... band
BACKWARDS		have mad ... for them
DOWN		Name of newsletter
DOWN		but ... we can't match the bands
DIAGONAL		we move ...
BACKWARDS		check the ... of every band
Complete the story: <b>Once upon a time there was a bird...</b>		



Answer to previous Sudoku puzzle

O	N	C	E	U	P	S	O	N	A	T	I	M	E	T	H	E	R	E
W	A	S	A	B	I	K	R	D	T	H	A	T	L	Y	I	V	E	D
I	N	A	W	A	T	E	R	F	O	W	L	L	O	R	V	E	L	Y
F	O	R	E	S	T	L	O	T	C	E	P	S	E	R	N	E	M	I
S	T	Y	M	O	R	E	B	M	U	N	R	N	I	U	N	G	S	H
E	F	L	E	W	T	T	E	C	H	N	I	C	A	L	I	N	T	O
F	A	N	E	A	T	A	A	N	D	A	N	R	E	F	S	E	A	R
L	L	C	R	H	L	L	E	R	F	S	C	H	E	M	E	I	T	T
E	D	I	S	C	O	N	C	E	R	T	I	N	G	A	E	D	A	M
D	E	I	P	T	G	A	L	A	A	N	D	E	L	L	E	B	A	L
G	D	S	V	P	G	O	C	O	N	S	E	R	V	A	T	I	O	N
L	M	E	C	E	E	O	L	O	D	U	N	R	E	S	A	R	D	P
I	P	L	A	S	R	R	T	I	O	C	T	B	A	G	N	D	D	S
N	T	O	H	E	R	S	L	E	M	G	S	T	A	H	I	B	S	U
G	N	I	Q	U	E	C	I	O	M	B	I	N	N	A	T	A	I	O
N	W	A	S	R	E	L	A	T	I	O	N	S	H	I	P	N	I	M
P	O	R	T	A	N	T	F	O	Y	L	B	A	T	O	N	D	R	T
H	E	S	T	U	D	Y	O	F	H	E	R	S	P	E	C	I	E	S

(answer in next newsletter)