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## Banding Banter

With our 10<sup>th</sup> newsletter, we celebrate the growth of the Banding Office with the addition of a Technical Administrator, as well as joining Birds NZ in celebrating the launch of the NZ Bird Atlas.

Previous *BirDBanD* newsletters can be downloaded from <http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/> and <https://www.osnz.org.nz/nz-national-banding-scheme>.

## Introduction: Technical Administrator – Imogen Foote

I completed my BSc majoring in zoology and genetics at Otago University in 2015. I then decided that I liked Otago and zoology so much that I quickly followed up with a MSc in Zoology. My masters research involved looking at the breeding behaviour of NZ sea lions and how this relates to the genetic population structure on both the Otago Peninsula and Auckland Islands.

Although my research focussed on marine mammals, I maintained a keen interest in birds throughout my studies through various avenues such as assisting with other bird-related research and volunteering at the newly established Dunedin Wildlife Hospital. As a result, I’m very happy to have made the move north to Wellington and appointed to this position as a Technical Administrator to the Bird Banding Office.

I look forward to getting settled in this role, getting to know a few of you and seeing what the role has to offer!



# Banding Office Annual Report 2018/2019

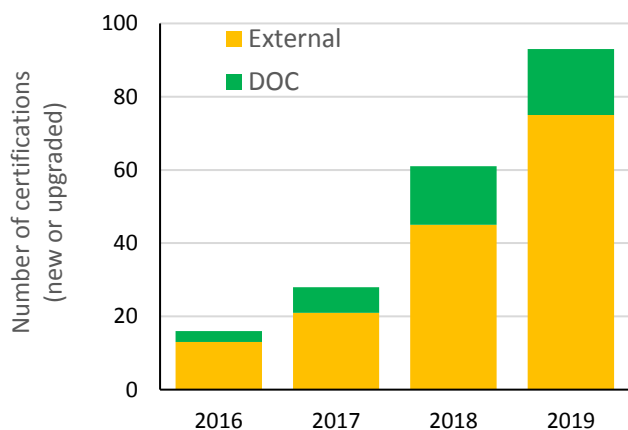
We are pleased to report improvements in several aspects of the Banding Scheme over the past year.

- Bird Banding Database:**
- ✓ Standardised “Data BOX” template in use
  - ✓ Database schema designed in-house
  - ✓ Requirements for online interface finalised
  - ✓ New Banding Webpage to be built by external vendor commencing July 2019

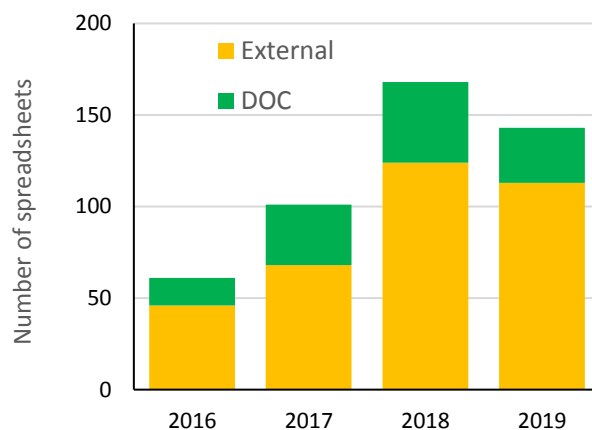
- Data processing:**
- ✓ > 3000 archived Recovery records scanned by Lance Kevey (volunteer)
  - ✓ 1292 Recovery records received during 2018/19
  - ✓ Data migration and error-checking of > 2 million records underway (progress: > 600,000 records)

- Increased stakeholder engagement and compliance:**
- ✓ New and upgraded certifications increasing annually (total 670: 185 DOC + 485 external)
  - ✓ Increased data submission (143 spreadsheets submitted so far in 2019: 30 DOC + 113 external)

NZNBBS Certifications

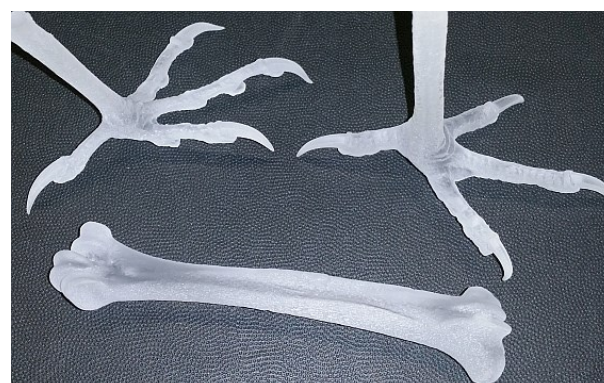


Spreadsheets submitted



- Workshops / communication:**
- ✓ Banding workshops held in Nelson & Hamilton
  - ✓ Birds NZ Conference presentation & Exhibitor table
  - ✓ Australasian Ornithological Conference presentation
  - ✓ *BirDBanD* circulated to >1000 stakeholders
  - ✓ Quarterly articles in Birds NZ magazine

- Equipment & sales:**
- ✓ 3-D printed bird legs used for bander training, available on loan
  - ✓ 2018/19 Sales: 173 orders from 117 individual customers





## The New Zealand Bird Atlas 2019-2024 – Patrick Crowe and Mike Bell

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 Birds New Zealand began embarking on an ambitious five-year project to map the distribution and abundance of our country's unique birdlife. This ground-breaking project will become the go-to authority on the state of New Zealand birds and is the first such attempt for over 20 years.

The country has been divided into 10 x 10 km grid squares, with a total of 3232 grid squares covering land throughout the whole of New Zealand and its outlying islands (including Stewart Island, Chatham Islands, Kermadec Islands and Subantarctic Islands). The aim is for each grid square to be surveyed at least once during each of the four seasons. Within each grid square, we will attempt to visit all major habitat types present and collect at least one complete bird species checklist for each habitat per season.

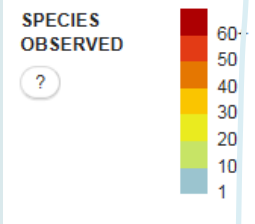
The biggest difference between the current Bird Atlas and its predecessors, is the transition from paper to electronic records with the use of eBird ([ebird.org/atlasnz/](http://ebird.org/atlasnz/)) as the primary recording platform. Records can be submitted online through the website or the eBird app can be downloaded and checklists can be recorded and submitted in the field on your smartphone. One of the greatest benefits of entering checklists directly into an online data platform is that they are uploaded in real-time. This allows all observers to view continuous updates of survey coverage and target specific grid squares or habitat types within grid squares that require more survey effort. However, paper and spreadsheet submissions are also accepted.

The New Zealand Bird Atlas is an ambitious and ground-breaking project which has the potential to have a lasting, positive impact on bird conservation in New Zealand for decades to come.

Already we have over 200 people and groups contributing but its success will ultimately depend on getting as many people as possible involved and recording bird checklists. Anyone can take part and we would like to encourage all the bird banders out there to help contribute to the New Zealand Bird Atlas.

Please visit the New Zealand Bird Atlas website [birdatlas.co.nz](http://birdatlas.co.nz) to get started. Here you will find the Atlas Handbook which has all the information you need to get started. Also on the website are links to help you download the eBird app, links to tutorial videos and a whole lot of other resources to help you with contributing to the Atlas. If you have any questions then do not hesitate to get in touch with us on [nzbirdatlas@wmiil.co.nz](mailto:nzbirdatlas@wmiil.co.nz).

National Bird Atlas Coordination Team



## Reminder to place band and equipment orders early

This is a reminder for all banders to assess their need for bands and banding equipment, and to **place orders early**. We do try to anticipate requirements and to keep adequate stock; however, there may be a turnaround time of up to three months if you order something that we do not have in stock. We endeavour to process all orders within 10 working days, and you will be informed if there are any issues or delays.

Please note that all orders for bands and mist-nets need to be placed by a Level 3 operator; otherwise we require a letter from a Level 3 operator taking responsibility for that particular order. Please refer to the updated Banding Office [Price List](#) and [Order Form](#).

### URGENCY OF ORDER?

How urgent is the order?

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

<1 month (provide reason)

1 month

2 months

3 months

Need by specific date:

Click or tap to enter a date.

## Banded wrybill on the Ashley-Rakahuri river - Nick Ledgard

The Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group (ARRG) monitors bird breeding through to the fledging of chicks, i.e. when they are able to fly, and it is only then that we judge breeding to have been successful. But it is much harder to monitor adult survival, as it is impossible to individually identify adults – unless they are banded. To this end, leg banding is important. Since 2000, 25 wrybills have been banded, but for various reasons that has not been possible over recent years.



BW-BW has two coloured bands on both legs (both blue over white) and is now the only banded bird left on the river. He was banded as a breeding adult in 2010, when we reckon he was aged 3 – which means he is currently at least 11 years old. Two other banded birds have reached a greater age on this river (12 years), but on average we only see banded birds for about 4 years. Why they don't last longer, we just do not know – because the oldest wrybills recorded have reached over 20 years.

When BW-BW was banded down at the Railway site, he was with a banded female, WO-GO. We know they were together for at least 3 years, and even though they annually laid the usual 2 eggs and chicks were hatched, we never saw any chick reach the flying stage. WO-GO then disappeared, presumably died, and next season BW-BW appeared with an unbanded female 3km further up the river at Groyne 2 near the airport. He has returned to this site ever since. But as his mate is unbanded we don't know whether she is always the same bird. Even though their nest has been washed out by spring floods at least twice, they always re-nested and did well up there, raising a total of 11 chicks. In the 2014-15 season they even double-brooded – that is had two nests in the one season and fledged 3 chicks. That does not happen very often on the Ashley-Rakahuri.

As spring approaches, we visit the river regularly. The first wrybills are usually seen in August, with BW-BW always present by mid-September. His nest is not easy to find, as unlike many other wrybills, he and his mate scuttle away through the rocks as soon as they see humans approaching too close.

During the 2017-18 breeding season, ARRG made a video of a year's activities associated with managing birds on the riverbed. This has good footage of BW-BW at home on his Groyne 2 site. The 20-minute movie can be viewed and downloaded from the Group's site ([www.arrg.org.nz](http://www.arrg.org.nz)).

Chair, Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group Inc and BRaid Inc

## *One year on (and still going strong!) - Lance Kevey*

On June 25<sup>th</sup> 2018 I 'reported' to the Bird Banding Desk in the DOC National Office in Manners St., Wellington for the first time; I had just retired from the workforce, and the chance to do some voluntary work for the NZ National Bird Banding Scheme was too good an opportunity to turn down. And so it was that I began the task of scanning older hand-written or type-written reports of sightings of birds wearing bands on to a new data system. It had all the makings of being a very long and very tedious task; all I had to do was remove staples from the reports, tape any odd-sized pieces of report to an A4 sheet, note in bold ball-point pen the file number stamped (at times faintly) in the corner of the original report, and put the reports through a scanner...

Boring, tedious work – right? Wrong!

What has made the work so fascinating is being able to learn some of the amazing things that some of our birds get up to – but be warned: not all the reports contained a happy ending. For instance:

- ☞ An Eastern Bar-Tailed Godwit banded on the shores of the Kaipara Harbour in March 1993 was shot dead by a hunter in June 2006... north-east of Nome, Alaska (over 11,300km from home).
- ☞ A Knot banded in July 1992 at Miranda (on the Firth of Thames) was trapped, checked and released in May 2009 by personnel from the School of Life Sciences, Fudan University, Shanghai, China.
- ☞ A juvenile Hutton's Shearwater was banded in March 2014 after it had crash-landed in suburban Kaikoura on its maiden flight from the colony high in the Kaikoura mountains. It was duly released at sea on March 25<sup>th</sup>, but it was noted at the time that this was a light-weight bird with a small wingspan. However, (surprise, surprise): it was next sighted – albeit sick – six days later on April 1<sup>st</sup> at Nambucca Heads, New South Wales... having flown 2,400km from Kaikoura, through Cook Strait to NSW. It was nursed back to health and in due course was once again released.
- ☞ A Tui that had been banded in a Dogwood tree behind the Plunket Rooms in Karori in May 2003 was next sighted in July 2013 – the oldest banded Tui on record. The sighting report also noted that the bird was very light when banded and that the bander was very surprised it had survived.
- ☞ A Murphy's Petrel banded on Henderson Island in the Pitcairn Group at the beginning of May 1991 wasn't sighted again until it was captured alive and well by the same bander on the same island in early July 2013. This was noted as a "longevity record" ...

and last but certainly not least:

- ☞ Children in Vanuatu were playing with "Glo Sticks" on the evening of January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 when their father wrote to the Bird Banding Office reporting that "...a strange bird like a duck flew down. It came to where the light was shining, and my children got the bird. They are now looking after the bird which has got used to eating grated coconut, and they are teaching the bird to eat other local crops! We will keep the bird until you come and get it, or until you tell us what to do with it." It's presumed the family were instructed to release the bird!

I could go on, but the Editor of this publication would probably be a little dismayed by the amount of space I've taken up if I did! However, I hope this gives you some idea of why – one year on – I'm still going strong, happily scanning these old reports on to a new database. Had I not undertaken this work, I'd never have begun to gain an understanding of what our birds are capable of – and at the rate I'm going, I just might complete the task by the time I'm in my mid to late 70s... if I'm unlucky!



Reprinted from *Notornis*, Vol. 7 No. 5, July 1957, pp. 123-135

## 7TH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND RINGING COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 1957

Compiled by F. C. KINSKY, Ringing Convener

### SOUTHERN BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus dominicanus*)

Thirty-nine Black-backed Gulls were recovered this year, 36 of which were ringed on the Rangitoto Island colony, 1 in Bluff Harbour, and 2 on Baring Heads, near Wellington.

#### Recoveries from Rangitoto Island

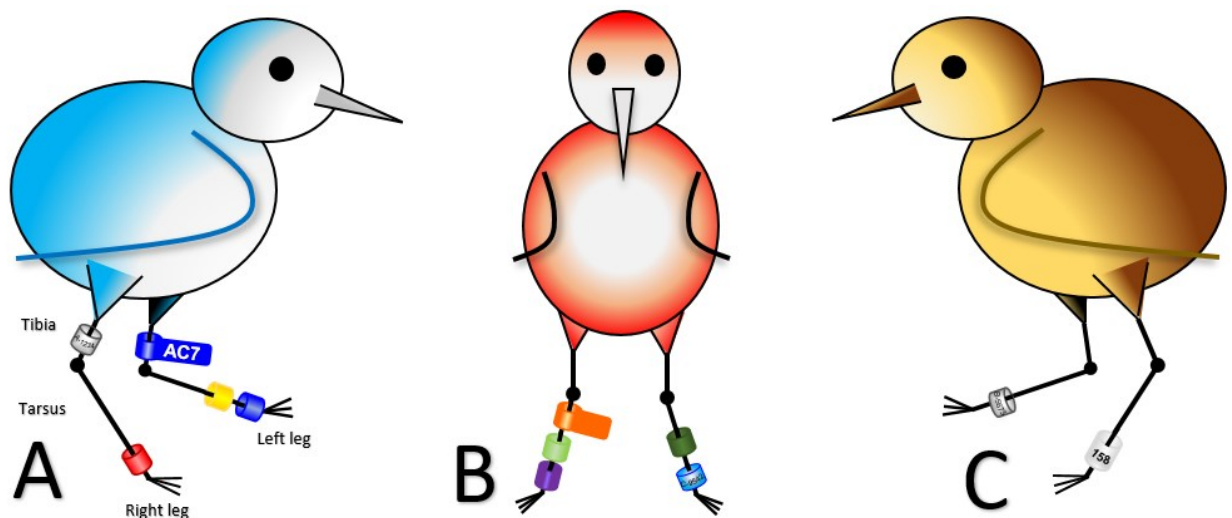
Thirty in their first year, of which 3 were found dead on Rangitoto Island, 3 were found injured and presumably died, and 24 were found dead in Auckland or suburbs. Two in their second year, of which 1 was found dead on Rangitoto Island, and the other on Takapuna Beach, Auckland. One in its third year was caught off King's Wharf, Auckland, on a fishing line and released, and one in its fourth year was found dead on an Auckland beach.

An interesting and hitherto unexplained matter is the recovery of 3 rings placed on gulls in December 1952, 1953 and 1954 which were found in the colony – 2 (14939 and 22918) in December 1955 and 1 (26427) in December 1956. The rings were half opened, and well worn, and polished from the inside, proving that the birds must have worn them for at least one year. The rings must have opened up through some internal stresses in the metal, which caused them to slip off the bird's leg.

#### Recoveries from Baring Heads (Wellington)

One gull in its second year was caught tangled up in a fishing line in Wellington Harbour and released, and one in its third year was seen several times feeding in the back yard of a house in Melrose (Wellington).

### Answer: colour band recording



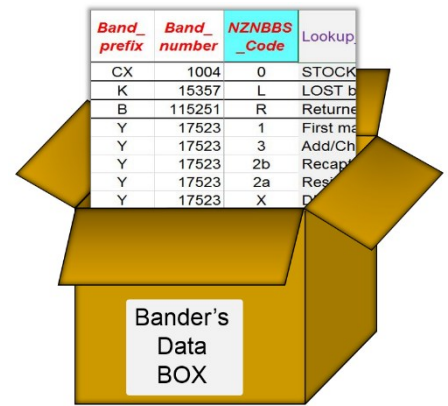
Bird	Left tibia	Left tarsus	Right tibia	Right tarsus	Colours_Left	Colours_Right	Metal colour	Flag position	Metal position	Alpha numeric
A	white text on F blue	yellow, blue	M	red	FB(AC7)//YB	M//R		1	2	AC7
B		dark green, M light blue		F orange, light green, purple	DG/M LB	FO/LG/Pu	LB	4	7	
C		black text on white		M	W (158)	M			8	158

## Bander's Data BOX

Level 3 operators are responsible for collating and submitting banding data using a [standardised data template](#). This is the culmination of two years of operator feedback, refining the various fields and options. Currently, this template is in "Version 9.2" but this name is uninformative (and the number will likely keep changing), so we would like to introduce the alternative name of the "Bander's Data BOX".

**B-O-X** = **B**anding **O**ffice **E**Xcel spreadsheet

The Data BOX caters for banding and resighting data, as well as foreign bands, transponders and colour bands, and includes ancillary data such as moult, morphometrics, samples, nest numbers, etc. It keeps track of whether birds have been translocated or released from captivity, and who did the banding under which Level 3 trainer. Data validation and error messages ensure consistent formatting, while drop-down lists and lookup tables standardise data entry.



**The new Banding webpage will upload Data BOX spreadsheets directly to the new database, incorporating error-checking**

All spreadsheets that do not conform to standardised templates will need to be converted to the Data BOX before they can be incorporated in the new database. Banding operators that have long-term banding datasets of threatened species in MS Access or other databases should contact the Banding Office regarding data submission.

## Quote me

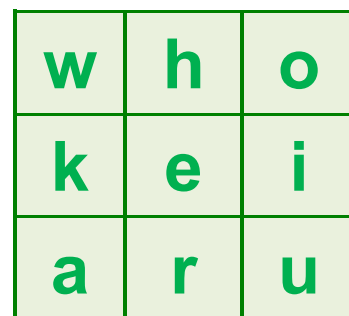
*“Not least important of the advantages to man and bird alike is that bird-ringing may take the place of bird-shooting: the ornithologist who formerly shot birds in order to study their skins, plumage and physiology, or merely to place them in his collection, has very largely been replaced by the modern bird-watcher enjoying the more humane and intellectually rewarding hobby of studying the living bird.”*

– *Bird-Ringing: The Art of Bird Study by Individual Marking*, R. M. Lockley and Rosemary Russell 1953

## Puzzle: Count the manu

How many Māori bird names can you find using the letters below? You may use each letter more than once.

- 5-10: keep looking...
- 10-15: good going!
- 15-20: excellent!
- >20: outstanding! Please submit your list





# The Bander's Code of Conduct<sup>1</sup>

**Banders must have appropriate [certification](#) and [permits](#) to conduct their work.**

**Banders are responsible for the safety and welfare of the birds they study:**

- The welfare of the bird is paramount.
- Only catch as many birds as are required for the purpose of your project.
- Handle each bird carefully, gently, quietly, with respect and in the shortest possible time.
- Do not operate more trapping/catching equipment than you can properly manage.
- Capture and process only as many birds as you can safely handle.
- Do not allow unqualified persons to use your equipment, capture or handle birds, or fit bands, except under direct supervision.
- Do not attempt to catch birds in conditions that could result in birds becoming severely stressed, subject to potential injury or death, or lead to birds abandoning occupied nests.
- Birds that show signs of stress should, in most cases, be released without banding.
- Regularly check all mist-nets and traps according to site conditions and target species.
- Properly close all mist-nets and traps at the end of each banding operation.
- Beware of banding nestlings at too advanced an age (they may 'explode' from the nest).
- Use the correct band size and banding pliers for each bird.
- Keep careful and accurate records of all birds banded and submit schedules to the Department of Conservation Banding Office.
- Treat all bird injuries in the most humane way.
- Maintain trapping and banding equipment in hygienic conditions (see the Department of Conservation's Wildlife Health Management Standard Operating Procedure; DOC 2010a)<sup>2</sup>.

**Banders should continually assess their own work to ensure that it is beyond reproach:**

- Look for ways to improve your techniques and advise the Banding Office of improved methods.
- Reassess your methods and approach whenever an injury or mortality occurs.
- Ask for and accept constructive criticism from other banders.

**Banders should offer honest and constructive assessment of the work of other banders to help maintain the highest standards possible.**

**Banders must obtain permission to band on private land and public lands where authorisation is required.**

**Banders should be willing to explain the methods and purpose of bird banding to members of the public when necessary.**

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<sup>1</sup>Melville, D.S. 2011: New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme Bird Bander's Manual. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 133 p.

<sup>2</sup>Copies of DOC internal reports, documents and Standard Operating Procedures can be obtained from the Banding Office.

