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Banding Banter

As part of a suite of changes and improvements in the National Banding Office, I would like to introduce a newsletter to keep banders informed of changes, training opportunities, banding updates, equipment offers and suchlike.

"**BirDBanD**" will also include band recovery anecdotes, project updates, discussions... feel free to submit articles and photographs for inclusion.

Banding Officer's note

This fledgling Banding Officer would like to thank Sandy Taylor, Department of Conservation (DOC) colleagues, the Banding Advisory Committee, BirdsNZ, and banders in general for their incredible support so far! Although these past six months have been a steep learning curve, I can honestly say I have thoroughly enjoyed this challenging role thus far and look forward to taking the Banding Office to new heights.

I enjoy streamlining processes and logistics, improving efficiency, and multi-tasking. My background is mainly in marine conservation and research, focusing on seabirds, sharks, cetaceans and seals. Maybe some of these skills will come in handy...

My banding experience is limited to seabirds (penguins, albatrosses, gannets, cormorants, petrels, gulls) and I have yet to apply for banding certification under the NZNBBS. I have a lot to learn about New Zealand birds, and hope that through this role I can contribute to the conservation of this unique avian biodiversity.

- Michelle Bradshaw

Lost and found

At the Banding Office, we receive all kinds of reports of banded birds from members of the public. These are immensely valuable, and keeps Sandy, our part-time assistant, very busy!

Some records are reported by phone (04 471 3248), others via email (bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz) or on-line (<http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/reporting-a-bird-band/>), and still others by post, as per the address stamped on the band.

Unfortunately, many of the bands posted to "DOC BOX 108 WGTN" fall out of the envelope (unless the band is flattened and taped to the accompanying letter). We end up with empty envelopes that have holes in (often with no other data), and the Post Offices end up with random bird bands lying around, which they collect and forward to us, but *alas!* we can't match the bands to the holes...



Banding Office Functions

The Banding Office, despite its name, doesn't do any banding! Nor is it an office as such, since it comprises all of one-and-a-half staff (a full-time Banding Officer, and a part-time assistant) that occupy two desks in an open-plan area at the Department of Conservation head office, shared with other staff of the Terrestrial Ecosystems Unit. Our files, paperwork and stock (bands and banding equipment) are distributed between a few filing cabinets, off-site storage, and National Archives; whereas the banding community and stakeholders that we serve are distributed nationally and globally – as are the birds that bear NZNBBS bands.

Functions of the Banding Office include:

- Building and maintaining a relationship with the banding community
- Managing the Banding Certification System, approaching the Banding Advisory Committee for advice on applications, and maintaining a database of all certified banders
- Providing technical advice to internal and external stakeholders, including advising the Permissions Team on Wildlife Act Authorisation applications
- Facilitating training of banders – this will be in collaboration with BirdsNZ
- Banding Office administration, including responding to reports of band recoveries and resights, data entry, stock take, finances, etc.
- Updating website contents, writing newsletters and reports
- Ordering and sale of bands and banding equipment
- Management of all banding data – we are in the process of investigating options for a new Bird Banding Database with an online interface to facilitate the submission of banding schedules and recaptures, as well as data interrogation through reports.



Bird banding in New Zealand 1996–2013

Jamieson, S.; Newman, D.; Taylor, G. 2016: Bird banding in New Zealand 1996–2013. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 43 p.

The report has been finalised and will be available via the Banding Office website at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/>



Abstract

The New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme is coordinated by the Department of Conservation's National Banding Office. The purpose of the Scheme is to have all banding records in a single system, this facilitates coordination between researchers, ensures high banding standards and safe-keeping of data. In this report we describe the numbers of birds that were banded and resighted between 1996 and 2013, in hopes of encouraging more banding and ideally more reporting of resights. During this period, 330 708 birds were banded, bringing the total number of banding records in the National Banding Database to 1 444 669. The largest number of birds were banded in 1997 (23 719 birds), while the fewest were banded in 2002 (13 549 birds). Passerines and waterfowl accounted for 56% of the birds banded. In total, 37 572 bands were resighted, almost one-third of which were recovered from dead birds. The number of resight records submitted to the Banding Office declined notably from 1996 to 2000, but has remained relatively stable since this time. This report highlights the tremendous banding work being done in New Zealand; to make the most of these data we strongly encourage researchers to submit their resight data.

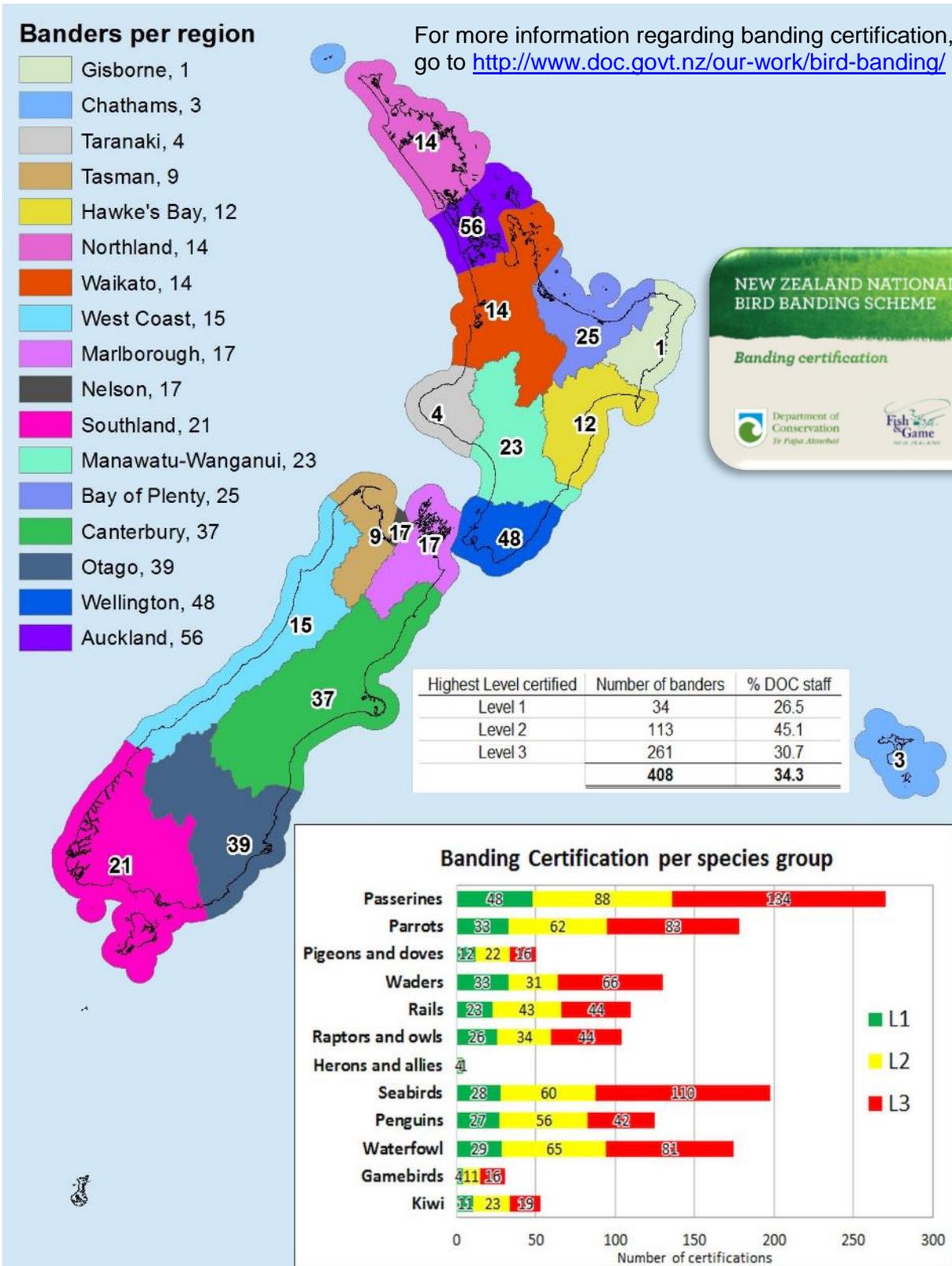
Certified Banders

Of 408 certified banders, 55% are based on the North Island; see figure below indicating the number of banders per region, per level and per species group.

Only one-third of banders are Department of Conservation staff – over 180 other institutions are represented, emphasising the diversity of the banding community.

There are currently 1 429 certifications across all species groups (an individual bander can be certified at various levels for different species), with most banders being certified for passerines and seabirds, followed by parrots and waterfowl. Mist-netting endorsements closely match passerine certifications.

The Banding Office has received a further 70 enquiries regarding banding certification, half of which are requests for upgrades.



"Dear DOC"



10-4-16

Dear DOC

My name is Elijah Cameron
and I am 6.

Our family were staying at
Tom Cane Bay in
Port Underwood this
week end and this
after noon we walked
around the rocks and we
found a dead bird skeleton with
tag on each leg. One tag
said send them to you so
I am

yours sincerely, Elijah



Dear Elijah,

Following on from my letter to you dated 27 April 2016, I now have further information about the bands that you found at Tom Cane Bay – **E227098** and **V48**.

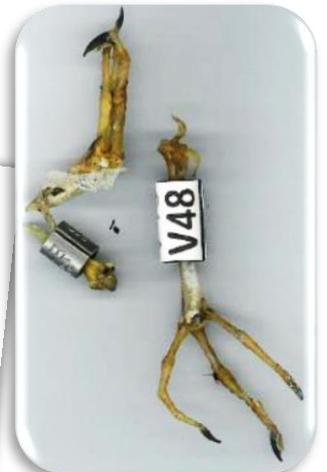
The bird was a black-billed gull (scientific name *Larus bulleri*). It was banded as a chick on 26 December 2015 on the Wairau River (near the Taumarina Bridge), Marlborough. Its last recorded sighting was on the Picton foreshore at the end of February.

Any recoveries of banded birds (even if it is skeletal feet and bands) are valuable to us and our research, so thank you for taking the time to send the bands to us.

Kind regards,

Sandy Taylor

Please can you write back about the study you do on the bird tags? My boy would love that - it could promote your work @ school 😊 Dad



Black-billed gull colour marking study

Little is known about the movements, juvenile survival and recruitment, and annual adult survival of black-billed gulls. So to start collecting information on this Wildlife Management International, Limited (WMIL) have started a colour banding project using engraved plastic bands.

Over the past 5 seasons black-billed gull chicks produced on the Wairau, Clarence and Buller Rivers have been banded with an engraved colour ring, a different colour for each river system. The unique number is easily readable, and enables large numbers of chicks to be banded and hence individually identifiable.

The birds disperse across the country in winter, with sightings from Auckland to Otago. The most interesting information has been by the work we do re-sighting individuals at the breeding colonies, with data collected on juvenile survival, age of first breeding, annual adult survival and pair bonds. This is greatly increasing our knowledge of this endangered gull species, and will hopefully aid its conservation.

- Mike Bell, WMIL



Please keep a look out for banded black-billed gulls and report all sightings to the Banding Office and mike@wmil.co.nz, thanks!

Reports from yesteryear

(Reprinted from "Notornis," Vol. 4, No. 6, October, 1951.)
(Page 140)

RINGING OPERATIONS.

SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1951.

Compiled by J. M. Cunningham, Masterton.

GIANT PETREL (*Macronectes giganteus*).

16804 was ringed at Heard Island, 6/3/51, by members of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition, who are using O.S.N.Z. rings. The probable age of the bird when ringed was 2½ months, and it began flying in the middle of April. The bird took the bait of a hand-line from a fishing vessel about 200 miles south-west of Durban, South Africa, on 9/8/51. The hook was removed, ring number noted and the bird released without injury. The incident was reported by Mr. J. R. Malin, hon. secretary of the Natal Bird Club (branch of the South African Ornithological Society), Box 937, Durban. The recovery point is about 2400 miles from where ringed.

Banding Office move

The best way for a new Banding Officer to figure out what's been happening in the Banding Office, is to pack up and move across the road to another building (while Conservation House is being earthquake strengthened).

After weeks of sorting through stuff, we ended up with about ninety boxes labelled "keep" – phew! In the process we discovered all kinds of interesting paperwork, heaps of unsorted bands, and sent all the hard-copy banding schedules (hundreds of thousands of carefully-filed banding records) to Archives for safekeeping. And in March 2017 we move again...



What is rarer than a unique band?

Have a close look at this photograph – there's something very disconcerting here! Can you spot it?



It is very important that banders check the number of every band they use, as the Banding Office is not in a position to do so.



Interview with Kate Pickard

When did you first start banding birds, and how did you become involved?
I started getting involved with the Wellington bird banding team when I was around seven. I had always had a love of birds, so when Peter Reese, who was the main organiser of the group, came along to my primary school to do some mist netting, I was pretty interested! I started going to some bird banding sessions at Wellington Zoo, and by the time I was twelve, I had handled most common passerines. Bird banding is more of a passion for me because I have grown up around animals. I love the conservation side of bird banding, and being able to contribute to such a huge, ongoing research project: <http://wgttnzbanders.blogspot.co.nz/>



What was your best banding experience?

My best banding experience would have to be banding my first Tui. I helped extract it from the net, and then got to band it. When it got to weighing, things got a bit interesting, but I came away with only a few scratches!

Most interesting recapture?

After doing bird banding for around seven years, I've handled about 25 species, and am pretty close to having banded around 1000 birds. However, out of all of these, the most memorable recapture I have had was a few years ago at Houghton Valley School, when we caught a dunnock which had an old band number. We thought that it was quite old at first, but later discovered after looking at previous data that it was over four years old, and was the oldest dunnock we had caught. It was a great feeling knowing that by catching these birds, we really were finding out new information about them and making a difference.



"So much information on a small band"

The report of a band from a Cape Kidnappers gannet that was picked up on the beach caused a flurry of excitement, with both the finder and the bander wondering about the life and death of the bird.

wow thanks Sandy, so much information on a small band. It has made me get out the bird book and wonder about the life of the gannet, well, not just the gannet but made me notice how many birds i don't notice! My flatmate and i are making up stories about where the gannet grew up, the life it led and how it came to end its life in Onerahi.

Cheers for what you do and letting us know about the information. It has made my day.



thank you very much for letting us know about this interesting recovery! A nice further piece of information for the puzzle of movement patterns - from light logger data we know that at least some of the Cape Kidnappers gannets forage around the Bay of Islands between the breeding season and their wintering migration to Australian waters. The Timing now suits, too - as the bird could have been on the way to the breeding site.

“Should we shoot it?”

In 1987, a member of the public reported a sighting of a white-fronted tern with a red band on its left leg. Unfortunately, the Banding Office replied that without the metal band number, it is impossible to identify the bird. The irate response was as follows:

Should we see another colour banded bird should we shoot it so we can get the metal band to read the number?

Alternatively as it seems the data from our sighting is unimportant should we just not bother to report it?

Almost thirty years on, I do hope the Banding Office has improved in how we respond to reports of this nature. Collating information on colour banding projects and incorporating a search function for colour bands into the new Banding Database will assist greatly in linking colour records to individual birds. **NO!** Please don't shoot (or capture) any bird just to read the band number!

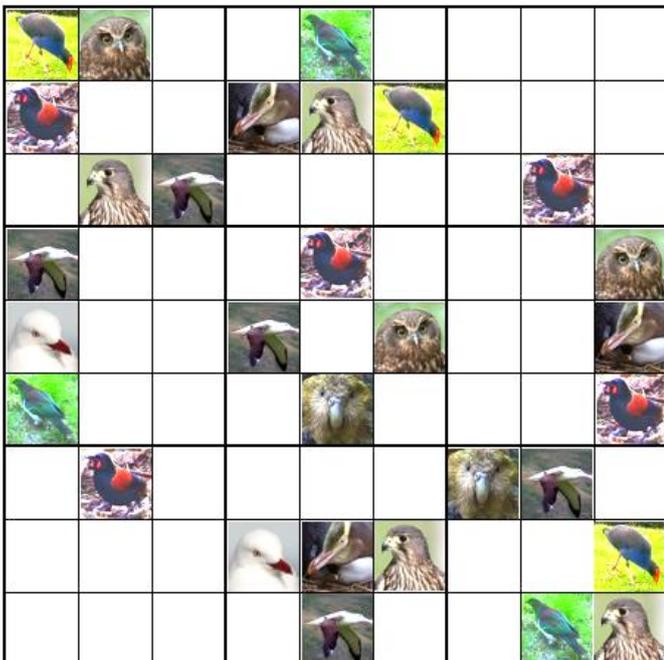
A Magellanic Mystery: can you solve it?

Every band tells a story, and it sometimes requires a bit of detective work to piece together the relevant information of the bird, the bander, and the reporter. This band – 10000 – was fitted in 1986 to a Magellanic Penguin by Prof P. Dee Boersma (penguinstudies.org). Thirty years later, we discovered it in a drawer amongst old Banding Office stuff. How did a penguin flipper band from Argentina make its way to Wellington? Where and when was the band/bird found, and by whom?



Picture-Sudoku

Try your hand at Sudoku with a difference!



(answer in next newsletter)

Quote me

“Let me take the time to go on the record in bold faced, highlighted, italicized font, to say that bird banding is not easy. There is a reason why certification is required. If you ever see somebody bird banding, have mad respect for them and if you ever get the opportunity to try bird banding, take it. It’s an experience many people don’t get to have.”

- Hailey Hoyat, chroniclesofanormal.com