

May 2022

New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme
NZNBBS

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Reporting banded birds



Racing pigeon

[Pigeon Racing New Zealand](#)

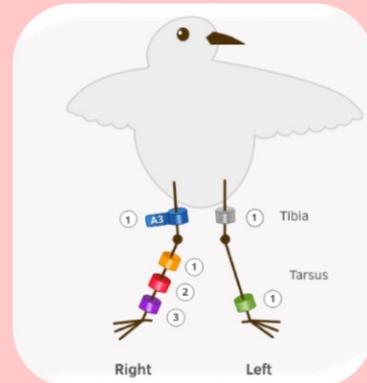
Info on how to care for pigeon and what to report to trace owner



Gamebird

Fish & Game's [Banding Together Form](#)

Banding Office collates records, Fish & Game corresponds with hunters



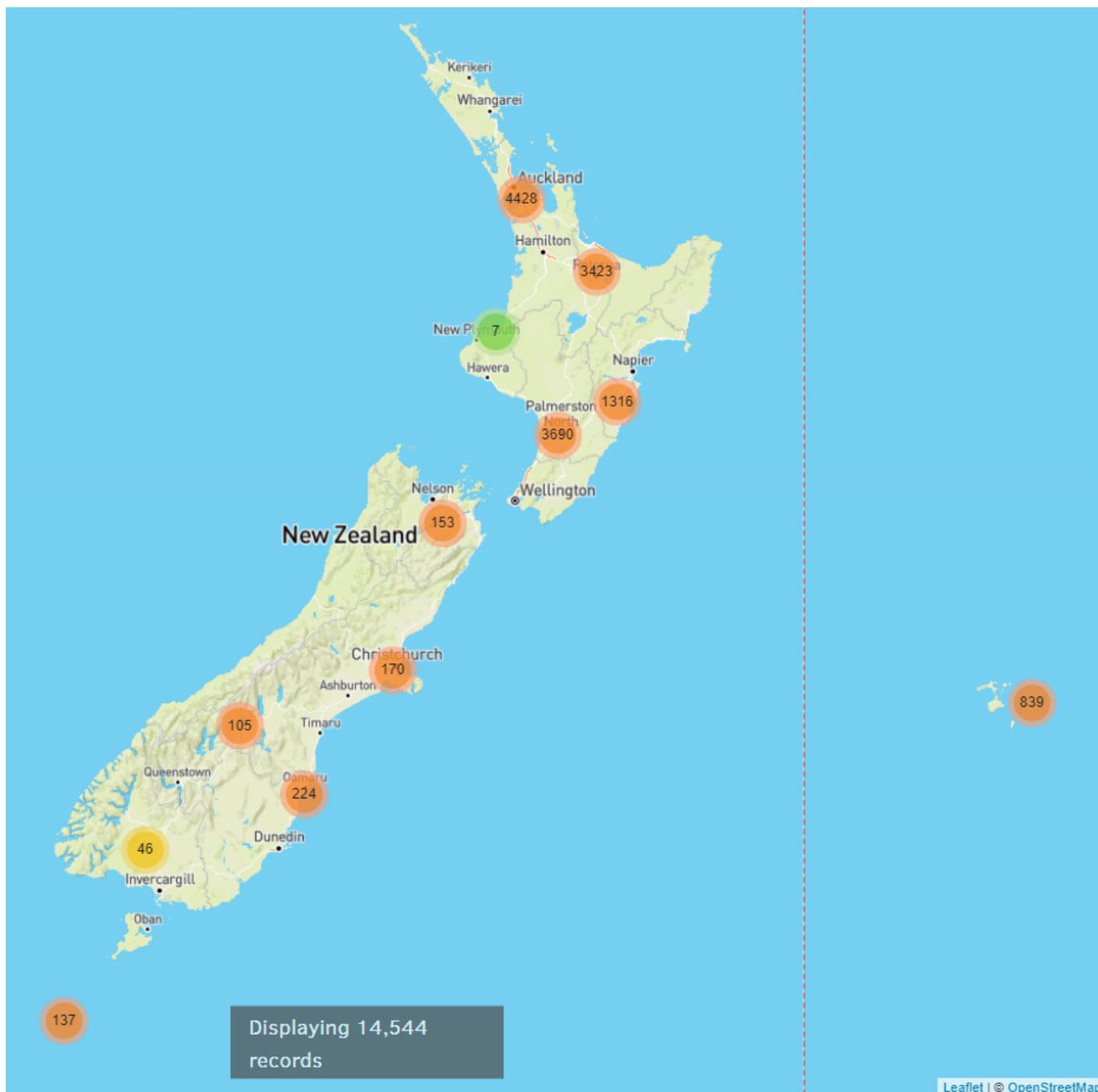
Other species

[FALCON Sightings Form](#)

Banding Office verifies record, corresponds with bander and reporter

Birds marked so far this year

We would like to extend a huge thank you to all banders that responded to requests for project information and data submission. We have received data for 14,544 birds marked so far in 2022 – see the map below.



Banding Office shop closed during June

We will have reduced capacity during June to process any band or equipment orders and will be closing the shop for annual stocktake and financial year-end.

Please ensure that you *place any urgent orders before June!*

- [Price list](#)
- [Order form](#)



Birds NZ Research fund

There is still much to learn about most of our native bird species. [Birds New Zealand](#) is now inviting applications for this year's Research Fund. Applications are open to Birds NZ members and need to be submitted by **15 June 2022**. Details are available at birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-research-fund/.

Fun FALCON fact

Banded herons are almost as rare as heron banders! There are only two Level 3 certified heron banders, and only 20 first marking records of White-faced Herons in the FALCON System. Of these, the oldest record is from 1958 and only two were banded in the last decade (we are aware of some missing data – and would like to hear from you if you are aware of any missing data too!).

The only White-faced Heron with recaptures in the FALCON database is L-4313 banded in 1964. L-4313 was recaptured in 1965 and 1968 along Waituna Gorge Road, Invercargill.



Birds NZ Conference

An annual highlight, the [Birds NZ Conference](#) will be held in Christchurch from 4-6 June 2022 (Queen's Birthday weekend). The Banding Office will be giving two presentations (see abstracts below), host a "Banding Gathering" meeting, and have an exhibitor table with our usual array of 3-D printed legs, puppets, bands, equipment etc. Come along and have a chat!

Banding through the ages

Michelle Bradshaw, Graeme Taylor, Sandy Taylor

The Department of Conservation's Banding Office curates New Zealand's national bird banding data spanning 86 years and comprising over 1.5 million records. This long-term dataset enables us to draw insights into banding trends while also highlighting missing records or under-represented taxa. We will compare three different decades of banding and recapture data: the 1960s, 1990s and 2010s. Richer insights can also be drawn from known-age birds – for instance calculating longevity – so we investigate the age structure of birds marked as pulli, juveniles or adults. The value of banding data lies in the proportion of marked birds that are reported (re-sighting and recovery data). From 1960 to 2000 this proportion was over 20% but dropped sharply to 7% after 2000. The new FALCON Bird Banding Database is an accessible online repository of all national banding data that enables banders to upload, view and export data while retaining control over data sharing. This system has already facilitated increased reporting of re-sighting and recapture data to 18% of marked birds in the past decade. We hope that continued engagement will facilitate coordination between researchers and make the most of this valuable dataset for ages to come.

Getting Stuffed: An investigation into marked taxidermy specimens

Annemieke Hendriks

Taxidermy specimens held in museums provide an opportunity for researchers to investigate questions on specimens representing in a moment in time. Insights can be drawn from comparisons spanning decades or centuries – a genuine time travel opportunity! Marked individuals (such as banded birds) can be especially valuable for research, providing additional context to that specimen's life history. While many museums added extensively to their collections during the Victorian era, this fascination with taxidermy and donating bird specimens has dwindled world-wide. This investigation considered collection trends and specimen traits in Te Papa's banded taxidermy bird collection. Such insights are useful in understanding collection history, and opportunities for comprehensive avian research and reporting. If every band tells the story of an individual bird, then a museum is a library of data waiting to be discovered! In the process of 'getting stuffed', the stories of these birds will continue to contribute to our knowledge well into the future.

Imogen meets her subject matter

After leaving the Banding Office a year ago to pursue a PhD on albatrosses, Imogen has finally had the opportunity to see these majestic animals in real life through a scholarship from [Heritage Expeditions](#).

Read about her trip of a lifetime at <https://www.myview.co.nz/sailing-the-subantarctics/>

Previous Technical Administrator, Imogen Foote, enjoying a subantarctic expedition.



Runway runaway

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/news/300539306/seaquills-stroll-paints-a-pretty-picture-on-nelson-runway>



One bird's casual stroll through wet paint on an airport runway resulted in more than 17,000 views and 700 reactions!

Does painting a bird constitute marking it? Yes! According to the Wildlife Regulations 1955:

37 Interpretation

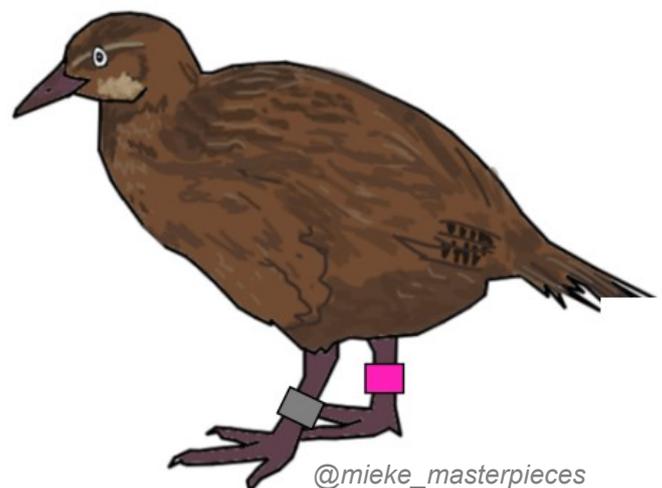
In this Part the term mark includes any band, ring, clip, tag, or paint, or any other thing or method affixed or applied to any wildlife for the purpose of distinguishing any wildlife; and marked and marking have corresponding meanings.

[For anyone wondering, no, the bird did not get a permit to mark itself.]

Native bird whakatauki

E hia motunga o te Weka i te māhanga?

This historic whakatauki (saying) translated means: How often does the Weka escape from the snare? This can be used when someone has had a narrow escape and should take care not to fall into the same danger again.



East-Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF)

Did you know that 14 May was [World Migratory Bird Day](#)? Banding – and the use of coloured leg flags – is a visible and cost-effective way of tracking the movements of long-distance avian migrants. Over twenty years ago our “Bander Number One” (Bander ID 0001), Adrian Riegen, published a paper in *Notornis* outlining the movements of Arctic waders based on data from banded birds:

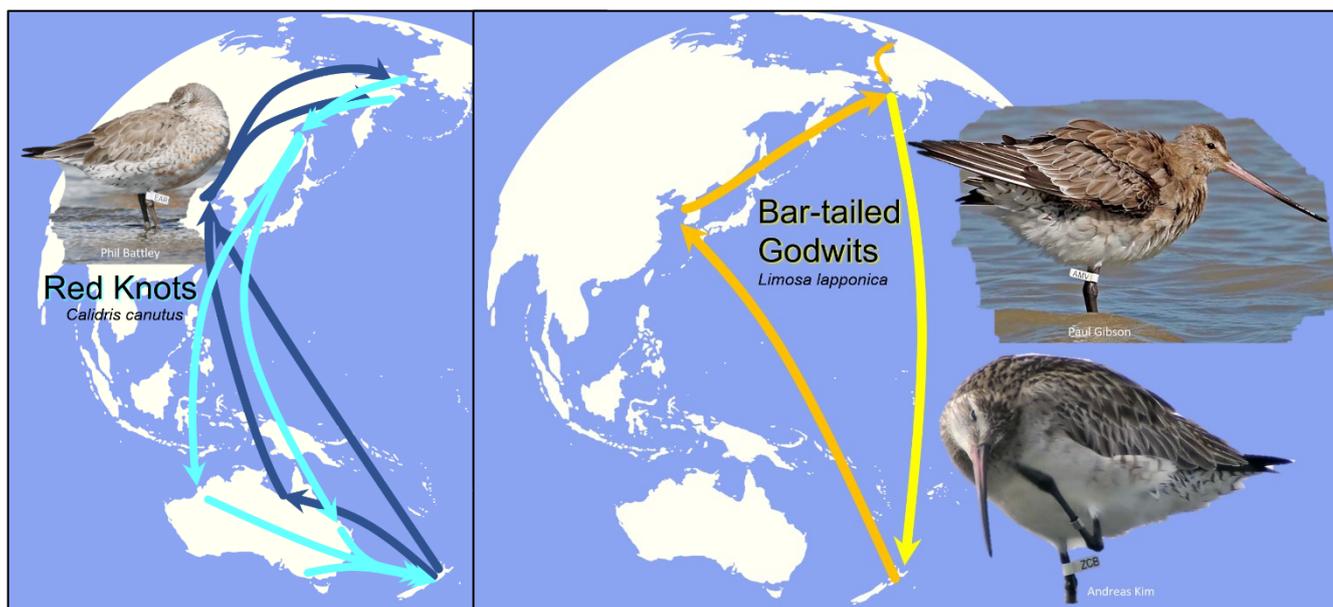
Riegen, A.C. 1999. Movements of banded Arctic waders to and from New Zealand. *Notornis* 46: 123-142.

In order to ensure that the colour marking of waders along the birds’ flyway are unique for each country and enable easy identification of birds, the [East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership](#) (EAAFP) provides colour marking protocols, such as the [Shorebird Color Flagging Protocol](#); see an excerpt below:

White	White	White	White	White	White	White
no flag	White	Black	Blue	Green	Orange	Yellow
NEW ZEALAND	NORTHERN INDIA	CHINA	CHINA	NEW ZEALAND	SOUTH KOREA	CHINA
North Island		Chongming Island (old)	Taiwan	South Island	Eastern Yellow Sea	Hong Kong
(may be engraved)			(may be engraved)			

You can use this to work out where a bird was banded – see the [article by Lloyd Blakie](#).

Red Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits both use the Yellow Sea as a staging post and refuelling station on their northward migration to breed during the short Arctic summer. The godwits’ southward migration of some 11,000 km is the longest non-stop flight undertaken by any bird.



Of course, banding birds provide us mainly with information regarding the movement of birds where they coincide with humans that are inclined to make the effort to record and [report the band combinations](#) and engraved flags (hint, hint... 😊). This has now been supplemented by the use of satellite tracking, providing further insights into the movements of these global migrants.

For a fascinating look at the movements of the tracked birds, head over to the [Global Flyway Network’s interactive map](#) – find yourself a favourite bird and check for updates on where in the world it is, and the challenges it faces in terms of windspeed or precipitation as it heads northwards towards the boreal summer.

There's no soot on Luna! – Rebecca-Lynn Cavanagh Smith, Zane Smith

This leucistic and fabulous titi mā (white Sooty Shearwater), “Luna”, was discovered and released on the 2nd of May at Herekopare Island, 8km East Northeast of Halfmoon Bay at Stewart Island during the 2022 titi season.



“Luna” – image from Rebecca-Lynn Cavanagh Smith



Titi harvesting is an important Māori tradition which persists today. Although there is some controversy over the subject most people that have negative views of it have never walked on the shore of a titi island, nor have they ever experienced what actually happens during a season.

Now more than ever before it is important to educate and share what actually happens on the titi islands, there are several factors that need to be brought to light. Descendants of Rakiura Māori are the only ones allowed to take titi during April & May each year. There is estimated to be around 250,000 titi chicks taken each year in an average season off 36 Islands only around Rakiura/Stewart Island. There are a huge number of other islands and headlands around New Zealand where no harvesting takes place. The Snares for example – 56NM South of Rakiura where there is an excess of four million birds – where no harvest occurs. Sooty shearwater are the most numerous seabird on the planet. Although it could be argued that the annual harvest puts some pressure on the titi population, ocean plastics, birds of prey, significant weather events and cat and rat predation are all parts of the equation – not to mention other factors that can occur during their long migration as far north as the waters between Russia and Alaska.

It's quite shocking hearing ignorant views about killing titi. Some say it is barbaric and dreadful! These views are so far from the truth. Titi hunters have a variety of method to kill titi. The traditional method which Zane chooses is to bite the titi skull, so it is a fast clean death.

The annual titi harvest is a time for family to get together and work on the huts and upkeep of the titi grounds while passing this on to the next generation. Most are grateful for the blood that runs through their veins that gives them the right to take part in this annual event, which has been taking place for hundreds of years.

Some families rely on the titi harvest for income as well as a food source. The Māori kaitiaki (guardians) have a great respect for the titi and of course want to see a continued sustainable harvest. Many take part in eradicating rats. There are so many wonderful things the titi hunters are doing to help these birds and other species for that matter. Many families have re-introduced other species to their island that were previously decimated by rats, for example species like saddleback, or snipe and other endangered birds onto their island.

A lovely couple that visits Herekopare as well as Zane and Rebecca are happy being on the titi island and they aren't too worried about harvesting titi. They are in fact big bird lovers and enjoy seeing the abundance of bellbird, tui, fantail, tomtit, red-crowned parakeet, wax eye, kahu, etc.

The Rakiura Māori have utilized the titi islands for a very long time, well before European settlement. Until more recent times Herekopare Island was visited in 1911 by Guthrie Smith. He recorded more than 20 species of bird life including yellow crowned parakeet, fern bird, korure (mottled petrel), brown creeper, banded rails, snipe broad billed prion, fairy prion, sooty shearwater, song thrush, grey warbler to name a few. An abundance and wide variety of native birds still reside at Herekopare. The Island has a land area of 28ha and rises about 90m above sea level. Most of the island is covered in scrub, also a mixture of tree daisies: *Senecio stewartiae*, *Hebe elliptica* and *Griselinia lucida*.

Although there are no rats on Herekopare, cats were accidentally introduced to the island around 1925 with devastating consequences to the bird life according to Mr P.R (Buddy) Willa (who had mutton-birding rights on Herekopare). He was an old whaler. It wasn't until the 1970s that all cats were finally eradicated by mutton birders.

Weka were released on Herekopare in the 1920s as a food source, which (unbeknown to the releasers) also had a tremendous impact on other bird species, and still to this day weka predate on bird eggs in burrows and smaller fledging birds. The mutton birders now shoot and trap and eat the weka which in turn has noticeably improved the titi, gecko skink and giant weta populations. Weka are known to produce more than one clutch of eggs annually, having between one and three chicks per clutch. It is known that a healthy population of weka can reduce the number of titi eggs by nearly 40%, not to mention the impact they also have on the other nesting sea birds and other ground birds. Weka can be rather destructive. Weka predation is not the only issue for titi, as we consistently see plastics in the stomach content of birds.

Some years, some colonies are being affected by changing ocean temperatures which can make foraging voyages longer and more energetically expensive for the birds, not to mention changing weather patterns which can affect titi numbers while the eggs and young chicks are vulnerable.

There are concerns as to the changing climate we are beginning to experience. We are hopeful that this important cultural harvesting event can sustainably continue. During the last three years the titi numbers have been very, very good.

Titi can be harvested by two methods. The 'Nanao', which is done earlier in the season during daylight, where the chicks (usually covered in fine grey down) are pulled from their burrows. Or the 'Rama' or torching period when the nocturnal chicks – in preparation for fledging - leave their burrows to exercise their wings and shed their down during wet, windy and dark nights. The titi are quickly and humanely dispatched and squeezed to remove their stomach contents (Ruakaka). Then the titi are put into a hui– five at each end of a short piece of flax (harakeke), slung over the shoulder and carried to be processed. The birds are then plucked as soon as possible, the wings and legs clipped off then the birds are dipped into hot wax to remove the second layer of fine grey down next to the skin, then let to cool. Once the wax is removed, they are then left to hang in a cool safe for a couple of days. The birds are then split, gutted salted and packed into sealed buckets. Some of these are sold throughout New Zealand. Titi are a delicious source of omega 3; titi is great served hot or cold once boiled. The Smith family render down the fat off the titi to use as an alternative for cooking oil.

Thirteenth generation Rakiura Māori descendant, Zane Smith, was out torching at 21:30 seeking titi for the annual harvest. This takes place between mid-April and mid-May when the mutton bird chicks are fledging from their burrows to head out and join the long migration as far north as the seas between Alaska and Russia. Mr Smith, raised in Stewart Island has been spending time on Herekopare since he was an infant, and now in his 48th year having never missed a season. Zane has an affinity with Rakiura (Stewart Island) and strives to protect and preserve the land, ocean and creatures that dwell in this latitude.



For Zane to stumble across a titi mā was quite a spiritual experience. With the bird gently cradled in his arms, he walked back to the hut to surprise his wife Rebecca and two-year-old son Veaux with this beautiful bird. As you could imagine he was met with awe struck faces and big smiles. Rebecca named the titi “Luna” (moon) as she gently stroked its little head, she quickly took footage before Zane carefully released her into the wild.

Soon after he shared the news with his father Phillip Smith a local Kaitiaki/kaumatua of Rakiura Stewart Island who has since officially named the titi mā, “Te Marama” (the moon) which interestingly enough is the second name of Herekopare.

It’s very fitting.

The Smith family will treasure the memory for years to come and hope to see her again. If you would like to see footage of Luna - Te Marama, please look up Rebecca-Lynn Cavanagh Smith on Facebook.

The couple were on Country Calendar recently, you may be interested to watch [the episode](#) based on “wonder weed”. Zane is working with the University of Otago on methane reduction in ruminant animals by feeding them *Asparagopsis* seaweed.

Furthermore, Becky has a seaweed art gallery at Stewart Island, where she sells prints inspired by the natural beauty of Rakiura. Currently she has obtained a lot of inspiration at the Titi Island, such as the titi mā. Keep an eye out on her website (www.seaweedsmith.com) for a print of the titi mā and a very special image utilizing seaweed and kakapō feathers from Whenua Hou/Codfish Island.

From the Re-sightings Officer’s desk – Sandy Taylor

It is the year 2025, a band re-sighting is submitted via the [FALCON sightings form](#) with an accompanying photograph. One of the Banding Office’s staff enters the colour band combination into the database using FALCON’s search functionality. Within moments an individual is identified, and the bird’s banding history is revealed. Everything about this band record matches with the bird that has been reported – right species, right band combination, plausible location, and date. Confident that this is a valid re-sighting of this individual, the staff member forwards the bird’s banding history to the finder, and the bird’s record is updated, and the bander is alerted that their bird has been re-sighted.

This is the ideal scenario, the goal that we, in the Banding Office, are aiming for and working hard to achieve.

Seventeen years ago – and for more than 5 decades prior to that – the NZNBBS operated using a paper-based system. Banders mailed banding schedules to the Banding Office once a year and these were filed by band prefix in ring binder folders. To find first marking records of re-sightings required searching through folders, page by page, making any changes or annotating records by pen. Between 2005 and 2007 over one and half million paper records were manually entered onto Excel spreadsheets and in 2008 migrated into a database called BioWeb – a DOC database that also contained records for such groups as weeds, plants, pests, and reptiles. Bird band data was manipulated to fit into this database – not always a great fit but an improvement on being paper-based and it was what was available at the time. Refusing to move forward into the digital age was not an option, not with the volume of data that was being accumulated. There were flaws, as there are with any system. The biggest was that BioWeb within a few years became outdated technology, it was not adequately IT supported, and there was no plan for an upgrade.

The NZNBBS baton was passed to Michelle Bradshaw in 2016. What Michelle acquired was me (a part-time casual employee), a struggling database in its death throes that barely functioned, a mass of Excel spreadsheets, schedules from banders in every format you could think of, and hundreds of emails. Of course, the Banding Office is not just a repository for data, there are a lot of other functions and duties that it must perform as well. It has been quite a juggling act to keep everything going while establishing a fit for purpose database that holds approximately two million records and counting.

I will not bore you with the details but suffice to say there were many hurdles, piles of paperwork, meetings galore, tears, a rollercoaster of highs and lows, and lots of long work hours before the [FALCON database](#) eventually went 'live' in August 2020. During one of those lows, Michelle had pens made up for the two of us that showed the motto that we had adopted: **Never Give Up**.



I still have my pen and the Banding Office still retains that motto (we have others but that is the oldest and the one that continues to resonate).

So now that we have a great database with lots of excellent functionality, why isn't everything humming along? Why are instant results not being produced for every re-sighting? This is an old(ish) saying but one that holds true: **a database is only as good as the data in it**. No amount of searching or fancy functionality on FALCON is going to produce a great result if the data is inaccurate or missing.

The general re-sightings process

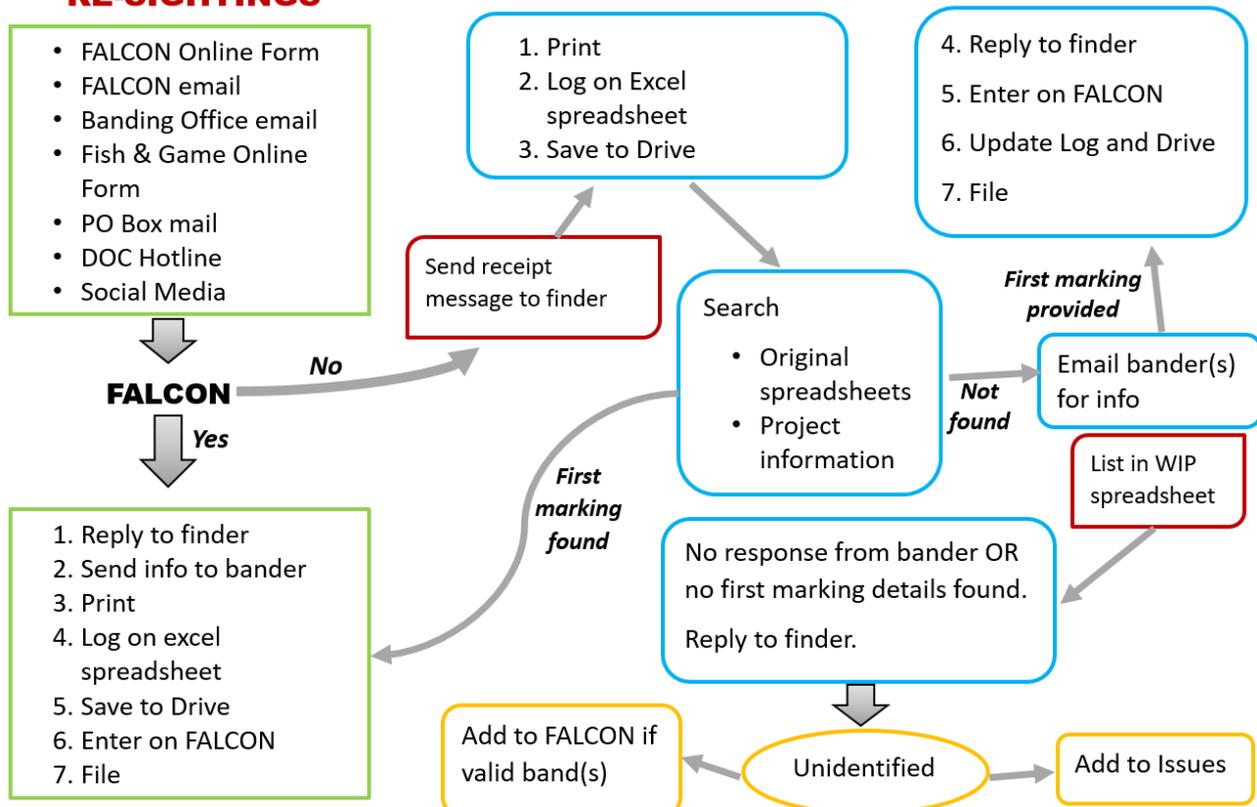
- a band re-sighting is received (via one of several methods)
- the details as reported are entered on an Excel spreadsheet
 - quick way to keep track of all incoming re-sightings
 - easy to produce statistics e.g., what method was the re-sighting submitted, how many re-sightings have photos, how many species have been reported
- the re-sighting is printed, and a tick sheet added
- the band combination as reported is searched for on FALCON
- if there is a clear result then the finder and bander are sent an email/letter.

Why is the re-sighting printed and a tick sheet (a list of what needs to be or has been done) added?

Because re-sightings are not always straightforward.

If there is no record of the band combination on FALCON, then the investigation begins. This involves searches through spreadsheets that have not yet made it onto FALCON, finding out who the bander most likely is (not always easy), clarifying with the finder that what they saw is correct (was it white, pink, grey or could it be faded yellow, red, blue?) and are there photos, and waiting for responses from banders. There are a lot of dead ends and scribbled notes over sometimes a lengthy period of time, hence the printouts and tick sheet. All associated emails and documentation are duly filed. Only once I am satisfied that the re-sighting details are accurate, are they entered onto FALCON.

RE-SIGHTINGS



What are the challenges with re-sightings?

- **Recent banding data not submitted yet:** Not every banded/marked bird is on the FALCON database. Why not? Sometimes a banded bird gets sighted before the bander has submitted its first marking record. We now encourage banders to upload their banding records as soon as they can after each banding session (some are now using the functionality that allows banders to upload each record as they band). Nowadays a lot of banders have their own databases so naturally enough their valuable time goes into populating this first. Work is ongoing in trying to make it easier for people to have their database programs/spreadsheets talk/match to FALCON so there is no doubling up of effort. Improving the efficiency takes time.
- **Historic banding data not uploaded:** There are a lot of missing data and there are lots of reasons for this. Over the years not everyone played the game and submitted their data, be this deliberate or just too busy. Bands were issued but with little follow-up as to where those bands ended up. Records are buried in notebooks which themselves are buried in the back of cupboards (one day I will sort that out!). Data are stored on old technology (*remember floppy-disks?*), no longer easily accessible. People die and their paperwork gets thrown out by people unaware that the notes have value. There is a large backlog of data (including records that were pouring in at a rate of 55 per day but had to be put 'on hold' while FALCON was being developed). Dirty data ended up in 'purgatory' because it failed data validation rules during migration from BioWeb to FALCON. All of this 'on hold and purgatory' data need to be correctly formatted before it can be uploaded to FALCON. Efforts continue to track down what is missing.
- **Colour bands change:** Colour and alphanumeric bands fade, birds can lose them, and banders add bands without submitting this change, so sometimes what gets reported does not match with any first marking records on our database. Then it becomes a process of elimination which often requires the assistance of the bander.
- **Not enough information:** All the bands worn by the bird are not seen or not seen clearly, so there is difficulty in pinning down a possible individual. Photographs can be immensely useful.
- **Incomplete band combinations:** Band combinations are reported as being complete, but they are not, which means there is a non-result, or worse an inaccurate result.
- **Partial data migration:** Historical data (which is any data prior to 2020) is often not complete due to the migration process dropping colour band and alphanumeric data. For example, the first marking record may have the metal band number but does not give the colour or alphanumeric bands, which, of course, are the bands that get re-sighted.
- There are **inaccuracies in the historical data** that are only being spotted now with FALCON's search, reporting and mapping functionality. For example, the ability to map a record shows if the latitude and longitude coordinates are accurate (*Little blue penguin banded in Hamilton City – not likely!*). Inaccurate original data does not help with solving re-sightings.
- **High workload:** Re-sightings are received from a number of sources (FALCON's [online reporting form](#), email to the [FALCON address](#), emails direct to Banding Office staff, emails to the [Banding Office](#), by letter, phone call, DOC Hotline, [Fish & Game online reporting form](#), social media, and serendipity (e.g., word of mouth, publications/presentations that contain information about banded birds), and from lots of groups: DOC staff (rangers, Visitor Centres, DOC Hotline), NZNBBS certified banders (>1000), other Banding Schemes internationally, Fish & Game staff, duck hunters, OSNZ (Birds NZ) members, Forest & Bird members, sanctuaries, zoos, rehabilitation centres, WReNNZ, community groups, veterinarians, school children, people from overseas (sometimes a NZ banded bird; if not, they are re-directed to the relevant Banding Scheme), and the general public. The workload is high. In 2021 there were approximately 2200 emails associated with 2014 re-sightings; so far this year there have been 682 re-sighting records reported (these do not include records uploaded directly by banders).
- **Accuracy is paramount** and re-sightings can be time consuming to get right. I like to envision my counterpart one hundred years in the future looking at the records in FALCON and having every confidence that the data is as correct as it can be.

It is disheartening to receive a report of a dead bird with a legible and valid metal band but all the information we have is that the band was issued to the DSIR in 1994. It should always be remembered that birds carry these bands their entire life; the bands don't just magically dissolve when the banding study is over – if the data are not in a central accessible repository, then that bird is wearing the band for no purpose.

The challenges will lessen; it will improve. New data being entered on FALCON are rigorously checked, this includes first marking records and re-sightings. Errors in the older data are being corrected as they are found. Additional data are being added to the older data. There are more stringent checks that data are being submitted in a timely manner and that data have been submitted before more bands are issued. There are tighter rules around who is responsible for the bands once they leave the Banding Office stock, and who is responsible for submitting data. Some measures put in place now to collect data may look like bureaucracy, but it is helping to streamline how we do things.

Re-sighting / Recovery – what's in a name?

A re-sighting is when a live bird has been sighted with a band; the bird can either be viewed from a distance or has been re-captured and be 'in hand'. A recovery is when a banded bird has been found dead.

We use **Re-sighting** as a general term; after all a band has been re-sighted regardless of whether the bird is alive or dead. Re-sightings are bands, flags and any other marking device sighted, reported, and received by the Banding Office (NZNBBS).

It is **the goal, the plan, the hope** that future Banding Office staff will have available to them an accurate and as far as possible, complete dataset, and future me will be able to be more efficient as a result.

Duck banding

For the past 25 years, Fish & Game (F&G) have been banding gamebirds in order to monitor population trends and manage game bird resources through setting season lengths and bag limits.

Hunters are encouraged to report all banded gamebirds using the Banding Together form:

<https://fishandgame.org.nz/game-bird-hunting-in-new-zealand/banding-form/>.

The Banding Office collates all records of ducks banded during December and January each year and receive all records of duck band recoveries throughout the gamebird hunting season of May to August. We link up each recovery with the original banding record, and forward this to each F&G Region who then correspond with the hunters. This past season there were almost 10,000 ducks banded by F&G, and a further 3,000 captive-reared mallards.

Duck banding is a great opportunity to gain skills in banding, and F&G are very welcoming of Level 1 trainees who would like to take part. So Annemieke went along for some duck cuddling and banding – see her pics below.



Images (L to R), Annemieke with banded duck, Mallard leg with band, hybrid wing with a strong Grey Duck coloured wing. Image credit: Ami Coughlan, Annemieke Hendriks

The power of banding

Scientists Kath Walker and Graeme Elliott have studied the Gibson's Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis gibsoni*) since 1991. This species breeds predominately on Adams Island of the Auckland Island group. There are resighting and recovery records on the coasts of New Zealand and Australia, as well as at sea; however, in all that time they have never received a record of one of their banded birds appearing on Tasmanian shores – until now.



Photo credit: Shannon Hibberd

Shannon Hibberd from Tasmania, Australia, found a dead Gibson's Albatross washed up on her local beach at Four Mile Creek. The bird had a band on each leg – metal band R-42886 and a red alphanumeric band 37H. It was found on 29 April 2022 during a time when Shannon says, "We have had some rough seas over the last 48 hours which have washed the bird onto the beach". Thankfully, Shannon thought to take some photos, not only of the bird but also some close-ups of the bands, and she forwarded these to the Banding Office.

This male albatross was banded as a breeding adult on Adams Island on 17 February 1993. Kath Walker says, "As he was already an adult when Graeme [Elliott], Pete McClelland and I banded him in February 1993, he must have been at least 40 but quite likely 50 years old when he died. So sad to see him lying on the beach in that wasted condition. I went looking for any photos of him alive but couldn't find any, in part I think because his nest was right on the edge of the study area so that four of the eight nesting attempts he made in the 29 years we've known him, his nest was outside the study area".

The only photo Kath has of a Gibson's Albatross near Tasmania is one taken of a beautiful male Red-43G (named Tini) in March 2017 at sea 500nm SW of Tasmania by observers on the research vessel *Investigator*. You can read the full story of Tini on the [FALCON homepage](#).

Both Red-43G and Red-37H had very similar histories. According to Kath they were "banded as breeding adults in the first few years of the study, lost their female partners in the big 2005 population

crash and essentially have been lonely single males waiting on the breeding grounds each summer most years since." Or perhaps as Kalinka Rexer-Huber (one of the researchers on the Gibson's Albatross Monitoring project) less romantically puts it: "The darvic (red band 37H) was attached on 8 January 2015; at that point he was just loafing in the colony, not breeding."

This band recovery is a valuable record, and everyone involved is very appreciative that Shannon took the time to report her find. The final words go to Kath: "Many thanks to Shannon for her sighting and clear photos – it's pretty unusual to know for sure where and how an old bird dies – usually they just melt away, never to be seen on the breeding grounds again. The power of banding."



Photo supplied by Kath Walker

Every band tells a story – Lance Kevey

While scanning through the archives of recovery letters, Lance noted these interesting stories of birds.

49551 - Crested Tern banded west end of Phillip Island on 22-12-09 and recovered - dead - on Maui Platform A 35km west of Taranaki Cape Egmont.
Noted as the first time the species has migrated to NZ.

47056 - Giant Petrel picked up alive in Pelorus Sound and taken to Havelock by the mail boat. A local Ranger took the bird home and fed it fish successfully. After 2 nights the bird was taken to Picton and a Tour Boat released it in Outer Queen Charlotte Sound in a stiff wind. The bird flew off successfully. The bird was wearing an American Band and had been banded on 3-3-07 at NR Palmer Station, Anverse Island, Antarctica. It had been found in Pelorus Sound on 22-2-08.

139034 - Cat killed a Gull and "gifted" it to its family by leaving it in the lounge. They found the gift when they got up in the morning.
(What a thoughtful cat!)

Australasian Gannet found dead on Maroochydoore Beach Queensland on 28-8-11.

Bird had been banded as a chick on 12-1-02 at Farewell Spit, and was recorded at Farewell Spit on 4-2-07 and again on 1-9-07.

The find caused surprise because the bird had gone to Australia, ~~and~~ returned to NZ to have offspring, and had now gone back to Australia.

17034 Southern Royal Albatross found on beach in Japan probably off a fishing boat.
See Schedule for details.

16605 Southern Royal Albatross found off the coast of Chile. Details are sketchy!

13353 sthrn Royal Albatross "knocked over head" by a fisherman who wanted the Bands as souvenirs! Other details are sketchy.

Flag-spotting - Lloyd Blakie

I was brought up on and later owned a developing bush farm. My mother had a keen interest in wildlife which has been passed on to me. My photography didn't have a chance to develop until I retired and moved to a section overlooking the Aparima Estuary. The little bay in front of our home is a great feeding spot for Kingfishers, so they became my first targets. In 2016 three Black Stilt arrived, and they stayed several months. This gave me a good reason to start upgrading my camera gear. With better equipment it was easier to correctly identify their bands, information I passed on to Twizel. The next thing to grab my interest was a Bar-tailed Godwit with an orange flag, but at that time I didn't know where to go to find its history. I have now photographed it in three different years and now know it was tagged in Australia.



As a photographer, birds in flight are the greatest challenge but they do give me the most enjoyment. It was after photographing flying Turnstones one day and looking at my efforts on the computer I noticed one had a white flag. Wishing to find out about its history I was put in touch with the Banding Office and got its story. Very exciting! My interest in banded birds got a boost this season when the Godwits arrived, with them there were three Turnstones, one with a flag, a different number. Sometime later while photographing a locally banded bird, a third flag was noticed. I have now recorded Nos 25, 26 and 27.

The gear I used for the last six years is a NikonD500 with a 300mm lens and a 1.4 Teleconverter. While farming, our holidays were rare, but retirement has allowed us the chance to go to some birding photography hot spots, highlights being South Georgia and Costa Rica.

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Ruddy Turnstone W1RRYW (D-161676), banded on 5/02/2021 at Jacobs River Estuary near Riverton, NZ. Photo by Lloyd Blakie



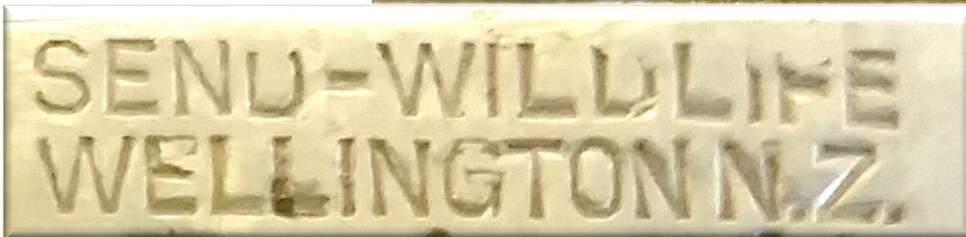
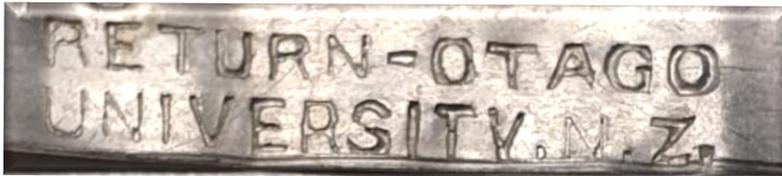
Ruddy Turnstone White flag 27 (F135234) banded at Chongming Dao, Shanghai, China on 17/04/2018 as an adult. Photo by Lloyd Blakie



Bar-tailed Godwit Orange flag CTL (07370496) banded on 17/06/2015 at Barry Beach Corner Inlet, Victoria, Australia by the Victoria Wader Study Group. Photo by Lloyd Blakie

“He aha tēnei?” / “what is this?” – Addresses on bands

Real life puzzles from behind the scenes: Why are there different addresses stamped on bird bands in NZ?



Answer to: “He aha tēnei?” – AA/AE bands



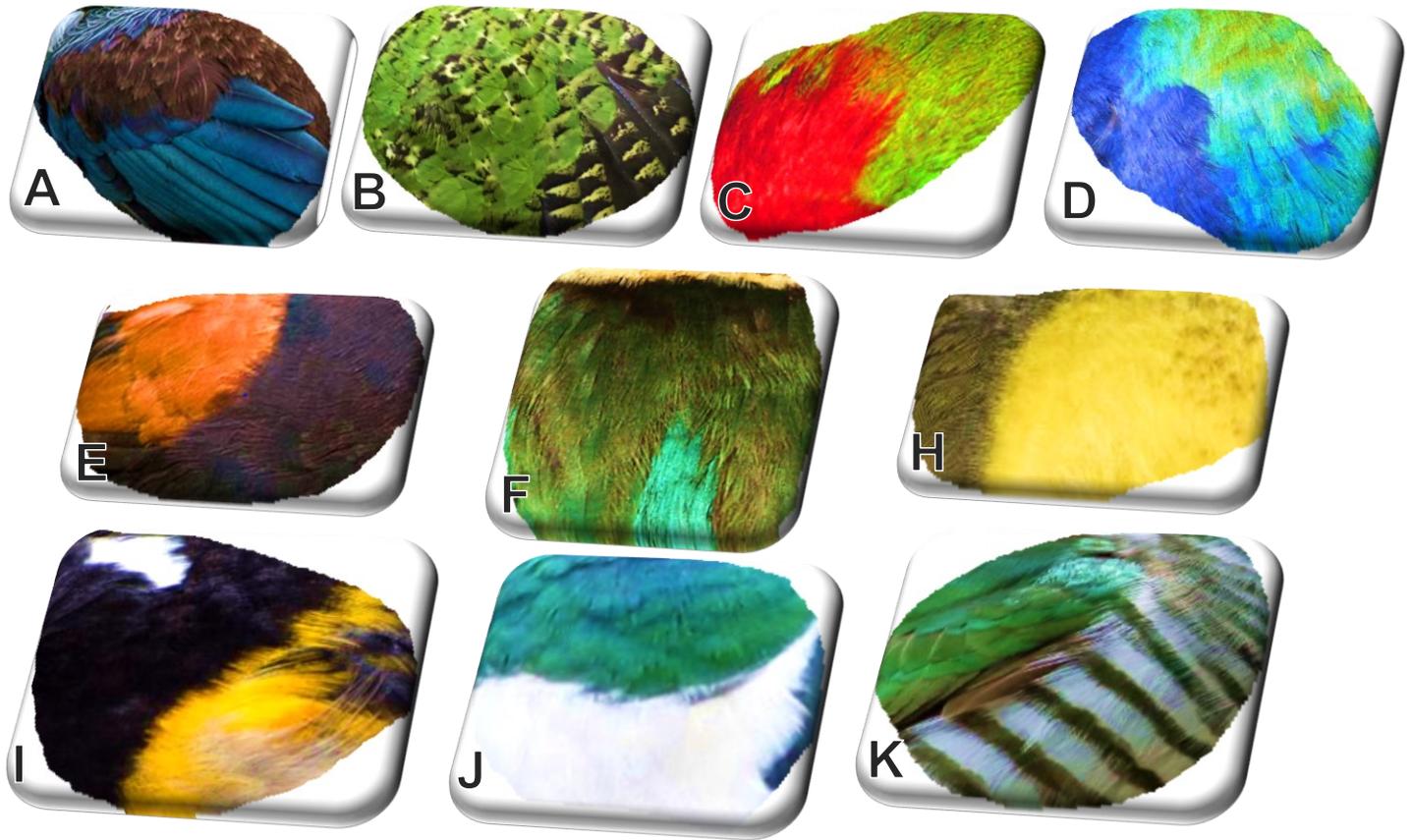
AA bands are really tiny – only 2 mm internal diameter when closed – so there is only space for four numbers after the “AA” prefix. The AA series were first printed in 1986, and reached AA-9999 in 2007, at which point there were 2000 “AX” bands printed; these bands were all from I.Ö. Mekaniska in Sweden. In 2010 the prefix was changed to AE when bands were sourced from Porzana in the UK, with the numbering starting again from 0001, reaching number AE-9000 in 2020.



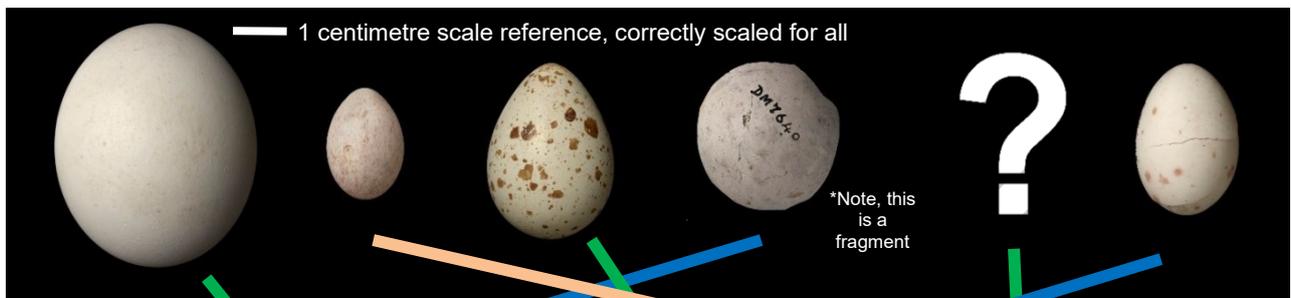
These are used on small birds such as Titipounamu (Rifleman), Pīwakawaka (Fantail) and Riroriro (Grey Warblers).

Puzzled: who said NZ birds are drab?

Can you identify the species?



Answer to: Egg-stinct - Whose egg was that?



From left to right, the extinct bird species are: Huia, Laughing Owl, Chatham Island Bellbird, New Zealand Quail, New Zealand Little Bittern (no we did not manage to find any egg photos) and Bush Wren.