



Tiakina ngā manu tā ia ripanga, tā ia ripanga
Saving the birds and bats one spreadsheet at a time

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Fun FALCON fact

Rock Wren are an endemic bird to New Zealand and are considered to be New Zealand’s only true alpine bird as they survive year-round above the tree line. According to FALCON 453 individuals have been banded in New Zealand. The earliest marking event in FALCON is from 5th January 1971 at Homer Cirque, Fiordland and the most recent marking event was 25th February 2022 in Makarora.

If you have Rock Wren banding data, but unsure if it is in FALCON please get in touch! bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz



@mieke_masterpieces

Avian Influenza Reminder

Please ensure that you keep informed regarding the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in the Northern Hemisphere - if this is detected in New Zealand, we *may need to restrict or suspend banding activities with immediate effect*. All operators are reminded to take particular care to **adopt the highest hygiene standards possible** while capturing and marking any species at any location or visiting colonies of waders or seabirds. If you identify an unusual number of mortalities, or notice birds displaying symptoms of respiratory or neurological distress, please **ring the exotic disease hotline for advice: 0800 80 99 66**. For more information, refer to [Bird Flu advisory for wildlife managers and bird banders](#)

Not all those who wander are lost – especially if they have a band on them! – Sandy Taylor

Due to some amazing photography by Kirk Zufelt, the metal band number on a Flesh-footed Shearwater was clear enough (when viewed through several photos) that an identification was able to be made.

During April this year, Kirk was on the *Sauvage*, a 60ft sailing yacht going from Hawaii to Fiji via Kiribati and the Phoenix Islands, conducting a Pacific seabird survey – one of several undertaken by Bob Flood, Kirk, and others over the last few years (a full expedition report will eventually be available online on the Pacific Seabird Group website: [Technical Publications – Pacific Seabird Group](#)). On 19th April 2022, while south of Hawaii (latitude: 16.463; longitude: -156.846), a banded Flesh-footed Shearwater was sighted and photographed.



Images from Kirk Zufelt

This female bird, with the metal band Z-66192, was banded on 12th December 2016 as a breeding adult (age 3+) on Ohinau Island (Mercury Islands Group, east coast of Coromandel Peninsula). She bred there regularly until 2020 but has not been seen since. According to Patrick Crowe, the bander, she has probably still been breeding but may have gone undetected by shifting to another burrow.



Image from Kirk Zufelt

2016 was the first season that Wildlife Management International started monitoring the population of Flesh-footed Shearwaters on Ohinau and Lady Alice Islands for the Department of Conservation, and the project is ongoing. The full report of the 2016/2017 season can be read here: [Flesh-footed shearwater population monitoring on Ohinau and Lady Alice Islands, 2016/17 report](#)

Although this species is known to migrate each winter to the seas off Japan, this is the first resighting recorded on the FALCON database of a New Zealand banded Flesh-footed Shearwater in the North Pacific.

Patrick responded, “*What an awesome resighting!*”, and thanks to Kirk for wonderful photos and reporting the band.

Banding Office move

The Banding Office has moved! No, not physically – that would be a huge undertaking (refer to articles in [BirDBanD Oct 2016](#) and [May 2017](#)) – but in terms of our reporting line within the Department of Conservation.

- Team: Conservation Technology; Manager: Jonathan Thomas
- Unit: Monitoring and Evaluation; Director: Sharon Alderson
- Group: Biodiversity, Visitors and Heritage; Deputy Director-General: Steph Rowe

Rock Wren 2022 Bird of the year



Wynston Cooper CC BY-SA 4.0

The 2022 [Bird of the Year](#) (BOTY) election was hotly contested again this year, and the winner by popular opinion was the Pīwauwau (*aka* Tuke, Rock Wren). So what is the [Pīwauwau](#)?

- New Zealand's only true alpine bird – it spends its entire life year round in the alpine zone
- Along with Titipounamu (Rifleman), they are the only living descendants of a basal endemic lineage of birds (NZ Wrens)
- Nests can be as warm as 30°C even when the outside temperature is freezing (below 0°C)
- The adults, chicks and eggs are vulnerable to predation
- The birds are poor fliers
- They go into a state of torpor during winter – a metabolic state where the bird reduces its energetic requirements
- Historically they were banded with metal bands, but following concerns that a cold metal band may impact negatively on the bird during torpor, Rock Wren now tend to be colour banded only.

Consider voting for the NZ Bug of the Year 2023 <https://bugoftheyear.ento.org.nz/>

Introducing banders to ringers – Michelle Bradshaw

On a recent trip to South Africa, I linked up with a team of banders (or 'ringers' as they refer to themselves there) at Grotto Bay on the west coast, an hour's drive north of Cape Town.

Apart from a fascinating diversity of birds including shrikes, weavers and mouse-birds, one large dung-beetle provided a tricky mist-net extraction!



The ringers included Les Underhill and Dieter Oschadleus, who previously administered [SAFRING](#), the South African Bird Ringing Unit. They have now teamed up to form the [Biodiversity & Development Institute](#) and run regular [bird ringing courses](#) – have a look here at the [report](#) from a recent such course that included catching nearly 500 birds of 30 species, including an African Hoopoe!

Wouldn't it be great if we could introduce banders to ringers and have an exchange of expertise? Get in touch with the [Banding Office](#) if you're keen!

Banding Banter on DOC Sounds of Science Podcast

Listen to Banding Officer Michelle Bradshaw talk about bird banding in the 21st episode of the [DOC Sounds of Science Podcast](#).

Greying gracefully - Liz Brown

RW-RK is the oldest kakī ever recorded, having celebrated her 28th birthday this week, the previous oldest kakī making it to 22 years.

She's had many fans over the years, as she was one of the two birds on display at the Department of Conservation visitor hide in Twizel. A number of people have mentioned meeting her when they visited the hide on school trips; she's done a great job inspiring the next generation of conservationists! Unfortunately, the visitor hide was closed in 2015, but she's having a happy retirement with her long-term friend (also an elderly lady who is turning 23 in two days' time!). Even though the visitor hide has closed, there are opportunities to see kakī out in the wild of the Mackenzie Basin if you keep your eyes peeled in the braided rivers or wetland areas. Take care between September – February as this is nesting season and they may abandon their eggs if disturbed.

In the last few months she has become quite grey, which strangely makes her appear to be ageing backwards. Her grey plumage now makes her look like one of the sub-adults in the aviary next door, but they are only a year old!



RW-RK in 2009, 2021 and December 2022! Images by Liz Brown

This answers a question we are often asked, "How long do kakī live for?" It is rare for wild kakī to live to this age, but we have had several cases of wild birds still breeding in their early 20s. The average age of an adult kakī in the wild is currently 6.5 years. Increasing survival in the wild is the biggest challenge for the programme due to the risks of predation from introduced mammalian predators.

FALCON notes

As administrators of the FALCON system we keep an eye on data submitted to the database. There was one comment in particular we recently enjoyed that was attached to a resighting of E-233873 (Red-Billed Gull):

Red-billed gull at Dunedin Wildlife Hospital "Dropped in to see if there was any free food on offer as there was another Red-Billed Gull in the hospital pool area. Stayed for about 30mins but no food was offered so departed again".



Michal Klajjban, CC BY-SA 4.0

Being the newest member of the Bird Banding Office - Angus Fordham

Hi everyone, I'm Angus Fordham, I have just recently started volunteering at the Department of Conservation Bird Banding Office. What an amazing opportunity it is!

From the moment I walked in, and met Annemieke and Sandy, I felt welcome, as though I had been taken under their proverbial wings. I'm a birder and to me it's fascinating to see the critical information that can be gained from banding and tracking of various different species of birds. I really love the opportunity to contribute to the overall knowledge, decisions and protection of our native and migratory bird species.

There are many aspects to the work we do here. Currently I'm looking at marine bycatch records for the Marine section of DOC, so they can access what species of seabirds, and roughly how many are being affected by getting caught in fishing nets or on long lines. The unique number code and colour bands fitted on birds caught in the nets, and on the lines, are reported and sometimes sent to the Bird Banding Office. There are interesting and concerning reports from far flung countries such as Peru and Argentina, because birds get caught in the nets or on lines of fishing boats in those waters. I am keen to be involved with "hands on" banding of birds, so am now a level one trainee bird bander - that means any banding that I am involved with needs to be supervised. Other tasks to be done are sorting through boxes full of old, new and used bird bands. If I'm lucky, I might even get one of these boxes to sort through over Christmas, yaaay, truly, it is exciting!

I am a member of Birds NZ and Zealandia where I have been involved as a volunteer there in the last 2-3 years, although I'm not currently volunteering there at the moment. Over the years I have been involved with, and assisted in various science research projects, mainly in New Zealand, but on two occasions on the far northwest tip of Tasmania. The research involved assessment of Spotted Tail Quoll population and breeding in the area, but an elusive population meant we saw and handled Tasmanian Devils more often. I have veterinary nursing, that pre date the new training levels. Also photographic qualifications.

Volunteering at Department of Conservation and especially in the Bird Banding Office is something I feel very lucky to be able to do.



Looking for fairies - Debbie Martin

The tara iti / fairy tern is New Zealand's most endangered indigenous breeding bird. Approximately only 12 breeding pairs stand between recovery or extinction. Tara iti / fairy terns are classed as critically endangered. We simply cannot afford to lose even just one of these birds to predators or extreme weather events. The tara iti in the images were observed at Pakiri Beach in Dec 2021 and September 2022. They appear to have favourite areas to groom, bathe and fish at depending on the time of day and what the tide is doing.



The Department of Conservation has a Recovery Plan in place for the tara iti/fairy tern. A DOC Ranger protects the fairy terns' nesting site during breeding season when the birds, eggs and chicks are most at risk of predation. A lot of behind the scenes work from volunteers, scientists, zoo staff and trappers goes on in all weather to protect these incredibly beautiful little shore birds.



Cat victim flies free after three month recovery at Hamilton Hospital – Jonah Franke-Bowell ([Stuff](#))

A critically endangered, native long-tail bat (pekapeka-tou-roa) has made a full recovery after being attacked by a domestic cat in late July. A member of the bat species, that [controversially won last year's bird of the year competition](#), was released at a semi-rural location on Monday night, after making a full recovery under the watchful eye of Hamilton zookeepers and DOC staff.

Monday night's release was over quickly, with the recuperated bat fluttering off into the night sky.

The adult female bat's recovery was miraculous and stands as a conservation success story, DOC bat specialist Dr Kerry Borkin said in a statement. "The bat had made a remarkable recovery from its injuries and had reached the point where it needed to be returned to a suitable natural environment to live out the rest of its life".



The recovering pekapeka being fed a grub. PETER DRURY

After falling victim to domestic cat, the injured bat was delivered to a local vet who then contacted the Hamilton Zoo to make arrangements for its treatment. Hamilton Zoo head veterinary nurse Trudy Willetts said that upon first inspection, the plight of the bat was worrying. "The membrane between the right leg and her tail was completely torn and there were concerns it might not re-attach, and she'd be unable to fly. "As the health of the bat improved, it was moved from an incubator to a soft playpen, and finally to its own private room - once it was clear it could fly again comfortably.

Crucial to the bat's successful release was ensuring it had regrown enough fur.

"We knew we wouldn't be able to release a bald bat, so had to reassess her care and change things such as the type of gloves we used, how often we handled her, and parts of her diet," says Willetts. The convalescence of the bat serves as a learning opportunity for zoo staff and the public alike. "She has taught us so much, and we are prepared if any other bats do come in needing special care, although we're hoping they don't!" says Willetts. DOC is using this opportunity to [encourage cat owners to be responsible for the management of their pet's relationship with endangered species](#).

Keep an eye on your bands

It's easy to get complacent and not double check your bands when you receive them. Recently one of our NZ banders demonstrated why it is so important to check. On their string of E bands, they had duplicate numbers (with no return address) and blank bands. Please check all bands in your stock (whether old or new) and contact the Banding Office immediately if any bands are faulty in any way.



Makarora Bird Banding Workshop (Intro) – Rachel Hufton

Following several local requests a bird banding workshop was set up and delivered for four attendees (registered Level 1's with the Bird Banding Office) over an afternoon and an early morning session on 30 Sept - 1 Oct 2022. The first session commenced with a presentation, a mist net installation demonstration, and experience handling introduced passerine species that are considered suitable to initially understand correct bird handling technique. Mist netting extraction and bird banding was demonstrated, and attendees were supervised whilst extracting and banding birds. All attendees took well to this process.

The following early morning session involved dawn installation and opening of mist nets and passerine bird banding under supervision. At the end of the session attendees were guided whilst closing down mist nets carefully. A total of 22 birds were captured during the workshop comprising 6 species, 21 new birds banded and 1 recapture. Records have been added to the [FALCON Bird Banding database](#). All birds observed during the session were also added to the [New Zealand Bird Atlas](#) via eBird.

Attendees found the experience beneficial and are keen to take their bird banding further. Follow up resources were provided. The photograph shows taking down nets (without stick debris collected).



Attendee comments:

*Thanks so much for running the course. It was a fantastic intro!
Thanks for your time and sharing your knowledge on bird banding on the weekend, I felt like I learnt a lot.*

Native bird whakatauki

Iti rearea Kahikatea ka taea. Tīhei mauri ora.



@mieke_masterpieces

This whakatauki (saying) literally translated means: The small bellbird (rearea) ascends/ accomplishes the Kahikatea (White Pine). Breath (sneeze) of life. More poetically translated this whakatauki reads: “Although a bellbird is small in stature it can fly to the top of the lofty white pine. And exhort the breath of life (/ And claim the right to speak).

This whakatauki can be used to encourage individuals or groups to keep chipping away at an obstacle, or to celebrate an obstacle being overcome. It can also be used to validate someone who is unsure if they are doing a good job.

BW-BW the Ashley-Rakahui Rivercare group Inc. celebrity – Nick Ledgard

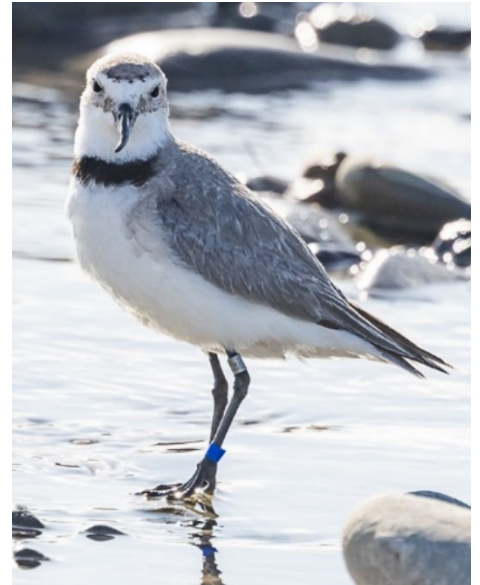


BW-BW, 2018; image by Grant Davey

BW-BW was banded as a breeding adult male wrybill in 2010, when we reckon he was aged 2 – which means he is currently at least 14 years old. To our knowledge, no other banded bird has reached this age on the Ashley-Rakahuri river, and 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 well over 20 years.

We have closely followed BW-BW's progress since he was first banded. This was down at the Ashley-Rakahuri river's Railway

site, when 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 airfield. He has returned to this site ever since. But as his mate is unbanded we don't know whether she was always the same bird. Even though their nest has been washed out by spring floods at least twice, they have always re-nested and done well up there, raising a total of 14 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 river.



BW-BW in 2022; images by Grant Davey

BW-BW parented a chick in the 2019-20 season, by the end of which he had lost one of his white bands, and therefore become BW-B. When

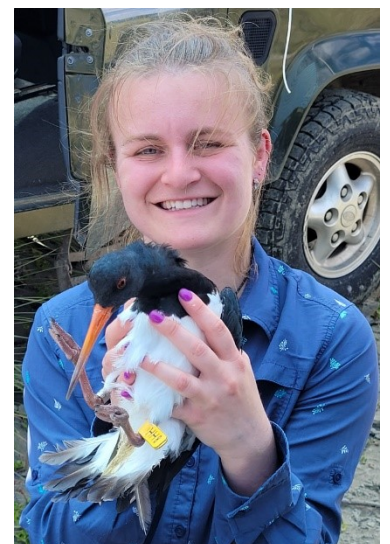
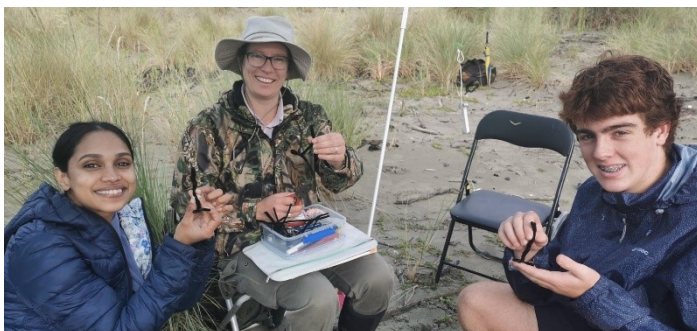


located at his usual Groyne 2 site next year, he had lost his second white band, so was just B-B. Then when first seen last season at the same site, he had only the one blue band on his left leg, and therefore become just plain B. This season (2022-23), he is back again at Groyne 2, and we found his nest, plus saw him with a flying juvenile later on. This is the 14th chick he has seen through to the flying stage since he was banded in 2010.

So B(W-BW) remains a major contributor to rising wrybill numbers on the Ashley-Rakahuri river. Long may this continue, although our ability to monitor that is doubtful. With his single blue band looking decidedly insecure, it may soon disappear and we will not be able to identify him again. Hopefully that band can last longer, as without such ID we would not know any of the above.

Getting out and about

Instead of yet another office day, Banding Office staff Michelle and Annemieke recently managed to 'get their hands dirty' by joining the OSNZ/BirdsNZ National Shorebird Banding Project catching and banding South Island Pied Oystercatchers on Rabbit Island, Nelson.

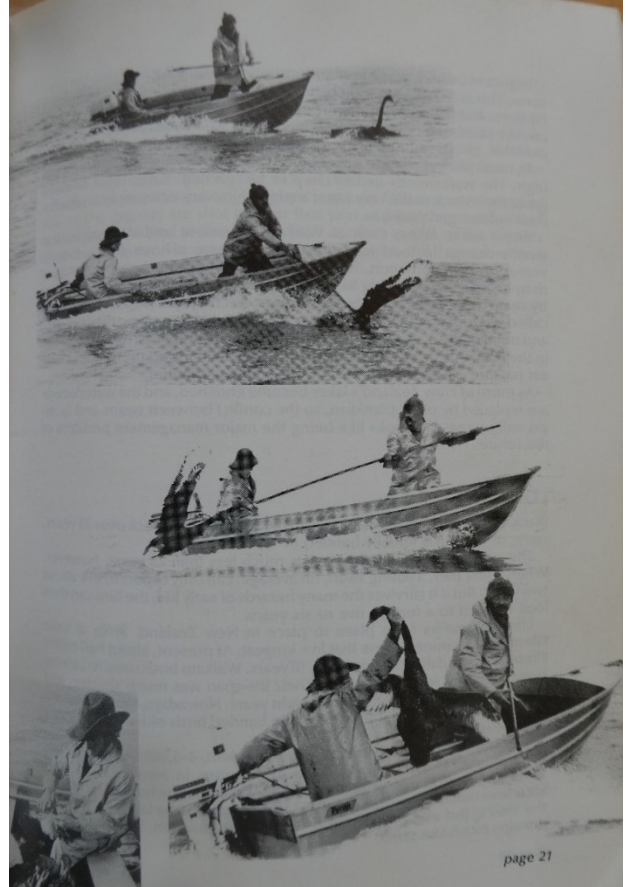


Crooked as they get – how to catch swans – John Dyer

Swan catching crook design.

The NZ Department of Conservation Banding Office informed me on 10/10/2019 that they have records for 61,621 black swan that have been banded in New Zealand, almost all of them between 1955 and 1988 by the Wildlife Service and various Acclimatisation Societies. Of these there were 13,637 recoveries. Many of these birds were banded as cygnets, so they could be accurately aged if they were later recovered. For instance, at Lake Ellesmere, 2,000 cygnets were banded each year, a job that usually involved 12 people for 3 or 4 days. (Williams, M.J., in Wildlife-A Review No.4, 1973).

Adults were also captured in summer when they moult all their flight feathers at the same time and become flightless. It takes about 5 weeks to regrow these to be able to fly again. A crew of two in a 3.6m aluminium outboard boat would chase the swimming swan. The forward person would reach out with a swan crook on the end of an approx. 3.5m-long stick. The swan's long neck would be guided by the stick into the inside bend in the crook where the bird's larger head meant it couldn't escape the crook's gape. The still floating swan was then allowed to swing back to the person at the motor end who'd free it from the crook and hold it until the boat was stopped. A leg-band could then be applied. This sequence is shown in 5 photos within The Duckshooter's Bag, (Williams M.J., 1981).



Swans are quick to accept their newly captured status and my impression is that this is a simple, effective and relatively low-impact way of catching them. Unfortunately, none of those people we know of who'd done this work in the past are still around to produce an old crook or describe the ideal dimensions. Nor did a NZ literature search find specific measurements, though the aforementioned 1973 M.J. Williams article does show a swan hook or crook catching a cygnet. Consequently, I had to reinvent the wheel and several swan initially escaped while the correct dimensions were found by trial and error. This brief communication is to put these measurements on record for future use.

The new swan crook described here has been used for capturing birds from boats to band, also to attach radio-tracking devices to. On land it has been used to capture sick birds for treatment and to recover dead birds that have died from botulism, (these need to be quickly removed and buried). It has also been used to recapture live banded birds to report their number to DOC.



The crook used here is made of 6.5mm diameter steel. The crucial inside gape is 35mm. This crook has a flare at the terminal end, the flare tip being 270mm from the apex of the bend. This helps with captures from a bouncing boat and the same flare can be clearly seen in the 1973 article's photo. The crook is secured with either one or two stainless steel radiator hose clamps and also with duct tape, to a 2.2 - 3.5m long, strong but also lightweight bamboo rod which hopefully also floats if dropped! The crook in the 1973 photo is clearly also attached to bamboo.

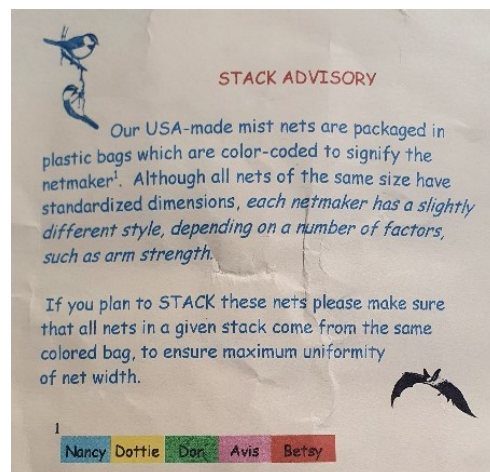
Swans take a #19 series band and are fairly passive when applying it. One bander suggests popping their head and neck around your neck like a feather boa so they can watch proceedings. Swans seem quite relaxed about this. Swans often have swan-lice, especially if they are in poor condition. These will transfer to humans, but unless you have feathers growing on you somewhere, no harm will come from this. However, moving about on your skin they do feel odd. They're hard to squash, but the tips of a pair of banding pliers will do the job nicely and you'll be doing the bird a favour.

“He aha tēnei?” / “what is this?” Real life puzzles from behind the scenes: the P prefix series bands

The mysteries continue. Some eagle-eyed observers may notice that some of the NZ metal bands have both a normal prefix and a P prefix e.g., A and AP, B and BP, C and CP etc. Do you know what the differences are between each band and its P prefix sibling? Do you know what the “P” stands for?

Answer to: “He aha tēnei?” – Colour mist net bags

It turns out that the different coloured plastic bags that mist nets are packaged in, indicate the different people who make mist-nets at Avinet. This document from over a decade ago shows that Nancy, Dottie, Don, Avis and Betsy were the main mist net makers, each with their own designated colour. Don still seems to make nets to this day.



Puzzled: Bird words

Think that you are egg-cellent at using bird-related vocabulary? Try to guess the following “bird words” according to their descriptions:

Example: When something is found to be funny, especially in reference to a large ratite.

Answer: Emu-sing (Amusing)

1. When something is very good, especially in reference to unhatched birds
2. When raptors that don't feel well don't abide by the law.
3. Getting vaccinated, especially in reference to a large ratite.
4. When certain geese look at genuinely spreading politically biased information.
5. The process of stealing via threat of force, especially in reference to a small friendly bird
6. A funny person, especially in reference to female chicken.
7. Dishonest conduct, especially in reference to water birds.
8. To abruptly stop doing a habit, especially in reference to a chilly Galliforme.
9. A market where people invest such as NZX, especially in reference to a bird-run baby delivery service.
10. To be excluded from a society or group, especially in reference to a large ratite.

Puzzled: Answers to Who's that Manu??

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| A. Wrybill, Ngutu pare | I. Stitchbird, Hihi |
| B. Rock Wren, Pīwauwau | J. Black backed Gull, Karoro |
| C. North Island Kōkako | K. Fantail, Pīwakawaka |
| D. Huia | L. Pipit, Pīhoihoi |
| E. Yellow-Eyed Penguin, Hoiho | M. Kiwi |
| F. South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Tōrea | N. House Sparrow, Tiu |
| G. Morepork, Ruru | O. Tui, Tūi |
| H. NZ Pigeon, Kererū | P. Southern Royal Albatross, Toroa |

