

New Zealand Bird Rescue Charitable Trust



Newsletter #22
October 2013



Welcome to the latest edition of the NZBR newsletter. Spring is here! In this edition, read about a visiting albatross from the south, new spring babies and our recommendations on feeding wild birds.

RECENTLY AT BIRD RESCUE

Surprising Southern visitor found on local west Auckland beach

Bird Rescue volunteers had a surprise when they were called about an albatross, found disoriented and exhausted at local Wood Bay beach. The big beautiful bird with characteristic white semi-circular rings about the eyes, was identified as a light mantled sooty albatross (*Pheobetria palpebrata*). Although a large sized bird, these are one of the smaller species of albatross and like others of their kind they spend most of their lives up in the sky effortlessly gliding over the open ocean, and only really coming in to land to breed. Light mantled sooties have circumpolar distribution, with NZ populations on the Auckland, Campbell and Antipodes islands. That means a trip of more than 1600km all the way up to Auckland! Despite being very skinny, this bird had no physical injuries and so after 3 weeks stay at the Bird rescue centre, being fed up on fish and squid, he was successfully released at Piha, to make the long journey home.



Spring is here- baby bird season has begun

Spring has definitely arrived at Bird Rescue, judging by the numbers of baby birds arriving into the centre on a daily basis. We have received thrush, blackbird, pukeko, heron, pigeon and spur-winged plover chicks so far, and of course many ducklings. The precocial species, such as blackbirds and thrushes, require a huge investment in time as they require hand feeding. In the wild, in its first few weeks of life, some species of chick will be fed all day long at 10 minute intervals! Needless to say this is a difficult job for our volunteers to live up to. Once the baby birds are feeding themselves and can fly, we are then able to release them back into the wild. The first of the ducklings and thrushes have already grown to adult size and have been successfully released in late September.

You can help us care for these spring chicks, by donating some of your time or money to the cause. Contact us on volunteer@birdrescue.org.nz if you feel you can spare the time to help these little guys out!

A Big Thank-you to our local business supporters!

We have had a number of kind donations from various businesses over the last couple of months, which we appreciate hugely. All these individual donations of time, skill and products is what helps make our job of caring for the birds as a charity possible.

Perroplas kindly donated some NZ made plastic crates, which once converted, will be used as temporary housing for injured birds in our hospital. This is greatly appreciated, as our current hospital boxes have been very well used!

Treescape recently delivered a couple of loads of much needed wood chip- which we are planning on using to plant out kowhai trees over the Bird Rescue property.

And lastly, **B&M Engineering** deserves a big thank you for the free repairs made to our cages and pens that need speciality welding skills. We would be at a loss without this help!



Adopt these spring babies!

These two cute spring babies, a cygnet and a peking duckling, are looking for a home where they can live together permanently. They are excellent companions, and must stay together as they keep one another company as well as keeping each other warm. The cygnet is on a special diet, so you will need to be able to provide for this, as well as give them access to a pond. They are still young, and will need some extra care until they have grown to adulthood (kept inside when bad weather and penned outdoors to keep them safe).

If you are interested in giving a rescue pet bird a second chance, we list all birds up for adoption on our NZBR Trademe site. Or email trademe@birdrescue.org.nz for specific enquiries.



Bird of the year

NZ Bird of the Year is back! Forest and Bird's annual poll has opened for 2013, where you can vote for your favourite NZ bird. Last year's winner was the powerful Karearea ("NZ's got talons!"). Head along to www.birdoftheyear.org.nz to read entertaining bio's about the different birds and make your own vote!

When feeding birds harms more than helps

In some cases supplementing a wild birds diet with food or water (for instance during famine or drought) can save birds' lives. However, when you regularly feed a wild bird population, you are altering the balance of nature, and in some cases this can have negative consequences. These include:

- * **increase of birds living in an area that would not otherwise be sustained by natural food availability.** This means if the food source (ie. you) disappears, then the bird population is going to find it very hard to survive in the same area.
- * **malnutrition** over long periods of time. The food we feed (like bread) is not as nutritious as that which birds would find in the wild (insects, plants)
- * **loss of innate fear of humans** which is required to survive an urban landscape filled with all sorts of hazards.
- * **Overpopulation** (increased breeding success+ movement into area) which commonly leads to...
 - increased presence of disease (such as botulism in ducks)
 - increased aggression and competition amongst birds, leading to injuries and death
 - degradation of environment (decreased water quality, loss of vegetation etc)
 - hazards to other species (including people) living in the same area
 - conflict with humans

If you do decide to feed birds:

- always feed in a suitable environment (away from roads and industrial/heavily built up areas), and don't throw food into waterways, as this causes botulism.
- never increase your food over time, unless population growth is the intended outcome (ie for threatened native species).
- once you start feeding, do not suddenly stop, especially during a period where food is likely to be scarce, slowly reduce the amount of food over time until you are providing nothing.
- if you do decide to feed, take precautions to prevent pets catching birds and window collisions of birds attracted to your garden.
- try to feed foods that have nutritional value to the birds, and avoid stale/mouldy bread and other junk foods.

Mallard ducks, pigeons, sparrows are thriving in parts of NZ that are becoming more urbanised, and are increasing the risk of disease in the areas they congregate.

If you would like to feed birds, you could help out native species by supplementing appropriate food and improving your garden habitat for them.

Finally please enjoy local birds, but view them from a distance and respect their wildness- you'll give them the best chance for survival! If you have any questions about feeding birds, feel free to email or call us.

Every little bit counts



If you would like to help us care for the birds, a donation is always hugely appreciated. If you would like to make a donation, you can do so via electronic transfer- our bank account is ASB 12 3029 0421056 50. Receipts are available for donations larger than \$5, just email info@birdrescue.org.nz

Contact Us

Website: www.birdrescue.org.nz

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Call us on

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*'On mended wings we
set you free'*