Records Appraisal Committee annual report for 2013

Prepared for OSNZ Council for consideration at the 2014 AGM

RAC membership
Current membership is

- Colin Miskelly (Convener)
- Andrew Crossland
- Paul Sagar
- Ian Saville
- Alan Tennyson

Elizabeth (Biz) Bell is the RAC Secretary, and continues to provide superb administrative support to the panel and submitters.

Brian Bell was co-opted to the panel to provide an additional independent assessment of Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) submitted by RAC members. This occurred 13 times in 2013.

RAC processes
The online UBR reporting system on the OSNZ website is working well, and is the main source of UBRs received.

Receipt of UBRs is acknowledged promptly by the Secretary. Batches of UBRs are sent to the panel every 2 months, and they then have 2 months to provide comment. All panel members reliably kept within deadlines during 2013. There were some delays in providing responses within the agreed timeline during April-June, when the convenor was over-committed during the final pre-launch stages of the NZ Birds Online website, but the resulting backlog was soon cleared. Apart from these 3 months, response letters were sent out 3-5 months after UBRs were received.

UBRs assessed in 2013
A total of 77 UBRs was received in 2013. Fifty-seven (74%) of these UBRs were accepted by the panel. No new species were added to the New Zealand list, but one of the eleven South Island kokako UBRs submitted was accepted, making this the first accepted sighting of this 'extinct' species since 1967.

Publication of RAC decisions
A paper reporting on 175 RAC decisions was published in the December 2013 issue of *Notornis*:

Miskelly, C.M.; Crossland, A.C.; Sagar, P.M.; Saville, I.; Tennyson, A.J.D.; Bell, E.A. 2013. Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the OSNZ Records Appraisal Committee 2011-2012. *Notornis 60*: 296-306.

I thank Biz, Brian and my fellow panel members for their efficient support during 2013.

Colin Miskelly, Convener