

Records Appraisal Committee annual report for 2015

Prepared for OSNZ Council for consideration at the 2016 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 timely and efficient administrative support to the panel and submitters.

Brian Bell was co-opted to the panel to provide independent assessment of Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) submitted by RAC members. This occurred 11 times in 2015.

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 2015. Response letters were typically sent out 3-5 months after UBRs were received.

UBRs assessed in 2015

A total of 79 UBRs was received in 2015, and assessed between March 2015 and February 2016. Seventy (87%) of these UBRs were accepted by the committee. Two new species were added to the New Zealand list: northern fulmar and magpie-lark.

UBR database

Council approved funding for development of an online database of Unusual Bird Reports at the June 2015 Council meeting. While substantial progress has been made on this, the software company contracted to do the work has been frustratingly slow responding to feedback on website design and apparent errors affecting the data. This has dragged on for 9 months since the original brief was submitted, and I am not confident that the database will be completed and the full dataset (1600+ UBRs) checked before the 2016 AGM.

Once completed, the database will provide almost immediate feedback on UBR submissions and decisions, as well as a searchable database of all submissions and decisions dating back to the 1960s.

Publication of RAC decisions

A paper reporting on 154 RAC decisions from 2013-14 was published in *Notornis*:

Miskelly, C.M.; Crossland, A.C.; Sagar, P.M.; Saville, I.; Tennyson, A.J.D.; Bell, E.A.
2015. Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand
Records Appraisal Committee 2013-2014. *Notornis* 62: 85-95.

I thank Biz, Brian and my fellow panel members for their efficient support during
2015.

Colin Miskelly, Convener