



About Otago

Mō Ōtākou

Ones to Watch: Oscar Thomas

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Oscar, who is only just beginning his exciting journey, has just published his first book.

A budding young book-writer and bird enthusiast is already undertaking big adventures with his passion for New Zealand wildlife.

Second year Bachelor of Science student, Oscar Thomas, is majoring in Zoology and Ecology and has just recently returned from a life changing adventure to the Subantarctic.

“I’m grateful to Heritage Expeditions for granting me a True Young Explorers scholarship to voyage to our Subantarctic islands. Tini Heke (The Snares) and Motu Maha (Auckland Islands) are havens for seabirds, megaherbs and stranger things, such as snipe, which very few people know about.”

Oscar says it was reassuring to see native animals thriving in huge numbers with the reduction of pests in this part of the world.



Oscar found it reassuring to see native animals, such as Hoiho, thriving during his trip to the Subantarctic.

“Motu Maha is the last remaining island in the New Zealand Subantarctic with predators. Mammalian pests continue to cause immense damage to the flora and fauna there.”

“I chose to study at Otago because not only does it have the only place in the country with a dedicated zoology department, but Dunedin is also the Wildlife Capital of New Zealand which offers so many opportunities to observe animals such as Albatross and Penguins.”

The Auckland-raised student first fell in love with animals at a young age when he visited Tiritiri Matangi, a wildlife sanctuary in Auckland.



A New Zealand Sealion, spotted on Oscar's recent trip to the Subantarctic islands.

"I volunteered as a visitor guide there, and had various roles through BirdsNZ, the Department of Conservation, and Forest & Bird, where I also won a Youth award for my involvement campaigning for my favourite bird, the North Island kōkako in Bird of the Year."

Oscar, who is only just beginning his exciting journey, has just published his first book, 'A Naturalists Guide to the Birds of New Zealand'.

"I covered 238 of Aotearoa's most unique and prominent bird species, with photography from myself and many others, from every corner of this amazing country. Whether New Zealanders realize it or not, many of our taonga are still threatened with extinction for a whole lot of reasons, many of which I talk about in detail in the book."

Oscar's book can be found online and in most kiwi bookstores, and he plans to continue his undergraduate studies, moving onto postgraduate studies in future. His advice to anyone who wants to study Zoology and Ecology is to be proactive.

"Volunteering and getting experience in your own time is a good way to grasp what you're getting into. There are plenty of opportunities to get to know wildlife, you just have to go get them and make it happen."

Oscar hopes to one day return to Motu Maha and help remove the remaining pests and return endangered species from the surrounding islands. To hear more about what Oscar is up to, you can tune into his webinar later this month.

Kōrero by Internal Communications Adviser, Chelsea McRae