



## NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER

February/March 2017

Regional Representative

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**I love sitting** outside on a summer's evening and watching for the first star to appear, because about the same time redbilled gulls appear in the vista fluttering and dipping and diving, hawking for their evening's insectivorous meal. But down in the Mackenzie Country recently during our evening alfresco boiling of the billy I had to slap and flick and smack to keep the sandflies off me. Symbiotic associations were interesting, fisherfolk in camper vans, caravans, 4WDs, old and new buses hung round the salmon farms with their lines dipped into the canals hoping for a tale and a photo of the big one, or at least a small meal, then I noticed mallards/grellards hanging out with coot. In pairs, one of each in the water moving very closely together, turn by turn, Then a coot would dive and bring up a sizeable bunch of weed which the bigger duck honed in on and poached a decent frond or two for its own meal.

### Count the Heads



Photo Rebecca Bowater 2017 White-fronted terns, Motueka Sandspit

**ALSO** from the Motueka Sandspit end of February Ken George spotted the **whimbrel** with godwits and ruddy turnstones.

Another observation from Ken, in Feb: "Marahau is an excellent location, right on the boardwalk there at the start of the Abel Tasman walk. Great to see the resident **banded rails** are still there and just as relaxed going about their lives right off the board walk. Same with the **marsh crake**. The Marahau boardwalk must be one of the best places in NZ to see both these species because they are so habituated to seeing a constant procession of humans going up and down the Abel Tasman Walk causeway they don't take any notice of them. Yesterday the boardwalk was like Ponsonby Road on a Friday night!!"

Keeping with the **February** theme Chris Petyt reports from Golden Bay :

A Farewell Spit tourist bus driver recently reported (in February) a **Glossy Ibis** for a couple of days in a marshy bit by the Cape Farewell Road. (A separate sighting of a Glossy Ibis from the same area also came in. GDQ)

The Mangarakau Swamp people report reasonable numbers of **Bittern** and **Spotless Crake** out there, not often seen but detected by their calls.

### **M&M's**

Nothing to do with the occasional chocolate treats you might give to granddaughters but magpies and mynas. Ingrid has had a magpie at her place. Single sightings have been reported at times over the years closer to the Stoke and Richmond fringes but are they moving into built up areas? And I have heard of a couple of unsubstantiated sightings of mynas. Keep your eyes peeled.

### **A BIRDER FROM THE UK**

"I was on a family visit to the Nelson area between 19 Jan and 2 Feb, staying on the Bronte Peninsula near Mapua. During that period I regularly heard a rattling bird song coming from a tall pine tree, but was unable to see the bird. Then on 30 Jan, the song was very close to me, in a small kowhai tree, and I was able to identify a male **cirl bunting**: strong facial pattern, chestnut streak across wing coverts, size of a slim yellowhammer. The song was like that of a yellowhammer - but without the final flourish. Though a single observer, I had no doubt about the ID. Later the same day I shared another sighting with my adult son. We are both experienced observers. This time the view was even clearer, from inside our holiday cottage, when the black chin was a strong feature. Again the bird was perching in the kowhai tree. I hope this is enough data for you to log the bird.

On our return home I was delighted to see that the current RSPB magazine ('Nature's Home') featured a cover picture of a male cirl bunting, and carried a keynote article about how the project to conserve the cirl bunting in SW England has been such a success. Again, I can send you information; or you/OSNZ may like to contact RSPB direct. " (Thank you PW from Cheshire, GDQ).

## Australian Wood Ducks



Photo Rebecca Bowater Nov 2016, Tasman

Spread over four or five farm ponds in the Tasman area, anecdotal evidence suggest c22 **wood ducks** this season. The 11 ducklings hatched last Nov seem to have survived so far, and from the same pond an adult pair and four new ducklings have been reported, 18 March. I wonder how many more are sitting round the many other ponds in the region.

**Keep an eye** on Regional Roundup in Birds NZ magazine. It's great to hear what's been seen in other regions. Our regions's blurb sometimes repeats what has been in newsetters and sometimes tells new stories!

### **MARCH MEETING**

A good turnout heard fascinating accounts from Sam Gale on using cryopreservation for AI of kakapo, and from Andrew Fiddler on colour vision in Mohua and a discussion on the role it may play. Thank you Andrew, and Sam who leaves our fair shores to work on capercaillie in Scotland. Also thanks to Richard W for fern bird news and Rebecca for her lovely Motueka Sandspit tern and gull photos.

### **PROGRAMME 2016**

We meet **usually** on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Fisheries Building", Cross Quay, off Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). All birders are welcome! Contact: Don Cooper 03-544 8109 or Gail 03-5450456.

#### **Monday 3 April**

Indoor Meeting

#### **Monday 1 May**

Indoor meeting

Thank you to this month's contributors. Contributions for next newsletter by 25 April please, email, snail mail or phone, Gail 035450456,