

NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017

Regional Representative :

Gail D. Quayle,
6 Tresillian Ave,
Atawhai . 7010

stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz

One should be careful with what one wishes for. Several Sundays ago with all main doors open, I heard a noise in the kitchen, went to investigate and disturbed a weka fossicking around! It shot down the hallway visiting bedrooms on the way and leaving its stain bearing mark everywhere, finally made its exit out the back of the house when my back was turned only to come in again through the front door. Banished it a second time and haven't seen it since. All I really want is to hear, from up the hill, weka calls, evocative of holidays on the Coast and Golden Bay.

Long before the shortest day, summer cicada song gave way to black field crickets who in turn crept deep into crevices with fading song. Then came *Turdus* to entertain us. In both Golden and Tasman Bays a song thrush was heard in the first week of May. But, as Chris Petyt asks, why does the blackbird not hit the airways till some time later? July, as the Field Guide suggests. Listen out for *Turdus merula* and send me 'first heard' dates.

Out and About

End of June I spotted two **white herons** separately in Motueka Estuary and last Wednesday I spotted a **white heron** close to the Mapua causeway's entrance to the Leisure Park, a bloke operating his smallish remote control yacht only a few feet away. The heron not remotely interested in their presence or activity. Willie reports **Spur winged plover chicks** in Hope last week and I spied a sitting bird in a paddock in Motueka mid June.

From Over the Hill: Chris Petyt reports:

A **whio** recently seen on a farm pond at Packards Road, Motupipi, by Willie Harris. The daughter saw it first and the parents were rather dubious but it turned out to be true. And a **robin** at Parapara, the first seen there for years. On 2nd April a flock of 15 VOC on Tukurua beach; I've only seen a pair or family party previously. This year our local pair abandoned the beach and nested on top of a 25m cliff on the edge of someone's lawn, but apparently was not successful.



Photo Don Cooper: Godwits and Wrybills, Bells Is. July

Winter gatherers

We may not get huge flocks of migrant geese or swans to our coastal areas but it's lovely seeing groups of our own pied stilt, SIPO, banded dotterel and VOC. The Waimea plays host to a small number of **wrybills**, some passing through, some staying for a bit. Spoonbill seem to be popping up right around our different estuaries. Their royal icing plumage giving their presence away. Normally at Delaware, (13 in April); either side of the Motueka causeway and throughout the estuary; in the Waimea, seen from the motorway and Rabbit Is bridge; off Monaco; Mapua area, and Nelson Haven feeding in channels and near stormwater outlets. Golden Bay has their lot too.

Winter overstayers, the non-,breeders, godwit, knot, turnstone, whimbrel, and **Wanderers**, 2 sanderlings on Farewell Spit,

A murmuration of starlings in name alone conjures up thoughts of autumnal mellowness, but the real deal can be spotted just off Rocks Road. This year I marvelled at the sight end of June – one evening about 5.0'clock, the whirling ebb and flow of birds rose up above, over and back and forth along Haulashore Is, turning en-masse sometimes splitting to go down either side, sometimes moving across over The Cut and back, sometimes a dense cloud, sometimes sparse.

WHAT MEMBERS HAVE BEEN UP TO:

From Richard Wells

Below a pic I took at Waikaia (Piano Flat) in Southland during roar hunt. This area has been 1080-d in 2014 and 2016 Battle for the Birds campaigns and robins, riflemen, tomtits, fantails, kakariki abound and others including kaka can be heard.



From Chris Petyt

In February I visited Kaikoura where I'd spent time studying the gulls in the early 1980s. Luckily I caught up with Jim Mills, whom I'd been working for, and who's now spent 53 seasons on intensive study of these colonies. (Google his name, gulls and Kaikoura for a RNZ interview revealing some of his discoveries.) This summer the birds were not doing well; chicks fed mainly on worms and fish eggs; they were skinny and not growing well. The earthquake raised the rocks a metre; millions of limpets died and the chicks were fed almost exclusively on limpets for 2-3 weeks when krill appeared. The chicks grew very well though the limpet diet turned the guano black and very smelly. The earthquake was at midnight but the moon was full so disturbed birds would have been able to return to their nests. But total numbers now are only about 1/3 what they were in the 1980s.

The Hutton's shearwaters were not so lucky. Slips are thought to have buried about 30% of the burrows in the mountains. However the colony on the peninsula, started with translocated chicks, has about 19 nesting pairs which is a good start.

Bells Island, Waimea Est. Field Trip lead by Willie and Don, July

Photo Don Cooper



And after the birding was over: Photo Ken George



From Ken George:

The two of us from Golden Bay had an excellent afternoon out on the Bell Island shell bank with Willie Cook, David Melville and the others from the Nelson OSNZ. My initial skepticism about what interesting species of waders would be around in mid-July was completely blown away when we had 150+ godwits, 70+ wrybill, many banded dotterels and a dozen turnstones. As a bonus we had the Waimea **whimbrel** fly in for an appearance, and a **Little Tern** joined the group later in the arvo. David Melville ID'd the Little Tern as an immature non-breeder, not quite a lifer for me (seen previously at Werribee) but a first for NZ for me.

Top of the South Winter wader count, co-ordinator Rob Schuckard

The weather conditions were perfect and conditions for the census couldn't be better. Almost 23,000 shorebirds were recorded, 89% endemic and the rest wintering migrants.

Farewell Spit

The highest number of Pied Oystercatchers over the period of recording was identified in February 2017. This high number was also reflected in noticeable higher number of oystercatchers wintering on the spit (almost 9000).

Numbers for other species were average. Steve Wood and Anna Simmonds recorded two Sanderling in perfect breeding plumage.

Golden Bay

All shorebirds in Golden Bay were average. Many Pied Oystercatchers were recorded in the paddocks. Pakawau is a site of International Importance for Pied Oystercatchers. With the high tides we encountered birds hunkering on the last piece of dry land. A flock of 1600 Pied Oystercatchers (>1% of total population) was disturbed by two fishermen and a small child. Where there was most certainly no intend to cause this disturbance, it will be a lot more quite when birds decide indefinitely not to use this area as a roost any more. Birds flew to paddocks, FSpit and Bird Island.

Tasman Bay

Apart from Banded Dotterel, numbers encountered were average. This may be caused be problems of accessibility of Motueka Sandspit. Motueka Sandspit is for some time now cut in two and the channel is very deep. HT was at 11:15 and arrival at 09:26 was not early enough to cross it. I counted the tip of Motueka Sandspit from Talley's Point (~11:00) Where Variable and Pied Oystercatchers were well visible. This is not an option for the future and we may have missed some Banded Dotterels from the island.

We experience now a number of logistical problems with our census:

- Access to Motueka sandpit southern tip.
- Access to Bird Island and Totara Avenue Bar near Collingwood.
- Access to Sand Island in Waimea Estuary.

Access to drones is getting cheaper and easier and we may like to explore the possibilities (funding, rules, safety etc.) these new technologies provide.

As always we are very grateful for the support we receive from the Department of Conservation in Golden Bay.

Parish Notices:

If anyone has difficulty locating our meeting venue please contact me, Gail 5450456.

For Sale: By Ken George – Nikon Spotting Scope

Below the photos and details of the birding scope I want to sell. It's a Nikon RA3 model with a 20-60x zoom and 82mm front objective. It's in as new condition, only reason I'm selling it is that I've changed to one of newer 'mini' scopes which is physically smaller and easier to carry in my backpack. Any offers? Ken George 03 525 6235 email ken@mohuabirder.nz

For Sale:



PROGRAMME 2017

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 7 August

Indoor Meeting

Willie has some photos of the Shetland Is

Monday 4 September

Indoor meeting

Monday 2 October

Indoor meeting

Summer Wader Census

3-6 November

Monday 6 November

Indoor meeting

Rob Schuckard

King Shags and Salmon farms

Thank you to this month's contributors.

Contributions for August newsletter by 28th, please email, snailmail, or phone:

Gail 035450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz