



Birds New Zealand  
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***Birds New Zealand***

***Otago Region Newsletter 9/2017 September 2017***

**Polaris Water Sampling Voyage 21 Sept 2017.**



Out to sea to celebrate the equinox with Kim Currie. Great, but mist, swell and wind meant the birds were elsewhere. Matthias and I managed to log 23 species of seabirds, many only one individual, wandering albatross, grey-backed storm petrel, sub-antarctic little shearwater, soft-plumaged petrel, diving petrel, black shag and grey petrel. Only five albatross species this time compared with the record ten seen in July. Salvin's mollymawks predominated and there were quite a few indeterminate juvenile cauta birds.

Grey-faced petrels were often seen and the first sooty shearwaters were seen singly. Francesca Cunningham reports some fresh burrow cleaning on the east head of Sandfly Bay too. Some Hutton's shearwaters near shore. The other birds were; southern royal, Buller's mollymawk, white-capped mollymawk, northern giant petrel, fairy prion, broad-billed prion, white-chinned petrel, black-backed gull, red-billed gull, white-fronted tern, Otago shag, spotted shag. Very few interactions between species seen, highlight a shy molly getting a fish off a fur seal.



Skipper Bill Dixon reported seeing spoonbills on Taiaroa Head two days ago but none seen this evening and crew Evan saw them in the Waikouaiti on Sunday.

**Graeme Loh**

## Ornithological snippets

Several **Pied Shags** were reported, with 2 birds at Moeraki Wharf on 26th (Lei Zhu), and singles at Aramoana Mole on 28th (Pete Naik), Dunedin Harbour by the Fryatt Street wharf on 30th (all August), and at Tomahawk Lagoon with 2 on 23rd August (Andrew Innes) and 1 on 6th September

(Mary Thompson). 7 **Cattle Egret**, with at least 3 attaining breeding plumage, were on Inchclutha on 17th September (Richard Schofield). On

22nd August Nick Beckwith saw what appeared to be a **Golden Pheasant** on the bank of Waikouaiti river about 1km above the main highway bridge, it was working its way through the flood debris. Examination of his photos suggested the bird was a hybrid **Golden X Lady Amherst's Pheasant** – presumably an escape. Penelope Gillette continues to see large numbers of **Pukeko** around Henley, with 3 figure counts on August 28th and September 16th – she assures me she wasn't doing the driving!

**Black-billed Gulls** have again established a colony in Balclutha, along with significant numbers of **Red-billed Gulls**; most of the early nesters seem to have survived the high river levels of the last few days. Meanwhile 5 **Black-fronted Terns** were in Balclutha on 10th September (Suzanne Schofield).

Rachel Hufton reported a flock of 30 **Kereru** at Makarora on 23rd August, foraging amongst pastoral grazing then flew into tree. A **Brown Creeper** was heard and seen briefly in the compiler's garden in Balclutha on 23rd August – only the 3rd sighting there in 15 years. Jane Young reported 4 **Tui** in a plum tree in her garden near Owaka on 20th August.

Please send any noteworthy sightings to [richard@pcconnect.co.nz](mailto:richard@pcconnect.co.nz)  
Compiled by **Richard Schofield**



## The Otago Shags did not choose Quarantine Island Pedestals.



Torea Scott-Fyfe picked up the monitoring cameras at the shag artificial nest pedestals 8th September after breeding had really got going at Taiaroa Head and numbers roosting on Quarantine Island had reduced to thirty from a high in the eighties. (See ebird). Some of the roosting shags had coloured up into breeding

facial flesh, but most were probably immature birds. According to the cameras, and observers on Back Beach, one shag sat on one pedestal once. The rats visit the site most nights, and dunnocks, starlings, blackbirds, and yellowhammers also foraged around the pedestals. The red-billed gulls took a break from waiting for regurgitated food pellets and looked in the pedestal bases too.

Next season? Perhaps some models, perhaps some sound to increase the attraction.



The colony on Taiaroa looked quite sparse when I went past on Thursday 21st. Must check North Otago again!  
**Graeme Loh**

## Notices and Business

### More Field Trips

#### **Taieri Mouth and End-of-year Picnic, Sunday 3rd December.**

Birds NZ has been invited to do a bird survey of the Livingstone Wetland and Native Bush Walk, an area of private wetland and bush near Coutts Gully Road at Taieri Mouth that is undergoing restoration. There should be water birds, fernbirds and a variety of native bush birds. This is a great opportunity to re-explore this area.



Those who would like to carpool from Dunedin, please meet outside Bunnings on Otaki Street by 8.30am.

We should all aim to meet at the Knarston Park Picnic Ground at Taieri Mouth, by 9.30am.

Contact Mary to let her know if you are coming; [maryt@actrix.co.nz](mailto:maryt@actrix.co.nz) or 464 0787

We will walk around the Wetlands and Bush Walk in the morning, to do a complete species list and also travelling eBird records of numbers-it will

take a couple of hours (bush walk has a small part that is fairly steep and tricky, but this can be avoided if stay on the lower path.)

**Picnic:** Even if you cant make it for the bird survey in the morning , All members are welcome and encouraged to come with their family and friends to join together for lunch at about 12 noon, at Knarston Park overlooking the estuary (near low tide). Please bring some picnic food to share if you can.

Then for those who would like to explore further, a short stretch of the Taieri River track would be worthwhile. We'll have telescopes to look over to Moturata for spoonbills.

**Mary Thompson**

### **After Dinner Birdwatching at the Prion Fence, Saturday 14th October**



To celebrate Spring and Conservation Week we shall have an evening at the Prion Fence to watch the sooty shearwaters, and hopefully the prions, come in for the evening. Excellent courting calls promised but good behaviour necessary. Access is steep and rough so agility is required.

Contact Graeme Loh 0211322436 to say that you are coming and gather in the carpark near 47 Highgrove at 8pm. Boots, walking sticks, a dim torch and clothes for sitting out in the evening are necessary. Will shift to Sunday if Saturday is southerly gale.



## Manuherikia River Weekend 4th and 5th November



Manuherikia River birds are breeding. We shall count them in the first weekend of November, Saturday 4th Sunday 5th. Stay in huts onsite overnight and walk portions of river in the morning. Wet feet compulsory. Graeme Loh is organising. To line up for a walk down the river, email or text Graeme at 0211322436 [gloh@earthlight.co.nz](mailto:gloh@earthlight.co.nz)

Sue Maturin and Graeme reconnoitred the Falls Dam/ Upper Manuherikia on 16th September.



Banded dotterels were sitting by the road on eggs. A SIPO pair had laid one egg in a scrape 'crater' that they had made in the sparse vegetation. I have never seen a wader nest that implied real construction effort.

Sue saw 13 unemployed dotterels in the Otiake Reserve on the Hut Creek fan. Perhaps they are waiting for the snow to clear on the Hawkden Range and will nest up there? Only six black-fronted terns were seen patrolling the river which is worrying. No black-billed gulls seen. But this was a quick visit to check the lie of the land for the river survey planned for the first weekend of November.

**Graeme Loh**

## **More Surveys**

### **Forest birds in the Town Belt: A new project**

Bruce and Mary have continued to develop the spring bird counting project in the town belt. Using previous work undertaken by Derek for Wildlands we have re-established 14 count stations between Prospect Park and Eglinton Road. These are designed to within the town belt forest areas and are all accessible from a road. There will be a map and a methodology supplied but basically we want as many five minute bird counts completed at each of these as you can manage during spring which we have defined as between the beginning of October and the end of November. We intend to run this for a few years and to look for changes in number of total birds observed at these count stations. We will work through the details of the method at Wednesday meeting and at that meeting will arrange a training day. This project is an opportunity to refine your bird identification skills through sightings and song. If you want to be on the list of people to call up then let Mary or Bruce know.

**Bruce McKinlay** 273891477

## **EBird news**

### **Using eBird – observation type**

When entering observations into eBird, on the Date and Effort page there are several options for the observation type. Some types of count are more useful for scientific analysis than others, and the best is a travelling count. This can be on foot or other means of transport, depending on habitat (I find biking, with frequent stops, quite useful), and should ideally be less than 8km, and in generally uniform habitat; for longer distances, or when habitat changes, it is a good idea to use more than one list. When calculating the distance travelled, if your device doesn't do it for you, then don't forget to add any sections that you may have doubled back on, but if you do an out and back trip, then only calculate the distance one way (but



the time you enter is the total time for the return trip!) When plotting the location, put the marker in the centre of the area covered (or use an existing hotspot).

Next most preferable type of count is a stationary count. This involves staying in one place, or at least not moving more than 30m, and enables good correlation between birds and habitat. Generally numerous shorter counts (5 minutes or more) from different locations are better than one longer count over a larger area.

An area count allows an estimate of the density of birds in a given area, if you can count all the birds that are in a measured area – this option is located under "Other", along with pelagic, banding, nocturnal and random counts

Using the historical protocol is useful when you have lists from birding trips in old notebooks (pre eBird) that do not have all the search effort data necessary for a travelling or historical count. In this case you can still enter as much information as you have available (if you were really conscientious at the time you can still enter old records as travelling or stationary counts).

The incidental count is used when you happen to see a bird or birds that you think worth reporting while you are not specifically look for birds (out driving, gardening, shopping etc) These counts show up on the distribution maps, but not in the bar charts.

And finally a reminder that whichever protocol you use, any list is improved by having counts rather than an 'X' for presence. If you are unable to obtain a precise count, then an estimate is fine, especially if you make a note of how you arrived at the figure (minimum number, counted by 10s, etc)

For further information, see

<http://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/974012>

**Richard Schofield**

## Programme 2017

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

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|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Wed Sept 27</b>         | Indoor Meeting. Fergus Sutherland on 'Te Rere, thirty-six years helping penguins and other birds on the remote Catlins Coast.'   |
| <b>Sat October 7</b>       | Sinclair Wetland Spring Survey. Carpool leaving Dunedin at 8.30 am. Backup Sunday October 8th. To join the survey teams and for information contact Mary Thompson 464 0787, <a href="mailto:maryt@actrix.co.nz">maryt@actrix.co.nz</a>       |
| <b>Sat October 14</b>      | After Dinner Birdwatching at the Prion Fence. Contact Graeme Loh; 0211322436 if you are meet in the carpark near 47 Highgrove at 8pm.  |
| <b>Wed October 25</b>      | Indoor Meeting. Francesca Cunninghame on 'The future for Darwin's rarest finch - lessons learnt from 10 years conservation management of the Critically Endangered mangrove finch.'  |
| <b>Sat-Sun Nov 4&amp;5</b> | Manuherikia River Survey. Contact Graeme Loh 0211322436 <a href="mailto:gloh@earthlight.co.nz">gloh@earthlight.co.nz</a>   |
| <b>Wed Nov 22</b>          | Indoor Meeting. Mel Young on 'Foraging Ecology of Yellow-eyed Penguins'.   |
| <b>Sun Nov 26</b>          | Summer Wader Count. High tide Dunedin at 10.10am, 1.8m. Counters needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui. New counters very welcome to join the teams.<br>Contact: <a href="mailto:peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz">peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz</a> |

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for next newsletter please by 18th October.