



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

***Otago Region Newsletter 10/2017 October 2017***

**Spring Survey of Sinclair Wetlands, plus a bonus.**



Mary and James counting from Lonely Island.

Thanks to the team who counted waterbirds, did 5 minute bird counts and surveyed for fernbirds. The weather was perfect for counting: calm, mild with high cloud clearing off. The number of fernbirds seen at the counting stations was fewer than expected from previous counts and may be due to the inexperience of the team (included Mary!) compared with Andrew,

who has the knack of hearing and spotting these very secretive birds. However, one male was very keen to mark out his territory around the home pond and we all had really close-up views of his singing prowess. With careful observation his nest site may be spotted. The number of waterfowl was low and compared very closely with other spring counts. Scaup are by far the dominant species.

Species	spring 2015	spring 2016	spring 2017
Greylag goose	5	0	6
Canada goose	10	0	12
Black Swan	29	3	22
Paradise duck	0	0	2
Mallard(hybrid)	3	2	5
Shoveler	7	7	2
Grey Teal	5	0	0
Scaup	59	64	75
Total birds	118	76	124



The 5MBC stations were counted in duplicate so we had a good coverage. Once again grey warbler, fantail and silvereye were the main native species and blackbird, dunnock, chaffinch and redpoll the most common introduced species. Interestingly for the third year in a row, no bellbird has been seen or heard on Ram Island in spring, although they are present at other seasons.





I have left the excitement for last. Glen, who is the manager out there, reported to us about a pair of Marsh Crake he had watched the previous Wednesday in the pond near the nursery; they were behaving “interestingly”. So we were all very keen to have a go at seeing them on Saturday. And there they were, a pair feeding on the mud in the pond, coming and going from

under a large Carex (?possible nest site), feeding together, swimming, short fights, more feeding-thin long worms from the mud. We all spent about an hour over lunch watching them. This was the first time most of us had had such long, close-up views of Marsh Crakes.

**Mary Thompson**



All photos from the day by **Nick Beckwith**

## Ornithological snippets

3 **Fluttering Shearwaters** were seen off the Otago Peninsula on 28th September (George McDermid), and another 5 from Long Point on 9th October. Four small shearwaters of the **Fluttering/Hutton's** ilk flew south past Shag Point on 12th October (Derek Onley). On the evening of 9th October **Sooty Shearwaters** were passing Purakaunui Bay (Catlins) at the rate of about 300 per minute and at a mere 75 per minute at Shag Point on 12th (Derek Onley). Three **Pied Shags** were photographed at Taieri Mouth on 22nd September by Matthias Dehling, and 4 were snapped at Moeraki Wharf on 24th September by Lei Zhu. The ODT noted a **White Heron** at Chatto Creek on 23rd September, which was apparently returning for a 4th season (<https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/central-otago/rare-white-heron-visits>).

A partly pied **Variable Oystercatcher** was at Long Point 9th October. Maree Johnstone saw a possible **Pacific Gull** at Burke's Inlet 3rd October; unfortunately the bird has not been tracked down subsequently to confirm its identity. Meanwhile the **Black- (& Red-) billed Gull** colony in Balclutha was washed out by high river levels on 25 & 26th September. A **Caspian Tern** at Nugget Point on 10th October was a notable sighting by visiting birder Graham Tompsett

A **NZ Falcon** has been soaring and calling over the Waitati area for a month and a half and was finally seen mating in the eucalypts in the Orokonui Sanctuary on 16th October. There goes the sanctuary's predator free status. Pen Gillette counted 25 **Kereru** in Dunedin Botanic Gardens on 27th September; on 10th October, while travelling along the Chaslands Highway, Annie Schofield noticed a large flock of **Kereru** in a tree. On walking back down the road, she counted 48 in the course of about 50 m, mainly in willow trees. The first **Shining Cuckoo** of spring was seen by Rachel Hufton at Lake Hawea on 30th September, followed by birds at Orokonui on 2nd October, and at Awakiki & Pounawea on 8th. Finally a male **Cirl Bunting** put in an appearance at Lake Hawea on 1st October (Rachel Hufton).

Please send any noteworthy sightings to [richard@pcconnect.co.nz](mailto:richard@pcconnect.co.nz)

Compiled by **Richard Schofield**



## The Prion Fence. 22 October 2017



8°C

10-16-2017 10:13:46



Breeding season is upon us. Titi are cleaning their burrows and prions are just flying around it seems. Two prions were found in one box a month ago but they have not been seen recently and are not so prominent in the trail camera photos. The titi are most active in front of the camera before dawn. But they were flying and calling actively last night nine-ish. We had a Conservation Week activity last Saturday 14th between rain showers. Both species were active then but last night was far more active. No prion eggs have been laid yet at the main colony. The ecosystem restoration is proceeding apace with top predators making this their habitat. So far no falcon sightings this year but a white-faced heron makes regular appearances in front of the camera on sunny days. I presume that it preys upon the abundant common skinks. There should be no sound from the speaker!

**Graeme Loh**



## Notices and Business



### Counting birds in the Dunedin Town Belt: a progress report

We have got this scheme underway with the identification of count stations and development of a count form and maps to help people on the ground. Last Sunday morning six of us went and completed all the counts. We found along the way that even pink cruise tape can be hidden in the leaves. So far we have 64 five minute counts completed. These counts have recorded 23 species. The highest count overall was silvereye ( $n=300$ ) followed by blackbird ( $n=111$ ). The lowest counts were brown creeper, rosella and shinning cuckoo. Based on last weekend's experience I have remodelled the count form so if you want the new version let me know. There has been a lot of debate about how to record traffic noise and cars. I've decided to trial doing direct counts of cars going past you as you stand on the side of the road. Cars are now included in the list of birds.

We want this to run until the 1 December and so if you want more data forms or maps then let me know.

**Bruce McKinlay 273891477**

## **EBird news Are you reporting all species?**

Every time you submit a checklist to eBird, you are asked “Are you reporting all species that you were able to identify?” This seems to be the source of some confusion, with some people thinking that if even a single bird is not assigned to species, then the list is incomplete. However, this is not the case, as eBird is designed to make use of data from all levels of observer. Statistical algorithms take account of the different levels of skill among different birdwatchers (don’t ask me how!) to ensure that all data is meaningful.

The main reason for the question “Are you reporting all species that you were able to identify?” is that negative data is as important as positive data. If all identified species are reported, then any species not on the list was not present, rather than being ignored. For example, if you reported a White Heron at Tomahawk Lagoon and said “no” to “Have you reported all the species that you were able to identify?” then the list will assume other species were possibly present. But if you answered “yes”, then the list will assume other species were not present – so would mark ducks, gulls, terns, etc. as not present!

Any checklist where all species are reported is regarded as complete, and as such shows up in bar charts, and also on the distribution maps, where the shaded grey squares show where complete checklists have been submitted, but the relevant species has not been recorded.

It should be noted that you do not have to count all individuals of each species for a checklist to be complete, though of course you should always endeavour to put your best estimate if a direct count is not possible, or an ‘X’ as a last resort. By the same token, if you know that one or more species have been overlooked, then please don’t submit the checklist as complete.

<http://help.ebird.org/customer/en/portal/articles/1006361-are-you-reporting-all-species-complete-checklists-vs-incomplete-checklists-?t=401194>

**Richard Schofield**



## Wader Conservation World Watch: Wader Quest

Lei Zhu has brought this bird-watching event to our notice.

The 4th WCWW will take place on the 4th and 5th November 2017. If you are not going on the Manuherikia River bird survey, then perhaps you would like to check out the waders at Aramoana. I note that last year Natalie won one of the spot prizes.

- A. Go out and see waders/shorebirds wherever you are in the world.
- B. Send us an email telling us what you have seen and where.  
waderquest@gmail.com
- C. Look for your birds on the species list and your name on the roll of honour on the website. <http://www.waderquest.org/p/wader-quest-world-watch.html?m=1>

## 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**

## **Programme 2017**

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar

- Wed October 25** 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.'
- Sat-Sun Nov 4&5** Manuherikia River Survey. **Note change of contact**  
Sue Maturin phone 0212225092  
s.maturin@forestandbird.org.nz
- Wed Nov 22** Indoor Meeting. Mel Young on 'Foraging Ecology of Yellow-eyed Penguins'.
- Sun Nov 26** 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.  
Contact: peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for next newsletter please by 17th November.