

Birds New Zealand
 PO Box 834, Nelson. osnz.org.nz
 Regional Representative: Mary Thompson
 197 Balmacewen Rd, Dunedin.
maryt@actrix.co.nz 03 4640787
 Regional Recorder: Richard Schofield,
 64 Frances Street, Balclutha 9230.
cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 9/2018 September 2018

Shags -Otago



A small taua headed to Oamaru on Tuesday to protest the erection of a 900m bird catching wire in Oamaru Harbour, otherwise known as a Zip line. The public is incensed at this crass intrusion into this bird rich historic harbour. In the after match function Graeme patiently dotted all the apparently nesting Otago shags photographed on the Sumpter Wharf. About 311 at present. Chris Lalas will do the official count in October.

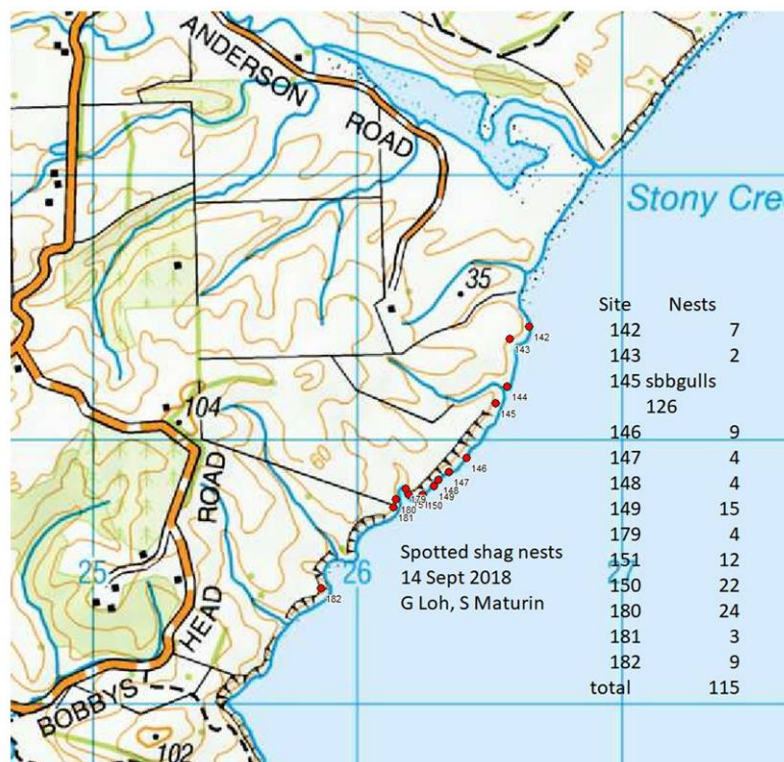
Shags - Spotted



A Summer weekend in Spring. We went to see the spotted shags in North Otago around the Andersons's Lagoon coastline. The ones in the sun were panting, some even in the shade because of the high teen temperatures. We thought we might be a little early but two nests with chicks were confirmed and other shags were sitting low in their nests with wings wide as if a chick were present. They had already lost their curls and bright skin. Others were fully coloured up and still bringing in material or standing around on poor nests. Late or learners? Not counted.

The geography of the shelves in the calcareous sandstone is intriguing. There has clearly been a lot of recent rockfall, some in the last year and much probably in the storms of the 2017 winter. High tide usually reaches the base of the cliffs so erosion is active. Does the increased number and intensity of storms mean that mass wasting will outpace the gentler chemical and wind weathering that removes soft rock so creating ledges and overhangs for the shags? Many of the higher rockfalls expose the roots of the pines above that penetrate crevices many metres down the cliffs. A recent phenomenon, or one that is just a substitute for the long gone cliff edge native forest?

I must find the series of photos I took in the early 90's for comparison of nests and habitat.



Other sightings of the trip. A male elephant seal pup. One gannet.

Graeme Loh

Aussie Snippets

Besides counting an abundance of spoonbills in Northland after the conference, Sue Maturin and I saw a Nankeen (now 'Australian') kestrel fly over the pasture of Te Paki. This was entered on eBird and someone on NZbirding noticed it and posted it. A report without photo was submitted to the rare birds committee and in due course they approved the record on the basis I used to see them out of my school window in Sydney.



More recently, with great pleasure I saw one in the old graveyard south of Bondi where my father is buried. Gracefully perched upon an angel.



Birds can be fun in Oz, I just stopped for a moment in a random spot to check the map and this superb fairywren pounced upon the windscreen to glean insects.

Graeme Loh

Ornithological Snippets

Mary Thompson counted 89 **Black Swan** cygnets on Tomahawk Lagoon on 5th September, while a pair bred on the lagoons in Balclutha for the first time, in recent years at least, with 7 young present at the time of writing. Alan Baker saw a pair of **Paradise Shelduck** on the roof of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in the Octagon at lunchtime on 28th August. On the seabird front 88 **Buller's Mollymawk** were seen off Nugget Point on 10th September, and Graeme Loh reported 311 **Otago Shags** on nests on Sumpter Wharf at Oamaru on 11th September.

Nick Dunckley watched 2 **White Herons** at Lake Hawea on 5th September – they looked like they were heading towards the Hunter Valley. **Cattle Egrets** have been scarce this winter, but 2 were seen near Momona on 24th August. Tim Jowett observed a **White-faced Heron** possibly feeding on skinks at Chisholm Park Golf Course on 15th September.

Alan Baker came across a **NZ Falcon** in Dunedin Botanic Gardens on 1st September, while a **Coot** on Station Road Pond near Oamaru seen by Graeme Loh was scarce for the area. Steve Kelling, Jeff Gerbracht and Jessie Barry from eBird came across a pair of **Barbary Doves** at Brighton on 1st September – there are no previous eBird reports for Otago. And finally 2 **NZ Pigeons** seen at Taiaroa Head on 26th August by the same observers were rather unexpected.

Reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Compiled by **Richard Schofield**

Robin update



Robin team 26 August photo: Mary Thompson

Since mid-August, the robin team has made 4 visits to Jill Hamel and Ruth Houghton's land adjacent to the eastern side of Orokonui Ecosanctuary, where robins originating from the ecosanctuary have been making their home for at least 3 years. The weather has been glorious on every visit so far. We have been establishing the whereabouts of robins and their breeding status and intend to follow any nesting attempts to see if these robins are able to sustain a population outside the predator exclusion fence. Our visits this year have been very successful. So far, we have located 5 robin pairs and identified 2 further possible territories. This compares to 3 or 4 territories and 1 pair seen last year. The first nest was located on 1 September, 5 m up in a fork of a kanuka. This nest was very close to the location of our only nest in 2017, and is likely made by the same pair. Unfortunately, the nest was found abandoned with 2 eggs just 2 weeks later. The male and female of the pair are still present in the territory and we hope that they will make another nesting attempt in due course. Three of the other 4 pairs of robins are at the stage where the females are being courtship fed by the males prior to nesting, and the fifth pair we also believe have a nest although the exact location remains elusive for now.

Thank you to everyone who has come out to help with this project so far, and to the Ecosanctuary for providing the mealworms. New helpers are always welcome. We meet every other Saturday morning and our next visit is 29 September. Contact gpickerell@outlook.com.



Abandoned Robin nest in Kanuka fork photo Jess Cripps



Robin pair photo Nick Beckworth

George Pickerell

Report of Birdwatching walk in Botanic Garden

About 55 people turned up for our guided bird-watching walks in the Botanic Garden on Sunday 9th September. Huge thanks to 8 members and friends who helped with the guiding. The weather cooperated and the marathon runners didn't affect us too much. We divided up into groups of about 5 per guide although Andrew accumulated about 15 in the end. Each group set off in a different direction and each had different highlights. Combined we saw about 20 species. I am sure Andrew's group checked off the most species. Mine was a little mundane with only sparrows for half the time but they were actively collecting all sorts of nesting material- feathers, pine needles and ripping thin strips of bark off gum trees – and in the geographic borders we heard grey warbler and then had splendid views of two birds flitting about the outer branches of shrubs searching for insects – real textbook stuff. Most of my group had not seen a grey warbler before. Suzanne's group was the only one to spot a rosella. Dunnocks turned out to be the most intriguing for most of our visitors. We had very positive comments so hopefully we can organise these walks as regular events in the Botanic Garden calendar.

Mary Thompson

Notices and Business

Young Birders Camp, Marlborough, 15-20 April 2019

We have received information about next year's camp. It will be held near Blenheim, staying at Watsons Way Lodge backpackers in Renwick. Campers need to be able to get themselves to the Marlborough province - they can be picked up from Picton ferry terminal, Blenheim airport or bus station. The field trips include Blumine Island (one day), Kaipupu Point, (both by boat but they don't travel if its rough), gull band reading, Wairau lagoon walk, walking to Cape Campbell Lighthouse (this is about 2.5 to 3 hours each way; one day) banding/mistnetting, and visiting other places of local interest. There will also be evening lectures.

Can members who know of young people who might be interested please let them know about this camp. These camps are always very popular so they need to act quickly. I can give them further details.

Any 13 – 18 year old who would like to be considered for acceptance to attend this camp needs to contact Kristin Ruwhiu at kristin.ruwhiu@hotmail.com, with an expression of interest including why they think they should be accepted.

Kristin is also keen to hear from adults who might be keen to help with the camp.

Mary Thompson

EBird news

A reminder that there is another eBird Big Day on Saturday 6th October. This date will potentially enable some more productive birding than was the case in May, with longer daylight hours, hopefully better weather, no duck-shooting, and a high tide in the early afternoon. Although we are not organising a specific group outing, it would be good to coordinate so that as many species as possible can be tracked down, especially our regional specialities. This event coincides with the overnight stay at Sinclair wetlands, so this has the potential to boost the tally for the day. So please get in touch at cluthaphotos@gmail.com if you wish to take part, and we'll see if we can beat our record of 80 species.

Richard Schofield

**ONLY 3 WEEKENDS AWAY SO ACT SOON to join
Overnight Birding at Sinclair Wetlands, Saturday 6th
October, 2018**

The team that counted the birds at the Sinclair Wetlands over the last 3 years has always wondered what we would come across if we were out there at dusk and the crack of dawn, so I have booked the Sinclair Wetlands Centre for us to stay over on Saturday night 6th October, arriving late afternoon for birding between about 5pm and sunset at about 8pm. We will have a joint meal on the Saturday evening after our birding. Then up early for birding as the sun rises; sunrise at 7am so the early morning is not too daunting. So this is your chance for a wilderness experience on your back door. There is limited accommodation so it will be on a first come, first served basis. There is a bunkroom for the ladies, and the gentlemen will have mattresses on the floor in the lounge. There is also room for campervans and tents if you prefer this option. Cost \$10, plus food contribution. Please let me know as soon as possible, if you would like to have a bed confirmed for you.

Those who would rather not stay overnight, why not join us for the evening –birding from 5pm to about 8pm followed by meal. Please also let me know if you are choosing this option.

We will look and listen for spotless and marsh crakes, and bitterns at dusk and dawn (peak calling of crakes immediately after sunrise). I have got details of monitoring for crakes by call playback, so we try this, and we will set up the automatic recorders around the wetlands.

email maryt@actrix.co.nz, phone 464 0787

Mary Thompson

Pelagic Bird Tour

Fierce Elegance Charters, is running a pelagic bird trip from Carey's Bay on 6 October.

"The coastal waters off Dunedin host an incredible variety of pelagic species. You won't want to miss our trip on 6 October to see many different species of pelagic birds including albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, shags, terns and gulls. Joining us is renowned ornithologist Peter Langlands who is a staunch conservation advocate and actively involved in habitat protection for birds."

Saturday 6 October | 8am – 1pm. (Weather day 13 October)

Tickets \$120, spaces limited to 12.

Email for bookings fierce.elegance@xtra.co.nz

<https://www.facebook.com/fierceelegancecharters/>

Andria Scott



Moana Pool August 18. Enjoy the sunshine and the spring days!
Cheers, Yue Cui

Programme 2018

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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| Wed September 26. | Indoor Meeting. Nic Rawlence on “Taxonomy and biological heritage of NZ birds.” |
| Wed October 24. | Indoor Meeting. Denise Martini on “Evolution and conservation of the endangered New Zealand Kaka.” |
| Wed November 28. | Indoor Meeting. Luke Easton on “Anti-predator behaviour of NZ Robins.” |
| Sun December 2 | Summer Wader Count. High tide 12.42pm. Counters are needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui Inlets and Blueskin Bay. Please confirm participation with peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz |

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the next newsletter by 18th October please.