



Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 11/2018 November 2018

Final Meeting and Fieldwork for the Year



Just to remind you that our final Indoor Meeting for the year is coming up this Wednesday 28th November at 7.30pm. We will be treated to hearing about the robins at Orokonui.

As it is the final meeting for the year it would be lovely to have a good turn-out, and I also thought it might be nice if those you can, could bring some festive food to share for supper. Thanks.

The Wader Count is scheduled for Sunday 2nd December starting about noon as high tide is 12.42pm. Counters are needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui, Blueskin Bay. This is an excellent chance to get to see the godwits and hopefully one or two rarities and is a good day out birding. If you would like to be assigned to a team please contact peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz

Happy birding over the summer.

Cheers

Mary Thompson Regional Representative

Ornithological Snippets

3 Australian Shelduck were reported at the north end of Lake Dunstan on 17th November. Suzanne Schofield was walking a dog along the main road in North Balclutha on 23rd October when an unidentified but familiar call attracted her attention. She was somewhat surprised to see a male California Quail perched on a roadside tree. One was also heard calling 2 km away on Sunflower Road on 10th November. The only records of Long-tailed Cuckoo were from around Mt Aspiring Hut between 22-26th October, and a more unexpected sighting at Wanaka golf course on 31st October.

At the former L&M Gold dredge pond at Earnscleugh, John Douglas reports the fortunes of Black-billed Gulls, with colonies of 350-500 and 50 on 13th October, with some nests visible; on 20th October some chicks were seen, but on 27th high water levels flooded out the nests, and all the gulls were out on the water.



Meanwhile the colony at Balclutha was submerged on 9th November; birds appeared to have already finished sitting at this stage, though there were lots of young chicks around, which were subsequently gathered in crèches at various points downstream. As the waters receded, numbers of birds returned to the island, and some looked like they were getting ready for business again, but major flooding on 20th November put paid to that.



An out-of-habitat Bar-tailed Godwit was seen & photographed at Watsons Beach (Akatore) by Stan & Marion Rutherford on 27th October, while a Turnstone was roosting with the godwits at Hungerford Point (Pounaweia). 2 Chatham Mollymawk were reported from the Fierce Elegance pelagic on 11th November. A Kaka was heard at Lake Wilkie by George Hobson on 23rd October, during the Forest & Bird Gathering there.

An article in the Rural Life newspaper <https://www.odt.co.nz/rural-life/rural-life-other/old-nest-shows-magpies-had-no8-wire-mentality> on 17th October concerns a Magpie's nest which was discovered when an old tree was chopped down near Millers Flat. The nest had been used by generations of Magpies, and from the types of wire used had probably been started around 90 years ago. Finally a striking Blackbird with a completely white head was seen by Alan Baker at the corner of City Rd and Queens Drive on 20th October, and again by Francie Beggs on 7th November.

Reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com.

compiled by **Richard Schofield**

On the Road Again with Graeme.

I am on the road with Swedish twitchers. No idea what my life list is but I did see one bird new to me at Kaikoura, the southern Cape pigeon.

There are a few things to report. 19 November crossing the highway bridge across the Ashburton I was thrilled to see the black-billed gulls had set up colony again. About 2000 birds. They were not there 4th November. And perhaps they have to start again after the flooding rains we have suffered.

We went out in a sea of murky water with the Vivienne J 22nd Nov. I was surprised to see a range of pelagics inside the harbour. Cape pigeons, white-capped mollymawks and a giant petrel. The twitchers continued to have trouble coping with the Otago shag because this bird is not on their world list, and the Stewart Island shag no longer exists. But they did enjoy the spectacle of Sumpter Wharf Oamaru. I had the same problem explaining about the Australian little penguin in Otago. I found the new book "Bird Stories"¹ very helpful and very up to date. One for the book addicts.

Things were pretty quiet for many kilometres at sea, it being murky even seventeen kilometres offshore. But the range of species was typical. The Swedes enjoyed seeing a black-bellied storm petrel and two Campbell mollymawks, new for their list after three previous pelagic trips. Buller's mollymawks were absent as usual at this time of year. The rest of the list was Northern and Southern Royal albatross, White-capped molly and plenty of Salvin's mollies, Northern giant petrel, white-chinned petrel, cape pigeon only a few, a few sooty shearwaters, one Hutt/flutt, a couple of Buller's shearwaters, Otago shag, spotted shag white-fronted tern, red-billed gull, sbbg (Swedish? ed.) and one Australian little penguin.

I took one and a half islands before we finally encountered riflemen. They were in the matagouri at the Blue Lake shelter Aoraki. It was a delight to discover they had a nest on the boardwalk entering the shelter there. Only six hundred people walkover them every day. And they were gleaning insects from the grills of the parked cars.

Graeme Loh

¹ Geoff Norman. Bird Stories, A History of the Birds of New Zealand. Potten & Burton 2018.

New Feature

This month's newsletter is a little slim, hardly the Bumper Xmas Edition that might be expected to turn up in your email stocking as the Festive Season approaches. To fill out the issue your Editor has finally decided to publish a contribution he received way back in the depths of winter from a local resident Derek Dunnock; the suitability of which he has been mulling over for months. So here is A Little Bird Told Me in a new feature: the Gossip Column. BirdsNZ's first?

Warning. As with all good gossip columns this one is likely to include strong language, defamatory remarks and racist undertones that may offend some people.

A Little Bird Told Me

At lunch last week, a little bird told me, I'm pretty sure it was a kiwi and not some flibbertigibbet bunting from Britain, that a certain CEO of a certain windfarm had rung up a certain CEO of a certain local Ecosanctuary, offering to pay them, they are cash strapped poor dears since a certain government department withdrew their funding, for every bird the proposed windfarm kills. IF, there's always an if isn't there when money is involved, if that is, the Ecosanctuary wrote a letter of support for the windfarm. I'm sure the CEO in question didn't use so emotive a word. as kill. Impacts upon or interacts with the turbine is far more likely. But then again maybe I do him an injustice for I wasn't party to the call. One has to understand of course that this fair land of ours is Neoliberal to the core and it is perfectly legitimate to put a price on everything. How else does one expect the Market to survive? Even the Green Party have finally endorsed this fait accompli, demanding that a fair price be paid for water. So it is no small step to put a price on life itself. However, as one of your feathered brethren if only a lowly dunnock, I do feel obliged to point out that it does raise the spectre of some avian hearts beating away in a feathered breast being perhaps worth more than others? Surely a kiwi is worth more than a silvereye?

Whilst the practice of actually putting a monetary value on an avian heart beating away in a feathered breast is novel, there is a document which, now I come to think of it, in practice does just that and it's called the Conservation status of New Zealand birds, New Zealand threat

classification. Now I'm sure the authors of this worthy tome did not intend it to be so, earnestly endeavouring simply to point out the perilous plight of many of our native birds. However, in our market driven, price of everything hegemony, the classification ends up guiding the allocation of conservation funding towards those deemed more needy or, as my colleagues, our common as muck silvereyes and grey warblers would no doubt point out, more upper class. So how much dear fellow Neoliberals should we put per head on our feathered friends?



photo: Habiballah of Sava

A meeting was called for. The Concourse of the Avian Denizens of Aotearoa (CADA) is always somewhat fraught. We have our pecking order. The raptor clan are inclined to take pecking to extremes, impacting upon the columbines and passerines in a terminal fashion and even the so called Sacred Kotare is not unknown to be partial to bloodied breast of bunting of a winter's afternoon. But today we were gathered together to counter the threat of a common enemy. The callous money grabbing Homo, so called sapiens and all was peace and goodwill.

Until, the Market, i.e. the price of an avian heart beating away in a feathered breast, reared it's ugly head. The raptors, supported by the owls, demanded a high price per top of the food chain head, claiming furthermore that so common a gathering was unqualified to consider their case and it should be referred to a body of the status of the Higher Salaries Commission, made up of raptors and owls. Our common as muck, working class, who bear the brunt of fertilising our native flora, Tauhou Silvereye, would 'ave now't other than a flat rate for all and were heartily supported by us immigrant, albeit against our will, thrushes, finches, ducks and

believe it or not those unbearably raucous Aussie rosellas. Which was when all hell broke loose. If you think Winnie is racist then you should have heard those Endemics. Us immigrants stormed out of the meeting in disgust. Actually we slunk out with n'er a whistle or whimper for fear of being beaten up or worse by the Endemic Raptors, though in truth such a fate was unlikely as feathers flew in the raptor delegation when Karearea Falcon called Kahu a mere swamp harrier and bade her return forthwith to the foul foreign bogs from whence she came. Ruru Morepork called for further genetic analysis to validate endemic species status but the call for reason was drowned out by the braying of the upper class Endemics and the indignant self righteous whines of the middle class Natives. The Tauhou Silvereye delegation, being recent voluntary arrivals on these shores, found themselves the object of ire from both parties, yet couldn't quite bring themselves to join us common indentured immigrants.

So it was a surprise to us common folk, that from such chaos, but six months later, a glossy, albeit virtual, publication emerged entitled Windfarm Threat Classification. It is a slim volume, if I can use such a tactile idiom for so ethereal a realm, reminiscent in fact of a list of tolls for a bridge over a river. In this case the Styx.



for a view from a friendly Homo sapiens:

www.monbiot.com/2014/07/24/the-pricing-of-everything/

Notices and Business

Opportunity for Involvement with Falcon Study

Graham Parker and his team started on the falcon project again in October and it will run through the summer months. Fieldwork focuses on finding falcon nests and capturing and banding adult and juvenile birds.

Generally involves full days, so if you are interested please be prepared to spend the whole day out in the (mostly) plantation forests. We'll leave each morning from Maryhill, Dunedin.

If you are interested to help contact Graham Parker at:

g.parker@parkerconservation.co.nz

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

Website changes

Regular users of the eBird website will have noticed one or two changes to the layout recently. The main one is that the “Explore” function has been revamped. Clicking on the tab takes you directly to a page where you can explore everything eBird in one place. The two main choices are explore by species or by region, with further options to go directly to maps, photos, alerts, quizzes, and numerous others.

If you take the explore species route, start typing in a species name and click on the required bird in the dropdown box (clicking on a highlighted species name anywhere in eBird takes you to the same place) this takes you to a page showing all eBird information on that species in one place – identification, statistics, range map, photos, video and audio. Statistics here show both overall eBird figures, and also your personal contribution. Note that although you can use ctrl + scroll to zoom in on the map, you need to click on “large map” (upper right) to see individual locations.

<https://ebird.org/newzealand/explore>

Do you provide sugar-water to birds?

Do you live in Auckland or Dunedin? We are looking for local gardens in Auckland and Dunedin to be study sites for our Sugar-water Feeder Project! Feeding birds in backyards is a popular pastime in New Zealand. More and more people are providing sugar water to attract native birds. However, very little is known about how this practice might affect our native birds – does it help them or harm them?

My name is Daria Erastova and I am a PhD student with the School of Biological Sciences studying the influence of sugar-water feeders on native birds in urban Auckland and Dunedin. I am recruiting residential backyard gardens in both cities with existing sugar-water feeders that frequently have birds visiting (e.g. tui, bellbirds and silvereyes). Mind that you can join even if you don't have a sugar-water feeder! I will be catching and banding birds, and observing the birds at feeders in your garden. Please get in touch with me (dera076@aucklanduni.ac.nz) if you live in Auckland or Dunedin, have established sugar-water feeders in your garden, and are interested in being part of this study. If you would like more information about this project, please visit:

<https://sugarfeederproject.wixsite.com/sugarfeeder>

Ngā mihi,

Daria A. Erastova

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.

Wed November 28. Indoor Meeting. Luke Easton on “Anti-predator behaviour of NZ Robins.”

Please bring some festive food for an end-of-year supper.

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.

The first newsletter of 2019 will be in late January; if there are enough contributions.
Articles, photos etc by 20th January