

Birds New Zealand

Wairarapa Region Newsletter

January 2018

Hello all and welcome to the first newsletter for the year!

Upcoming events:

- **AGM Tuesday February 8th** @ 7:30pm

Location: Choice Room, Chapel St, Masterton (north of the GWRC building)

Note: we will not be having a speaker at the AGM. We will have a review of the past year and election of officers, with some discussion of plans for the year ahead.

- **Last Chance!! - Trip to Matiu-Somes Island Friday February 16th**
(overnight stay)

At the time of writing, there was still a place or two available on this trip so if you are keen contact Oliver (06 304 9854) or Joanna (06 3788 235).

- **NZ Bird Conference 2018**

Location: Waitangi (Bay of Islands) 2nd-4th of June (Queens Birthday weekend).

It looks like a great programme lined up, with a variety of workshops and interesting fieldtrips planned. *** Check out www.osnz.org.nz for details.

- **Nikki McArthur of Wildlife Management International** is keen to give us a presentation on topics relevant to this region: the Coastal Wairarapa bird survey which was done in November (*they walked the whole coast!*) and the riverbird surveys also done around the same time. No date set as yet, this will have to fit in with his intensive fieldwork schedule. Maybe late Feb - *tbc*

Regional Roundup:

NZ Dotterels on the increase. Numbers of NZ dotterels appear to be improving along the eastern Wairarapa coastline. After receiving reports of sightings from different sources a few of our members set off to verify these. As well as the regular pairs at Riversdale Beach, birds were recorded nesting at Mataikona Beach and Flat Point. Pairs have also been seen at Otahome and Homewood beaches, but nesting wasn't confirmed.

2 Chicks were recorded at Flat Point, but it is not known whether they fledged – which is the only real measure of nesting success.

Photo: nzbirdsonline.org.nz



It was a good season for the Riversdale birds this time. As well as the regular two pairs nesting, a third pair set home home there and altogether 5 chicks were fledged! His is well above the national average for managed sites and is a testament to the combined efforts of predator control, fencing, nest-lifts (to raise nests threatened by floodwaters) and public awareness campaigns.

Pied Shag Colony Discovery in South Wairarapa



Photo to: Robin List
Thanks to information passed on by Steve Playle

(GWRC), a **Pied Shag** colony was found by local Birds NZ members at a wetland on a farm near Pirinoa. This is the first one recorded since the 1930s as Pied shags suffered heavy persecution (shooting) in the 1900s, due to being deemed a threat to fishing.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/reports/pied-shag-population-review-final-report.pdf>

At the same wetland we saw **Little Pied and Black Shags** nesting, so it was an exciting find indeed!



Colin Shore reports a small group of **Little Black Shags** cooperatively fishing just above the Barrage Gates in December. The birds were “porpoising” together to herd fish.

Finding where these birds nest in our region would be significant, as that is not yet known.

Also that day – and at the same location – he saw a **White Heron**. It could be the same bird seen at Willow Island at times, or JK Donald Block, Tairoa Wetlands.

A **Black Stilt** was seen recently at Te Awaiti on the Tora Coast. It had a leg-band so was clearly a Twizel bird. This location is also the site where a **Red-billed gull** colony was seen to be nesting on the reef, with good numbers recorded.

Attempts made by our colony of **Black-billed Gulls** to nest again at the Tauherenikau Delta were unsuccessful, as rising lake levels caused eggs to be washed from nests, twice it appears, as I found large numbers of eggs caught in hollows under driftwood near the delta. That is a blow to our population. Many of the adults gulls have stayed put at the lake and a number still seem to be frequenting Henley Lake and QE2 Park in Masterton.

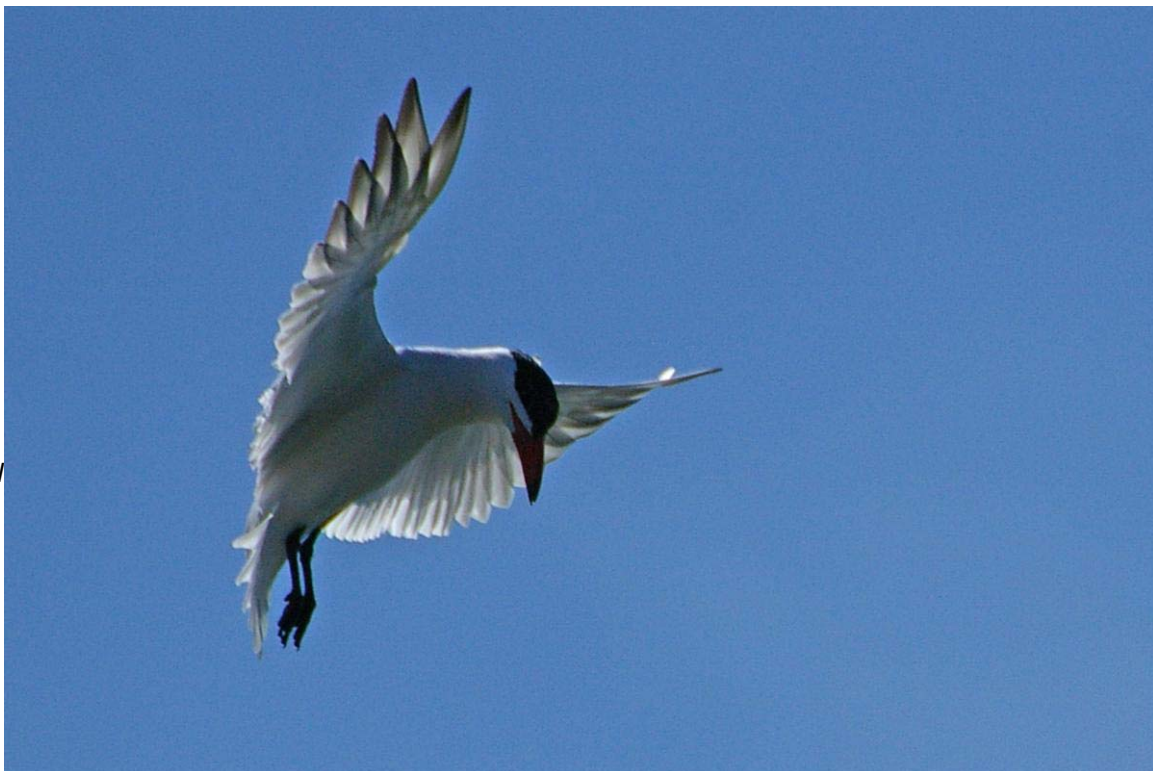
There are concerns that the extremely high lake levels also may have impacted on the **Australasian Bitterns** nesting in the surrounding wetlands

The **Caspian tern** colony on Onoke Spit did not fare well this season, for reasons unknown. It appears that only 2 pairs attempted to nest this time and both failed. A recently-fledged chick (still with mottled plumage) was seen a week ago, with its parent amongst the colony - but indications are that it was bred elsewhere as its age does not fit with the dates nesting birds were recorded at the Spit. The predator control work there will continue, with more protection measures being planned for the area. Hopefully we will be able to report success next season!

Photo:
nzbirdsonline.org.nz

A trip

to the colony made in December revealed 2 adult Caspian terns with silver leg-bands.



Does anyone have information on where these birds might have been banded?

There is still a large **Black-backed Gull** colony at the Spit, with something like 250 pairs nesting (successfully).



It was interesting to note that 3 pairs of **Royal Spoonbills** also nested on the ground at Onoke Spit just adjacent to the gulls and they successfully fledged chicks.

Photo:
nzbirdsonline.org.nz

An interesting website to view:

<http://braid.org.nz/>



species that breed on the riverbed as these species are the most visible indicator of complex and dynamic ecosystems from the alps to the sea".

- **Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2018 – reminder!**

The annual membership subscriptions were due 1 January 2018. It is all too easy to overlook this during the Christmas New Year period.

Remember that you can pay subs online.

Regards,

Joanna McVeagh (Regional Recorder)

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