

The Wrybill

Newsletter of the Canterbury Region, Ornithological Society of New Zealand

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June 2015

What's on at OSNZ Canterbury: June to August 2015

Indoor Meetings

Evening Meetings take place at 7.30 pm on the last Monday of the month at Mahaanui Area DOC Office, 31 Nga Mahi Road, off Blenheim Road, Sockburn. Plenty of parking is available.

29th June - Bruce McKinley, Vice-President of OSNZ, from Dunedin, will talk about 'Shorebird Priorities for New Zealand'.

27th July - James Fraser of 'Nose for Conservation' will show photos of and talk about his dog's work with Whio, Kakapo and other endangered species. He was much appreciated last time he spoke and we are privileged to have him over from Akaroa.

31st August - Andy Roberts, the Director of Conservation Services in the Eastern South Island, will talk about the recovery and pest eradication projects he has been involved in.

Field Meetings

Sat 18th July. Ashburton Lakes waterbird count. Meet at Mt Somers at 9am to go to different lakes in the basin.

We will need to carpool from Christchurch if enough people want to go. It means an early start from Cookie Time on the Main South Rd if you are up for it. Contact Jan.

August - This is often cancelled for weather reasons, so it will be announced closer to the time.

Rambles

July 14th - Visit to the Museum, meeting 9:30am at the main entrance.

August 11th - Visit to Lake Ellesmere. Meet in carpark of the Islington Tavern, 670 Main South Road, at 9:30am. Bring lunch etc. as we might find something interesting to see (we are always hopeful!)

Please let Bev know if you intend to come, as it does help with organising the day and the weather may not play its part for a good day out. Look forward to seeing you all. Contact Bev on: home phone - 03 313 7009; mobile - 027 3184 713; email - birdiebev@xtra.co.nz.

Udo Beneke

Our Canterbury member Udo Beneke died suddenly on 15th April while travelling in Ecuador after a visit to the Galapagos, which he and his wife had enjoyed immensely. He hadn't been an OSNZ member for many years, but he was hugely liked and respected and a very good birder. He joined OSNZ as one of his many 'retirement' activities and put his usual intense interest into our society.

Going by helicopter up the mountains on the West Coast as a present from his family and finding Rockwren, which he photographed, was one of the highlights he recounted. Some of us will never forget the trip to stay at Hart's Creek where Bitterns were visible from the verandah of the house. Udo was quite fascinated and stayed taking photos of a booming male with green facial skin, while we went elsewhere.

On this trip he gave us an insight into what it was like in Germany during the war as a young child with his father away at the front and then moving to England with his new step-father and later to New Zealand. He had a 'brilliant career' in science, but that isn't how I'll remember him. He was just such a nice person, lots of fun, always smiling and full of helpful, useful ideas.

By Jan Walker

To read more about Udo's inspiring life, go to this website - <http://www.stuff.co.nz/science/68146537/obituary-forest-scientist-had-passionate-love-of-environment>.

Recent Events

If you haven't been attending any of the regular activities run by OSNZ here in Canterbury then you've been missing out! Each month Jan Walker, our RR, organises a field trip to a local place of interest. In April a small group ventured to Orton Bradley Park. An uphill walk through the bush featured good numbers of Fantails and Kereru. Our pace was considerably slower than that of the orienteers who were competing at Orton Bradley that day, but we did make it back to our cars before the rain set in. The following month seven of us made the trip south to Ashburton where we visited Russell Langdon's Riverbridge Centre. Russell kindly gave us a tour of his aviaries and the wetland area he has developed. Sadly the weka kept itself hidden but we saw Mute Swans, Cape Barren Geese and a range of other water fowl.



Visit to Russell Langdon's wetland. Photo by Duane Harland.

Bev Alexander's monthly mid-week rambles are well worth the effort, especially for birders who are still learning their craft. During these relaxed morning walks Bev is excellent at sharing her knowledge and helping those less experienced develop

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theirs. Recent rambles have explored the Avon-Heatcote Estuary and the Pegasus Wetlands.

The monthly evening meeting is held on the last Monday of each month (unless that is a public holiday) and features talks by local birders as well as visiting experts. Our two meetings in May (April's being delayed due to Anzac Day) both featured local members sharing their overseas birding adventures with us.

Patrick Aldwell had made two separate trips to the United States, visiting Alaska, the canyons and Monterey Bay among other areas. His informative, illustrated talk covered the human and natural history of these areas as well as the bird life. Andrew Crossland was as entertaining as ever as he regaled us with tales of an expedition he made to the Solomon Islands with a small group of other local birders. With small boats, large spiders, Indonesian logging interests, the threat of disease, and guides under the influence of betel nuts, this was not a trip for the faint-hearted!

OSNZ Teen Field Camp

In early April, I was lucky enough to attend the first OSNZ teen field camp, which was held on Mana Island. Because participants had to be at the ferry early in the morning, I had to fly up on Monday, the day before the camp started. I was staying the night with Peter and Ruth Reese, and that afternoon Peter took me to Zealandia. I've never been there before, and it was really fun. I saw lots of new species, such as the New Zealand

Dabchick, Stitchbird and North Island Robin.

The next morning, the group of eleven teens and eight instructors were supposed to take a ferry out to Mana Island, which is located off the Kapiti Coast. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented this, so we went out into the middle of Wellington Harbour instead, to stay for a few nights on Matiu/Somes Island.

At first, I was slightly disappointed that we wouldn't be able to get out to Mana Island, but when we reached Somes Island, my disappointment vanished. Even though the weather was terrible, it was still awesome, and there was lots to do. We went on a few rambles to practise our identification and description skills. Later, when it was raining too hard to go outside, the instructors read out our notes to see if we could pick which bird had been described. My favourite birds were the Red-Crowned Parakeets, which were gliding and diving over the trees, chattering away to each other.

One evening, I went to the Fluttering Shearwater colony. At the entrance to each burrow, two little sticks had been stuck in the ground. We checked the sticks to see if they were knocked down, indicating an adult could be present, or still up. If they were down, we would put the sticks back up and check inside the burrow to see if an adult was in it or not. We recorded which burrows were empty and which ones were occupied. For the other two evenings, I went to monitor the Little Blue Penguins. We walked along the track to catch the birds that had come ashore. We checked them for radio transmitters, flipper tags or web tags. If they

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had one, we recorded the number. Then we put a smear of twink on top of their head to show that they'd already been caught. One afternoon, most of us went to check their nest boxes as well. We recorded the box number, and then opened up the box to check if there were any birds inside. Like at night, we checked for tags, recorded the tag numbers, and put a smear of twink on their head before returning them to their burrow. We also recorded whether the box was empty or occupied. The problem in some of the occupied boxes was that there were two birds in them. If one penguin was facing one way, and the other penguin was facing the opposite way, you had to try and find a way of distracting one and reaching in to grab the other. If one bird looked up at the wrong moment, you were in danger of being bitten. If anybody is wondering how I know this, I've got a scar as a result. But it was worth it.

On Thursday, we took the ferry back to Wellington, then drove round to a different set of docks and took another boat out to Mana Island. We stayed on Mana Island until the camp finished on Sunday, so we still had plenty of time there. What I enjoyed best out of the whole camp was banding the Sooty Shearwater chicks. They were like big, adorable, moving balls of vacuum cleaner fluff. Once they had been extracted from their burrows, we got to take turns weighing them, measuring their wings, and banding them before they were returned. The chicks weren't too pleased about this arrangement, and two of them expressed their displeasure by pooping all down my jeans, which was pretty disgusting.



Sooty Shearwater chick.

Another awesome experience was seeing a Rowi Kiwi in the wild. It was walking along the path behind us, and when we stopped and turned around, it kept on moving forward. I think it only realised we were there when it stood on my gumboot! Mist netting was a lot more successful on Mana Island. We caught plenty of different birds, and we all got to do some banding. I didn't fancy getting too close to the Yellow-Crowned Parakeets after seeing how happy they were to bite. All too soon, it was time to pack up and go home. At camp's end I was recognised for my understated enthusiasm and also for best poker face (the result of regular card playing sessions, two of which lasted until 1:30 am).

All up, the field camp was a fantastic trip. I'd like to thank the Canterbury branch of OSNZ for their support which enabled me to attend.

Text and photo by Eleanor Gunby

Recent Sightings

Contributors

AC – Andrew Crossland; BA – Bev Alexander;
DT – David Thomas; DW – Duncan Watson;
GB – Grant Bawden; JA – John Allan; JS –
Jon Sullivan; JW – Jan Walker; MR – Matt
Rose; NA – Nick Allen; PC – Philip Crutchley;
PW – Peter Wilson; RC – Russ Cannings; SA –
Steve Attwood; WH – William Harland

March

Rockwren, 1, White River Headwaters, 31/3,
JA.

April

Whimbrel, 1, Ashley Estuary, 3/4, SA.
Yellow-Crowned Parakeet, also Brown
Creeper, Robin, Tomtit, Riflemen, Kaka
(heard), New Zealand Falcon (heard), Nina
Valley, 6, 5/4, SA.
Wrybill, 60, Red-Necked Stint, 9,
Embankment Road to Yarrs Bay, 6/4, GB.
Gull-Billed Tern, 1, Yarrs Bay, 6/4, JW.
Gull-Billed Tern, 1, Crescent Island, 10/4, AC.
Gull-Billed Tern, 2, Lake Forsyth, 10/4, AC.
Pomarine Jaeger, 1, Point Kean (Kaikoura),
11/4, RC.
Cirl Bunting, 1, Inland Kaikoura Road, 26/4,
DW.
Cirl Bunting, 1, Postmans Road (Kaikoura),
26/4, DW.

May

Wrybill, 1, Saltwater Creek, 9/5, BA and DT.
Tui, 1, Victoria Park, 18/5, PC.
Hoary-Headed Grebe, 1, Bromley Oxidation
Ponds, 19/5, PC.
Little Egret, 2, Lake Forsyth, 19/5, MR.

Tomtit, 1, Victoria Park, 19/5, NA.
Little Black Shags, 4, Crested Grebe, 1,
Kaiapoi Lakes, 23/5, PW.
White Heron, 1, Crested Grebe, 1, Pegasus
Wetlands, 24/5, PW.
Glossy Ibis, 1, White Heron, 1, Seafield
Lagoon (Brooklands), 25/5, AC.
Cirl Bunting, 1, Kennedys Bush Road, 25/5,
JW.
Cattle Egret, 2, McDrurys Road (Ladbrooks),
26/5, JS.
Cattle Egret, 3, SH 1 north of Ashburton,
28/5, WH.

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