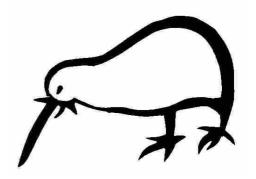
### APTERYX

### Issue 13 **December 2005**



### NEWSLETTER OF THE FAR NORTH REGION OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



April trip to Moturoa Island



### **REGIONAL REP'S REFLECTIONS**

Spring is here & Christmas is coming, this still sounds strange to an ex-Brit! Time to get out into the field in Far North birding land & see some birds. Carol & I were out of the country for most of October & November (yes, mainly birding) & partly as a result, we were unable to arrange a wader count in November. However, a visitor to the area did a lot of wader counting in Sept & Oct, see later under Recent Reports. We will make a special effort for January.

The Brand Name census resulted in 226 entries, 207 in favour & 19 against the name change. The decision now rests with Council who will discuss the matter next June.



Does anyone have some suitable photos of New Zealand birds, scenery or people at Far North birding events which we could use for the newsletter? I like to include a selection of pictures to enhance the publication but for economic reasons I will be trying to keep colour on 4 pages only. I also welcome contributions, illustrated or not.

Most Far North members have an email address. From time to time I circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times & meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email & would like to be kept informed this way, please let me know & give me a phone number so that I can contact you with such information.

The Far North Regional Officers are as follows:

### **Regional Representative:**

Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri. Phone: 09 407 3874 (home), 09 407 0178 (work)

Email: detlefdavies@yahoo.com

### **Regional Recorder:**

Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri.

Phone: 09 407 8747 Email: laureen.a@xtra.co.nz

### Treasurer:

Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa Road West, Kerikeri Phone: 09 407 8058 Email: godbert@xtra.co.nz

### RECENT EVENTS

Looking south from Moturoa Is.

### Sun 25 Sept MOTUROA ISLAND

This was planned as a beginners field trip & Laureen Alston kindly offered to take us over to Moturoa Island for the day in her sailing boat 'Eliminator'. This was the club's second visit after a group of us went in April. So the boat left Doves Bay Marina at c.9 am with Laureen, Carol & Detlef, Bet & Frank Jacques, Mike Bryan & his son Stuart, & Dawn Cox. The weather was dry with some sunshine but cool breeze & cloud cover. An extract from Detlef's notebook is as follows:

Variable Oystercatcher

(Stewart Is) Detlef Davies

Caspian (2) & White-fronted Terns (6+)

Pied Shags 4

Gannet 5+

Variable Oystercatcher 4

Common bush birds

**Tui** Very abundant

Harrier 2 or more, also a dead one at foot of Ponga Trail.

Eastern Rosella 4

Skylarks & Yellowhammers common

New Zealand Robin One heard singing &

seen well & 2 briefly on way back up Ponga Trail.

**Brown Teal** One on pond near tennis courts.

Spur-winged Plover 3

Paradise Shelduck Female

### Fri 7 Oct INDOOR MEETING

We were unable to secure Laurence Gordon as a speaker tonight so we had 3 replacement items. First we held a short meeting to vote in Laureen Alston as the Far North Regional Recorder, then Lynette Smith gave us a short talk about her

voluntary work on the Bay of Islands project. With intensive pest-eradication it is hoped to turn many of the islands in the bay into the kind of bird paradise that Tiritiri Island offers.

Russell Thomas then gave us a slide show of a trip in which he took part to Patagonia & Easter Island some years ago. The mountain scenery & bird-rich lakes of southern Argentina were quite breathtaking & the history of Easter Island's past inhabitants most mysterious.

### Fri 16 Dec INDOOR MEETING

Again, our original plan for tonight was changed as Kiwi Wildlife Tours were heavily occupied with tour-leading. We are promised a visit in March by Chris Gaskin, Karen Baird or both for an illustrated seabird lecture. Tonight instead, 12 of us enjoyed a short presentation by CJ Ralph on the recent Australasian & Shorebird Conferences (of which an account follows later) & a video, courtesy of Anthea, on Gerry Clark's expedition to the Bounty & Antipodes Islands.



### **PROGRAMME**

All indoor meetings will take place at Detlef & Carol's house at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated. Any additions to this programme, indoor or out are most welcome.

### Wed 17 Jan 2006 INDOOR MEETING

David Crockett has indicated that he can give us a talk on his extensive life-long work with the endangered Chatham Island Taiko. The date is still to be confirmed & this will be done by email, watch this space.

### Weekend 21 – 22 Jan WADER COUNT

This is the preferred weekend to carry out the January wader count. The sites we would like to cover are Rangaunu Harbour (including Walker Island), Parengarenga Harbour (including Kokota spit) & Houhora Harbour (including Kowhai Beach). High tide on the Saturday is between 12.30 & 1 pm & on the Sunday about 45 mins later. (High tide on the previous Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> Jan is 8.30 – 9 am so too early for anyone not living close by). The proposed Far North wader counting boat has not yet been acquired so anyone with a boat available to get to these sites & interested in taking part please pipe up. An example of the recording sheet & the species of main interest can be found in the August newsletter.

### February WARAWARA FOREST

Rumour has it that there is a remnant population of Riflemen in this remote forest in the west of our area near Mitimiti. We would like to check it out & anyone interested in joining us, or with any local knowledge of the site please make contact. We can then choose a suitable weekend.

### 10 March INDOOR MEETING

We hope to secure Chris Gaskin or Karen Baird or both to come & give us a presentation on seabirds around New Zealand & share their experiences on the many pelagic trips they have led recently.

### **BEACH PATROLS**

### **JANUARY - APRIL 2006**

These are scheduled for the following Saturdays:

**90 Mile Beach**: 7 January, 4 February, 4 March, 1 April, 29 April. **Karikari Beach**: 21 January, 18 February, 18 March, 15 April.

However, these may change & you should check dates with the organisers: Isabella Godbert – 09 407 8058 or John Dawn – 09 407 8658. Beach patrollers are in demand. John indicates that to make it worth covering 90 Mile Beach we need a minimum of 4 people to cover around 30 kilometers. We can cover Karikari with 3. It would be good to have one or two extra people to call on when necessary. Any members interested in the experience, can walk 7+ kms, don't mind travelling in a van & don't mind handling dead birds, please make contact. Generally 90 Mile Beach is the more productive of the 2 sites but much depends on weather & wind direction.

Among a good variety of species, the year produced 2 Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, 2 Thinbilled Prions & a Kerguelen Petrel. You never know when you will find a rarity & these results show what it must be possible to see on pelagic trips in the Far North.

The results for the whole of 2005 appear on the next 2 pages.

BEACH PATROL 90 MILE BEACH 2005

									- 1		
MONTH	Feb 5th	Mar 5th	Apr 2nd	Apr 30th	May 29th	May 29th June 26th July 24th Sept 17th	July 24th	Sept 17th	Oct 16th	Nov 13th	Dec 11th
DISTANCE	28 kms	29	29	32	30	26	26	33	31	32	31
Wandering Albatross											1
Grey-headed Mollymawk	-								<b>~</b> -		
Yellow-nosed Mollymawk							~				
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross								1			
Mollymawk sp.					-						
Southern Giant Petrel				1	<del>7</del> -						
Buller's Shearwater	2	-		-	1				1	16	6
Sooty Shearwater	2	-		-					1	4	12
Short-tailed Shearwater	4								-		2
Flesh-footed Shearwater		-	-							2	
Hutton's Shearwater	-	2								τ-	
Fluttering Shearwater	5	22	5	က	4	1		2	3	7	17
Allied Shearwater	-		γ-					τ-			
Common Diving Petrel				-							3
Cape Pigeon (Pintado Petrel)					-	-					
Antarctic Fulmar									1	1	
Antarctic Prion						1					
Thin-billed Prion						n.	1	,			
Blue Petrel									2		
Cook's Petrel	1				*					_	
Mottled Petrel	-			, -						1	
White-headed Petrel		-							က	14	က
Kerguelen Petrel					100					1	
Grey-faced Petrel					1881				-		-
White-faced Storm Petrel				8	8						_
Blue Penguin	-	15	2	-		2	46	42	1		5
Australasian Gannet	20	10	9	2			1		7	2	6
Southern Black-backed Gull	6	,		2	1			2		-	
S Black-backed Gull (Juv)		12	3					1	2		
Red-billed Gull	1	1			s (3)						
Caspian Tern								-		1	
Total	52	29	18	13	6	9	49	50		52	63
Duck	1										
Harrier			1								
Cattle Egret				τ-						1	
				-	11						

Patrollers: J. Dawn, B. Couper, I.and D. Godbert, C. MacDiarmid, P. Gardiner

BEACH PATROL KARIKARI BEACH 2005

DISTANCE lantled Sooty Albatross ooted Shearwater Shearwater siled Shearwater alled Shearwater shearwater shearwater shearwater shearwater lighed Prion led Prion aced Storm Petrel red Office (ad.) rag rn Black-backed Gull red Gull rn Tern rn Tern	MONTH	Jan 8th	Mar 20th	Apr 16th	Apr 16th May 14th June 12th	June 12th	July 9th	Aug 6th	Sept 3rd	Oct 30th	Nov 26th
100 kms         23 kms         23         23         23         23         23         23         23         1											
Fross 5	DISTANCE	23 kms	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
5 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Light-mantled Sooty Albatross							1		-	
5 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Flesh-footed Shearwater			1							
1	Sooty Shearwater	2			_					2	2
1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Buller's Shearwater		-		_		a.			3	
2	Short-tailed Shearwater			-						-	
2	Fluttering Shearwater	_	-	2		1		-		18	12
2	Hutton's Shearwater					-					
2 1 1 1 1 2 56 51 8 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 6 1 1 8 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Allied Shearwater	2				-					
1	Diving Petrel							_	-	6	-
2 1 1 2 5 6 51 8 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 5 6 51 8 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Fairy Prion								<b>-</b> -		
2 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 56 51 8 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Thin-billed Prion						-				
11	White-faced Storm Petrel	2			3						
12     1     1     1     1     1     8     51     8       1     1     1     1     1     2       1     1     1     1     2       1     1     1     1     3       1     1     1     1     3       30     6     5     6     3     60     53     50	Grey-faced Petrel	-			,	-				3	
12     1     1     1     1     1     8     51     8       1     1     1     1     1     8     51     8     8       1     1     1     1     1     1     2     1       1     1     1     1     1     1     3     1       1     1     1     1     1     3     1       30     6     5     6     3     60     53     50       1     1     1     1     1     1	Black Petrel										-
3ull     2       1     1       3ull     2       1     1       1     1       1     1       1     1       1     1       30     6       5     6       3     60       5     6       4     1       5     6       6     5       7     1       8     6       9     6       1     1	Blue Penguin	12	1	1	1	-	2	56	51	8	2
1     1     1     2       Sull     2     1     1     1       2     1     1     1     3       1     1     1     3     3       30     6     5     6     3     60     53     50       1     1     1     1     1     1	Australasian Gannet (ad.)	1	1								
Shag     1     1     1       lern Black-backed Gull     2     1     1     1     3       silled Gull     2     1     1     3     3       ian Tern     30     6     5     6     3     60     53     50       ble Oystercatcher     1     1     1     1     1     1	Pied Shag	1			1	serve.		-		2	
Nern Black-backed Gull         2         1         1         1         1         3           Silled Gull         2         6         5         6         3         8         6         5         6         5         5         6         5         6         7         <	Little Shag					1					
inlled Gull     2     3       ian Tern     1     1     1     1       ian Tern     30     6     5     6     3     60     53     50       ble Oystercatcher     1     1     1     1     1     1	Southern Black-backed Gull	2	-		-	1		_			_
ian Term     1     1     1     6     5     6     3     60     53     50     50       ble Oystercatcher     1     1     1     1     1     1	Red-billed Gull	2								က	
ble Oystercatcher 30 6 5 6 3 60 53 50.	Caspian Tern	1	1								
7-	Total	30	9	5	5	9	က	09	53	20	20
	Variable Oystercatcher				-		-				
	Godwit										-

Patrollers: J. Dawn, B. Couper, I and D. Godbert, C. MacDiarmid, P. Gardiner

### RECENT REPORTS

### August - December 2005

Nigel Milius who lives at Whitianga on the Coromandel Peninsular and is known to some Far North members as co-leader for some of Kiwi Wildlife Tours' pelagic trips has spent some weeks in Sept & Oct working in the area between Kaitaia & Cape Reinga. He has sent me a lot of records of sightings during his time in the Far North which are set out below, together with some wader counts which also follow.

**New Zealand Dabchick** On ponds off Houhora Bay on SH1, 1 on 6 Sept & 1 Oct, 3 on 22 Sept **Common Diving Petrel** One alive on Henderson Beach on 10 Sept.

**Little (Blue) Penguin** 3 c.200 metres offshore on 22 Sept.

**Eastern Reef Heron** Singles off end of Paua Road, end of Houhora Heads Road end & Kaimaumau, all on 14 Sept, also 1 Parengarenga Fish Factory on 9 Oct.

**Australasian Bittern** One seen Henderson Bay Road nr SH1 on 6 Sept, one heard Kaimaumau Road 12, 15, 21 Sept & seen there on 2 Oct.

**Royal Spoonbill** At Unahi Wharf, 25 on 7 Sept, 116 on 16 Sept, 225 on 25 Sept. At Houhora 5 on 11 Sept, 21 on 22 Sept & 19 on 29 Sept. Details of colour bands on 2 birds sent in.

**New Zealand Shoveler** 3 on pond off Henderson Bay Road near SH1 on 2 Oct.

**Brown Quail** 5 or 6 Trig Road on 9 Sept, 3 on Houhora Heads Road on 12 Sept, 2 near backpackers at Otaipango Road on 13 Sept, 1 at Kaimaumau Road on 13 Sept, 1 Unahi Wharf on 17 Sept, 1 above Tapotupotu Beach on 28 Sept, 2 N end of Houhora Beach on 2 Oct.

Banded Rail At least 2 heard Parengarenga 9 Oct

**New Zealand Dotterel** Seen with nests on Henderson Beach from 5 Oct & on Kokota Spit from 8 Oct, prob a nest on Kowhai Beach.

**Banded Dotterel** Breeding on saddle between Kowhai & Henderson Beach where small chick seen on 3 Oct.

**Curlew Sandpiper** One midway along Karikari Beach on 10 Oct.

**Red-necked Stint** Also one Karikari Beach on 10 Oct.

**Whimbrel** One S end of East Beach on 21 Sept, 4 Kokota Spit 8 Oct, probably all Asiatic.

Far Eastern Curlew 1 Parengarenga 1 Oct

**Barbary Dove** (Have reached Mangonui)

**Shining Cuckoo** Heard end of Henderson Bay Rd on 24 Sept & at Pukenui Holiday Park on 6 & 8 Oct.

**Dunnock** Cape Reinga 28 Sept

NZ Pipit Seen in several places during Sept & Oct

**Fernbird** Heard near Kaimaumau Road 12 & 26 Sept, seen above Kowhai Beach 3 Oct.

Aus Magpie 1 near Lake Ngatu turn off SH1

Also pod of **Bottlenose Dolphins** heading north from Henderson Beach on 6 Oct, **Australian Painted Lady** butterfly N end of Henderson Beach on 9 Oct & possible **Lesser Wanderer** at S end of Kokota Spit on 8 Oct.

### OTHER SIGHTINGS

**North Is. Brown Kiwi** Seen on Purerua on several dates, have had a good breeding season.

**Chukar** One walked across the forecourt of the Caltex Garage in Kerikeri at 8.30 am on 22 Nov to Detlef's amazement.

**Wandering Tattler** One on rocks on 26 Oct at eastern end of Tom Bowling Bay, called several times before joining 4 Godwits on beach (Anthea Goodwin & Ed Smith).

**Kaka** John & Juliana Williams saw one in their garden in Stanners Road, Kerikeri one day in October.

**Shining Cuckoo** One heard at Kororeraka Reserve north of Russell on 20 Sept at 6.40 am (Lindsey Alexander in bed) was the earliest we know of.

**Fernbird** Heard & seen on several dates between Kawakawa & Opua (Detlef & Carol).

**Tomtit** One by trail close to Puketi HQ on 17 Dec (Detlef & Carol).

# WADER COUNTS - Sept & Oct 2005 - NIGEL MILIUS

## PARENGARENGA HARBOUR

	Paddock	s at end c	Paddocks at end of Paua Road	oad		5 100					Kokota Spit
-	11-Sep	14-Sep	16-Sep	17-Sep	19-Sep	p 14-Sep 16-Sep 17-Sep 19-Sep 21-Sep 23-Sep	23-Sep	26-Sep	01-Oct	04-Oct	08-Oct
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	125				157	171		86			
Variable Oystercatcher	တ							3			10
Pied Stilt	4			88		78	125	106			
Banded Dotterel			1	-							16
New Zealand Dotterel	2	2		2		2	2	3	3		4
Asiatic Golden Plover							7	14	4	11	
Knot	200	47		-	က	_	4			80	870
Wrybill		თ							9		
Turnstone	58	102			81		80		2	38	
Bar-tailed Godwit	761	687	538	317	651	19	264			222	470

### KOWHAI BEACH

	13-Sep	20-Sep	22-Sep	24-Sep	27-Sep	29-Sep	29-Sep 02-Oct	03-Oct	05-Oct	06-Oct	09-Oct
Variable Oystercatcher	10	4	4	4	4	9		ဖ	ω	ω	8
Pied Stilt					-						
Banded Dotterel	9		4	2	-			2		4	5
New Zealand Dotterel	-			-	9	-		ო	4	4	1
Asiatic Golden Plover			4		12	12					
Knot	4	2	7	2	18	16	c.50	24	27	12	111
Wrybill	14				_		_	4		,	1
Turnstone	က	4	10	18	24	38		20	13	7	21
Bar-tailed Godwit	32	139	120	115	128	221	250-300	291	272	303	490

## HENDERSON BEACH

									The second of the second of the second			
	10-Sep	13-Sep	20-Sep	22-Sep	24-Sep	27-Sep	29-Sep	02-Oct	03-Oct	05-Oct	10-Oct	
÷	-						F					
Variable Oystercatcher	4	ဖ	7	9	ဖ	3	10		11	œ	7	
					2					)		
Pied Stilt							-					
		-		-		The state of the s						
Banded Dotterel	7	7	7	ς,	2	4	9		σ	4	ינ	
				-					,		)	
New Zealand Dotterel	ო	m	7	က	0	ď	-	-	4	6	4	
-						)	The state of the s	-	-	1	-	
Iurnstone			rC.			σ	C	U	15	4.0	7	
	The second secon		,			)	1	)	)	7	2	

### S end EAST BEACH

	07-Sep	08-Sep	12-Sep	26-Sep
Variable Oystercatcher	10+	10	18	9
Pied Stilt				
Banded Dotterel		2	2	4
New Zealand Dotterel	2		3	
Knot			15	
Wrybill	1	1	1	
Turnstone			22	
Bar-tailed Godwit	20		2	

### N end EAST BEACH

	15-Sep	20-Sep	30-Sep
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	39	36	14
Variable Oystercatcher	2	22	11
Pied Stilt			
Banded Dotterel			
New Zealand Dotterel		1	-
Knot			
Wrybill		7	
Turnstone			
Bar-tailed Godwit			

	Rawarawa Beach	Karikari Beach
	17-Sep	10-Oct
Variable Oystercatcher	2	19
Pied Stilt		
Banded Dotterel		3 '
New Zealand Dotterel	2	8
Knot		
Wrybill		
Turnstone		14
Bar-tailed Godwit		3

### **OSNZ** joins Birds Australia in Conference in Blenheim

Several Far North members journeyed to the South Island for the third biennial "Australasian Ornithological Conference," 6-10 December. This is a joint meeting of the two societies, Birds Australia and OSNZ, and this was the first time New Zealand hosted. The 200 attendees included university professors, government agency researchers and managers, OSNZ volunteers, biological consultants, and many graduate students, about a third from Australia, with a sprinkling from other countries, including the U.K., Canada, and the U.S.A. Enthusiasm about birds, eagerness to share ideas and experiences, and general informality prevailed. Three days were full of double or triple sessions of 20-minute talks on research, of poster displays of other research, of three major speakers, of morning and afternoon teas and lunches on the sunny lawn and patio, and of an evening banquet, and the fourth day offered field trips.

One of the special things about these meetings is the people. Many of our heroes of ornithology in New Zealand were right there, with easy smiles and very accessible to all: Don Merton, Richard Holdaway, Mike Bell, Hugh Robertson, and dozens of others, like the banker from Waikato who bands shearwaters in his spare time with his wife, or the many graduate students giving their first talks, as they blaze the way forward into interesting frontiers of knowledge here, in Australia, and around the world.

The research talks covered a diversity of topics, including conservation, bird song, ethnoornithology, fragmented landscapes, agricultural landscapes, monitoring, avian influenza, taxonomy, waders, kiwis, seabirds, ...Did you know that most birds cannot see the tips of their own bills? We briefly detail here the three plenary lectures and three of the research talks. The titles can be found at <a href="http://osnz.org.nz/aocsciprog.htm">http://osnz.org.nz/aocsciprog.htm</a>, and the abstracts may soon be posted on the web. Folks interested in specific topics can contact the authors of the papers or us for specific addresses.

**Hugh Robertson** of the Department of Conservation summarized much past and current kiwi work by many people. Among his topics were that genetic studies have split Brown Kiwi into three species, so we now have a total of five: *Apteryx australis, mantelli, rowi, haastii*, and *owenii*. Population studies have shown alarming declines, leading to certain extinction if nothing is done. Poisoning mammals, trapping predators, Operation Nest Egg (ONE), and establishing kiwi sanctuaries all have proven, with controlled studies, to improve the outlook. ONE, which "borrows" selected eggs to raise and release, dramatically increases kiwi productivity the most, but at high financial cost.

**Richard Holdaway** of University of Canterbury showed us how applying new techniques to tiny bits of fossil bones or dirt opens the window to past environments. Having used nitrogen enrichment, ancient DNA, or light-to-heavy isotope ratios, Holdaway could tell us many things. For example, in New Zealand, seabirds once drove the nutrient cycle, carrying marine matter to onshore colonies. Even today 40% of the nitrogen in a native pigeon colony originated in a marine ecosystem. Christchurch used to be tropical. Brown Teal used to feed in much broader habitats than now. When giant moas were young, they fed in the shade under trees, moving to open areas as they reached full size. There were only two species of giant moa. One had a bush morph and a dry land morph. Westland petrels were gone before the Maori arrived. Such are the marvels of today's palaeobiology.

*Michael Clarke* of LaTrobe University recounted the exciting, cooperative efforts of field biologists, breeders, and land managers to save the Black-eared Miner in the mallee habitat type of Australia, an effort similar in many ways to that working with the kiwi. The "single species recovery program" for this flagship species has resulted in great biological knowledge of this species and its habitat, useful information for land managers, and widespread public awareness of the value of the mallee and this bird. Along the way Clarke demonstrated the value of museum specimen collections in establishing that this miner began hybridizing during the land modifications of the 1950's. He also pointed out the importance of sharing our small victories with our political "masters," so they know good things are happening.

**Emma Neil** of Department of Conservation in Whangarei reported in an excellent talk that the population of Brown Teal in Mimiwhangata Conservation Park is responding well to four years of predator trapping targeting mustelids (all three species) and cats.

**Dai Morgan**, a student at University of Waikato, found that magpies may have only a minor effect, and on only a few birds. He did this by removing magpies, counting birds, observing magpies, and photographing nests. He found a slight depression of populations of Kereru and 5 species of introduced birds. Other birds avoid going near foraging magpies or flying near territorial magpies. Nest cameras saw 8 predations by harrier, 7 by rat, 5 by cat, 1 by Pukeko, and 1 by magpie. Morgan says controlling mammalian predators is likely to be a lot more important and cost-effective for bird conservation than controlling magpies.

**Jeremy Corfield,** a student at the University of Auckland told us about kiwi voice recognition. By using this non-invasive recording method, he has found that they possess individually distinctive vocalizations that can be used to correctly identify at least 85% of the individual birds. Jeremy, from Kerikeri, found that applying this new technique can demonstrate longevity, population size, and other important conservation values.

### SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS MADE IN PROMOTING NEW NATIONAL BIRD MONITORING SCHEME

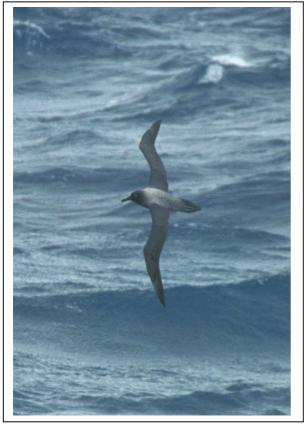
One of the highlights of the OSNZ and Birds Australia Conference was a Symposium "Landbird Population Monitoring", followed by a workshop on "Establishment of a landbird population monitoring scheme in New Zealand," convened by an *ad hoc* Working Group, including representatives from the OSNZ, DOC, Landcare Research, University staffs, consultants, representatives of local authorities, and interested individuals. The symposium was convened by Dr. Eric Spurr of Landcare and Dr. C.J. Ralph.

During the one-day intensive workshop on the Sunday, following the main Conference, about 25 leading ornithologists from all parts of the country, as well as contributors from overseas, met and discussed various methods of monitoring birds, primarily focussing on landbirds. Substantial input was received from OSNZ, leading off with a talk by Paul Scofield, OSNZ Council, on "A bird population monitoring scheme: what the OSNZ thinks it wants " and followed by DOC's Terry Greene on "Bird population monitoring plans in the Department of Conservation".

Consensus was reached on a broad range of topics such as the: (1) Objectives of bird survey (e.g., trends, inventory, distribution and habitat); (2) Which habitats and scale; (3) Which bird species or species groups; (4) Sampling strategies (e.g., grids, habitat types, and observer density); (5) Survey techniques, largely point counts; (6) Temporal scales (e.g. start times, count lengths, and season); (7) Spatial scales; (8) Data handling systems, including data entry systems (for current and historical data), data storage, data analysis and feedback; and (9) Organisation and structure of a co-operative venture.

The notes and discussion of the workshop will be summarised shortly and presented to various interested groups for input and funding, including OSNZ. It is expected that such a monitoring programme will be a collaborative, interactive effort with observers, including many volunteers, entering their own data into a system which provides rapid response including maps, graphs, and tables of data collected. It is the intent of the organisers that such a program be modelled on some of the international efforts in Europe and the Americas where various organizations, agencies, individuals, and companies put aside traditional 'ownership' of programmes and work towards the common grounds of understanding bird trends, distribution, and abundance to inform conservation.

C.J. and Carol Ralph (cjralph@xtra.co.nz) Moturoa Island, Paihia





Left: Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (Prince Edward Islands, Nov 2002) 2 found on beach patrols this year

Above: Tomtit in Puketi Forest 17 Dec 2005

Photos: Detlef Davies

### COMMON BIRDS DOING UNCOMMON THINGS

In late October/November I spent a fair part of three weeks working at the Opua marina. With 250 berths, mostly occupied, didn't expect to see many birds. However there was usually something interesting happening. At dusk, about half an hour after the lights on the pontoons switched on, several Red-billed Gulls took up their stations under a light. Each bird guarded its spot jealously. At times the fish were back to back, probably koheru or mackerel, but there must have been smaller fry too because occasionally a bird would do a plunge onto the surface. I never saw one catch anything but obviously they must have done, sometimes. After an hour or an hour and a half they gave up and returned to their roosts. There were usually up to 5 Pied Shags fishing among the boats but I have never seen a shag behave as one did. It raised the front of its body out of the water and beat the water vigorously with its wings. Then it dived and secured a feed. A few dives were sufficient for it to retire and digest its meal on the pontoon. Another time I saw a great commotion just below the surface. I imagined it was struggling with a big eel, but in fact this was variation of the previous antics which it repeated several times.

### **Anthea Goodwin**

Caspian Terns & Pied Stilts at Te Haumi (DD)



### **NEOTROPICAL BIRDS & NUPTIALS**

Detlef & Carol had an unexpected opportunity to go on an ambitious birding trip to Central & South America in October & November this year. Carol's son, David, who lives in Scotland announced that he was getting married to his fiancée, Loraine, & that the wedding would take place at a beach resort in the Dominican Republic. For the Scottish relatives & friends (about 20 of them), this was a Caribbean package holiday & easy charter flight from Glasgow Airport. For us (& let's face it we HAD to go), it was a challenge to work out how we would get there. We rejected the idea of returning to Britain to join the party & the possible route through Los Angeles & Miami.

We took a direct flight from Auckland to Buenos Aires, from there to Panama & thence to Santo Domingo where a coach took us on the 4 hour ride to Puerto Plata. Of course, to make the most of these relatively expensive flights, we spent 2 days in Buenos Aires on the outward journey & a week in Panama & a week in Argentina on the way back.





Our hotel in the centre of Buenos Aires was in walking distance of an excellent wetland reserve with a wealth of birds. The wedding was of course a wonderful occasion & most of the men, not wishing to abandon the Scottish

tradition, wore kilts. We spent our week in Panama in tropical rainforest, staying in lodges in 2 centres at different altitudes. Birding was amazing with a multitude of raptors, antbirds, hummingbirds, trogons, puffbirds, manakins, etc.

Returning to Argentina, we divided our week between the magnificent Iguazu Falls & the foothills of the Andes near Salta. Both places merited more time & we very much want to return one day & explore further. The trip as a whole had produced 437 species.

White-necked Jacobin (DD)



