

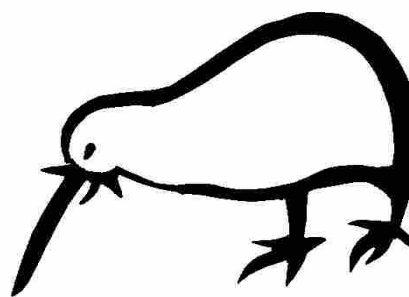
# APTERYX

Issue 30

**August 2011**

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

### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

As I write, we are experiencing an exceptionally cold winter and morning ground frost has been a pretty sight off our balcony. Silveryeyes have been flocking to our bird tables to feast on the abundant kiwi-fruit we put out for them. With my Far North site guide making progress, we have travelled more than usual in the Far North to some remoter sites for information. Many of you will have heard of the unusual, and very sad, wreck of thousands of prions on our west coast beaches over the last few weeks. A full report is on page 6. We welcome Susie Lindauer from Kaikohe as a new Far North member.

I often circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times and meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email, please give me a phone number so I can contact you with this information.

**Detlef Davies**



Fluttering Shearwaters off Cable Bay, 16 July – Detlef Davies

### The Far North Regional Officers are:

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## RECENT EVENTS

**Thurs 28 April** – Indoor meeting scheduled for Kevin Matthews' talk on Dune Lakes but floods on the highway following stormy weather stopped him getting here. Instead Detlef gave a presentation on his adventure on the West Pacific Odyssey in April 2009 – a birding sea trip from Auckland to Japan.

**Fri 20 May** – With the waters having subsided, Kevin came and gave his presentation on the dune lakes, a special habitat for a variety of flora and fauna but under threat from pollution, invasive plants and eutrophication.

**Fri 22 July** – Far North AGM. The minutes are set out on page 4. Gary Little then gave a talk on his experiences as a volunteer on Tiritiri Island where he and Asta had spent a week recently.

## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Detlef Davies

This covers the Far North region from 24<sup>th</sup> April to mid August 2011. Contributors include: Detlef & Carol Davies (DCD), Gary Little (GL) & Asta Wistrand (AW), Kevin Matthews (KM), Bill Campbell, Anthea Goodwin, Isabella & Derry Godbert, Ian Wilson (IW), Jenny Atkins, Dan O'Halloran & Jackie Andrews. To save confusion over the 2 lakes named Rotokawau, the one near 90 Mile Beach is designated **NMB** and the one on the Karikari Peninsula is designated **KK**.

**North Island Brown Kiwi** – Monitoring took place during May & June in several places. Results available through Kiwi Foundation and Puketiti Forest Trust. Heard Valencia Lane off Waimate North Road in June (Jackie Andrews)

**New Zealand Dabchick** – 5 on Lake Waiporohita, 5 on Lake Rotokawau KK all on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 5 Lake Rotokawau NMB 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2 on lakes in Henderson Bay Road on 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Australian Little Grebe** – 1 on Lake Waiporohita 30<sup>th</sup> April, 3 Lake Rotokawau NMB 5<sup>th</sup> July

**Wandering Albatross** – 1 off Mitimiti on 7<sup>th</sup> August (DD)

**Albatross sp.** – 1 or 2 off Ninety Mile Beach (Waipapakauri) on 5<sup>th</sup> July, one, prob White-capped, off Mitimiti 7<sup>th</sup> August

**BULLER'S ALBATROSS** – 4 at sea between Taupo Bay & Berghan Point on 7<sup>th</sup> August (KM). Kevin also saw several **GREY-HEADED ALBATROSSES** off Northland (Tiritiri – Bream Bay) – see page 8

**Sooty Shearwater** – Lots off Mitimiti on 7<sup>th</sup> August

**Fluttering Shearwater** – Estimate of c.3000 birds stretching the full visible width of Doubtless Bay and coming right into shoreline at Cable Bay on 16<sup>th</sup> July, few hundred Taupo Bay / Berghan Point 7<sup>th</sup> August.

**Prions** – We hear that some of the beached birds were found alive on Ninety Mile Beach on dates prior to our visits. See report of the dead birds found, page 6.

**Fairy Prion** – Over 2000 at sea between Taupo Bay & Berghan Point on 7<sup>th</sup> August (KM)

**Grey-faced Petrel** – Several heard (hard to estimate numbers) and 3 seen coming in to burrows at South Head, Hokianga Estuary after dark on 31<sup>st</sup> July (DCD).

**Common Diving Petrel** – few hundred Taupo Bay / Berghan Point 7<sup>th</sup> August (KM)

**White-faced Storm Petrel** – 1 storm petrel, probably this species, off Mitimiti on 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Little Penguin** – No specific reports but some beached corpses

**Black Shag** – Lots on Lake Omapere on 5 July, 1 Lake Waiparera on 7<sup>th</sup> August

**Little Black Shag** – 8 at end of Unahi Road, Awanui on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 12 Ratcliffes Bay, Whangaroa on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 3 Kaitia Oxidation Ponds 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Pied Shag** – Occupying roosts at Taipa & Helena Bay in August

**White Heron** – 1 at Orongo Bay near Russell, in a paddock at high tide on 10<sup>th</sup> August (Margaret Pasco)

**Cattle Egret** – 4 seen in paddock at SH10 / Puketotara Road junction early on 28<sup>th</sup> April (DD). 6 seen in the Waihou Valley near SH1 at the end of June (IW) and 3 in Waipa in mid-July (IW).

**Reef Heron** – 1 Ratcliffes Bay, Whangaroa on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2 Mitimiti on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1 roosting on yacht in Houhora Harbour 12<sup>th</sup> August.

**Australasian Bittern** – One across the road at Frenchmans Swamp on 16<sup>th</sup> June (Dan O'Halloran), pair at farm west of Kaitia Airport 20<sup>th</sup> August (KM)



Grey Duck & Australasian Shovelers, Lake Rotokawau – Detlef Davies

**Royal Spoonbill** – 250+ at Unahi Road roost on 5<sup>th</sup> July, at least this many during August.

**Canada Goose** – 16 Lake Rotokawau KK 30<sup>th</sup> April

**Grey (Pacific Black) Duck** – c.10 Lake Rotokawau KK 30<sup>th</sup> April, 3 by Waipapa River, Landing Road 3<sup>rd</sup> July during Garden Bird Count, 5 Lake Rotokawau NMB 5<sup>th</sup> July

**Grey Teal** – 2 Lake Rotokawau KK 30<sup>th</sup> April, 28 at Kaitaia Oxidation Ponds on 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Australasian Shoveler** – c.25 Lake Rotokawau KK 30<sup>th</sup> April, 7 at Kaitaia Oxidation Ponds 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Brown Quail** – seen by Honeymoon Valley to Kaitaia road on 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Bar-tailed Godwit** – No reports received

**Variable Oystercatcher** – Seen in usual places

**South Island Pied Oystercatcher** – 26 at Taipa Estuary on 30 April

**Pied Stilt** – No large numbers reported

**New Zealand Dotterel** – 4 Taipa on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 6 pairs in breeding plumage in the sandspit area at Tauranga Bay mid-August

**Banded Dotterel** – No specific reports

**Turnstone** – 1 Taipa Estuary on 30<sup>th</sup> April

**Wrybill** – 1 on Tokerau Beach on 16<sup>th</sup> July

**Caspian Tern** – Recorded Cable Bay, Taipa, Mitimiti, 90 Mile Beach, etc.

**Red-billed Gull** – Estimated 5000+ in paddocks between Pukenui and Te Kao on 13<sup>th</sup> August

**Arctic Skua** – Light phase adult harassing terns at Cable Bay on 30<sup>th</sup> April (DCD)

**Laughing Kookaburra** – One seen at Ian Wilson's farm on 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

**New Zealand Pipit** – Several Mitimiti 7<sup>th</sup> August

**BELLBIRD** – We hear that there is a regular Bellbird in Mangonui. Bill Campbell has heard it recently but it's a couple of years since he has seen it.

**Fernbird** – heard Lake Ohia 30<sup>th</sup> April, one at farm west of Kaitaia Airport (1<sup>st</sup> here for over 25 years (KM).

**Whitehead** – several seen on Moturoa Island in July, well after translocation (Paul & Enid Asquith)

**North Island Tomtit** – Good numbers on Moturua Island in July (CD), present Kaikohe area (Jenny Atkins).

**North Island Robin** – 30 recorded in the Te Tawa catchment in Puketi Forest on a recent survey and another 9 on the Plateau a few days later (IW).

## PROGRAMME – INDOORS and OUTDOORS

There has been a change in the venue for future indoor meetings. In order to maintain regularity in dates of meetings, these will now take place on the second Friday of each month, starting at 7.30 pm. Most will take place at the Community Rooms, Proctor Library, Kerikeri but in the months of October, April and July they will be held at the Doubtless Bay Christian Centre in Mangonui. This will hopefully provide for a wider attendance and more member participation. The September meeting is on the third Friday (by way of exception) as we have guests on 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. So the programme so far is as follows:

Friday 16 September – Indoor Meeting, Kerikeri - Robin Booth and Verna Brevig will give a talk on their trip to the Seychelles. As they are away at the moment I cannot give any further details but I expect it to be excellent !



Friday 14 October - Indoor Meeting, Mangonui – As this is the night before the main weekend of the Dotterel census, Carol & Detlef will give their presentation on this delightful species. Then we can head off next morning and get counting!

### Weekend 15 – 16 October - New Zealand Dotterel Census

This is a nationwide event but our region is important as we hold most of the population of this species. Some members have already expressed interest to help but more would be great. This is the 'core' weekend, counting can be done a few days, or even a week either side.

Friday 11 November – Indoor meeting, Kerikeri

Friday 9 December – Indoor Meeting, Kerikeri

(Topics for Nov and Dec still to be arranged – offers & suggestions welcome)

### **FAR NORTH AGM - MINUTES**

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2012.

Meeting started 7.48 pm. Present: Detlef & Carol Davies, Isabella & Derry Godbert, Gary Little, Asta Wistrand, Robin Booth, Verna Brevig, Anthea Goodwin, Bill Campbell & Kevin Matthews. Apologies for absence from Margaret & Robert Cooper, Margaret & Tom Pasco, Laureen Alston, Mike Bryan, Dave & Mavis Hill, Paul & Enid Asquith.

Last year's minutes were read & proposed by Detlef & seconded by Isabella. The main matter arising was Detlef's eventual stepping down and distribution of tasks which would be discussed later. As before, Detlef gave a verbal account of the past year's events which, as a Regional Representative's report, was proposed by him and seconded by Derry. Isabella read the Treasurers Report and produced the account for the year ending 31 Dec 2010 which showed a closing balance of \$601.37. Detlef mentioned that the Far North had the lowest balance of all the regions by a considerable margin but with applications for funding projects, this might improve. Proposed by Isabella, seconded by Detlef.

Subject to members considering a change of Regional Rep and some job-sharing, the Far North officers were all willing to stand again and with no other nominations received, their approval for 2012 was unanimous. Accordingly, Kevin will organize wader counts & Bill will arrange the new Mangonui meeting venue. Carol gave a Publicity Officers report, mentioning the successes of the past 12 months including library displays, Oromahoe School, etc. Carol proposed, Detlef seconded.

Future indoor and field meetings – Detlef wanted to bring the region in line with the others by having a regular night in the month for indoor meetings. It was getting too much to hold them in their home (although this might be an occasional option). After discussion we agreed to meet on the second Friday in the month either in the Community Rooms in Proctor Library in Kerikeri or in Doubtless Bay Christian Centre, Mangonui. (Actual dates & times are shown under Programme on page 3). Anthea said she knew some possible speakers for meetings. Gary suggested having occasional short daytime meetings. It was agreed that there would be more distribution of work organising field meetings.

Carol spoke about Projects and Activities. Following on from her earlier report, funding applications were to be submitted for the forthcoming NZ Dotterel census, hopefully similar projects like Caspian Tern counts will be offered for assistance. 3 existing projects were nominated for Trustpower awards: the Beach Patrollers, Moturoa Island restoration and the Bushland Trust at Coopers Beach. Kevin hoped that Steve Amon might assist with transport for beach patrols. Tiritiri Island are looking for volunteers for bird monitoring in November.

Pelagics – a reminder that Brian Candy is available to motor out of Whangaroa Harbour to check out winter seabirds if we can get enough people. AOB – amid some general chat, Gary said that Doubtless Bay Times are looking for bird-orientated articles to publish. Meeting closed 9.10 pm.



The often ignored GOLDFINCH by Jenny Atkins

## EMPEROR PENGUIN – THE BIG TWITCH

Detlef & Carol Davies

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June, there was a report, later confirmed by DOC scientists, that a young Emperor Penguin had been found on Pekapeka Beach north of Wellington. Although I used to be quite a keen 'twitcher' in the UK from the 70s to the early 90s, this had waned before our move to New Zealand and opportunities are much more limited here. However, this seemed to be special enough to travel for so Carol and I took time off to drive the 900 kms or so down the full length of the North Island. We left on the Wednesday evening and got to the road south of Turangi, before the Desert Road before we stopped to get some sleep in the car. Waking up to a moist morning at c.7 am, we continued on through Waiuku and Bulls, arriving at Pekapeka Beach at 10 am. To our relief, there were quite a lot of cars in the car park suggesting that the attraction was still present.



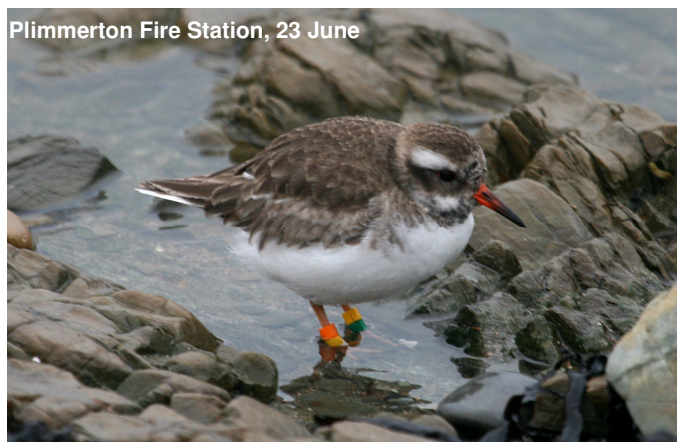
About 30 people were standing around a cordoned off area about 200 metres south of the beach entrance and there, lying on its stomach was the young Emperor Penguin. However, with a couple of exceptions, these people were not birders. It was still good to know that this many visitors had shown enough interest to come. Cameras were clicking everywhere and after a while, the penguin heaved itself up on its flippers and sprang into an upright position, to the delight and cheer of its onlookers.



Adding to the attraction of making this marathon journey was a report that a flock of Shore Plovers had flown across to the mainland from predator-free Mana Island off the Kapiti coast, to where they had been introduced. They had originally been reported on one of the post-Conference field trips. So after enjoying the penguin, we headed further south to the now well-known Plimmerton Fire Station, a solitary building close to the rocky stretch of coast where the Shore Plovers gathered. We saw c.35 of these lovely little birds, a considerable proportion of the world population. We hope that efforts will be made to control predators here as the birds may not appreciate a forced return to Mana Island.

After visiting the penguin once more on our way north, we spent the next night in Wanganui. After an unsuccessful search for Blue Ducks, we returned via Miranda Shorebird Centre arriving there late afternoon on Friday. There we heard the news that the penguin had been taken into care on the Friday morning. You know the rest from the national news but for us, we were relieved that we had gone when we did. It would not have been the same (and certainly not "countable") to have seen it on an operating table!





## THE PRION WRECK

**Isabella Godbert**

Our recent beach patrols have been very sad as there has been a huge "wreck" of prions. They are small birds that feed on plankton so if there is any change in plankton availability they have few reserves. There are huge "wrecks" of these birds every few years and they do get washed up every year but usually only a few. This year has been bigger and unusually, most have been Broad billed Prions. 50,000 have been picked up on the west coast of the North Island and it is estimated that there were probably 1/4 million washed ashore.

We first went out in July - Derry and Isabella Godbert, Maggy Aslund, Catherine Macdiarmid and Sue Wilson. You will see from the result chart that the numbers were enormous. Derry met

someone on the beach who said there had been 10 times as many the day before and some were alive. We next went out on Tokerau 2 weeks later and found there were still a lot of birds, this time mainly Fairy Prions. Detlef and Carol visited Mitimiti early in August and in only 300 metres found over 200 birds. On 14th August Derry and Isabella went back to 90 Mile Beach with Anthea Goodwin and Pat Gardner. There were not nearly as many and they were not fresh so deaths are probably tailing off.

MONTH	Jan 30th	May 15th	July 15th	Aug 7th	Aug 14th
DISTANCE	40 kms	35 kms	33 kms	300 metres	8 kms
Beach	90 mile	90 mile	90 mile	Mitimiti	90 mile
Wandering Albatross			1		
Grey headed Albatross			1		
Huttons Shearwater	6				
Buller's Shearwater	11	13			
Sooty Shearwater					
Short tailed Shearwater	8				
Fluttering Shearwater	2		5		6
Little Shearwater			1		
Common Diving Petrel			6	6	3
Prion sp.				3	3
Broad-billed Prion			546	137	27
Salvin's Prion			167	18	7
Narrow-billed Prion			240	20	
Antarctic Prion			178	41	2
Fairy Prion			105	18	12
Fulmar Prion				3	
Black Petrel	1				
Grey-faced Petrel					
Mottled Petrel					
White-chinned Petrel	35	6			
White-headed Petrel	9	1			
White-faced Storm Petrel					
Blue Penguin	2	1	1		
Australasian Gannet					
Sthorn Black-backed Gull					
BBG Juv			1		1
White-fronted Tern		1			
Caspian Tern	74	22			
<b>Total</b>			<b>1252</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>61</b>

MONTH	July
Beach	Tokerau
	9 kms
Fluttering Shearwater	20
Short-tailed Shearwater	
Broad billed Prion	2
Salvin's Prion	5
Antarctic Prion	5
Fairy Prion	157
Common Diving Petrel	10
Pied Shag	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>



## PRIONS

Above: Storm-driven **Fairy Prion** on Kokota Sandspit in 2007. It soon flew off strongly (Detlef Davies)

Right: Dead **Broad-billed Prion**, Kaitaia, a casualty from last month (Mike Bryan)



Above:  
**Broad-billed Prion** landing in breeding area at Tuku Camp, Chatham Island, Nov 2007 (Detlef Davies)

## WHITEHEAD – POPOKATEA TRANSLOCATION TO MOTUROA ISLAND

**Paul Asquith**, Chairman Wildlife, Moturoa Island

On Monday 2nd May after almost a 24 hour delay due to the rough weather and seas, over 20 volunteers from Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi, Ark in the Park and Moturoa Island arrived fairly late in the afternoon on Tiritiri and set about the necessary preparations to catch up to 90 Whiteheads for translocation to both the Ark in the Park (50) and Moturoa Island in the Bay of Islands (40). An early start on Tuesday morning in reasonable weather saw 4 intrepid teams set forth to various mist net sites and a further processing team finalised setting up 'shop' in the aviary.



Extraction from mist net behind the Visitors Centre

To everyone's surprise the first two bagged birds arrived at the aviary at 7.25am and processing commenced straight away. Mostly males were caught at first and by 9.30 am birds were arriving from all sites in good numbers. Many birds were netted in what were obviously family groups so wherever possible we tried to ensure that the family all went to the same location. Sexing was achieved by simply plotting a graph of weight and wing length and proved to be very reliable although obviously some of those identified as females could be juveniles of either sex.

All three holding aviaries were used, (1 for Moturoa birds and 2 for Ark in the Park birds), all well filled from floor almost to roof level with cut foliage, deep leaf litter and stocked with a goodly supply of wax moth grubs, meal worms, various assortments of soaked or cut fruit and of course plenty of fresh water bowls for drinking and bathing. The wax moths were removed from their cases to make it easier for the birds to feed – a labour intensive task but the results justified the effort.

Having expected (and thus provisioned) that we might take several days to catch our allotted total of birds, we were all delighted that by 3.30pm we could call a halt as we had our totals plus a few spares in case of later rejects/losses. By this time most birds were flying around the aviaries and feeding quite well and there was plenty of bird chatter and calling.



Andy W processing



With such early success it was decided that it would be preferable to get the birds off Tiritiri as soon as possible rather than hold them till the Saturday which had been the original plan. Arrangements were quickly made to take the Moturoa birds off on the am Tiritiri ferry the following day, Wednesday and the Ark in the Park birds on the Thursday. In preparation travel boxes were lined with newspaper and filled with cut tea tree and the birds were given a good late afternoon top up feed. Early the following morning after being given another dawn feed, the 40 birds for Moturoa Island from Aviary 1 were hand netted, checked for weights and condition, and put into the travel boxes at 5 to a box along with plenty of food including cut oranges and feijoas. On to the ferry and at Gulf Harbour by 11 am to be met by Enid (Paul A's wife) and car. A bit of a tight squeeze to get all the boxes in, and to make the journey more tolerable from the hot sun and window draughts we covered the boxes with a light coloured sheet. There was a lot of bird chatter as we drove north and then boarded the water taxi from Waitangi wharf for the 15 minute trip out to Moturoa Island.



Releasing on Moturoa Island - the last bird

After a quick unload of our gear and all the boxes loaded on to the 'kawasaki' mule and trailer to go down the island, we released all the birds by about 3.30 pm, into two adjacent bush areas. The birds all appeared to have travelled well, most flew strongly after the boxes were opened and started foraging, feeding and calling in the foliage above our heads at the release sites. They stayed around for quite some time and were seen in the same area 36 hours later happily foraging and calling. *(Please excuse omission of acknowledgments – DD)*

## FROM OKAHU BAY, AUCKLAND TO WHANGAROA

A yacht trip by  
**Kevin Matthews**

Brought the yacht up north after starting last Thursday morning 14/7/11. Spent the first night at North Cove on Kawau Island.....a well sheltered anchorage after getting hammered by a very strong North West which was supposed to be SW! Saw a Grey-headed Albatross in the Tiritiri gap and at least another 3 but possibly 5 Grey-headed Albatross in Bream Bay the following day..... One at the Fair Way Buoy out from the Whangarei entrance! We got hammered by 40 plus knot squalls blowing W-NW across Bream Bay.....Again supposedly forecast from the SW.....the birds were busy in this rough sea with lots of Diving Petrel and Fluttering Shearwater..... Saw 2 NZ Storm Petrels too which was a highlight (SW of the Hen).....quite brown backed compared to Wilson's . Spent Friday night in the quiet of the Marsden Point Marina .....a good safe place to stop over as long as you dodge the big ships and tugs! The next day was a pleasant motor sail up the coast in westerly winds to Mimiwhangata.....another pleasant sheltered anchorage. Thousands of Diving Petrels seen feeding along with thousands of Fluttering Shearwater on this



Juv Buller's Albatross (Berghan Point / Cape Karikari – Steve Amon

leg with a smattering of Fairy Prion. The next day was virtually windless and we left at 6.30am to motor the 50 odd nautical miles to Whangaroa. Saw lots of Fairy Prion, Fluttering Shearwater and Diving Petrel feeding on this leg. Moored the yacht in the Whangaroa Harbour and will do the next leg to Houhora in the next week all going well.....that will be an easy one days sailing. Have got a mooring up there so will make that its home.....a bit further north but a far easier access to open water.

Other birds.....A Prion was found on the road here not far from the house, I never saw it but was almost certainly an Antarctic and another in the local school swimming pool on the 15/7. Lots more must have perished unnoticed as they limp inland. Found two cat eaten Antartics on the Shenstone Block just south of the Tepaki Stream (30/7/11). Had a report of 50 dead Prion sp. on Mangawhai beach on 25<sup>th</sup> July.