

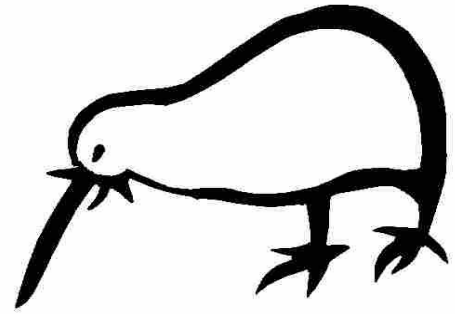
APTERYX

Issue 32

April 2012

Photos:
Detlef Davies (DD)
Jenny Atkins
Ann Hallett
Jacqui Winter

www.osnz.org.nz



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

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Summer has been and gone and the popular view is that it has not provided the weather to which we in the Far North have come to expect – no prolonged periods of hot weather and more than our fair share of rain. However, for those of us who have been out in the fresh air, our birds have provided much pleasure as you will see from our regular feature 'Recent Reports'.

We welcome Peter Ladd from Kerikeri as a new Far North member. We have just received an up-to-date membership list showing only 25 paid-up members. Another 8 are paid up to the end of 2011 and many more have lapsed earlier. This is quite worrying so please help the Society by renewing promptly and helping the Far North branch to thrive.

Detlef and Carol will be in South America for 10 weeks from the middle of May and will need assistance from other members to keep the momentum of the Society going for this period. In particular we need a host for indoor meetings and speakers, topics and publicity.



Fernbird – Otangaroa Road (DD)

In this bumper issue we report on 2 outstanding pelagic trips out of Whangaroa Harbour aboard the Kuri II, various news from Moturoa Island, lots of bird sightings including multiple Long-tailed Cuckoos and new sites for Fernbird, and the dangers of beach-grooming.

The Far North Regional Officers are:

Regional Representative & 'Apteryx' Editor Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 detlefdavies@yahoo.com	Treasurer Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 godbert@xtra.co.nz
Regional Recorder Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8747 lm.alston@actrix.co.nz	Secretary & Publicity Carol Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 carolanndavies@yahoo.com

RECENT EVENTS

Tues 10 Jan – Full day (9 hour) **Pelagic trip from Whangaroa Harbour**

See report on page9.

(There was nobody to host an indoor meeting on 10th Feb).

Fri 9 March – Detlef's presentation on the **Subantarctic Islands**

"I let him go to the cold southern extremities of New Zealand (not really my kind of ocean trip) and he came back with his usual quality pictures of seabirds and island endemics, spectacular King and Royal Penguin colonies, etc. The talk also featured the island megaherbs, sea lions& elephant seals and ended in Hobart where we were reunited for a few days in Tasmania" (Carol Davies)

Sat 11 March – Half day (6 hour) **Pelagic trip from Whangaroa Harbour**

See report on page10.

Sat 31st March – **Envirofest** at the Domain, Kerikeri

Like last year OSNZ had a stall here and we had some interest in our display but unlike last year the weather was less than ideal so visitors were rather fewer.

Fri 13 April – At our northern venue in Mangonui, we showed the comedy film **'The Big Year'** about obsessive birders in the United States. 12 members attended and enjoyed a film about 3 American birders who compete with each other to try to record the most species in the USA in one year, and how it affects their personal lives. 'Golf widows' are mild in comparison!

RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Detlef Davies

These cover the period from January to mid-April 2012. Contributors: Detlef& Carol Davies (DCD), Laureen Alston, Jenny Atkins, Anthea Goodwin (AG), Kevin Matthews (KM), Gery Shore, Ann Hallett, Melanie & Kit Kinghan, Yvonne Steinemann& Wayne Parsonson (YSWP), Peter Honey.

Jan Pelagic denotes the full day January pelagic trip from Whangaroa Harbour on 10th Jan, March Pelagic denotes the repeat half day trip on 11th March.

North Island Brown Kiwi – One often visible in a burrow on Moturoa Island, regularly heard and seen at usual sites and very young birds seen on Purerua.

Little Penguin – 1 near Taylor Island (Paihia) on 3 Jan. 4 on March Pelagic.

Australian Little Grebe – 1 on Lake Ngatu& 7 on Lake Rotokawau 29 March.

New Zealand Dabchick – 4 on Lake Rotokawau 29 March.

Wandering (Gibson's) Albatross – 11 seen on Jan Pelagic including a mainly brown juv., 2 on March Pelagic.

White-capped Albatross – 5 on Jan Pelagic, 2 on March Pelagic.

Buller's Albatross – 2 on Jan Pelagic, 1 dead on beach nr. Ahipara 17 April.

Northern Giant Petrel – A juvenile in fresh plumage found alive but exhausted on 90 mile Beach (near Waipapakauri) on 28th March (Ann Hallett)



Juv Northern Giant Petrel, Ninety Mile Beach (Ann Hallett)

Flesh-footed Shearwater – c.55 on Jan Pelagic, up to 100 on March Pelagic.

Buller's Shearwater – 60+ on Jan Pelagic, up to 150 on March Pelagic.

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER – one seen on Jan Pelagic, a great rarity in New Zealand (see page9).

Sooty Shearwater – 1 on Jan Pelagic

Short-tailed Shearwater – 3 on Jan Pelagic.

Little Shearwater – 3 on Jan Pelagic, 2 on March Pelagic, all distant, one seen off Coopers Beach on 29 March.

Fluttering Shearwater – 100+ on Jan Pelagic, nearly all close to Stephenson Island, far fewer on March Pelagic, c.50 off Spirits Bay on 17 March.

Common Diving Petrel – 1 on Jan Pelagic

Black Petrel – c.90 on Jan Pelagic, up to 100 on March Pelagic.

Fairy Prion – c.30 on Jan Pelagic, up to 15 on March Pelagic.

Cook's Petrel – 3 on Jan Pelagic and 10+ more which were either this or Pycroft's.

PYCROFT'S PETREL – at least 1 on Jan Pelagic and probably several on March Pelagic (see photo on page10).

Black-winged Petrel – c.25 on Jan Pelagic, 1 on March Pelagic.

Grey-faced Petrel – 15+ on Jan Pelagic, 2 on March Pelagic.

KERMADEC PETREL – a distant one on Jan Pelagic – a first for Whangaroa pelagics.

WILSON'S STORM PETREL – at least 3 picked out from NZ Storm Petrels on March Pelagic

NEW ZEALAND STORM PETREL – up to 8 on Jan Pelagic and probably 10 on March Pelagic.

Apart from a tentative sighting last year, this species is new for these trips but not unexpected.

White-faced Storm Petrel – estimated c.175 on Jan Pelagic, up to 30 on March Pelagic.

Australasian Gannet – notable records include one regularly visiting the decoys on Alcatraz (Moturoa Island) and at least 36 diving together off Coopers Beach on 29 March.

Reef Heron – Singles seen on Moturoa Island on 8 Jan, Whangaroa Harbour & Stephenson Island on 10 Jan, Paua on 18 March.

Cattle Egret – 4 at Paua (Parengarenga) on 16 March, 5 there on 17th.

AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN – Two seen at Lake Ngatu on 2 Feb by Kevin Matthews out on a paddleboard. One perched on a tree-stump at Rawhiti on 2 March (Melanie & Kit Kinghan), one in TeWairoa Road, Waitangi Forest where it borders Bailey's Farm, early April (Peter Honey).

Royal Spoonbill – 10 at Whangaroa Harbour (by river near SH10) on 10 April (Gery Shore), up to 300 at Unahi Road roost site in April.

Brown Teal – hybrid with Grey Duck on Moturoa Island

Tufted Guinea fowl – one by Wairoa Road (Waipapa / Okaihau) on 18 Jan, 3 adults & 6 young on road to Honeymoon Valley on 2 March.

Spotless Crake – at least 3 heard on Skudders Beach Road Reserve, Kerikeri during March.

Banded Rail – seen Kohumaru Road (AG).

Variable Oystercatcher – 5 breeding pairs with chicks Motumaire Island early Jan, 64 by Waitangi Marae on 11 March.

South Island Pied Oystercatcher – up to 50 at Taipa in late March, 52 Waitangi Boat Club 13 March, 70 Scotts Point 19 April.

Pied Stilt – 200 at Paua on 16 March.

New Zealand Dotterel – 6 seen on the south-facing beach on Motumaire Island (opposite Paihia seafront), on 3 Jan, often agitated and showing clear signs of breeding. This island was not covered (nor even considered) on last year's census. Reports from several other sites in the region, the most significant being flocks of up to 47 on Waitangi Golf Course, the grounds by the Marae and on Te Ti Beach, Paihia. This area of the Bay is thought to be an important post-breeding flocking site.

Banded Dotterel - 70 on west side of Rangaunu Harbour & 31 near Scotts Point (90 mile Beach) (KM), often a few with the NZ Dotterels in the Waitangi area.



Cattle Egrets, Paua (DD)

Wrybill – Tokerau Beach (Dick Ulrich Road) 2 on 25 Jan, 5 on 1 Feb, c.9 on 8 April (AG).

Turnstone- c.40, most in breeding plumage, Parengarenga Harbour on 17 March, 1 Te Ti Beach, Paihia 3 Jan.

Knot – c.170 at Paua on 17 March, many in breeding plumage.

Bar-tailed Godwit - Good count of 55 at Taipa 6 March (AG) and over 30 on other dates, c.50 in Parengarenga Harbour over weekend 17 to 18 March so main flock assumed to have departed, 2 at Waitangi on several dates well into April.



Long-tailed Cuckoo, Honeymoon Valley (DD)

Caspian Tern - a few seen at many coastal sites, flock of 11 at Te Haumi (Paihia) on 17 Jan.

White-fronted Tern – up to 78 on rocks at Waitangi Boat Club, smaller numbers elsewhere.

Arctic Skua – 1 off Waitangi 2 Jan, 2 near Stephenson Island on Jan Pelagic, one at the chumming site on March Pelagic giving great views.

LONG-TAILED CUCKOO – Several reported at Honeymoon Valley in early March; both vocal and visible in distant trees on 2 March when 8 seen crossing over trail in quick succession, probably 15 in total (YSWP, D&CD), also several heard Kohumaru Road over same period (AG).

Shining Cuckoo – few heard in January.

New Zealand Pipit – recorded at several of the usual coastal sites.

Fernbird – Many birds heard and some seen easily c.700m down Otangaroa Road (inland from Whangaroa Harbour), several also in the marsh at Skudders Beach Road reserve, Kerikeri.

Whitehead – The birds on Moturoa Island are increasing and unbanded juvs regularly seen.

Tomtit - Female on Moturoa 8 Jan, seen at other regular sites.

North Island Robin – Few recorded from Moturoa Island but seems to be declining.

Finally, Kevin Matthews saw 7 **ORCAS** passing close to shore at Cape Reinga on 19 April, consisting of 5 adults, a half-grown one and a young calf.

PROGRAMME

Our meetings usually take place on the second Friday of each month at the Community Room at the side of Proctor Library in Kerikeri but in April, July and October they will be in the Christian Centre on SH10 between Mangonui and Coopers Beach. **NOTE: Detlef and Carol will be away between 14th May and 5th August and will need willing people to assist, find topics and host the May, June and July meetings, as below – x:**

Friday 11th May – Community Room, Kerikeri - x

Sat 2nd June – Kiwi Survey on Moturoa Island. For details, see below.

Weekend 1st to 4th June – Annual Conference & AGM, Tauranga.

It is not too late to book for this event. 3 Far North members are going and full details can be found on the Society's website.

Friday 8th June – Community Room, Kerikeri - x

Friday 13th July – Christian Centre, Mangonui - x

Friday 10th August – 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri - Detlef and Carol will be back and will host this meeting at their home, with a presentation on a so far undecided aspect of their forthcoming adventures in South America

Weekend 18/19 August – Nationwide Spoonbill Census. Keep free, details to follow.

KIWI SURVEY – MOTUROA ISLAND – 2nd June

Paul Asquith

It is 7 years since we last surveyed the kiwi numbers on the island. We plan to carry out our next survey on the Saturday evening of Queens Birthday Weekend, i.e. 2nd June.

Start time will be 7pm at the wharf cottage for the briefing and finish around 10pm. Assistance from any Far North OSNZ members not attending the conference would be very welcome.

6 volunteers would be fantastic, we have reserved accommodation at no charge in the wharf cottage, bedding and towels are available, but please bring sleeping bags with you if you wish especially if it's cold and the only other requirements would be food and beverages for your evening meal and breakfast. Plus of course warm clothing, a torch, hand compass if you have one and something warm to sit on during the survey.

Water transport (no charge) can be arranged from Doves Bay Marina at around 4.30 – 5pm with a return on Sunday am to suit.

If you are able and would like to take part please contact Paul Asquith:

Telephone 094783919 or 0274 969689

Email <p_e_asquith@xtra.co.nz>



FIELD FEST ON MOTUROA ISLAND

Carol and C.J. Ralph

Although reported in the December newsletter, here is a more descriptive report by the hosts of this event, one of our best-attended field trips - Weekend 17-18 December 2011.

At the invitation of Carol and C.J. Ralph, a field trip was hosted on Moturoa Island where OSNZ was treated to a "Field Fest" of bird watching and monitoring. The island is about 180 hectares, just a couple of hundred meters off the mainland near the Kerikeri Inlet in the western Bay of Islands. Over the past 30 plus years the 20 shareholders have fenced off a third of the island for wildlife, mostly in well-watered valleys and along the steeper edges. They have planted tens of thousands of native trees and shrubs, while maintaining an active sheep farm in the centre. They have actively reintroduced 7 species of birds on the island, including kiwi, robin, brown teal, and banded rail.



Juvenile Whitehead Moturoa Is (DD)

The trip began Saturday morning as folks were picked up at Dove's Bay on a sunny day with a nice break in the generally wet weather of this summer. The dozen hardies included Carol and Detlef Davies, Mike and Stuart Bryan, Ian Wilson, and Alison Stanes. By sail came Laureen Alston and Anthea Goodwin, and two by kayak - Michael Winch & Diana Galbraith! We all rendezvoused at the house for refreshments and depositing luggage. Walking out the island to the beautifully small sheltered Karaka Bay, Carol Davies

spotted a Shining Cuckoo high in a Eucalyptus being fed by a much-energized Grey Warbler. Down on the beach it was quiet bird-wise as we discussed plans for the next two days. On the walk up to the paddock, one keen-eyed member spotted a burrow just next to the track, and shone in a light. There, sitting peacefully, was a stone cold kiwi egg, just a few centimeters inside. It was probably abandoned, although they do leave their nests unattended at times for extended periods, especially when it's cool (the nest was checked over the next few weeks and the egg was still there and cool).

Further along the pasture edge we all climbed over the fence down a knife-edged wooded ridge. Just above the cliff's edge, we turned into the steep and wooded slope and found burrows of the Grey-faced (Dark-winged) Petrel that have been followed for many years by Carol Ralph and Eric Spurr, another shareholder-ornithologist on the island. Folks were treated to the odour and sounds of a few late-nesting and active burrows of the 20 or so petrels.

While some continued searching the slope for burrows, others walked along the top of the slope with Ian Wilson playing his "squeaker" (a bit of styrofoam on his watch crystal), in the off chance that the recently-introduced Whiteheads might make an appearance. To our delight, almost immediately a pair responded and notes were made of the colour bands. By the end of the day, this sighting was followed by about 5 more pairs, including a family group! This was very good news, indeed, as it is the first evidence of breeding since their introduction in early May 2011.

We walked up the west Trout Valley Track, finding a couple more Whiteheads, and paused infrequently to "squeak". Suddenly two dark shapes came hurtling out of the forest, and revealed themselves to be a North Island Robin chasing a Morepork. The robin was introduced several years ago and is just holding on with a few pairs now. Ian tossed some meal worms to it and it finally, reluctantly, came to pick them up and flew off up the track. We were excited, as Ian told us that this behaviour indicates it is likely to be provisioning the young in a nest. So, hope for the future! Checking further wildlife valleys, we went down into the valley known as Ponga Hollow, where another very vocal robin chased us down.

The excitement wasn't over, as we climbed up the valley on the trail, we spotted a Tomtit. Like the others that have appeared over the past few years, this was a male, probably a young one dispersing from the mainland to the south, and out looking for a territory possibility. As we gathered together to look at it, CJ whispered the hope that we might spot a female or young, indicating breeding for the first time of this self-introduced bird. A few moments later, we indeed spotted a female! As we watched it, the two birds came together and the male fed the female in a courtship ritual, perhaps foretelling more overt reproductive activities later this summer.

Returning to the Ralphs' home, we had a BBQ pot luck and enjoyed the panoramic views over the



Bay, with much discussion about birding and record keeping. After dark, people went out with flashlights, and saw at least four Kiwis by two parties in the paddocks between the house and the shore. The ground must be nice and soft for them now after the recent rains. The night was punctuated with Morepork and kiwi "song", and as dawn approached, about 4:30, the increasingly abundant Tui made their presence known.

On Sunday, after a hearty breakfast, the crew headed off for Alcatraz Island, a tidal peninsula connected to Moturoa at low tide, to view the gannet "colony" that Paul Asquith, the wildlife chair of the island, has established. To visit the island almost all, including a very wide range of ages, climbed up the vertical cliff onto the flat top of the island, aided by cables that had been strung in recent years. We crept out to the far end where we could hear the recordings of gannets playing. We peeked around the corner where some of the decoys were perched realistically. Amongst them was a live gannet, unconcernedly preening, even though we were only 10 metres away!

We gathered down at the dock at 10 a.m. for the next adventure and set out on the boat to do the annual census of the tern and gull colonies on the small islands known as the Black Rocks. At the western most island, termed "the Atoll" by the Moturoa's shareholders, we found a small colony of several dozen Red-billed Gulls and lovely and light White-fronted Terns. As we made our way around the northern and eastern offshore rocks and islands, we found spectacular scenery with only scattered Black-backed Gulls nesting. In past years these colonies have occasionally swelled to several hundred.

We gathered back at the Ralphs' for a lunch and made out way by various transport back to the mainland. We hope to schedule another field weekend next summer as well.

We thank other ornithologists who are shareholders on the island, Eric Spurr, and the Asquiths, Paul and Enid, who offered bed space for the visitors.

Carol and I visited the island again on 6 to 8 January when we were all invited across to Days Point to check whether, on the off-chance, Whiteheads might have reached here – but not yet.



Moturoa Island from Days Point (DD)

HARRIERS ANTAGONISE DUCKLINGS

Derry Godbert

Observation of two Australasian Harriers attempting to predate ducklings on Lake Manuwai
3.30 pm Friday 9th September 2011 .

After putting boats away in the shed at Lake Manuwai I noticed a disturbance on the water of the lake a couple of metres from the reedy shore. A female duck [Mallard?] was swimming in an agitated manner away from the shore. She had four ducklings close to her [within 20cm] A silver grey harrier was circling and swooping overhead about 10 to 12 metres above the birds.

Suddenly a very dark harrier took off from the shore from among dark coloured reeds that matched its colouring. It flew very low over the water, [about 50cm above the water] then made a pass at one of the ducklings. The duck reared up in the water using its wings to splash quite a volume of water up into the air towards the harrier. The ducklings tried to dive under water. The harrier swung away

and returned to the shore amongst the reeds without having caught a duckling. The grey harrier flew off behind some tall gum trees.



Australasian Harrier – not always a carrion – feeder (DD)

The whole process was repeated five times while I watched, the grey harrier flying overhead, the dark harrier launching itself low over the water from its cover of reeds, the duck splashing water into the air and the two harriers retiring. They did not catch a duckling while I was watching. After about 30 minutes I had to leave but the intensity of the “attacks” seemed to have waned considerably. The dark harrier was slower to leave the reeds and was not pressing home its attacks at all closely. The first attack had taken it to within 15cm of a duckling.

TOMTITS INDOORS!

Here is a photo that is probably a bit unusual. A pair of tomtits have made their nest inside the porch of Waiopahu Hut in the Tararua and were both feeding 3 chicks when I was there early in Jan. The nest is just above head height and they came and went even when there was someone using the sink in the porch. A hunter's dog stationed at the entrance put them off for a while but they resumed when he went on to another hut. Hopefully they have fledged successfully.

Bruce Collett



Male Tomtit in Waiopahu Hut – Jacqui Winter

On 19 February there was a male tomtit inside the Doubtless Bay Christian Centre building at Mangonui. There are no significant areas of bush or scrub within several kilometres, so it was rather a surprising observation. I eventually managed to capture the bird and release it outside. From its appearance I suspect it was a juvenile male.

Bill Campbell

SADDLEBACKS AT TAWHARANUI

On 7th April we went to Tawharanui Regional Park to see the third of 3 releases of Saddlebacks onto the reserve. The final 30 birds, which came from the island in Lake Rotorua, arrived by helicopter and were released in the bush at the far eastern end. Among 60 or so people present were well-known sound recordist, John Kendrick and Auckland City Councillor Michael Lee.



Forest Gecko



Once released, the birds soon dispersed and were shy and hard to find. The Park has very quickly become a haven for birds in the same way as Tiritiri Island, from beginnings as recent as 2002.

In the evening we walked back out to the release site to look for geckos and found 3 Forest Geckos as well as stick insects, wetas and praying mantises in the tea trees.

Detlef and Carol



Whangaroa Harbour mouth

WHANGAROA PELAGIC – 10 JANUARY 2012

Detlef Davies

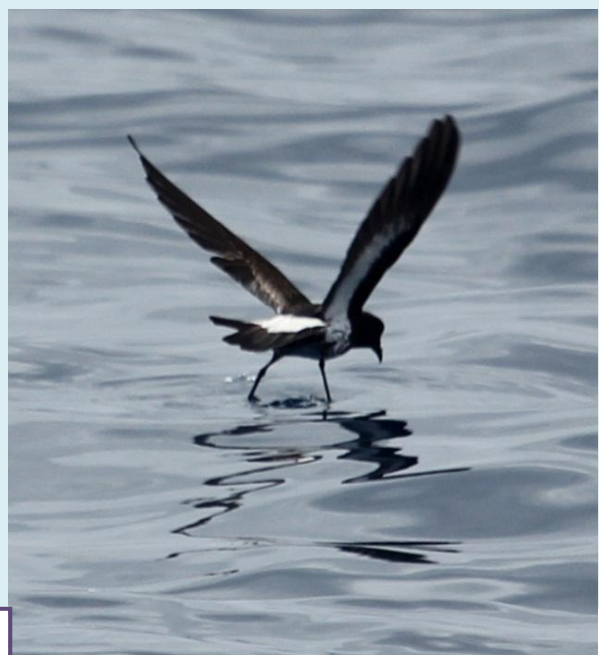
Eight of us met on the wharf at Whangaroa at 6.45 am today: myself, CJ Ralph, Anthea Goodwin, Derek Lamb, Soozee McIntyre, Kellie Mayo, Kylie McDowell & Michael Szabo. The forecast was for west winds, one metre swells and some rain but in fact it stayed dry. We soon left the common gulls and terns behind and were looking at big flocks of Fluttering Shearwaters near Stephenson Island. Progressing northwards out to sea and commoner seabirds appearing in good numbers, we



anticipated a productive day - and so it was when our first chumming spot at 173.55E, 34.46S, produced Wandering, White-capped and **Buller's Albatrosses** and early flocks of White-faced Storm Petrels. At c.11.30, among the flocks of shearwaters clammering for food behind the boat I spotted a strange all brown bird, instantly recognised as a **WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER** by its long diamond-shaped tail, slightly mottled all dark plumage and wings angled forwards. Apart from 4 seen last year on the Three Kings trip, I know of no other recent records.

Shortly afterwards a dark storm petrel with a white rump flew past, it proved to be a **New Zealand Storm Petrel** – after a tentative sighting last year, it was expected to be in this area; more appeared later but after examination of photos later, at least one of those seen was a **Wilson's Storm Petrel**. Things didn't stop there though, we had a distant **Kermadec Petrel**, several Cook's or Pycroft's Petrels (again photos confirmed at least 2 **Pycroft's**) and **Black-winged Petrels** totalled at least 25.

Heading a few nautical miles north-west we had a second chumming spot to which we attracted nearly as many birds including Grey-faced Petrels and Sooty and **Short-tailed Shearwaters**. We caught enough skipjack tuna to both feed the birds and to treat ourselves at the end of the day.



Photos: Wedge-tailed Shearwater & NZ Storm Petrel, 10 Jan (DD)

No White-naped Petrel this time but with 20 species of tubenose birds today, it was what I would describe as a 'Magic Pelagic'. The full bird list is set out below:

Red-billed Gull – 20+	Common Diving Petrel - 1	Black-winged Petrel – c.25
Black-backed Gull – 10+	Flesh-footed Shearwater – c.55	New Zealand Storm Petrel c.8
Caspian Tern - 2	White-faced Storm Petrel – c.175	Grey-faced Petrel – 15+
White-fronted Tern – c.40	Fairy Prion – c.30	Short-tailed Shearwater - 3
Reef Heron - 2	Black Petrel – c.90	Sooty Shearwater - 1
Arctic Skua - 2	White-capped Albatross - 5	Kermadec Petrel - 1
Fluttering Shearwater – 100+	Wandering Albatross – c.11	Buller's Albatross - 2
Australasian Gannet – c.6	Wedge-tailed Shearwater - 1	Wilson's Storm Petrel - 1
Buller's Shearwater – 60+	Cook's Petrel – 3+ (10+?)	Pied Shag - 1
Little Shearwater - 3	Pycroft's Petrel – 2+	

WHANGAROA PELAGIC – 11 MARCH 2012

Jenny Atkins

After a wild and stormy night with a dubious forecast skipper Brian Candy set off at 7am from Whangaroa Harbour with Detlef, Jenny, Kerry, Derry, Erik Forsyth and Phillip Griffin aboard Kuri II. The weather was perfect for birding, overcast with a light south easterly. Between the harbour and Stephenson Island a number of gannets, Red-billed and Black-backed gulls and a few Little Blue Penguins were spotted swimming along, no Cape Barren Geese this time though. Further out, Buller's, Fluttering and Flesh-footed Shearwaters were sighted. Brian slowed the boat to show us a storm petrel and to everyone's delight it was a **New Zealand Storm Petrel**. Brian also spotted a Black Marlin fin which had Jenny excited, she later saw a smaller marlin swim by, then we slowed down for another large fish which turned out to be a sunfish.

Fishing aside we headed on to the chumming spot. Fairy Prions and Cook's Petrels came by, a juvenile **Wandering Albatross**, a light phase Arctic Skua came to harass the birds and stayed around for a while giving the photographers on board an opportunity to get a good photo. **Wilson's Storm Petrels**, with

pale lines on their upper wings were first picked out by Erik, then a couple of Grey-faced Petrels. There was some indecision about **Pycroft's Petrel** at the time but this was later confirmed with a photo that Jenny had managed to capture. At about 11.40 two magnificent adult **White-capped Albatrosses** came in for a visit. Detlef and Erik were excited about identifying a **Black-winged Petrel** as this was a new bird for Erik, then it was time to head for home. Approx. 40 **Common Dolphins** escorted us for some distance at the bows, entertaining everyone on board. The fishing line was put out and a few skipjack tuna were hauled in before we returned to the harbour at 1pm.

There must be a good way of cooking tuna but at the Atkins house that wasn't it! A great day was had by all, new discoveries and a great opportunity to learn from the experienced birders we have in our club.

Photos: Pycroft's Petrel & Wilson's Storm Petrel – Jenny Atkins



Arctic Skua – Jenny Atkins

Full list for the day:

Red-billed Gull – 10+	Flesh-footed Shearwater – 80+	Arctic Skua - 1
Black-backed Gull – 6+	Little Shearwater - 2	Wandering Albatross – juv.
Caspian Tern - 4	New Zealand Storm Petrel 8+	Wilson's Storm Petrel – 3+
White-fronted Tern – 10+	White-faced Storm Petrel – c.25	Grey-faced Petrel - 2
Little Penguin - 4	Black Petrel – c.80	White-capped Albatross 2 ads
Australasian Gannet – c.25	Fairy Prion – 12+	Black-winged Petrel - 1
Fluttering Shearwater – c.80	Cook's Petrel – c.30	Pied Shag - 1
Buller's Shearwater – c.130	Pycroft's Petrel – 2 or more	Common Dolphin – c.40

DOTTERELS & THE BEACH GROOMER

Carol & Detlef

Most readers will have heard that Focus Paihia have obtained consent to use a beach groomer on the beaches around Paihia and Waitangi. Carol was the first to realise that this would cause damage to wildlife using these beaches and obtained copious information about the dangers, including in particular a direct effect on shorebirds, especially New Zealand Dotterels, by removing seaweed and all organisms living in it. (See <http://sbc.ltnet.edu/outreach/downloads.html>, Santa Barbara Coastal, scroll to 'Hopping with life' and look at the Streaming Video). There are many other worries, beaches are home to Shore Skinks, crustaceans, native plants and organisms which form an important part of the food chain which feeds the fish and dolphins in the Bay. In September 2011 Carol began to gather information to file a submission in opposition to the application. To her surprise, nearly all the positive response in support for her case came from outside our local area, even from abroad, such as California and the UK where beach groomers were already in use and damage had already been caused. She produced a substantial document with many appendices containing evidence from far and wide and clear warnings of the likely consequences of such a proposal going ahead.

David Melville put in a submission on behalf of OSNZ, drawing attention to the risks and dangers but took a neutral stance (as per its Constitution), but Forest and Bird joined in the opposition at a late stage and Dr Mark Bellingham (the North Island Forest and Bird Conservation Manager and Senior Planner) spoke at the hearing on 15th March on Carol's behalf. By this time, regular monitoring of the beaches had shown the presence of breeding New Zealand Dotterels on Motumaire Island and the formation of post-breeding flocks of birds on Te Ti Beach between Paihia and Waitangi (one of the affected beaches). As we know, this is an endemic species with an estimated world population of about 1,700 birds. At high tide, roosts of birds were found on the beach itself, on the Golf Course and on the grass by the marae, these reached totals up to 47 birds, including a few Banded Dotterels (see foot of page 3 under Recent Reports). Sadly, the decision was made to grant consent with no reservations, suggesting a continued lack of understanding on environmental matters on the part of a substantial proportion of the public.



The photo above (3rd Jan) shows Te Ti Beach at high tide and (when zoomed in) you can make out at least 9 New Zealand Dotterels, 2 Banded Dotterels and a Turnstone. 37 birds were counted here in April 2012.

Members are welcome to see the evidence which Carol has produced and are urged to encourage friends and colleagues, particularly younger people, to acquire the knowledge and interest in New Zealand's precious wildlife and take an active part in turning the tide of attitude towards it.

SOUTH - WEST TASMANIA – DEC 2011

Tasmania enjoys a similar climate to New Zealand but being much closer to the landmass of the rest of Australia, supports far more diverse wildlife. We visited Tassie for a few days in December 2011 and our target bird was the Orange-bellied Parrot, not only endemic to the island as a breeding bird but now critically endangered with fewer than 50 birds left. The fact that they migrate to southern Victoria in winter makes them even more vulnerable.

The breeding site is at Melaleuca in the remote south-west and accessible only by air (or multi-day hike). The habitat is open button-grass moorland and hills with some eucalypt woodland where full time wardens monitor the birds.

As well as enjoying the parrots, we found specialities like Beautiful Firetail, Striated Field-Wren & Hooded Plover and mammals like the strange Echidna.

Detlef & Carol

Photos: Orange-bellied Parrot, Beautiful Firetail & Scarlet Robin (DD)

