

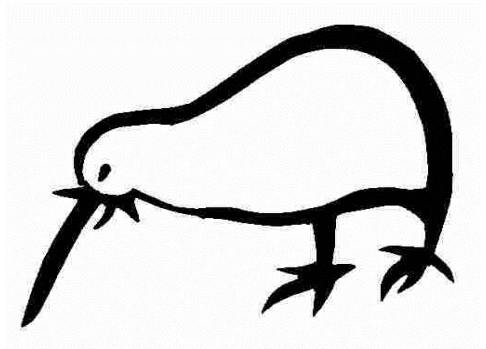
# APTERYX

Issue 35

**April 2013**

Photos:  
Detlef Davies (DD)  
Kevin Matthews  
Jenny Atkins  
Julia Riddle

[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)



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

### **EDITOR'S COMMENTS**

After 9 years in the position, I have stood down as Regional Representative. I will continue to produce this newsletter for the time being but I invite somebody to take my place and ideally to form a small team of people to communicate to local members by email, arrange meetings and field trips. At recent indoor meetings we have tended to resort to showing DVDs rather than invite speakers and hopefully the next RR will resume the job of getting live presentations for at least some meetings; also communicate with the OSNZ Council with regular reports and entries for southern Bird's Regional Round-up. Carol and I will be away for much of the New Zealand winter.

We welcome Paul & Linda Sutton and Ian Sharp & Sandra Cowan, all from Kerikeri as new Far North members.

Notable recent sightings include multiple Pelicans, a Brown Booby briefly in the Bay of Islands and 2 South Polar Skuas at sea north of Whangaroa.



White-capped Albatrosses and Flesh-footed Shearwaters – at sea north of Whangaroa (DD, 8 April)

## The Far North Regional Officers are:

<b>Regional Representative</b> <b>This position is vacant &amp; the region needs a new RR.</b>	<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 <a href="mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com">detlefdavies@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Regional Recorder</b> Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8747 <a href="mailto:lm.alston@actrix.co.nz">lm.alston@actrix.co.nz</a>	<b>Treasurer</b> Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 <a href="mailto:godbert@xtra.co.nz">godbert@xtra.co.nz</a>

## RECENT EVENTS

**Tuesday 5 February** - CJ Ralph gave a very enlightening talk on bird observatories in Europe, having recently visited such well-known ones as Heligoland in Germany and Sandwich Bay and Dungeness in England.

**Mon – Tues 4 & 5 March** – Wader Count at Parengarenga. Report on page 4.

**Pelagics** went out from Whangaroa on 20 Jan, 2 March and 8 April, see pages 6 – 8.

**Wednesday 24 April** – Evan Ward from the DOC office in Kaitia gave a talk to a group of us at our Mangonui venue. His subject was the Three Kings Islands where he has spent time on elimination of weeds and pest control. The islands remain very pristine with some special skinks, geckos and breeding seabirds.

## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Compiled by Detlef Davies

These records cover the period from January to April 2013 unless otherwise stated. Contributors include Anthea Goodwin (AG), Kevin Matthews (KM), Detlef & Carol Davies (DCD), Mike Bryan (MB), Bruce Collett (BC), Jenny Atkins (JA), Yvonne Steinemann (YS), Alan Cordery (AC), Robin Booth, Gary Little (GL), Alison Stanes (AS), Gerald Messenger (GM).

**WP = Whangaroa Pelagic**

**North Island Brown Kiwi** – reports from usual places in BOI region.

**New Zealand Dabchick** – 4 on Lake Waiporohita 25 Jan up to 4 on Lake Ngatu, 1 Lake Manuwaia 10 March.

**Australian Little Grebe** – none reported but no doubt at usual sites.

**White-capped Albatross** – 2 on WP on 8 April.

**Campbell Albatross** – 2 on WP on 8 April.

**Buller's Shearwater** – common on WPs, 1 off Kokota Sandspit 5 March.

**Sooty Shearwater** – 1 on WP on 20 Jan.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** – common on WPs

**Fluttering Shearwater** – 260+ on WP on 20 Jan, fewer in March & April.

**HUTTON'S SHEARWATER** – One identified from photo of Fluttering Shearwater flock on 20 Jan (DD).

**Little Shearwater** – 1 on WP on 2 March.

**Common Diving Petrel** – 2 on WP on 2 March, 25+ on 8 April.

**Black (Parkinson's) Petrel** – Up to 30 on WPs.

**Fairy Prion** – 5 on WP on 20 Jan, 26 on 8 April.

**Cook's Petrel** – Few on WP on 20 Jan & 2 March, none in April.

**Brown Booby on Bird Rock (Bay of Islands)**  
(Julia Riddle)



**LITTLE BUSH MOA !!**  
Rediscovered Kerikeri 1 April 2013  
Full story on page 8

**PYCROFT'S PETREL** – 2 on WP on 2 March.

**WHITE-NAPED PETREL** – 1 close to boat on WP on 2 March.

**Grey-faced Petrel** – 1 on WP on 8 April (DD).

**Wilson's Storm Petrel** – c.4 giving great views on WP on 8 April.

**White-faced Storm Petrel** – Many on Jan & March WPs, just 1 on 8 April.

**New Zealand Storm Petrel** – Several seen well on all 3 pelagics.

**Little Penguin** – 32 counted between harbour mouth and Stephenson Island on 2 March, few on other WPs.

**BROWN BOOBY** – An adult seen perched on Bird Rock (outer Bay of Islands) with Gannets on 14 April by scuba divers (Julia Riddle), one found alive on an Auckland street 2 weeks later may have been



the same bird.

**Australian Gannet** – widely reported.

**Reef Heron** – 1 Taylor Island, Paihia 28 Feb, Paua Wharf 4 March, 1 Skudders Beach 12 April & 5 May.

**Australasian Bittern** – Regular sightings of at least 1 at Lake Ngatu (KM).

**AUSTRALIAN PELICAN** – Recent reports of at least 1 in Rangaunu Harbour, often on Walker Island where it dwarfs all the other birds, & up to 11 at Parengarenga, still present early May (MB, KM et al).

**Royal Spoonbill** – 200+ at the Unahi Road roost at end of March (KM), 1 Waitangi 28 Jan & 1 Skudders Beach 12 April (DCD).

**Brown Teal** – reported from Puketotara River (Andrew Mentor)

**Grey Teal** – common Parengarenga, some at Puketotara River.

**Weka** – no reports outside Russell area.

**Banded Rail** – 2 (prob juvs) Chucks Cove, Taumarumaru 30 Jan, adult there on 20 Feb (GM).

**Spotless Crake** – One seen in swamp along Marsden Cross track on 9 March (DCD).

**Variable Oystercatcher** – 23 Waitangi on 17 Feb, smaller numbers elsewhere.

**South Island Pied Oystercatcher** - highest numbers c.90 Kokota Sandspit 5 March, 28 Taipa on 28 Jan, 56 at Waitangi on 17 Feb.

**Pied Stilt** – hybrid with 14 at Hihi 20 March, 320 at Paua 4 March (AG).

**Banded Dotterel** – Often 2 juvs with the NZDs at Waitangi, few at Parengarenga 5 March & Taipa on 25 Jan.

**New Zealand Dotterel** – Breeding records: Smokehouse Bay 19 Jan (Nigel Sharrock) & Taemaro/Tuanui 19 Jan (Jill Marshall). Up to 47 in Waitangi area throughout period indicating substantial post-breeding flock, 21 Karikari Beach 15 March (AS), 5 there on 20 April (BC).

**Lesser Knot** – c.600 on wader count at Parengarenga 5 March.

**Wrybill** – 1 Parengarenga 5 March

**Turnstone** – c.26 Parengarenga 4-5 March, some in smart breeding plumage.

**Whimbrel** – 2 Parengarenga on 5 March.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** – c.2500 Parengarenga Harbour on 5 March, eventually settling on north side of the entrance channel, 150 there on 27 March, 1 Waitangi/Paihia area in January, 16 Mangonui Harbour 25 March.

**SOUTH POLAR SKUA** – 2 on WP on 8 April, present throughout chumming (DD et al)

**White-fronted Tern** – up to c.20 at several coastal sites.

**Caspian Tern** – few at usual sites.

**KAKA** – 1 in garden in Kerikeri Road 18 April (Theresa Vujcich)

**Shining Cuckoo** – No reports after early Jan.



Australian Pelican – Rangaunu Harbour (Kevin Matthews)



Tomtit on verandah, Okaihau (Jenny Atkins)

**Long-tailed Cuckoo** – Several heard Kohumaru Road between 15 Feb & 10 March (AG) & at Honeymoon Valley from 15 Feb to 8 March (YS), one perched on a rimu in Totara North on 3 March (AC), at least 6 heard & seen in Diggers Valley Road on 5 March (& heard 10 Feb) - (GL, DCD). A good showing, February & March are peak months for this species.

**New Zealand Pipit** – Recorded from Kokota Sandspit & Marsden Cross track

**Fernbird** – Often seen at wetland reserve at Skudders Beach.

**Tomtit** – Often at start of 2 Day track at Puketi; male on Jenny's verandah 19 April (JA), male Herbert Bismarck Matthews Reserve (MB).

**North Island Robin** – No reports outside usual sites but we hear plans to bring them back to Russell area  
**Bellbird** – 2 in garden near Ngaiaatonga late April (Julia Riddle).  
**Rifleman** – The small isolated population in Warawara Forest has recently been surveyed but no results have been obtained yet.  
**Starling** – impressive flock of 2000+ along Purerua Road on 9 March.

## WADER COUNT at PARENGARENGA – MARCH 2013

Detlef Davies

This took place on Monday & Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March. Those able to take part – Anthea, Detlef, Carol, Gary, Asta, the twins Alison & Heather, Kevin & 2 Steves – were able to come mid-week, otherwise a weekend would probably have been chosen. Most of us arrived at 'Mother Jimmies', the bach we usually use now, on the Monday afternoon and we observed the estuary from Paua. By now the tide was falling & most birds were leaving the shellbank to feed over the widening expanse of mud. Weather over the period was warm but with a moderate SW wind.

On Tuesday Kevin & the 2 Steves arrived with the boat and we crossed over to the Sandspit shortly before high tide in the late morning. Shorebirds recorded are set out in the following table.

SPECIES	MON 4 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	TUES 5 <sup>th</sup> MARCH
Bar-tailed Godwit	c.1000	c.2500
Red (Lessr) Knot	c.50	c.600
S I Pied Oystercatcher	c.100	c.90
Variable Oystercatcher	c.15	7
Pied Stilt	c.320	20+
Turnstone	c.10	26+
New Zealand Dotterel	2	5
Banded Dotterel	c.20	
Wrybill		1
Whimbrel	2	1

Most of the Godwits and Knot were along the inner shore of the sandspit and once disturbed by fishermen they took refuge on the northern shore of the entrance to the harbour where they could only be viewed at very long range. A few Caspian Terns were seen on both days.

Counting waders at this site has always been problematic. We suspect that there are always more birds than we are able to find. The vast area, the need for boats to get us over to the sandspit, the need for high tide at the right time and enough people to cover the area, coupled with the remoteness of the site and the distance to travel all make for a big challenge to get a good wader count here.

Approaching large flocks of waders is also difficult as some illegal hunting takes place here and the birds have become very wary as a result. This photo of Red Knots was taken in north Queensland where they are far more confiding.

Kevin Matthews comments on very frightened Godwits & oystercatchers at Parengarenga on 27<sup>th</sup> March and recent evidence of shooting.



Red Knot, Karumba, Qld (DD)

## PROGRAMME

At present there is no programme of events. However, Detlef & Carol will welcome members and guests at their home at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri on **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May** for our presentation on **Wildlife of the Pantanal** (a trip to this part of Brazil in August 2012) – 7.30 pm.

If further events, including field trips, are planned, they will be communicated by email.

Members are reminded that the annual OSNZ Conference & AGM take place in Dunedin over the weekend 31 May to 3 June.

## BEACH PATROLS

Isabella Godbert

Although not a productive count this time, the data from a patrol on 9<sup>th</sup> March is reproduced here to show an example of the Society's data sheet.



The Ornithological Society of New Zealand

## BEACH PATROL DATA SHEET

Date of Patrol: 9/03 /2013 Time of patrol 10 :45 am District: NW  
 NW.....  
 Length of beach patrolled: 30 km.  
 Name of beach: .....90 Mile..... Nearest town:  
 Kaitaia.....  
 Start Point: ...Hukatere  
 Finish Point: .....30 kms North of....Waipapakauri

Name and address of observer/s: I Godbert 67 Waipapa West Road Kerikeri 0295  
 M. Aslund, C Macdiarmid Kerikeri, Bruce Collett, Anthea Goodwin  
 Manganui.....

Weather and tide (on day of patrol): Fine tide low going out

Previous weather & any general remarks: Fine mainly Easterlies very few birds sand built up.....

Evidence of oiling. No:

Species Found	No. of Birds Found	Age			Freshness		ID by
		Adult	Sub-adult	Unknown	A	B	
Little Shearwater	1	1				1	All
Little Blue Penguin	1	1			1		M.A.
Australasian Gannet	3	2	1			3	All
Southern Black-backed Gull	3	2	1			3	All
Australasian Harrier	1	1				1	M.A.
<b>Total No. of birds found</b>	9						

(Various instructions follow at the end).



## WHANGAROA PELAGIC REPORTS

Text & photos by **Detlef Davies**

### Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Nine of us: Detlef Davies, Graham Blackwell, CJ Ralph, Paul Asquith, Dave Bergum, John Robinson, Simon & Morag Fordham and John Overfield, plus skipper Brian Candy went out from Whangaroa Harbour for the day on a 10 knot westerly wind, from 7 am, returning c.4.30 pm.



Hutton's with Fluttering Shearwaters

Few gulls in the harbour, no terns; from here to the east side of Stephenson Island, at least 3 **Little Penguins**. We headed north towards the ocean shelf and stopped for close views of c.260 **Fluttering Shearwaters** on the water. A random photo taken of this flock showed a bird just taking off and revealing its underwing – we identified this as a **HUTTON'S SHEARWATER** from the pattern and shade of the underwing and by its dark breast and long narrow bill.

Also on route to the chumming spot were:

<b>Buller's Shearwater</b> – c.8	<b>Cook's (or Pycroft's) Petrel</b> – 6+
<b>Australasian Gannet</b> – 12	<b>Fairy Prion</b> – 2
<b>Flesh-footed Shearwater</b> – c.10	<b>New Zealand Storm Petrel</b> – 2
<b>White-faced Storm Petrel</b> – c.20	<b>Common Dolphin</b> – c.20

Chumming area at c.34.45E – 173.50S, moving a few kms west after a while. 9.45 – 2 pm.

<b>Flesh-footed Shearwater</b> – 20+	<b>Cook's Petrel</b> – 3 (& this or <b>Pycroft's</b> – 5+)
<b>Buller's Shearwater</b> – c.60	<b>New Zealand Storm Petrel</b> – c.15
<b>Australasian Gannet</b> – 4	<b>Black Petrel</b> – 5
<b>Fairy Prion</b> – 3	<b>Sooty Shearwater</b> – 1
<b>White-faced Storm Petrel</b> – c.50	<b>Mallard</b> – 3



White-faced Storm Petrels

Route back to harbour – 2 to 4.30 pm

<b>White-faced Storm Petrel</b> – c.20	<b>Buller's Shearwater</b> – c.20
<b>Cook's / Pycroft's Petrel</b> – 4+	<b>Fluttering Shearwater</b> – same flock as earlier
<b>Flesh-footed Shearwater</b> – 6+	<b>Pied Shag, Variable Oystercatcher</b> in harbour

## Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2013

Six of us: Detlef Davies, Ian Wilson, John Troost, Paul Sutton, Robin Booth and Verna Brevig, plus skipper Brian Candy went out from Whangaroa Harbour from 7 am returning at 2 pm. Weather similar to last couple of weeks, soon became hot, very light westerly wind and very calm sea. In spite of this it was a good days birding but again no albatrosses.

Few species in the harbour – [Red-billed](#) & [Black-backed Gulls](#), 20+ [White-fronted Terns](#) & 2 [Pied Shags](#). At sea we recorded the following:

[Fluttering Shearwater](#) – Fewer than 50 today, soon after passing Stephenson Island.

[Little Shearwater](#) – One flushed from sea

[Common Diving Petrel](#) – 2 in flight

[Buller's Shearwater](#) – 80+, mainly at chumming site

[Black Petrel](#) – 2 following boat early on, 30+ at chum including a banded one.

[Flesh-footed Shearwater](#) – 60+, mainly at chum

[White-faced Storm Petrel](#) – 100+, many at chum & c.20 over reef just north of Stephenson Island.



Probable Pycroft's Petrel



New Zealand Storm Petrel

[New Zealand Storm Petrel](#) – 10 to 15 estimated at chumming site for most of an hour.

[Cook's & Pycroft's Petrel](#) – 30+ including some close fly-pasts, at least a couple of both species identified.

[White-naped Petrel](#) – One spent c.2 minutes at the chumming area.

[Australasian Gannet](#) – c.10

[Little Penguin](#) – none on outward journey but groups of up to 8, totalling 32 altogether, between Stephenson Island & harbour mouth on return.

Couple of Flying Fish.

## Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Nigel Milius, Wendy Hare and myself went on a part day pelagic today. Left at 7 am in dull weather with a little drizzle; wind a cool 5 knot south-easterly. Later became warm and sunny and wind eased off, cloud 30%.

[Red-billed](#) & [Black-backed Gulls](#) in the harbour; also c.10 [White-fronted Terns](#) & 2 [Caspian Terns](#) & 2 [Australasian Gannets](#). Out of harbour c.7.25, few [Common Diving Petrels](#) & [Fluttering Shearwaters](#) before reaching Stephenson Island. One [Blackbird](#) & a [Welcome Swallow](#) on the island.

Stephenson Island to chumming spot:

[Common Diving Petrel](#) – c.25

[Fluttering Shearwater](#) – 10+

[Buller's Shearwater](#) – common, group of 30+ on water

[Flesh-footed Shearwater](#) – c.15

[Black Petrel](#) – 2

[Fairy Prion](#) – 4

[White-faced Storm Petrel](#) – one, surprisingly the only one of the day.



South Polar Skua





Wilson's Storm Petrel

[White-faced Heron](#) – one heading for Tauranga Bay

Chumming from 9.30 to 11.25

[Flesh-footed Shearwater](#) – the most numerous bird around the boat, 40+

[Black Petrel](#) – c.10

[Buller's Shearwater](#) – common, 30+

[New Zealand Storm Petrel](#) – observed throughout chumming, perhaps 4 birds

[Wilson's Storm Petrel](#) – also seen throughout, again 4 estimated.

[South Polar Skua](#) – 2 present throughout, probably both adults but one with head & body more sandy coloured and mottled than the other.

[White-capped Albatross](#) – 2 birds present, usually feeding some distance from boat.

[Campbell Albatross](#) – 2 adults feeding beside the boat.

[Fairy Prion](#) – c.8

[Grey-faced Petrel](#) – just 1 at feeding area a few times.

Return to harbour, 11.25 to 1.40 pm.

Few more [Flesh-footed](#) and [Buller's Shearwaters](#), couple of rafts of the latter on the water.

[Fluttering Shearwater](#) – 30 or more on the water, very scattered.

[Fairy Prion](#) – raft of 14 on the water

Mako Shark surfaced briefly

2 distant shearwaters may have been Little.

[Australasian Gannet](#) – 1

[Little Penguin](#) – 1

[White-fronted Terns](#), 6 [Pied Shags](#) & a [Harrier](#) in the harbour.



Campbell Albatross

## LITTLE BUSH MOA – OR NOT?

Well I guess we won't have fooled too many people over that one!! This is actually a young **Cassowary** shown here with its parent, seen walking along the grass verge near Mission Beach in north Queensland. But on its own it has an uncanny resemblance to one of our long lost ratites.







Karumba from the helicopter

This is an account of a project in which we took part in north Queensland, written for the Australian publication 'Tattler' and may be of interest to readers.

The first shorebird census of the vast area in the south-east of the Gulf of Carpentaria in northern Queensland since 1999 took place between 18<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013. A team of Australians and New Zealanders were invited to take part and arrived, either at the start or part way through the period of the project, in Normanton after a 90 minute flight from Cairns. From here the journey by road to the coastal settlement of Karumba took about 40 minutes and passed through wetlands, light forest and finally the almost treeless Karumba Plains.

Our merry band of enthusiasts comprised Peter Driscoll and Adrian Riegen, the organisers; Arthur Keates, Chris Herbert, Liz Crawford, Roger Jaensch, Penny Johns, Detlef and Carol Davies, Dan Weller, Keith Woodley, Kristelle Wi, Robert Bush and Jun Matsui. The team occupied the upper floor of the Pilot's Rest, a comfortable place to stay with well-equipped kitchen, mostly shared rooms and, of course, ways to keep cool in hot, tropical weather which dominated our time throughout. Shops and places to eat out were in walking distance so stocking up with food was easy and sharing household jobs went smoothly and efficiently.

Karumba lies at the mouth of the Norman river, roughly at the point in the Gulf where the west-facing coast meets the north-facing coast. The area is very flat and incoming tides rapidly cover large areas of mudflats, beach and mangrove. Existing information suggested that migrating and wintering shorebirds were very numerous and it was essential to find the high tide roosts in order to concentrate our efforts in just a few places within this vast area. For our use in accessing such places were a 5 seater 4WD ute, Peter Driscoll's open tin boat and his small Ukrainian Aeroprakt 22 Foxbat plane; larger boats provided by the Ferryman and by Carpentaria Barra, and a helicopter service. With greatly varying cost of these facilities detailed planning as to how best to use these methods of transport and stay within the budget, was necessary.



Group of Great Knot with a few Red Knot



**Black-tailed Godwits**

Peter and Adrian had already surveyed much of the area by plane and mapped the locations which we should try to get to. The first 2 days of the survey produced setbacks in that the Ferryman was unable to land us at our first destination through adverse weather (the only really windy & rough day of the survey) and a fault with the tin boat meant we were unable to land on the second day. After that things improved markedly and on several later dates the use of the plane and the helicopter enabled us to be dropped down on suitable places to walk to roosts of large numbers of birds.



**Peter Driscoll's Foxbat plane**

The places almost became household names, firstly to the north of us: Brannigans (the mouth of the river by that name), Cape Misery (a *nice* place!), Brian's Beach and Pelican Point; and secondly to the west: the Oaks, Mark's Beach, Disaster Inlet (no, it never happened!) and Gore Point. On days when we were not being transported by air, we explored the rivers by boat and spent time on the Karumba Plains which were extraordinarily rich in birds, particularly around the many patches of open water.

Even for Australians, the variety of shorebirds was impressive; for New Zealanders it was mind-boggling. The predominant species at the coastal high tide roosts were Red Knot, Great Knot, Greater & Lesser Sand Plovers, Black-tailed Godwits, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Whimbrel and Pied Oystercatchers. In smaller numbers were Bar-tailed Godwits, Greenshank, Marsh, Terek, Broad-billed and Curlew Sandpipers, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Eastern Curlew, Turnstones, Sanderlings and Pacific Golden and Grey Plovers; also Red-capped Plovers, a local breeding species. In terms of numbers, the closest site, the Oaks, was thought from an aerial survey to contain a few thousand birds. On the ground the count of Knot alone was estimated at c.2,800 birds. Invariably the roost sites would contain varying numbers of terns, stilts, cormorants, pelicans, herons, egrets, ibises and spoonbills. We counted terns too, Little Terns often reached 3 figures, also present were Gull-billed, Caspian, Crested, Lesser Crested & Black-naped Terns.



**Helicopter at the Oaks**

While counting birds, we were also interested in banded and flagged birds. In total there were 160 flag sightings involving 7 species but there will be some duplication through some sites being visited more than once. The sources of these are still being investigated but some Knot originated in Chongming Dao in China (dating from 2001); others in Australia (Broome, WA & Corner Inlet, Victoria), and New Zealand (Miranda & Foxton Beach).





Red-necked Stint

The birds of Karumba Plains were also part of our project. At 5 marked points along the road we regularly conducted 20 minute bird counts and spent additional time here surveying particular migratory species like Little Curlew & Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Apart from those, we were most impressed with the hundreds of ducks which included a few of the rare Freckled Duck and groups of the boldly marked Pink-eared Duck; herons, egrets, spoonbills, Black-necked Storks, big flocks of White-winged Black and Whiskered Terns, Red-kneed Dotterels, Australian Pratincoles, birds of prey including Black-breasted Buzzard, Wedge-tailed Eagle,

Spotted & Swamp Harrier; Australian Bustards, Brolgas & Sarus Cranes feeding by the roadside.

The opportunity for general birding in such a rich area was appreciated by all of us. Even between our cottage and the shops, you could look over a lake at Pied Herons & Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, and enjoy such species as Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, Star Finch & Great Bowerbird. Those still on site in April witnessed a mass movement of Australian Bustards when c.300 of them passed over the cottage over 3 days.



Great Bowerbird

Mangroves in northern Australia are very special for birds and we took full advantage of this, especially on the river trips where the list of sightings included Mangrove Robin, Mangrove Fantail, Mangrove Golden Whistler, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Collared Kingfisher, and for me that star bird, the White-breasted Whistler.

As if day birding was not enough we ventured out at night several times to enjoy the local owls, nightjars and other nocturnal species. Barn Owls were very common, Barking Owls and Boobook were also around, Tawny Frogmouths, Spotted Nightjar and Owlet Nightjar put in appearances, along with a Black-headed Python & various other reptiles and amphibians.



The Oaks high tide roost

For such a superb experience we thank the organisers, our fellow observers, Doug the car hire man, the Ferrypeople, Glen & Allison, Gavin from Carpentaria Barra, and Lochie and Des, the helicopter pilots. Detailed results of the census, and opinions and conclusions on the plight of our shorebirds as a result, are still to come and will be published in 'Stilt'.

*Photos (other than Peter's plane) by Detlef Davies ©*



## CONSERVATION NEWS

**Aroha Island** – summer managers, Cliff & Alice have departed from Aroha and the new winter managers from May 2013 are Tim and Helen Lee from the UK. Chairman and trustee Kerry Walshe has stepped down and a new trustee is being sought. Until his retirement from Unichem Pharmacy, Kerry was a regular sponsor of this newsletter.

**Project Island Song** – there is a planting day on Urupukapuka Island on Sunday 26 May. Contact Rod Brown at [summerhouse@xtra.co.nz](mailto:summerhouse@xtra.co.nz) , or phone 09 407 4294.

**Puketi Forest Trust** – we hear that 4 pairs of Kokako plus 2 females are holding territory in the forest; another male is present, and a further pair is shortly to arrive from Hamilton Zoo.

**Far North OSNZ** welcomes the decision by Far North District Council to remove the colony of cats on the reserve at Williams House, Paihia. The proximity of these cats to the beach where New Zealand Dotterels gather in numbers after breeding, and to diminishing numbers of Kiwi and other birds in Opua Forest would have been a constant worry. We admire the efforts of Carol and of Craig and Brad at Bay Bush Action in achieving this result.



For those interested in seeing tropical birds in spectacular quantity, North Peru is a very good choice. We have a full tour departing in June and in conjunction with our ground agent in Tarapoto, have put together various other options with a combination of other interests including other wildlife, archaeological sites and opportunities for children.

**Contact us for more information.**

**Detlef & Carol**

**09 407 3874**

[detlefdavies@yahoo.com](mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com)