

# APTERYX

Issue 36

**August 2013**

Photos:

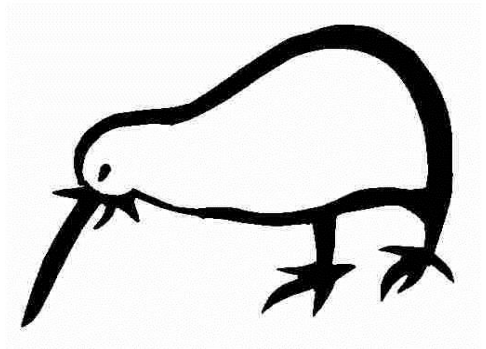
Detlef Davies (DD)

Carol Davies

Kevin Matthews (KM)

Isabella Godbert

[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**

With so many of us out of the country or out of the district during the winter, it has been difficult to find much to report by way of birds in the Far North. So this newsletter is more about what Far North members have been doing, where they have been and what they have seen elsewhere in the world, than about local sightings and local topics of interest. This will also be a very late issue as we are well into September now but I will keep this as the August issue for consistency.



White Heron – Unahi Wharf, 16 May (KM)

However, some of us have seen some good species locally over the winter. This photo of a White Heron was taken by Kevin Matthews on the derelict boat off Unahi Wharf on 16<sup>th</sup> May. The old White-faced Heron nest is visible in the background and the bird apparently succeeds in keeping all other birds away from the vicinity of the boat.

We welcome **Les Feasey** from Opuia as a new Far North member.

Among matters discussed at the Regional Reps meeting in Dunedin in June was the Society's proposed brand name. It was unanimously agreed that the Society will use the brand name:

**BIRDS NEW ZEALAND**

This will not change the name of the society but will (among other benefits) help communication with the non-ornithological public.

## 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@kinect.co.nz">lm.alston@kinect.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>
<b>NOTE LAUREEN'S NEW EMAIL ADDRESS</b>	

## RECENT EVENTS

**Friday 17 May** – Detlef & Carol gave an illustrated talk on Wildlife of the Pantanal, featuring Jaguar and other mammals as well as birds.

**Early June** - New Zealand Birds Online was launched. Everybody is encouraged to look at this and admire the work of Colin Miskelly & his team at <http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz>.

## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Compiled by Detlef Davies

These records cover the period from May to mid-September 2013 unless otherwise stated. Contributors include Kevin Matthews (KM), Detlef & Carol Davies (DD, DCD), Margaret Pasco. This is a very brief list as only a few reports have been received this time.

**New Zealand Dabchick** – 3 Lake Waiporohita on 11 August.

**Albatross sp.** – one off Cable Bay on 11 August (DD)

**AUSTRALIAN PELICAN** – we have had no specific reports from the Far North recently but feel sure that some are still around. 7 seen resting on the beach at Waipu river estuary on 15<sup>th</sup> Sept (DCD)

**WHITE HERON** – One at Unahi Wharf from 16<sup>th</sup> May (KM). One present for some time in the Orongo Bay / Waikare Oyster Farm area near Russell (Margaret Pasco)

**Royal Spoonbill** – 689 counted on aerial survey in Far North & Northland harbours (see page 3), 3 at Waitangi on 4 August, 7 at Aroha Island on 22 Sept.

**New Zealand Dotterel** – 6 at Te Haumi Beach, Paihia on 18 Sept, a potential breeding site.

**Wrybill** – 10 on Tokerau Beach at the end of Dick Ulrich Road on 11 August.

**Caspian Tern** - 2 Cable Bay, 2 Tokerau Beach 11 August.

**KAKA** – One seen several times at Waikino Road off Waikere Road, Okiato from a property facing the Opua Marina (Margaret Pasco).

**Shining Cuckoo** – heard in Kerikeri from 14 Sept.

**Fernbird** – 2 Skudders Beach Reserve 11 August.

**Tomtit** – Male Puketū HQ 11 August, male & imm male Diggers Valley.

**WHITE-NECKED HERON** – Although outside our area, this is an interesting vagrant from Australia and (if it stays), not too far for members to go and see. One has been present in paddocks on the north-west side of Wayby Valley Road south of Wellsford at least since 12<sup>th</sup> Sept, usually within a km of SH1 (DCD).



White-necked Heron – near Wellsford, 15 Sept (DD)



The only moment when a White-faced Heron flew in for size comparison, the rarity chose to peer behind the post!



## PROGRAMME

At present there is no programme of events as such and the region seeks an organiser. However, the Department of Conservation propose to carry out a **bird survey in the Bay of Islands** in which OSNZ are invited to take part. See page 4.  
Day pelagic from Whangaroa Harbour **Mon 11 Nov**. 6 visiting birders on board, **room for 2 more**. Phone Detlef for details – 09 407 3874. Another date reserved for Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December.  
If further events, including field trips, are planned, they will be communicated by email.

## BEACH PATROLS

**Isabella Godbert**

Here are the results of the two 90 mile beach patrols this year – thanks to Bruce Collett for providing transport. We also walked Karekare beach on 8th but only found 1 gannet so is probably not worth reporting.

DISTANCE	30 kms	28 kms
90 Mile Beach	9th March	1 Sept
Shy Mollymawk		<b>2</b>
Mollymawk sp.		<b>1</b>
Northern Giant Petrel		<b>1</b>
Fluttering Shearwater		<b>4</b>
Little Shearwater	<b>1</b>	
Common Diving Petrel		<b>1</b>
Fairy Prion		<b>2</b>
White-headed Petrel		<b>1</b>
White-faced Storm Petrel		<b>2</b>
Blue Penguin	<b>1</b>	
Australasian Gannet	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Southern Black-backed Gull	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>



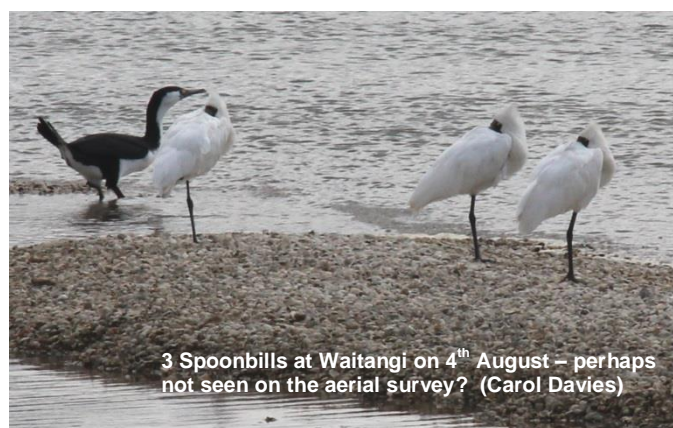
## SPOONBILL CENSUS

Following the recent census, this note on BirdingNZ from Colin Miskelly will be of interest:

*As mentioned in a previous (pelican) post, Kate & I flew over Northland harbours on 22 August. We recorded the following numbers of spoonbills (from south to north):*

9 on the inlet east of Pahi, N Kaipara Harbour  
3 on Mangawhai Harbour (19 Aug)  
60 on Whangarei Harbour  
25 on Whangaroa Harbour  
8 on Mangonui Harbour  
c.300 on Rangaunu Harbour  
34 on Houhora Harbour  
c.250 on Parengarenga Harbour

**Total = c.689**



## BAY OF ISLANDS BIRD SURVEY

Fleur Corbett from Bay of Islands DOC has contacted the Society about a bird survey on the islands; this is likely to take place during December or January when our American members CJ & Carol Ralph will be in New Zealand.

Fleur reports the following news from the islands:

*On other news, the pateke are doing well on Urupukapuka with three of the six pairs breeding shortly after their September 2012 release. Four pairs went to Entico Bay and two pairs to Urupukapuka Bay. The islands have now been pest free for four years, with no isolated incursions at all for over a year so the Guardians are finalising a translocation action plan, following Reuben Booth's feasibility study in 2011. We had hoped to enhance the NI robin population on Moturua, but were recently advised by Dr Isabel Castro from Massey University that as robins and tomtit compete for habitat, that could be a reason the robins haven't picked up since the eradication.*

*She also suggested that we get moving on translocating saddlebacks for the islands, so that is exciting news. However we will complete our action plan first. Cinzia has been looking at the Motuarohia, Moturua and Moturoa kiwi populations with the recovery group, 'Kiwis for kiwi' and Isabel, with wider consultation shortly. We are interested in reports of bellbird on the Cape Brett peninsula moving westward to Waipiro Bay. This is probably a remnant population, but could be a good indicator of the success of the mainland pest control project.*

## FREE COURSES ON PLANT IDENTIFICATION & FIVE MINUTE BIRD COUNTS

Peter Frost, Regional Rep for Wanganui, drew our attention on BirdingNZ to these courses. He continues as follows:

Kia ora (again),

As with my previous message, please could you bring these courses (see below) to the attention of your members, especially those in Taranaki and neighbouring regions. Both courses will be held in Taranaki (plant identification 5-6 November; 5MBC, 7-8 November) but there is no clarity yet on just where. I imagine that they will be held at Konini Lodge, Dawson Falls, Egmont National Park. I've written to NMIT and DOC Training for further information and I'll pass it on when I have it. As mentioned earlier, the ability to identify both native and alien plants is a useful adjunct to studying birds, and 5-minute bird counts is the adopted means of monitoring bird populations in many sites across NZ.

Many thanks,  
Peter

### Plant Identification

The Plant Identification course was developed in conjunction with the NZ Plant Conservation Network with funding from the Government's Advice Fund. This course introduces the broad spectrum of New Zealand plants (both native and exotic), and how to identify them. This course assesses for unit standard 27189.

- > START: 5-6 November
- > WHERE: Taranaki
- > FEE: Free

### Five Minute Bird Count

The five-minute bird count technique (5MBC) monitors the abundance of forest birds over time. The 5MBC course is based on the Dawson and Bull field method. This course uses innovative techniques, such as an online programme and pre-recorded bird calls, to help you identify common forest bird species. This course covers unit standard 26373.

- > START: 7-8 November
- > WHERE: Taranaki
- > FEE: Free

## BIRDING IN THE U.K.

### ISLE OF SKYE and NORTH WALES

Isabella & Derry Godbert

We went for a family and friends visiting holiday in May – June this year. It was cold but especially enjoyable as they had had a very late cold spring so bluebells and primroses were out much later than usual.

We went to The Isle of Skye with my sister and her husband who had booked a lovely cottage by the sea. They were well equipped with a telescope and good binoculars so we had a very enjoyable time bird watching. We flew to Inverness and then took the train to Kyle of Lochalsh. It was a lovely journey going through Dingwall over the hills and then really slowly along the coast.

In total we saw 23 different species in 4 days including a little **wren** by the front door of the cottage. We went for a lovely walk to a ruined castle by the sea where we saw **stonechat**, **cuckoos**, **greylag geese**, **hooded crows** and **eider** ducks. Later on that morning we drove past a tarn and were thrilled to see **red throated divers** and **dabchicks**. Next day we walked to the lighthouse in front of the cottage seeing **herons**, **shags**, **gulls** and **terns**. The final day we went for a walk in the mountains and my sister stayed by the car and saw **sea eagles** flying high above the Cuillins.



Nuthatch & Siskins at Tyn – y – Bryn, North Wales (Isabella Godbert)

A week later we went to visit Derry's brother John and family in North Wales. They are in Bettws-y-coed a pretty village in a deep wooded valley. They have an amazing bird table which they keep fully stocked every day with different food for all the different birds. On and around this table at different times were **blue tit**, **great tit**, **coal tit**, **siskin**, **robin**, **chaffinch**, **yellow wagtail**, **redpoll**, **nuthatch**, **thrushes**, **blackbirds**, **greater spotted woodpecker**, **jay**, **woodpigeon**, **collared dove**, **jackdaw**, **crow** and **sparrow hawk**, **buzzard** and **herring gull**. John goes to great efforts to make the bird table safe for the little birds with lots of netting and **sparrow hawks** still manage to have the odd meal.



### (Mainly) SCOTLAND

Detlef & Carol Davies

We too went visiting during August and September, covering a great distance to get to everybody we wanted to see. This involved a week in Dundee, a few days in Cardiff, Plymouth, Salisbury, London, Essex and Suffolk! We also took a flight to Trieste to see Detlef's sister. Birding was very disjointed and limited in time but included a day in the Cairngorms where we enjoyed **Crested Tits** among other common woodland birds, **Dipper**, **Red Squirrels** and **Scotch Argus** butterfly.





Crested Tit & Scotch Argus butterfly. Rothiemurchus, Scotland (DD)

After an absence of 5 years since we were last in the UK, we noticed a severe reduction in **Kestrels** (just 2 roadside birds along 2700 miles of road travelled) but a big increase in **Buzzards** (almost daily), there were several **Red Kites** which are still increasing, a **Sparrow Hawk** in Dundee & an **Osprey** at an ornamental lake outside the city.

A day trip into Croatia from Trieste which was not for birding still produced a few passerine migrants like **Spotted & Pied Flycatchers**, **Redstart** & **Nightingale** along the Istrian coast south of Pula.

## NEW ZEALAND at the BRITISH BIRD FAIR

At the start of our month in the UK we had agreed to help represent New Zealand at their stands at the Bird Fair. This event takes place annually in August on the western shore of Rutland Water in the east Midlands and this year was the 25<sup>th</sup> successive production. We were exhibitors for the New



The New Zealand stands at the Bird Fair  
From left: Caroline McCooey (our North Peru 'rep'), Carol Davies (Birders Rest), Rachel (Tourism New Zealand), Geoff Jones from Melbourne, Brent Stephenson (Wrybill Tours), Chris Collins (Heritage Expeditions), a visitor & Sav Saville (Wrybill Tours)



Zealand Birding Directory run by Oceanwings in Kaikoura for more than 40 advertisers for birding businesses, tours, accommodation, trekking and similar pursuits in New Zealand. Also at the stands were Ulva Island Tourism and Heritage Expeditions.

The event has become enormous with 8 display marquees, optics marquee overlooking the lake, outdoor displays and 3 lecture marquees. There were 350 exhibiting organisations and over 20,000 visitors over the 3 days. Apart from promoting New Zealand birding, it was a chance for us to reunite with birding friends from all over the world.

The Bird Fair will of course be on again next year. Have a look at [www.birdfair.org.uk](http://www.birdfair.org.uk).

## 'WHERE RUSSIA'S DAY BEGINS'

Detlef Davies

This was the title of one of Heritage Expeditions' Arctic Russian cruises which went ahead during the 2013 Arctic summer and as it was a new itinerary, it offered some irresistible discounts. As it was due to begin more-or-less as our Peru adventure this year ended, I proceeded on a journey from Lima to the Alaskan town of Nome via Los Angeles and Anchorage, while Carol stayed in north Peru for another week. The Russian ship, the Spirit of Enderby, was anchored at the Chukotkan town of Anadyr, accessed from the east by a 2 hour flight from Nome or from the west by a much longer flight from Moscow.



Female Grey Phalarope

So for 45 passengers including leader, Rodney Russ, naturalist guide, Chris Collins and crew began 14 days of travel through the cool calm Arctic waters, soon taking us into scenic pack-ice and some superb sightings of Arctic birds and mammals. Our first landing was at the mining town of Egvekinot from where we were taken over land to the point where the Arctic Circle crosses the 180 degree line of longitude.



Horned Puffin

On board were a team from Birdlife International and Birds Russia who were hoping to find breeding Spoon-billed Sandpipers along this coastline. Previous expeditions had succeeded in finding nests further south but this trip produced none on the various landings over the period. Nevertheless we enjoyed breeding tundra birds like **Western, Semipalmated and Rock Sandpipers, Long-tailed Skuas, Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes** and **White-billed & Pacific Divers**.



Largha Seal & Ribbon Seal



Walruses

There were a few sightings of **Brown Bears** including pairs with cubs but they were all very distant. Our most northerly spot was Kolyuchin Island on which the cliffs were covered in breeding **Common & Brünnich's Guillemots, Horned Puffins, Kittiwakes & Pelagic Cormorants** – it was great to be able to land here. Unfortunately the intact sea-ice was too far north to see Polar Bears



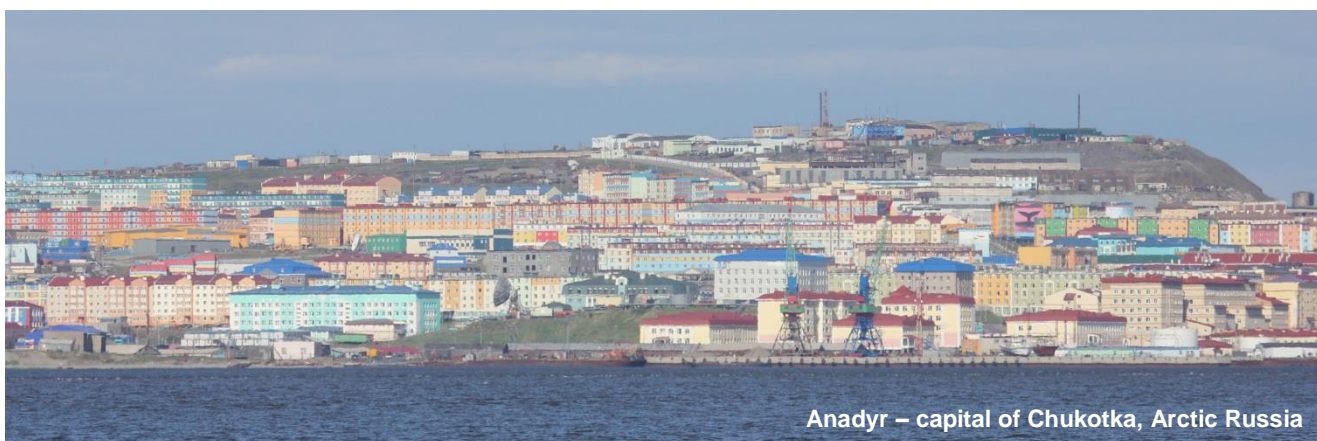
Beringia Festival



Imm male Spectacled Eider

but **Walrus**es were numerous, often forming 'haul-outs' when what looked at first to be perhaps a dozen animals turned into hundreds packed together. Other highlights included the rare **Ribbon Seal**; **Grey**, **Humpback**, **Bowhead** and **Minke Whales** and among the birds, **Crested**, **Least** and **Parakeet Auklets**, **Kittlitz's Murrelet** and the very special **Spectacled Eider**.

As well as wildlife, we enjoyed the Arctic villages, museums, schools and hospitality of the local people in remote coastal settlements like Uelen & Provideniya and the trip had been timed to coincide with the annual Beringia Festival in Lavrentiya.



Anadyr – capital of Chukotka, Arctic Russia

**But if you like it warmer . . . .**

For those interested in seeing tropical birds in spectacular quantity, North Peru is a very good choice. We have 3 week and 2 week tours departing in June 2014 and again in September 2014 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, trekking, mountain biking and opportunities for children.

**Contact us for more information.**

**Detlef & Carol**

**09 407 3874**

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