



Studying NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS

OSNZ®

## **NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2011**

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The first month of a new year loaded with new year resolutions. Some may be abandoned already. If not, there's eleven months to go. Families of birds and birders have been to the fore this month. There's been banding parties and non banding parties. February will see the start of our 2011 evening programme so tag your calendar now, the first Monday in the month for the rest of the year.

Contributions for the February newsletter: please email or phone me by 16 February. Gail 03 5450456 [stagefrightmusic@paradise.net.nz](mailto:stagefrightmusic@paradise.net.nz)

### **SHOW AND TELL**

As yet, we haven't secured any famous international speakers for the year, if anyone has a hot line to Tiger Woods or Oprah....., but we will have a great line-up of locals with their stories to educate and entertain us, so come along to our meetings and support our own. First up is **Robin Toy** with '**Hihi monitoring on Hauturu**'. Keep your eye on the programme component of the newsletters.

### **BIRDS SCENE**

Chris Pomeroy of Farewell Spit Eco Tours notified David and included a photograph, of a **terek sandpiper**, seen on the ocean beach side of Farewell Spit on 17 Dec 2010.

Willie and Don noted a greater number of **knots** in relation to **bar-tailed godwits** on a high tide at the Bell's Island shellbank on 17 January. Godwits were in the order of 500, but the knots were closer to 900.

## **ADDED VALUE BIRDWATCHING**

This is where not only species and behaviour can be observed, but bands, tags and flags can be noted and deciphered. There are rich pickings in our region. May be at the end of the year a small chocolate fish will go out to the birder with the most returns.

Spoonbills have recently been seen back in the Motueka and Waimea Estuaries, plenty of visible bands there. Locally banded VOCs, and a few from elsewhere move around our coast. Three colour banded VOC's from the Kaikoura study were seen on the Bell's Island shellbank on 17 January.

Other locally banded birds include Caspian terns from recent years, whitefronted terns not so recently, gannets, gulls, harriers, you might even spot a ringed banded dotterel or is it a banded double ringed plover, no, just banded b. dots. Native birds have been mist netted locally and plenty of introduced passerines have been banded throughout the region and elsewhere. Historical banding of swans may be just that. Big flocks of brown waders are a bit of a challenge, you need patience and lots of it. May be there'll be a bigger chocolate fish prize for the most arctic wader returns. And do stop and check road killed birds. Wear dark glasses and a large hat if you feel embarrassment might hinder this activity, or offer them to your family or friends waiting in the car.

## **AND THE TECHNICAL STUFF**

### **Banding With Willie**

Willie reports from the Bell's Island shell banks that the **Caspian Terns** have had a pretty average year, and 60 chicks have been banded. Most of them this year have alpha-numeric bands instead of colour bands. These are not so easy to read as you've got to be reasonably close to get the numbers, but it will be an interesting experience.

They were banded in two lots, about 15 days apart as it depends on the leg size to fit the bands. With Willie for the first banding were T Melis, D Cooper, B Wilkes, and the Stephens family, with the addition of the Melvilles, Julia and David for the second outing.

### **Don sent this note in, on behalf of the VOC banding team.**

Banding of **VOC** chicks this season has been particularly good around the Mapua channel and on the Bells Island shellbank. Rabbit Island has not been as productive due in part to varied weather conditions and some predation. To date no chicks have been seen on the eastern end, and on the western end of the island only the AK2 pair have reared 2 chicks on their second attempt.

We are into the 5th year of alpha/numeric banding VOC chicks around the Waimea Estuary and welcome any sightings/readings that members make.

Some of the first birds banded are seen frequently at different points from the Motueka sandspit to Tahuna Beach, these mature birds have not been observed breeding?

## **NEWS SPECIAL**

Rob sent in this notice of a forthcoming talk from Mennobart van Eerden. **Wednesday 2 February, 1900 hours.** At the Hearing Assn rooms, Trafalgar Square.

Mennobart has been invited by Friends of Nelson and Tasman Bay to review the ecology of King Shags in relation to aquaculture developments in the Marlborough Sounds.

## **Cormorants in The Netherlands and Europe: the triptych between Bird, Fish and Man**

Mennobart van Eerden

In Europe Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*) have expanded their range and population following the end of persecution, the ban on pesticides and helped by eutrophication of the surface waters. In many countries Cormorants are considered a nuisance and the debate about what to do is going on at a European level. As chair of the Wetlands International-IUCN species specialist group on Cormorants Mennobart has been contributing to the debate and has helped to alleviate the problems by looking at ecologically sustainable solutions. In his talk he will give an overview of the IJsselmeer work on Cormorants and as well address to the European situation.

The situation is quite contrasting to that in New Zealand where rare and endemic species of Shags occur which deserve considerable attention from the conservation point of view.

## **HOLIDAY SNAP SHOTS.**

Rebecca Bowater sent this lovely photo in to show the highlight of a trip north last year. The pic was shot at Ohiwa Beach [near Whakatane] on 5 Dec. There were several pairs there where they had been nesting.



## **The Roving Birdwatcher**

### **Food Scraps**

In Atawhai for three winters and three breeding seasons my Father has been putting out raisins for the same tame male blackbird. The bird is identified by a misshapen tarsus with his toes bent rather backwards. He's fed daily on a mat just inside the back door, and has been known to wander inside around the lounge picking up crumbs. A female mate followed him in one day. That activity has now been discouraged due to toileting issues. Last November a female blackbird took the liberty to enter my front-door on a couple of occasions without being enticed with raisins, but when she clucked for her two juveniles to follow I got to the door first, again on account of toileting issues.

I like to hear the crackling of pine cones as they open. A pair of resident chaffinches must have heard them too, from the pile ripening under the veranda and have been feeding on the little kernels and discarding the black husk and wing.

One week back in mid June birds cleaned up the last of the bletted crab apples on my three trees in Twizel. At one time there were 15 blackbirds, several thrushes and chaffinches, waxeyes and house sparrows. The waxeyes pecked the fruit amongst the branches, the blackbirds, thrushes and chaffinches fed from the ground.

Birdwatchers are recommended not to eat the pips and kernels of the apple and plum tribe as they contain amygdaline which produces hydrogen cyanide, but it's the pips that chaffinches always go for. The thrushes didn't need to bash the fruit before eating which reminded me of the best thrush's anvil I've seen, the top plate of our barbeque in Nelson. The barbeque was unlit at the time. Sparrows push their way into any bit of action. GDQ

**ACCOUNTABLE P.S.** Subscriptions are due.

### **PROGRAMME 2011**

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Building", Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). Anyone interested is welcome! Contact Stuart Wood 03-544 3932 or Don Cooper 03-544 8109

Monday 7 February

'Hihi Monitoring on Hauturu'  
Robin Toy

18-21 February

Top of the South  
Wader Census  
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