



Studying NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS

OSNZ®

NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2011

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Our estuaries and beaches are the places to be this month. Get up close to record digits printed on bands and tags attached to coastal birds, local or migrant, but stand back to view nesting birds, pairs or colonies. When you get home after a good day's birding, check your photos. You may have captured a surprising birding moment, like one of our members who discovered a falcon in one of his royal spoonbill shots!

MARKED BIRDS.

These birds are not singled out for suspicion or worse, an unpleasant fate, but the lucky ones whose private lives are no longer private all for the good cause of science. Some really like to move around a bit. A **red knot** seen on Farewell Spit has also been to Broome, China and Auckland. Willie spotted a **godwit** on Bell's Island who was given its number in Taiwan. Four other godwits banded on Catlin Lakes spent time in Nelson. One overwintered. Juvenile **VOC** banded at Kaikoura also fly to our area. Unfortunately a local marked VOC had a bad day recently and didn't make it to the other side of the road.

SHOW AND TELL

Only a handful of members braved the wet October Monday night to get together for birding goss, but we were **treated** to an educational talk on **gull-billed terns**. These birds have been making appearances around the country during the past four or five months. Don had photos of the three he and Till spotted, and with some of Phil Battley's photos and images from field guides **David M.** discussed the two races. The evidence from NZ photos point to our visitors being of the Australian race.

Join us again this Monday 7 November to swap and share your bird notes and have your glorious photos projected up onto the screen.

A warm welcome to new members Howard Williams and Carole Donaldson.

Two photos from Willie Cook

Gull-billed Tern at Bell's Island



Note long black legs, chunky black bill and black eye patch (non-breeding).

Blue Duck at Cobb Valley, below the PowerHouse.



A good view of the specialised bill.

WEKA WATCH

Sightings from St Arnaud/Upper Wairau area continue to augment the picture of the rather changeable weka world. Generally, weka are being seen in areas where they haven't been noted for a long time. Peter Gaze considers they are doing well in the Richmond Ranges at present and have in the last five years tried to extend their range, but he also notes that where there are rabbits, there are ferrets, and where there are ferrets weka never do well. Last year regular sightings of individuals were made from pockets around Tophouse and Kerrs Road with a few incidences of birds closer to and confirmation of breeding near built up areas. This year at the end of September Tim Rowe added a record of one along the Rainbow Skifield road(a previous record came from 2008) and from the Doc Office came news of a two month old chick doing well in the village, with the mother sitting again due to hatch in early October.

THE ROVING BIRDER

Duck round the corner

Municipal waterways often have a motley selection of ducks of dubious parentage. Some like to stay, others visit for awhile. Along with the resident couples in stunning breeding array, a pair of large dark strange ducks were recently seen on the sewer pond wetlands amongst native and introduced waterfowl. Of course the Queen's Gardens is the place to see odds and sods languishing about, and the Matai River through town supports birds with non-text book characteristics. Oh, and if you see the mute swan cob behaving badly don't let him know you're watching, it may encourage him. Another bird to behave badly is the striking blue and black pukeko with its scarlet accessory. Any duckling within reach, or with a bit of a run, is at danger of being zapped. I'm not sure if the unfortunate victim is always consumed. Pukekos apparently can learn to turn off light switches, pity about their aggressiveness.

June/July in the UK is not a good duck watching time. They visit in their hoards during autumn and winter, so ducks went way down the 'to see' list. My daughters, some time ago, persuaded me to ditch the old cosy feather leaking eiderdown bed cover (probably goose feathers) and go for the modern duvet covers but I was still interested to see eider ducks. Around the low-lying tree-less Farne Islands off Northumberland I saw plenty. The weather wasn't conducive to landing, but I thought of St Cuthbert authorising protection for his favourite 'cuddy's ducks' and no doubt protecting his source of down from these sea ducks and perhaps an omelette or two.

I love to see Canada geese in their V-formation against the McKenzie Basin sky and hear their evocative calls though I can understand the vexation of farmers. Closer to the coast on Hawkesbury Lagoons at Waikoutaiti amongst other wildfowl there's a small assortment of geese, slowly mixing and hybridising. The waterfowl are surveyed twice a year and I've joined the OSNZ Dunedinites on a couple of occasions. Some of the birds are easy to count, but I didn't find the several hundred up-ended ducks easy to identify. 'Ducks are a-dabbling, up tails all'. Mallard/grey hybrids make up most of the numbers and up to 30 geese are a mix of domestic or greylag, hybrid domestic-Canada, and a few pure Canada geese. They are getting difficult to tell apart. **GDQ**

PARISH NOTICES

Wader Count

November is summer wader count month. A good chance to get around our estuaries and coastline at hightide and count the roosting flocks while you're there. Get your pencils and notebooks ready. Some say using a sheep counting gadget is useful. Mine is still in its box. Contact Rob Schuckard for dates and get your name on his list.

rschckrd@xtra.co.nz Ph 03 5765371.

Banded Rail Surveys

The next areas to be surveyed include Havelock and The Sounds. Register your interest with Willie Cook, ph 03 5447189.

And spare a thought for the sea birds, who through no fault of their own succumbed to the life sapping effect of being doused in ship's engine oil, an unnecessary hazard of modern shipping. Huge thanks to the many volunteers for their expertise and input in cleaning up and rescuing, including our own David Melville. And it's not over yet.

Attached with this newsletter (email version) is a chart of the colour codes used for flagging shorebirds on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. If anyone else would like a copy, please contact me. Gail 03 5450456.

EVENING MEETINGS

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). All birders are welcome! Contact: Don Cooper 03-544 8109 or Peter Gaze wk 03-5463161.

Monday 7 November

Members evening
Share your Birding
Highlights.

Monday December

To be advised

Thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the November newsletter: please email or phone me by 25 November, Gail 03 5450456 stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz.

