



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2012

Regional Representative
Stuart Wood
Acting RR
Gail D. Quayle
6 Tresillian Ave,
Atawhai NN

Ph (03) 5450456
stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz

Regional Recorder

Don Cooper
1/26 William Street
Richmond
Nelson 7020

Ph (03) 5448109
doncooper@actrix.co.nz

Owlsh noises in the North Island can mean only one thing, the morepork, (the odd barn owl aside), but here in the South we have a choice. While both the morepork and little owl have their own particular signature call, there's a plethora of other chortles and chuckles that have to be deciphered and put into one camp or t'other. Later in the year we propose to conduct a morepork survey. Come to our September evening meeting to hear Pete Gaze discuss this, and sign up for the team. And do tell us where you've heard them and where your favourite owling spot is. If there's any counting to be done on Halloween night you'll be excused from dressing up. The mere sight of birders, huddled under trees at dark will be enough to be in character.

SHOW AND TELL

Seventeen members gathered together for the August meeting to be enthralled by Dave Butler speaking about his adventures in bird conservation in Samoa. Since the mid 90s Dave and his team has had input into bird conservation issues in the islands. Tackling threats including hunting, cyclones and forest clearance, with shades more of Indiana Jones rather than Arthur Ransome, we heard about the hic-ups, and hold-ups (excluding the 44 calibre sort) equipment wise, people wise, and weather wise. Projects included kicking rats off islands, applying NZ best practice, and endeavouring to save the endangered shy ground dove, giant honeyeater and tooth billed pigeon. As Dave quoted at the end 'A tough assignment but someone had to do it'. Thank you Dave.

SPRING ROUND THE CORNER,

- But don't drop your binoculars

Birds are on the move south. From zero **wrybills** earlier in the month Willy counted 253 wrybills on the shellbanks of Bells Island on 13 August and 60 on the 19th.

A reminder to welcome back those marvels of the long haul flight, at the Motueka **godwit** celebration on 23 Sept. See programme. (And last month's newsletter for details).

BIRDING WITH PIZZAZZ

Well, with JIZZ anyway. Don sent in the following article.

“JIZZ” a Tool for Bird Identification.

The word was originally GISS which stood for GENERAL IMPRESSION, SIZE and SHAPE. It was used by aircraft spotters in WW2 to determine whether an approaching plane was friend or foe, bomber or fighter etc.

The spelling has changed over the years but the meaning has remained the same and birders are probably the only ones who use it now.

'JIZZ' is one of our major tools in identifying the birds around us.

Not many birders raise their binocs when we see for instance a blackbird because we have seen them thousands of times and we recognise it by its 'JIZZ'.

It is important to familiarise ourselves with these 'common' birds by their 'JIZZ'

The majority of rarities are found by experienced observers who instantly recognise 'that call isn't quite right' or 'that blackbird looks a bit strange', the binocs are then raised 'hey presto' it is something different.

OVER THE HILL BUT NOT SO FAR AWAY

Mike Bell with Marlborough OSNZ has invited us to join in their activities. An

ongoing project is bird counts at Lake Grassmere on the third Sunday of the month.

From Mike: (Email mike@wmil.co.nz Phone 035779818 Mobile 021552768)

Dominion Salt kindly provides us access to Lake Grassmere to undertake a count of the birds using the evaporation ponds and lake. Meet at 10am at the Salt works on Kaparu Road, or give me a ring if you would like to car pool from Blenheim. Picnic Lunch at Marfell's Beach after the count.

If you think the weather looks bad and the day might be cancelled give me, or if I am away Brian (03 5702230), a ring before 9am on the day.

And....

October 20-22nd Labour weekend Kaikoura – Marlborough coast count

October 27-29th Marlborough Anniversary weekend

No Grassmere count this month.

Although it is one of the most well travelled pieces of road, little is known about the number of birds breeding in along the Kaikoura coast. So during Labour and Marlborough Anniversary weekends the plan is to undertake a survey of breeding shore and sea birds along the coast from Kaikoura to Rarangi. The coast will be divided into a number of 5-10km sections (the more volunteers we have the shorter the sections!!), which will then be walked with all shore and seabirds counted and mapped. The plan will be to travel down on Friday evening ready for a Saturday morning start, with counts on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. We will camp at Peketa Camp Ground on Labour weekend, who have offered us a discount rate. The camping spot for Anniversary weekend will depend on how much ground we have covered by then, so I will advise nearer the time. If anybody has a GPS please bring it, otherwise maps will be provided.

Please get in touch if you are keen to get involved as this will assist planning and I can provide you with more details – I also need to book camping spots, caravan, tent sites and cabins are available. (Email mike@wmil.co.nz

FROM PAULINE SAMWAYS

In Motueka

I was thrilled to receive an invitation to attend a book launch at St Peter Chanel School on 17 August, 2012. I knew that the children from Room 4 had been writing, illustrating and publishing a book about **godwits**, with the help of author Gavin Bishop. I had visited the class two years ago and told them all about the marvellous feat of these little birds that visit our sandspit and estuaries every year after flying so far from Alaska. What I wasn't prepared for was the wonderful book they had published - the moving stories and brightly coloured illustrations. I was so impressed with the huge amount of effort that the children, teacher, Gavin and the The Copy Press had put into producing '*Never Ending Story, The Flight of the Godwit.*'

It is heart-warming to know that the younger generation are spreading the word about the importance of all the stop-overs that the godwits make, especially the one in their own back yard.

And at the beginning of September, another Motueka school class, from Parklands School, will be erecting a sign that they have designed and made. It will be put up near the sandspit, telling people to look out for the wild life there. Great work, Motueka, at last the importance of this area is being recognised.

OUT IN THE COLONIES

Further to his article, **Pied Shag** Population Review in the June '*Southern Bird*' Mike Bell has asked regions for further information, for members to go out and count any colonies they know about. Mike says – "September to December is the best time to count pied shag colonies, it appears that this is when the peak number of nests are occupied. Information needed is count date, number of breeding pairs/nests, and location (detailed description or GPS reference)." Even if you think a colony is a familiar one and someone else would have counted the inhabitants, go ahead and count birds and nests anyway and send the info off to Mike. (And a copy for Don and me too please!) Pied Shag Review, PO Box 45, Spring Creek, Marlborough 7244. Email: mike@wmil.co.nz

OUT ROUND THE COAST

If the potential to have shag guano squirted at you while counting under a colony doesn't appeal, but you enjoy the coast, look for **Caspian Tern** colonies, they may be less hazardous. Only a little perhaps. This is the 2nd year of the OSNZ national 3yr Caspian Tern Survey. Go to osnz.org.nz for further details, now up on the home page or contact me. Please read the methodology carefully as - "Caspian terns and chicks are at threat from predation if disturbed at the colonies. With this in mind the nest counts from within colonies will only occur prior to hatching. Once hatching commences, all counts should be made from beyond colonies using binoculars and telescopes to count birds." Isolated breeding pairs are also worth noting and recording. Send your notes to Gail.

Age does matter, just look at those caruncles.

Willie has been looking closely at spotted shag faces lately. Clockwise from the top left, an immature; a juvenile; an immature and non-breeding adult; non-breeding adult. The adult breeding bird's look is still to be captured.



PROGRAMME 2012

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Fisheries Building", Cross Quay, off Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). All birders are welcome! Contact: Don Cooper 03-544 8109 or Gail 03-5450456.

Monday, 3 September
Indoor meeting

Speaker: **Peter Gaze**
Morepork Survey

Sunday, 23 September
10.00am – 1.00pm

Motueka, Welcome the Godwits
Old Wharf Quay Road

Wednesday, 26 September
Lecture, 7.30pm
Motueka Senior Net Rooms

Rob Schuckard
'Bar-tailed Godwits in Top of
South Island ...an OSNZ Brief
of Long Term Monitoring'

Monday, 1 October
Indoor Meeting

Topic to be advised

Thanks to all those who contributed.

Contributions for the September newsletter:
please email or phone by 22 September,

Gail 035450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz