



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER October 2012

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SPRING has sprung, **shining cuckoos** have been heard in Golden Bay and Nelson city, the latest **falcon** sighting was on 25 Sept over Harleys Road, **white-fronted terns** are back in the harbour with their adversary **Artic skua** (seen 17 Oct) and **weka** continue their move to become urbanites. Three pair were heard from Panorama Heights in Stoke and I understand a pair snuck up behind two birders much to the birders' surprise! Two broods of **grey teal** were spotted at Bells Is Sewerponds recently.

Lake Killarney in Takaka township is the place to be for a picnic especially if you want to see **dabchicks** with a young one. Last week the chick was still young enough to ride on its parent's back.

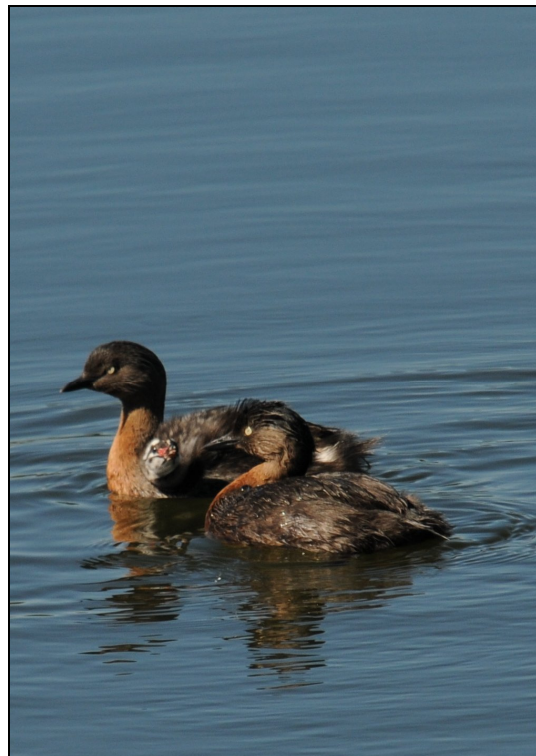


Figure 1 Photo by Willie Cook.

THANKS to all those who regularly send in sightings, Willie C, Don C, Chris P, Ingrid H, Peter F, Gillian P, David M, Rob S, Ken G.

RECENTLY I read '*The Island*' by Ronald Lockley for about the third or fourth time, but this reading was a bit different. Last year while in the UK I paid homage to the man himself by visiting the Welsh Isles, well, with binoculars anyway, from the mainland at St Martin's Head. The weather wasn't conducive to boating, but the seascape and the landscape was enough to feel the spirit. And I did buy a little puffin figurine from the Ronald Lockley Shop. Things have come a long way since Mr Lockley set about studying Manx shearwater migration with his homing experiments, way back in the 1930s. Birds from the island of Skokholm off the Pembrokeshire coast after being banded with aluminium leg rings, were transported in boxes by boat, car, train and or air to locations far and wide, released, and their return counted in days. Then a bit of maths applied to work out distance and speed of flight etc with a bit of conjecture as to route. Not all made it back. It was considered amazing that an individual found its way home to Skokholm from Boston, America in 12 days. During 13 years of much pioneering ornithology, Ronald Lockley documented a good deal of new information about the breeding and lives of these little 'cocklollies'. Today, migration studies include coloured plastic bands/flags; satellite transmitters for up to the minute precise information; and geolocators, with a bit of maths still to be applied to data from these small units for some answers. Bird feats still amaze us - a godwit can take less than 10 days to get from Alaska to New Zealand.

KEEPING OUR 'WITS ABOUT US

Four birders went out to look at **godwits**. Two approached the godwit flock from one angle, the other two from a different angle. One pair called out '**tattler**' the other pair called out 'yep, tattler'. The wader flock shuffled about a bit and the four birders came together. But there in front of them was not one but two pairs of yellow legs. 'Ah,' said one birder to another, 'thought you were looking in a different direction!' Two **grey-tailed tattlers**, then almost unbelievably another individual was seen. It was nice not having dog and vehicular disturbance out at the shell banks off Bells Is. 27 Oct.

All Blacks

Some might sit on the couch on a Saturday telling the umpire on TV how to ref a game, but wander about the estuaries and you might spot No 28, a **godwit** with a **black flag**. Willy has done just that. Willie caught No 28 on camera on 7 Oct out at the shellbanks. Mr 28's history includes getting his colour from Jesse Conklin in Nome, **Alaska** in June 2011 with another player, his mate No 29. NZ banded birds are given white flags.

Nov 5 Meeting

A reminder for our next meeting:

After a short local AGM, Rob Schuckard will give his talk on the latest godwit trends. Come along and hear about these incredible birds and their travels.



Figure 2. One of the three tattlers, with godwits, photo by Willie Cook



Figure 3 Weka photo by Ingrid Hutzler

RRs CHANGE-OVERS

Regional Recorder

Over many years Don Cooper has dedicated time and effort to recording and cataloguing members' sightings and writing our column, Regional Round-up, in Southern Bird. Keeping an account of the comings and goings of Nelson's bird life is valuable knowledge for our region and as national data. He's done a fabulous job. Now Don would like to hand the role onto someone else. Robin Toy has taken up this position. Many thanks Don for hours of work and welcome on board Robin. (Robin's contact details next newsletter).

Regional Representative

In the time Stuart Wood held the reins as Regional representative, he kept the region humming and organized and carried off a very successful national AGM and conference, held here in Tahuna. When I came home to Nelson I was thrilled to find a strong and active OSNZ group and happy to be back on the radar. Now Stuart has handed over the reins and it's my turn to keep everyone on their toes with binoculars in their hands. Thank you Stuart for your time and effort. Gail D. Quayle.

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, 5 November
Indoor meeting

Short AGM (NN Branch)
followed by:
Rob Schuckard's talk
'Bar-tailed Godwits'

Wader Spring Census
16,17,18 Nov
rschckrd@xtra.co.nz

December's meeting to be advised.

No indoor meeting in January.

Thanks to all those who contributed.

Contributions for the November newsletter:
please email or phone by 23 November

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