



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER MAY 2013

Regional Representative
Gail D. Quayle,
6 Tresillian Ave,
Atawhai . 7010

Regional Recorder
Robin Toy,
78C Little Sydney Rd
Motueka

stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz
Ph 03545045

twotoys@xtra.co.nz

It was great to see the lovely sunset photo of Haulashore Island's murmuration of **starlings** in the local paper recently, though the count of millions from the eye witness might be stretching it a bit.

This month's newsletter features the letter '**W**'

WEIRD

A male **blackbird** has discovered little chunks of over ripe banana buried in my pot plants. I've been feeding the pots inhabitants and normally feed birds on top of the ground but merle hoiked them out and carried them off to a sheltered feeding site. And I heard a story of a **white heron** regularly visiting a suburban garden taking a distinct violent dislike to the residents' cockatiel when the pet was let out for a fly around the section. So much so the parrot has been forced to spend more of its days behind bars. The great egret had already demolished the goldfish population from said garden.

And WONDERFUL

Just to gloat a little, I saw **six white herons** together at Tomahawk Lagoon in Dunedin recently. They've been there for several weeks now with several others at estuaries around the area. Mary Thompson (RR) comments this number has not been seen for decades with a suggestion they may have flown the ditch from Australia.

A few days ago while driving along the outskirts of Twizel township I spotted a **white heron** flying above, I immediately became a white heron chaser, which is way less treacherous than a tornado chaser, but I lost my quarry. Was it the same bird I saw in Ohau Delta, 23 March?

WINTER, WETLANDS, WRYBILLS AND OTHER VISITORS

Peter F spotted a **NZ dabchick** out at the Wakapuaka Sewer Wetlands on 26/5. We've had winter sightings for four years in a row now. **Cirl Buntings** have been seen on the sand flats off Boulder Bank Drive and Peter P has seen one near the airport. Again, winter is a good time to spot them.

Willie has been checking the **wrybills** on the Waimea Est. A few are hanging around. Gillian has been told of a dozen **cattle egret** roosting at dusk in a tree in Apple Valley Road, leaving at dawn. Watch coastal paddocks for their daytime activities. One has been seen at the end of Thorpe Street in Motueka. Pauline has been told of two sightings of a **long-tailed cuckoo** in Motueka in May, a rare sighting for this time of year. More of an over-stayer than a visitor.

WHICH IS WHICH

Shags and cormorants.

Throughout the birding world to differentiate species some shags are called cormorants, some cormorants are called shags. In Australia they are all called cormorants and we call them all shags, - confused?

At the annual OSNZ Conference** held over Queen's birthday weekend, this year in Dunedin, Hamish Spencer and Martyn Kennedy's presentation showed results of extensive genetic work on c40 species and suggested both terms are acceptable for all of phalacrocoracidae.

This actually was the first conference to be held under the banner of 'NZ Bird Conference' to coincide with the new branding name for OSNZ of 'Birds NZ**'. The Ornithological Society of NZ is still the official name for the society but for publicity reasons the title '**Birds NZ**' will hopefully be more accessible to the public. Six attendees from our region went down to Dunedin, with three giving scientific papers. For the full list of abstracts, go to osnz.org.nz

WHEN you're driving around Rock's Road cast your eyes upwards (preferably when a passenger) to the reinforced cliff face. On two evenings several weeks ago I saw **pied shags** milling about above the road at dusk. There's one tree on the cliff top which could possibly work as a new roosting site or there's all those little pipes sticking out. I didn't see any sitting birds (and yes I was a passenger). I'm not sure if any of the current local birds are old enough to remember roosting in the Norfolk pines in Basin Reserve (Opp Fifeshire Rock) before the tree tops were taken out to discourage the colonies but perhaps we could keep an eye on these trees too, now with lovely well grown new tops. There are still a few spots for parking around Rocks Road, so on an evening take your binoculars and watch the **spotted shags** come into the harbour to roost on Fifeshire Rock and the Haulashore Mole. Or go early in the morning to watch them depart. I first noticed them back in May, (the evening watch!)

WATCHING falcon versus **passerine** action over Neale Park on 21 May Howard W gave a descriptive account as akin to a Red Baron movie, I guess minus the sound effects! Jim F has heard falcon, from the top end of Nile Street at end of April.

WELCOME SWALLOW

Some years ago a gang of swallows made a bit of a nuisance of themselves by setting up a cluster of nests in a back porch area on my sister's farm at Tea Pot Valley. The pile of swallow guano was rather impressive. Almost opposite on the other side of the house is the front porch and when both doors were open birds would fly through the house, rather than around or over.

But where do they roost during winter months? My sister had 20 or so trying to cram into her porch, the late comers used the ledges of the trampoline, and I've seen a good many on cliff faces out at Cable Bay. The OSNZ Field Guide suggests raupo beds, but doesn't say where.

A snippet with photo from Pauline S.

“We always look out for the nest at Marahau, in the rafters of the shelter at the start of the Abel Tasman track. In the same place each year, quite unperturbed by all the visitors passing by within arms reach.”



MONDAY'S MEETING

Jonathan Banks - Barcoding birds: investigating New Zealand bird taxonomy using DNA.

Jonathan moved to Nelson in 2011 from the University of Waikato, Hamilton to start work at Cawthron, and transferred his OSNZ membership to Nelson. Let's give him a hearty welcome to our region.

An Abstract

'Traditionally, animal and plant taxonomy (who's who) and systematics (who's related to who) has been based on the physical appearance of organisms. Over the last few years, the use of DNA to investigate the taxonomy and systematics of organisms has exploded. Some of the findings from the work with DNA contradict traditional morphological based estimates of taxonomy and systematics, especially of birds.

I have been involved in several projects investigating the taxonomy of little blue and rockhopper penguins, Australasian oystercatchers and New Zealand falcons. I'll talk about how some of our results contradict some of the traditional views on the taxonomy of these birds, the implications for the conservation status and management of these species, and some of the other questions we have investigated using the results from DNA-based studies.'

While Pam Mc was walking in Pelorus Bush on 27 May, she took this photo of ruru watching her watching it.



BIRD OF THE MONTH Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Often known as hedge sparrow by those of the general public who are actually aware of these lovely wee birds. But as they are from the family of accentors and not sparrows and weavers, the name dunnock is far more appropriate. (Though hedge sparrow does roll off the tongue better!) Any tales?

PROGRAMME 2013

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 10 June
(2nd Monday)

Speaker:
Jonathan Banks

"Barcoding birds: investigating New Zealand bird taxonomy using DNA."

Wader Count
June/July

Golden Bay and
Tasman Bay

Monday, 1 July
Indoor Meeting

Speaker
Peter Gaze

"The role of two charitable trusts in restoring birdlife in our region."

2013 Garden Bird Survey
Gardenbirdsurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz

29 June – 7 July

Monday, 5 August
Indoor Meeting

Robin and Sandy Toy

Talk/picture-feast of Falkland Island birds

Thank you to this month's contributors.

Contributions for the June newsletter please email or phone by 26 June

Gail 035450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz