



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER JUNE 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

When I first met my future son-in-law his summer job was to shoot passerines over commercial berry gardens. Hmmmm, I'm not sure about this young man in our family, I thought. One night, some time later he took me shooting at an open pit of a small rural rubbish dump. I held the torch and he shot dozens of rats and wild cats. Well, it could work, I thought. Thirteen years on and I'm delighted to say it has worked beautifully and now my lovely wee granddaughters are enjoying birds.

Sophie last year at 18mnths with deceased waxeye and Andrew Crowe's small identification booklet. Completely on her own initiative!



One year on.....I was in a park with her recently and stopped to hear bird song. "There's a lovely thrush singing up there" I said pointing high up in a tree, she replied in her 2 and 1/2yr old wisdom, 'Hmm, no, maybe sparrow". We have a wee way to go with song identification! GDQ

AT OUR LAST MEETING we were shown some tiny parts of the bird world, - no not hummingbirds, much tinier, DNA. Jonathan Banks gave us a synopsis of the work he's been involved with, hours of deciphering bar codes indoors and hours obtaining samples outdoors. All with great graphics and photos. Fascinating stuff, and I know of one car load of members who carried on with lively relevant conversation all the way home. Thank you Jonathan. This Monday Peter Gaze is talking to us about "**The role of two charitable trusts in restoring birdlife in our region.**"

FLOCKS WITH BINOCS

Autumn flocks of starlings have already been covered, spotted shags on Fifeshire have been talked about, summer flocks of godwits, knots etc are followed by many birders but watching **wintering flocks** of birds is a seasonal delight for me. On an incoming tide at the top end of **The Haven** recently the area was thickly dotted with birds. **VOC** in multiples of 10, **pieb stilt**, in multiples of 20, and **SIPO** in multiples of 50 were feeding on the watery edges slowly converging to their high tide roosting sites, with 100 or so **godwit** too young to travel north. Taller **white-faced herons** were well distributed among them, not flying far for night-time roosting together. In the deeper water a group of male **shoveller ducks** sat showing off their colours with half as many females, lighter coloured than mallards. 50 of them in total. On single exposed rocks perched c10 **kingfishers**, some still in juvenile dress, with only a short low flight to zap their prey of crabs. Quite different to them watching for prey from high up on telephone wires slung across the Haven many years ago. **Scaup** in June, it seems, can only be found in handfuls on the ponds they frequent other months in bigger numbers.

Of course birders don't have to flock just to Wakapuaka to enjoy birds in numbers. In addition to most of the afore mentioned and closer to Motueka, **royal spoonbill** numbers have swelled from the summertime non-breeders, to grace our coastline. Later on this year a nation wide breeding survey is being run for these regal birds. I guess we'll have to sit that one out, but we live in hope!

Winter visiting **Cattle egret** are gregarious night and day. I haven't heard of any advances on the 12 or so mentioned locally last month and it's nice to see more **grey teal** around.

Willie reports the **wrybills**, a few weeks ago in the Waimea, with a count of five, have jumped to 49 on 15 June. These probably will stay in our area for awhile now. **Spurwinged plovers** have been noisily congregating in groups.

And others

Ingrid reported c25 **fantails** at the creek in Brook Sanctuary, on the evening of 6 April.

Blackbirds and **thrushes** can fill a paddock feeding close to each other but many are starting to pair up now, while dozens of **welcome swallow** are still flitting together hawking over water ways for their meals. **Finches, redpolls, yellow hammers** and a few **cirl bunting** flock over farmland and forage on coastal salt marsh areas, **skylarks** form loose feeding flocks and three or more **harriers** can often be seen at one time. GDQ

THE WADER FLOCKS. In total 16 people participated in the census, thank you all very much for that. In total about 18,000 shorebirds, about 17% migratory and the rest endemic species. All very average figures with at Farewell Spit good numbers of wintering godwits and knots. A reflection of a good breeding season last year. At Farewell Spit there were two Far Eastern Curlews and a NZ Dotterel with developing summer plumage. Rob Schuckard

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*) Widespread throughout NZ and in a variety of habitats. These common, but inconspicuous to some, delightful little brown, chestnut streaked and grey birds flick about your garden. But have you ever considered their domestic arrangements? In England they are known to have a complex mating system : monogamy, polyandry, polygyny, and polygynandry Our Field Guide states they haven't been studied in NZ, but now it's their day. At Otago University, through the Dept of Zoology Benedikt Holtmann and a team established a study population in the Dunedin Botanic Garden in 2012 where birds are being banded and studied for four years.

Fernbirds Up Close

Ken G sent in this paragraph from Golden Bay, in mid May.

"The Milnethorpe **fernbirds**, which you can pretty much guarantee seeing every visit there, were particularly forthcoming and inquisitive on Sunday. I was sitting by one of the little ponds there and a pair of fernbirds came right up close in the undergrowth and out onto branches well clear of the undergrowth. Best ever views I've had of fernbirds. Then about an hour later and a bit further around the tracks -another fernbird right up close; closer than my binos would focus in fact - just a couple of meters away. Magic stuff- not sure why they're described as 'drab' in the field guides - up close they're anything but drab."

Another member, Richard W, from his bolt-hole up country recently was pleased to see a **fernbird** again on his property. He reports that they are also resident in a swamp near Tadmor Saddle which luckily escaped the big fire.



South Island Robin, photo by Richard Wells

RECOVERY OF BANDED BIRDS – Peter Gaze

The banding of birds can provide a lot of knowledge but this mostly requires finding the bird again and determining what has happened in the interim - this may be in distance moved or plumage changes or breeding activity or even just the knowledge that it is still surviving. None of this knowledge is possible without that recovery of the bird (dead or alive) and that is where members can help by making sure the recovery information is high quality and gets to the right people. In almost all cases the best you can do is complete the recovery form found on the DOC website

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/native-animals/birds/bird-banding/reporting-a-bird-band/non-gamebird-band-report-form/> and send to the banding office address. If you tick the right box on the form you will receive a history of where and when your bird was banded. The easiest way to get band recoveries locally is by taking your telescope to grassy playing fields after rain and at high tide where you should find plenty of variable oystercatchers and usually a few with 'flags' that can be read. You may also chance on some of the black-billed gulls that were banded on the Wairau River by our Marlborough members - these bands have big numerals also which can be read with a telescope. We now have a lot of Willie's colour banded tui, at least in the Richmond area, and the sequence of bands will provide the individual's identity.

Beach patrols at this time of year will provide a range of seabirds which have died and washed up. Its always worth checking the legs for bands and you may strike it lucky with an exciting specimen that has come from the south Atlantic or our own sub-antarctic colonies. It is more likely that you will get a local gull or tern or penguin (band at the top of the flipper). With these banded corpses it may be convenient to take the specimen home just in case the bander is after more details. Hanging the bird securely on the back fence is less offensive than under your bed. With all of these recoveries it is so important that the details are recorded in your notebook - so many good recoveries have been lost because there was doubt over a digit or which leg the colour bands were on.

NZ Dotterel, Motueka Sandspit, Photo by Craig Martin



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, 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

Monday, 5 September
Indoor meeting

Talk/picture-feast of a Northern Country

Thank you to this month's contributors.

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

Gail 035450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz