



## NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014

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I don't have an outside tv aerial at my place but I wish I had a basketball hoop. Not that I intend to take up any ball game in the near future tho my spinster great great aunt was still playing tennis at 80ys. My next door neighbour has a basket ball hoop off their garage and it's great for perching welcome swallows. I've seen groups of juveniles, maybe from the nests built of mud from my driveway puddles way back in spring. The song birds have been quiet now for a month or two, my diary records the last turdus song end of Jan, but this week I have heard the lovely full song of a silvereye. I haven't seen a shining cuckoo in the neighbourhood yet foraging for late summer caterpillars, it's getting a bit late now, but I found a wing feather on my driveway. I've also found white faced heron feathers, blackbird, thrush, waxeye and sparrow feathers, not sure what goes on out there when I'm not watching. Overhead wires are filling up with starlings, mellow autumn days are just round the corner.

An interesting altercation between a **falcon** and **white faced heron** at Bark Bay. They both settled, one on the sand and the other almost belly deep in the water, very much aware of each other, until after about 10mins the falcon flew off. Thanks to Peter and Margo Syms for sending in the observation.

Photo Peter Syms March 2014



## ROUGH AND RABBIT

Take a bag to pick up a few pinecones or seaweed for the garden, don't forget your binoculars or telescope and head to these two recreation islands at Appleby. A big high tide may not be the best time.

NZ Birds Online say **Pacific golden plover** are the fourth most common Arctic migrant to NZ. Locally they are spotted on Farewell Spit, (15 in summer wader count) and, closer still Willie records sightings on Waimea Est. On 29 March at low tide three were watched foraging out from Rough Island. Drive over the Rabbit Is bridge, turn left into Tic Toc road, park outside the Equestrian Centre fence and train your binoculars over the estuary. A telescope is really the best as birds can be some distance away. Saturday's birds showed breeding dress, partial breeding dress and unidentified plumage. They were there in October also. WC, GDQ

This is a good place to brush up on **shag** identification. Pied, black, little and this time of the year **little blacks**. Not many sightings were made of little blacks last year but already this year a flock of c40 has been noted in the Waimea Est. Others to watch for : VOC, SIPO, pied stilt, b dotterel, sp w plover, wh f heron, if you're lucky a white heron, and historically little egret, Caspian terns, **black-fronted terns**, gulls, and of course keep your eye out for anything unusual. **Banded rail** have been seen at times in the area near the bridge.

At the same spot scan the area for **spoonbills**, or on Rabbit Is in Greenslade Park check the trees for spoonbills sharing branches with nesting shags and next spring keep an eye out for spoonbill nesting activities. Breeding hasn't been confirmed yet, but courtship behaviour has definitely been observed.

## Recoveries and Discoveries

A **Caspian tern** banded on Bell's Island shell banks has been spotted at Foxton Beach, 4 March. PB. The same Southern **NZ dotterel**, Red Metal/Black Yellow Blue, photographed on Motueka Sandspit last summer as a juvenile, by Craig M has returned this year, 18 Feb, 19 March, 15 March. Also a marked **godwit** on Mot Sandspit including a green flag was locally banded about 10 years ago. CM, DM. Two hybrid black stilt have been frequenting Motueka Estuary.



Photo Rebecca Bowater, Caspian Terns, Pakawau Beach, March 2014, the banded bird, one of Willies of 1996, from Bell's Island shell banks.

**Watch out, Weka** are coming down from the hills. close your backdoor and cat flaps. Ingrid has had one prowling around her house in Arapiki Rd. Other reports of weka families have come in from gardens around Suffolk Road. GW.

### **And their close cousins**

**Banded Rails** have been well photographed at Marahau, (November newsletter) PS, and earlier in March Craig Martin snapped 11 different birds for his collection, mostly young adults. Also from Pauline in March is good news from Motueka – a banded rail family is living in the estuary beside the Inlet biking/walking tracks. Enter from Old Wharf Rd beside the Community Gardens and follow the track beside the estuary. Two adults and 2 chicks have been seen.

**Southern NZ Dotterel, Motueka Sandspit, photos Craig Martin.**



left: 2014, right: 2013 (juv)



### **Dogs' Breakfast, Watch Dogs and Mad Dogs and Englishmen**

Early in March OSNZ had a presence at a successful Saturday event at the Kumeras, base of Motueka Sandspit, in conjunction with DoC and TDC, where around 50 dog owners showed up over the course of the morning, with most being interested in avoiding impact on the sand spit's bird life. We hope they pass the message on. Many thanks to Pauline Samways and David Melville for setting up display boards, flyers and posters. Hot sausages etc were enjoyed by all!

Many eyes were on godwits recently watching for their end of summer movements, and a report came in from Motueka Quay at 4.30pm on 15 March of a departing flock.

As yet I don't have a suitable tale fitting the third category.

**Some of you** counted the eggs in Ingrid's photo last month and deduced **Californian Quail**. Spot on. No photo this month but a question. When **golden plover** frequent the Waimea Est where do they go and with whom for their high tide roosting?

## **February Top of the South Wader Count.**

### **From Rob Schuckard**

In combination with the Marlborough count, 46,000 shorebirds were counted, 54% migratory species and 46% endemic species. Noticeable was a total of 3 Grey-tailed Tattlers, a high number for New Zealand. Farewell Spit – Banded Dotterel were low, possibly indicating that migration to the coast has not fully started at the time of the census. Other species were recorded in average numbers

Golden Bay – Also in Golden Bay (Westhaven Inlet) the number of Banded Dotterel was, like Farewell Spit, very low. Also godwits were recorded in low numbers at this site.

Tasman Bay - All species were recorded in very average numbers.

Marlborough – All species recorded in average numbers

Thanks to all the people that participated in the census and the Department for ongoing logistical support for the Farewell Spit Census

### **Ingrid's foray into the movie world**

Shorebirds in Tasman Bay were in the spotlight and will soon be viewed by millions in Germany. Spiegel TV (a well-known German tv company) is working on a documentary about Germans who have made New Zealand their new home. As a result, a production group (a manager, camera man and sound technician) followed me and my birding scope for two days counting shorebirds in the Nelson/Golden Bay area. Accompanied by Pauline and Sandy we started off at Motueka Sandspit. With the weight of the camera gear the guys were rather happy that a nice flock of bar-tailed godwits, South Island pied oystercatchers and a few red knots congregated just before the spit, about half-way up the spit. More birds landed and we recorded several colour band combinations. With a 4.6m spring tide the spit was reduced to a narrow strip of 10m - just wide enough for the birds to roost. Everyone behaved really well (the birds as well as the film crew) and my rather stretched nerves started to relax!

Filming was in full swing when the cold southerly strengthened, and brief showers had the shivering crew packing and unpacking their gear more than once. So things took much longer than expected. Despite what they described as arctic temperatures and a sandstorm (they have yet to experience Farewell Spit) the crew finally understood why gloves were a good idea, and we all agreed that Mt Arthur looks very pretty covered in fresh snow! After a rather long day Pauline went back to her warm home and the rest of us drove to Pakawau, with a brief warm-up at the Mussell Inn.

The next day started calm and sunny and with renewed spirit. Filming a large flock of South Island Pied Oystercatchers on the incoming tide at Pakawau beach the next day was simply a bliss and everyone was happy until that southerly returned! By then the film crew decided that for future visits to New Zealand they will bring winter gear! For my part, I never thought filming would take so much time and effort (it took two days to recover) for what will eventually become only a few minutes of film. Overall it was immensely interesting and heaps of fun - thanks to a wonderful team!

P.S. The documentary will be screened in December/January – let me know if you are keen to watch it (in German) over a glass of wine ☺



**Photo Richard Wells, Come and see more in May.**

#### **PROGRAMME 2014**

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 7 April**  
**Indoor meeting**

**Jonathan Banks**  
**A Tour around McMurdo Sound**  
**And Dry Valleys**

**Monday 5 May**  
**Indoor meeting**

**Richard Wells**  
**A trip to the Snares**

**Queen's Birthday Weekend Conference in Palmerston North.**

**Monday 9 June (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday)**  
**Indoor meeting**

**Winter Wader Count**  
**13, 14, 15, 16 June**

Thank you to this month's contributors.

Contributions for April newsletter by 26th please email, snailmail, or phone:  
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