



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER

February/March 2016

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WAXEYES haven't yet discovered the withering halves of last year's apples I've thrown out for them, but blackbirds and sparrows are plundering this year's grapes, now that the taupata berries have finished. Fantails are popping in and out of the house, and a greywarbler has flitted through my shrubs several times recently.

This month's question: a grumpy looking:? penguin.



Photo by Rebecca Bowater 2015

HE'S BEEN EVERYWHERE

Last meeting Don Haddon showed us some of his fabulous photos of his recent travels up and down our North and South Islands commenting that the places he'd been were bound to be places we've all been to also. There was quite a few negative shaking of heads and I'm sure mental notes were being taken. Don added up-to-date information on the fairy terns of Northland, a historical note on juvenile stitch birds being misnamed, and mentioned the **weka** on his property in Teal Valley produced three broods this season. My favourite – a lovely close up shot of a male cirl bunting. Thank you Don.

OUT AND ABOUT

Willie and Don report **six wood ducks** aka Maned goose (or duck) in the Tasman area, including four juveniles that in all probability were bred here, the first sighting for autumn of three **little black shags** near Rough Island, and a grand total of 17 **VOCs** banded with their white leg flags. Train your binoculars or camera onto these birds and send the results to Willie – william23@slingshot.co.nz. Willie was also chuffed to see a **pipit** at his place in Hope, early March.

Recently a sighting came in of a large raft of birds spotted not far off the Bounder Bank, stretching from the lighthouse to the oxidation ponds. The bulk probably of **shearwaters**. And while Helen K was on one of her **spotted shag** counts at Tata Beach, (early Feb) she noticed two large black birds entirely black from below, flying above the water close to the beach. She suggested **Westland black petrels**.

A couple of days ago when just heading North through the Trafalgar St / QEII Drive roundabout, a bold as brass weka with no thought of vehicular traffic walked out to the middle of the road after a piece of furry carrion. Luckily for the weka I slowed down, as did the opposite approaching vehicle, weka got a fright and shot off to the side without its meal. A short time later I was that way again, the furry carrion was gone. Had weka repeated the manoeuvre successfully in the interval of about 10 minutes.?

We may not have the tomb of Tutankhamen to wonder and ponder over but Mel Whiting from DoC came across a skeleton of a **royal spoonbill** way up on Pearse Ridge below Winter Peak. On a migration route?

From Rob Schuckard: Nelson OSNZ Summer shorebird count of Top of South Island. Overall, very good coverage of all areas with again some very nice weather. About 13 people participated in the census and some smaller areas were counted a fortnight later.

Tides were sufficient and a number of areas were reached by boat, Sand Island and Rabbit Island in Waimea and Bird Island and Totara Bar near Collingwood. In total about 58,500 shorebirds were counted, 62% migratory species and 38% endemic; in total 16 species of shorebirds were counted, with some less common shorebirds for our area as well. The latter were recorded from Farewell Spit, Totara Bar and Marlborough and include New Zealand Dotterel, Wrybill, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint, Far-eastern Curlew, Asiatic Whimbrel, Lesser Sandplover and Grey Plover.

Steve Wood made a number of pictures of Lesser Sandpipers. Some of these individuals confused us and the pictures will be analysed in due course.

At Farewell Spit we have seen some steep increases in numbers of red knot and bar-tailed godwit compared to our spring count in November 2015. This is surprising and different to the trend of decline of both species internationally. Whether there are changing conditions that makes Farewell Spit more attractive is unfortunately not known. These summer counts are not done as a national NZ survey.

Black-browed mollymawk



Photo, Rebecca Bowater 2015

RECENT NOTES FROM OVER THE HILL

From Alec Milne: Feb, The Golden Bay tramping club, with DOC's assistance, are building a new tent camp (like the one in the Cobb Valley) at the head of Lake Stanley in the Waingaro catchment. Called the Soper Shelter, it is a tribute to Frank Soper who build many of the more remote early huts in this part of Kahurangi N.P. It should be finished and ready for use after 7th April (the official opening day). Anyway, for birders seeking our iconic bird species this place is heaven. Working on site this last weekend, we had at least 3 **kiwi** calling each night, 2 **whio** in the pool by camp each night and others seen on the trip in, **weka** and **kaka** calling every hour, **kea** calling occasionally, 5-6 **robin** underfoot continually as we worked, **tomtit**, **fantail**, **tui**, **morepork**. There are a number of recent **kokako** reports from this catchment and 3 of the party had a probable **kokako** encounter on the way in near the Waingaro Forks hut.

I don't know why the bird life is exceptional here. The Waingaro has long been noted for its high numbers of whio and when following up kokako reports in 2009 I was taken with the richness of the birdlife.

Anyway, well worth a visit.

From Helen Kingston: Feb. The harvesting operations on the sea-facing slopes of the Pīkikiruna range, Pohara to Wainui proceed apace. This includes parts of our three hectares between Ligar Bay and Tata Beach. We already have some regenerating bush on the lower slopes since the flood events 4 years ago, and can see pockets of mainly acacias and macrocarpas above, (probably to be removed,) now the pines have gone. We hope that there will be further regeneration coming, with corridors of indigenous growth. Derry my husband will put work in on our bit, and we have some sympathetic neighbours. The upper slopes will probably be replanted in pines as there are two very large areas under private (absentee) ownership.

The logging workers told us of **kea** and **falcon** in good numbers up on the ridge. We had indeed seen and heard both, occasionally, in the past.

Now that the pines have gone, the kea are hunting for grubs etc in rotting logs and cleared ground, and the **falcons** are much more evident. In the past weeks I have seen and heard a pair of falcon on a fairly regular basis, with at least one young one.

A pair of **kea** have visited our property, almost at sea level, but only once in a while. However we see and hear them on the upper slopes every day. Yesterday (4 Feb) I counted nine flying at once. I am sure they are now resident in this area. On the other side of the range, beyond the ridge at the top (along which the track has been constructed for extraction of the trees) there is indigenous regeneration, more mature, which is now visible from the coastal side. The road climbs to about 300metres at the top, with amazing views, but it's not open to the public. (Some of us were able to go up by arrangement with PF Olsen).

NOT ONLY BUT ALSO

Not only can Willie spot a Cape gannet amongst thousands of Australasian gannets on Farewell Spit, he can spot an incorrect label on a whimbrel at Te Papa Museum. I understand the error will be rectified by (embarrassed?) museum staff.

Parish notices

Before Sara Jamieson left OSNZ Council to return to her homeland Canada, she devised a series of educational bird lectures to be used by the regions. There are seven in total. This coming meeting we will run No1, 'Introduction to Ornithology' with the others following in subsequent months.

Rebecca's photos used in this newsletter came from her recent trip to our southern most environs. She will show off more of her lovely photos also at the April meeting.

Thanks to those who have renewed their subscriptions for 2016. For those who don't wish to continue their membership, a wee note to the secretary, secretary@osnz.org.nz or to me would be helpful in deciding who has resigned and who has inadvertently let their sub slip.

PROGRAMME 2016

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 4 April
Indoor Meeting

Rebecca Bowater photos,
'Wildlife of Southern Environs'
And OSNZ bird lecture, No 1
'Intro to ornithology'

Monday 2 May
Indoor Meeting

Members photos,
And OSNZ bird lecture No 2
'Breeding'

No June meeting

Annual AGM and conference
June 4,5,6. Napier

Winter Wader Count

Thank you to this month's contributors.

Contributions for April newsletter by 14th, please email, snailmail, or phone:
Gail 035450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz