



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Otago Region Newsletter 8/2011 September 2011



Floating Feast

When first spotted a fair way off the end of Aramoana Mole on 18th August this large dead male Elephant Seal appeared to have hundreds of Giant Petrels fighting over it. By the time Jim Fyffe got out to look at it next day, it had drifted some way north and only a few Giant Petrels remained but the Cape Pigeons were still very keen.

It eventually floated ashore at the southern end of Long Beach and by the 22nd only a dozen or so Black-backed Gulls and a couple of mad birdwatchers, staying well upwind, were showing any interest.

Australia



Grey Fantails

Upper: Yanga National Park

Lower: Waitati

Sue Maturin and I had a great trip to Oz. Camp grounds are great wildlife centres with plenty of acclimatized species, some are bullies that prevent greater diversity and oppress the more finely adapted but great to see up close the construction of a noisy friar bird nest, then also challenging their foe in a car wing mirror. Have we used mirrors in our decoy efforts?

At the camp in Lake Mungo National Park there was a mob of Apostle Birds that raided inspected and challenged campers. Being a boy human I had to set them problems to solve. Bacon rind on a springy hanging string provided the greatest return per reward item.

At the start of the run back to Sydney up the Lachlan Valley near Booligalon dirt roads we saw small flocks of inland plovers roosting on the road at dusk, later in 40 km we saw 22 barn owls on the road exploiting a moth emergence night. Several mice were seen, one hanging from and owl beak. Such serendipity. Our randomly sited river bank freedom camp suffered the sporadic squarking of a bird all through that night. The next morning there was a ruckus and black-shouldered kites were squabbling with what looked like barn owls. But they were fledged kite chicks that had a confusing light brown collar creating the fuss and the night begging.

Bird of the trip was an Australian owlet nightjar in the daytime at nest hole. Above is a photo of the local fantail, how different is it?

Graeme Loh

Falcons

Mary has already fielded several calls about the recent article in the ODT on Falcons taking domestic pigeons. Hopefully these comments by Steve Lawrence may be of use to OSNZ members when asked about falcons by others.

From my experience with falcons since 1980 in the North Island it is not surprising to hear of falcons being seen in Dunedin city attacking domestic pigeons and doves, especially since there is a good population in the nearby surrounds. Usually wandering juveniles in winter are the falcons one hears about in cities where they are attracted to concentrations of birds- whether pigeons, doves, chickens or passerines fed by homeowners. They also turn up at pig farms, rubbish tips and where stock feed attracts finches on farms.

They may be attracted to Tui, Bellbirds and Silvereyes at sugar feeders but I personally haven't heard of this happening yet. If there is plenty of cover near feeders I don't think a falcon would have much success hunting there as Tui are very good at spotting falcon and their distinctive warning call alerts every bird within earshot.

I have observed falcon nests in dense bush where birds were still plentiful in the immediate vicinity so the presence of a falcon doesn't mean it will permanently scare all the local birds away- if food is plentiful they will still return to feed.

Falcons are attracted by high concentrations of birds so will keep visiting dove cotes and places like pig farms where there are a lot of sparrows feeding on animal feed.

They may be attracted by a lot of Tui regularly at a feeder but I don't believe they would scare off birds from a good food source- I have seen



places where falcons have regularly hunted but the birds are still there if there is a good food supply.

I have heard of falcons in the NI taking the occasional full grown hen but not continually targeting them.

Steve Lawrence

Ornithological Snippets

Mary saw **Great Crested Grebe** and **Little Blue Penguin** in Sawyers Bay on Sunday 28 August during the Harbour Survey.



On 19 September Sue Murray found this mollymawk on the Lawrence to Waipori Road, about 500m from the main sign for the Pioneer Stream Historic Reserve. It was behind a fence in a paddock, sheltering amongst pine trees. It is not easy to tell the species from the photo but the bill looks a bit too long and thin for the Shy (White-capped etc)

group, in which case it can only be a juvenile **Buller's Mollymawk**; not unlikely as they fledge on the Snares around now and Ros Cole from Invercargill DoC has had a “rash of Buller’s”. (If you do find a Mollymawk please look at the underwing and take measurements, especially of bill length and depth. But try to do so without getting your fingers lacerated.)

There were only 6 **godwits** at Karitane on 21st September and there did not appear to be any new arrivals at Blueskin Bay by 22nd. However David Melville went to the Bells Island shell-bank in Nelson on 19th and



found “a bit of turnover in the **Bar-tailed Godwits** with a new 'foreign' bird present banded at Warrington, Otago on 28 Feb 2006”. They rarely arrive here until late September. Does this sighting suggest they stop off en route?

Also at Karitane 5 **Royal Spoonbills** returned in early September and there were 2 there on 21st.

Exotics

Jane McAuslan reports sightings of “small Rosella-type birds - a pair last year, now a group of up to eight this year - establishing themselves in area of Forrester Park/lower Bethunes Gulley, and also seen as far south as Uxbridge Street. They may not actually be Rosellas as they appear predominantly fluoro Green/Yellow in flight, but are multi-bright coloured. (Peach-faced Lovebirds?)

They appear to be established and multiplying - if they continue at current rate, guessing they will displace other birds (natives?)”

If you do see something exotic please report it to Graeme Loh at DoC. And get a photo (or an old fashioned description).

Robins

In the first year (April 2010) of a two-year translocation proposal, 25 South Island robins/kakaruwai (*Petroica australis*) were translocated to Dunedin’s fenced Orokonui Ecosanctuary (307 ha) from Douglas fir plantations in Silver Peaks (9 km – 18 juvenile birds) and Flagstaff (16 km – 6 adults + 1 juvenile bird), in four consecutive-day transfers in April. All birds were held overnight in transfer boxes at the release site and released the following morning. A total of 6 birds were seen in the sanctuary over winter, 4 (two pairs) remained by spring and produced 5 fledglings; 8 of the juveniles were subsequently resighted at their capture site in the Silver Peaks; and 11 birds in total were unaccounted for.

Based on the results of the first transfer, 20 fledgling robins that were still on their parents’ territory (i.e. pre- dispersal stage), were captured from Silverpeaks (12) and Silverstream (8) and released in Orokonui on the same day, between Nov. 2010 and Feb. 2011. Released birds were fitted with transmitters and monitored regularly until mid May. Of the 20 released, 15 survived and remained inside the sanctuary: 2 birds found dead in sanctuary, 1 found dead just outside sanctuary, 1 transmitter failed but bird believed to be dead, and 1 moved outside sanctuary before signal failed. Of the birds that remained in the sanctuary, they eventually localised and some appeared to have paired. In total, 19 of the 45 (42%) robins released are known to be alive inside Orokonui Ecosanctuary.

Ian Jamieson & Robert Schadewinkel

(Update: By mid September there appeared to be 6, maybe 7 pairs in the sanctuary and 3 nests had been found. per Elton Smith)

Notices and Business

Special End-of-Year Meeting.

It has been generously arranged that we can have our meeting for Wednesday 23 November in the Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head. So please mark this date in your diaries and plan to be there. The Centre will provide us with a light meal (cost about \$15) at 6.30 pm. The meeting will start at 7.30 pm, when Neville will talk to us about his research on the work of Lance Richdale.

This is a special event by way of celebration of the completion of the two years of the Otago Harbour Survey and of the publication of Neville Peat's book on Lance Richdale; having the meeting among the albatross seems appropriate.

We will organise car-pooling from Anderson Bay Inlet car park, leaving at 5.30 pm. It is a leisurely 40 minute drive down the Peninsula. Some people may like to go earlier in the afternoon to do some wader watching and looking at the nesting Spotted Shags and Red-billed Gulls at Taiaroa Head, and perhaps afterwards staying to see the Little Blue Penguins come ashore.
Mary Thompson

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

**Field Trip to Awarua Bay and Waituna Lagoon,
12/13th November, 2011**

Confirmation of participation in weekend fieldtrip

The field trip is approaching fast and we need to confirm our accommodation bookings.

Please could all those (21 so far) who signed up their intention to come on the trip please complete and return the form below immediately.

Yes, I am coming on the Weekend fieldtrip to Awarua Bay and Waituna Lagoon.

Name

Email

Phone

Most people will probably travel down to Invercargill on the Saturday morning, leaving at 8.00 am. We plan to car-pool as much as possible. We will gather at 12 noon in Invercargill to depart together on trip to Awarua Bay. If people wish to go down on the Friday, they should make their own arrangements for transport.

Accommodation required (Beach Road Holiday Park)

Friday night, 11 November yes/no

Saturday night, 12 November yes/no

Transport

Travelling to Invercargill independently yes/no

Require transport on Saturday morning

(and back Sunday afternoon) yes/no

I will be taking my car and can take passengers; how many?

Please send form to Mary Thompson at 197 Balmacewen Road, Dunedin or email details to maryt@actrix.co.nz or phone 464 0787 (answer phone after 10 rings).

The final details of arrangements will be put in the October OSNZ Otago Newsletter.

eBird needs us

New Zealand
eBird



I hope we'll all spend one of the days when you can't get out watching birds to check out eBird <http://ebird.org/content/newzealand>. Register and get started by entering your latest notebook records; browse the information articles and try some of the tools. In October, instead of our regular Indoor Meeting we plan to have a hands-on session in the Zoology Computer lab where Bruce McKinlay will take us through using eBird in real time, online, but to get the best out of this session you must already be registered - don't forget your password. So please give it a go and be prepared for our special session on eBird on Thursday 27 October. Note change of day for our Indoor Meeting.

Mail out of monthly newsletters

A huge thank you to Ken Gager who has copied and mailed out our newsletter for many years; he would like to step down now, so a volunteer is needed for this job. It has decreased in size to about 15, due to email newsletters, but is greatly appreciated by those without email. Let Mary know if you can help with this.

The Otago Branch is to host the OSNZ Annual Conference and AGM in 2013

A steering committee is required for this. The various tasks are: finding venue for Scientific days, council meetings, dinners, etc; finding discounted accommodation; Registration; Scientific Days programme, Field trips, overall programme. Volunteers to help with any of these tasks would be greatly appreciated; let Mary know your interest.

Email Newsletters are in glorious colour!

Many of you will have received a pdf copy of this Newsletter by email as well as mail. It is quite a big job to photocopy, collate, address and post the newsletters so if you are happy to receive the newsletter **only by email**, or if you would like to but do not, please send your email address with your request to: mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Programme 2011

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held in the Benham Seminar Room,
Benham
Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street at 8 p.m.

- Wednesday, 28 Sept Indoor Meeting Bruce McKinlay
Bird experiences in the Sub-Antarctic.
- Sunday 9 Oct Hawksbury Lagoon, 10.30am
contact Derek Onley (482 2831)
- Thursday** 27 Oct Special Indoor Meeting. Bruce McKinlay
Hands-on introduction to eBird. Note date and
day but usual Zoology venue at 8.00 pm.
- Sunday 6 Nov Summer Wader Count, High tide 1.42pm 1.9m
Coordinator, Peter Schweigman (455 2790)
- 12 and 13 Nov Weekend Field Trip.
Awarua Bay and Waituna Lagoon.
Confirmation required. See notice in newsletter
above. Contact Mary Thompson, 464 0787
- Wednesday 23 Nov Special End-of Year Function at the Royal
Albatross Centre, Taiaroa Head, starting at 6.30
with a light meal (cost about \$15), followed at
7.30 pm by Neville Peat on the topic, "The
Rich Legacy of Richdale".

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.
Final date for copy for next newsletter 19 October