



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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Otago Region Newsletter 2/2012 March 2012

Day trip to Tiritiri Matangi.



In this day and age "Open Sanctuaries" are present in just about all places that you might care to visit in New Zealand. It is appropriate to remember that idea was first promoted at Tiritiri Matangi in the Hauraki Gulf and was first acted upon in the 1970's. Since that time islands such as Somes in Wellington Harbour and mainland sites such as Orokonui have

developed. However as much fun as it might be to reflect on ideas of open sanctuaries it is much more interesting to actually visit and I was excited to have the opportunity for a day trip this January.

The first part of the day is to get to Gulf Harbour which requires driving along the heavily housed Whangaparoa Peninsula, Gulf Harbour looks like an advertisement for housing development in Brisbane: neither are very inspiring.

However there are variable oystercatchers calling on the breakwater and gulls wheeling above as the ferry departs.

Once off shore shearwaters were all around the boat along with occasional white-fronted terns and one skua which was distinguishable by its lighter colour compared to black backed gulls. The ferry ride is only about 20 minutes, so it is not long until you gather up your gear and get ashore for the list of do's and don'ts from the DOC ranger. There is a strong emphasis on checking gear and pockets for seeds or other undesirable items; the queue at the ferry embarkation as people checked their boots was impressive.

Then it along the nearest track working hard to untangle the cacophony of noise from a wide range of birds. We headed along the shore track to Hobbs Beach and within the first 20 minutes heard or saw gannet, welcome swallow, whitehead, fantail, black backed gull, saddleback and variable oystercatcher.



From Hobbs Beach we headed up the hill into some of the better forest stands on the island and caught up with lots of tui, parakeet, robin and stitchbird.

Along the top of the island the ground is much drier, vegetation more open with space for brown quail, pukeko, mynah and at the southern end of the island, takahe. Brown quail were in pairs foraging quietly alongside tracks. The colour was brown but with distinctive white lines along the head and neck.

Young of the year were present throughout and made for some difficult identifications especially for drab bellbirds.

After we reached the northern end of the island and got good views of Kawau and the rest of the northern Hauraki Gulf we started walking back south towards the lighthouse and other buildings. Again at all times there was a wide range of forest birds present making themselves obvious with a range of calls. The tui were making full use of the available flax flowers and fighting amongst themselves for access to preferred flowers.

There is much more open grassland around the houses and visitor centre and so its here that takahe and paradise shelduck are present.

There is a large visitor centre and shop with plenty of space to have lunch either indoors or outside.

Its here that the history of Tiri as an open sanctuary is recorded. It seems it all started when a translocation of North Island saddlebacks was made from Cuvier Island to Tiri attracted the attention of John Craig and colleagues at the then Zoology Department of Auckland University. They started the vision, which today is present in the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi. It is here that the reality that Tiri runs on volunteers hits home. Whether it's the person in the shop or the person leading a tour of visitors around the island, or the people running the complementary cup of tea in the lunch area. They are all volunteers giving their time to make this vision happen.

From the visitor centre back down to the wharf the best option is the Wattle Track. It is here that some of the oldest replantings on the island are present and consequently has Wattle Track has very good canopy. Along the track are seats for sitting near bird feeders. At all the feeders stitchbirds, bellbirds were present and competing for food. Through out the canopy whitehead, bellbird and saddleback were present and then a large crow like bird hops through the canopy. As its afternoon there are no liquid calls to accompany but the sight of a kokako stops all conversation from the assembled people and there is silence all around except for birds calling all around. After about five minutes the kokako has moved on and people start to move again down the track. The last highlight was just near the wharf in a little dam where three brown teal were quietly swimming between rushes along the water's edge.

The ferry arrives and people move down the wharf and board for the short ride back to gulf Harbour or the slightly longer ride to down town Auckland. They all looked slightly sun or wind burnt but very happy.

www.tiritirimatangi.co.nz

Bruce McKinlay

The coastal Godwit survey, 19 February 2012



The main aim of this survey was of course to find the total number of Bar-tailed Godwits in Otago, but we wanted a special check at Aramoana, since they had not been seen there this spring. And it was not just the lack of godwits, most of the bird species normally seen there, were also absent this spring. However all

looked very good at Aramoana, with 321 Bar-tailed Godwits, 183 Pied Oystercatchers, 324 Pied Stilts and 7 Banded Dotterels.

Overall the godwits were present in good numbers, although the ones at Blueskin Bay were only briefly seen flying over Warrington spit and disappeared before they could be counted. Only 27 were seen feeding at Evansdale.

Totals elsewhere were: Karitane 122, Aramoana 321, Hooper's Inlet 636 and 398 at the Catlins.

The Catlins is still the best area for rarities. Richard Schofield identified a Turnstone and a Siberian Tattler.

All in all a reasonable result, carried out on sunny weather and, for a change, no wind.

Peter Schweigman

Kakaruwai, South Island Robins; Orokonui Update

In addition to the 15 of the 20 robin fledglings from the Silverpeaks and Silverstream that survived the translocation from last season, Orokonui had two resident breeding pairs (the 4 birds that remained from the first translocation of 25 in April 2010). One of those pairs established a territory in the Marie Block and produced five fledglings in total. The male subsequently survived the winter but was found with a new partner (one of the translocated fledglings), as his former mate did not appear to have survived the winter. The new pairing produced three nests this season (incidentally all were located on the ground) and five fledglings in total. In contrast to the successful pair, the other pair from last season (located just south of Marie Block) had four failed nesting attempts (due to unhatched eggs or nestlings that died in nest). That pair divorced at the end of last season but have remained in adjacent territories with both repairing with newly introduced fledglings from Silverpeaks. In the male's case, his first nest this season failed after a rainstorm, but the second nest fledged three offspring. His former partner nested only once, very late in the season, and laid three eggs of which only one survived to fledging. After another poor breeding season, it will be interesting to see whether this female ends up going through a second divorce! Of the five fledglings produced last season, four survived the winter and have paired up with the fledglings from the Silverpeaks translocation. All have established new territories adjacent to their parent's in the Marie Block. The remaining four new pairs (made up of fledglings from Silverpeaks' release) established territories in the lower end of the valley. We suspect this year's fledglings will settle in the vicinity of their parents, but in currently unoccupied habitat further up the valley floor towards the Visitor Centre.

The robins have now completed nesting for the year and overall it was a very successful season. There were 10 breeding pairs in total, which produced 32 fledglings. Two of 10 pairs produced no fledglings at all (they had 6 failed nests between them) therefore productivity for the 8 successful pairs was extremely high, with 4 fledglings produced per pair, on average (range 1 - 6). Overall nesting success (i.e. percent of nests that produced at least one fledgling) was 67% (21 nests in total), although 17 of the 20 adults were inexperienced and breeding for their first time.

In the Silverpeaks, where 12 mostly experienced breeding pairs were monitored after a 1080 drop reduced rat tracking index to 0%, nesting success was 68% (22 nests in total). At the other extreme, the 7 pairs of robins monitored at Silverstream, where rats had a tracking index of 70%, had nesting success of only 8% (13 nests in total). (See below for summary of 1080 drop and robin monitoring). Given the overall robin survival rate in Orokonui last winter of 83%, we could expect to see 43 adults next season, assuming the fledglings that survive stay inside the sanctuary. Therefore the robin population could more than double. That is good news for Orokonui and good news for Dunedin's threatened robin population.

The effect of aerial application of 1080 cereal baits for possum control on South Island robin (*Petroica australis*) in the Silver Peaks, Dunedin

Robert B. Schadewinkel & Ian G. Jamieson

Department of Zoology, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin

Acknowledgements: Study funded by research grants to I. Jamieson from Animal Health Board, Otago University and Landcare Research.

Background:

There is a lack of studies on the potential impact of current best-practice aerial possum control operations using cereal based sodium fluoroacetate (1080) laced pellets preceded by prefeeding with non-toxic baits, on native forest passerines. Robins are thought to be vulnerable to 1080 poisoning with individual birds found dead and testing positive for 1080 in earlier studies. Here we investigate the potential direct (negative) and indirect (positive) impact of a contemporary standard-practice aerial possum control operation using 1080 on a robin population in Silver Peaks, Dunedin.

Objectives:

1. To monitor the change in rat and possum relative abundance (using chew-tracking-cards) before and after a 1080 drop (5 Sept. 2011) in the area of the robin population in Silver Peaks, as well as in an adjacent robin population in the Silverstream catchment where no aerial 1080 had been applied.
2. To investigate the potential direct (negative) impact of the possum control operation on robin survival immediately after the poison drop.

3. To investigate the potential indirect (positive) impact of the operation on nesting success due to reduced predation pressure. This was done by monitoring nesting success of two clutches laid by each territorial pair and comparing these data with those collected from the previous breeding season.

Summary of results:

The aerial possum control operation in Silver Peaks reduced rats and possums to very low (undetected) numbers and numbers remained low for at least 3 month, while in the non-treatment Silverstream area, pest numbers remained high throughout the study. All of the individually colour-banded robins monitored in the treatment (n = 19) and non-treatment (n = 15) areas were re-sighted, indicating that no birds died as a direct result of the poison drop. Nesting success in the treatment area was higher than in the non-treatment area, but was not significantly different to the previous breeding season (Table 1). The study showed that the 1080 operation had no direct adverse effect on the robin population in the Silver Peaks while reducing potential nest predators (rats and possums) to extremely low levels. Although there was no evidence of a positive indirect impact on nesting success, rat and possum abundance was relatively low compared to Silverstream prior the 1080 drop and is known to vary from year to year. We therefore recommend continued monitoring over several seasons to ascertain whether 1080 operations have any long-term benefits for robins in the Silver Peaks.

Table 1 Observed nesting success and estimated nesting success based on adjusted daily survival rate.

Site/Year	No. pairs monitored	No. nests monitored	No nests successful*	Nesting success	Daily survival rate (DSR)	Est. nest survival
Silver Peaks						
2010/2011	10	16	12	75%	99.05%	68.92%
2011/2012	12	21	14	67%	98.5%	55.46%
Silverstream						
2010/2011	10	16	3	19%	94.54%	11.19%
2011/2012	6	12	1	8%	91.87%	3.66%

Tieke, South Island Saddleback; Orokonui Update

With so many robin pairs to monitor, the team from the Department of Zoology were unable to monitor the saddlebacks as closely. Things started out well with two new pairs made up of fledglings from last year being recorded in March in the south-east part of the sanctuary but very close to the fenceline; these birds have not been re-sighted during the nesting season (September-February). By October, there were four territorial pairs, two from last season and two new pairs, plus at least three single birds. Three managed to raise one fledgling each. Unfortunately, the female from the other pair (one of the original breeding pairs) was not seen after mid-November and is believed to have died. The male was not known to re-pair or nest.



Volunteer wanted to help monitor Saddlebacks

Dr Ian Jamieson <ian.jamieson@otago.ac.nz> from the Department of Zoology is looking for a keen volunteer with an interest in birds who would be willing to monitor the saddlebacks in Orokonui on a more regular basis. The person would need to: have their own transportation, be physically fit, not colour blind (to read band combinations), have their own binoculars and be able to visit the sanctuary (free entry) approximately one day every week during the nesting season (Sept.-Feb.). Please email Dr Jamieson with your contact details, if you are interested

Ornithological Snippets

Sue Galloway and Mary Thompson surveyed Lake Hayes by canoe on January 17th; a gloriously fine and calm day. They counted 80 **Great Crested Grebes**, including 2 juveniles and 4 chicks carried on adults' backs and two nests with one egg each. In 2009 the total was 81 with 15 juveniles, and in 2004, 75; so the population on Lake Hayes seems fairly stable.



On 6 March Lesley Gowans and Mary Thompson had ideal conditions for viewing waders at Aramoana. They had great views of 457 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 30 in breeding plumage, and recorded band combinations for 6 birds. One was banded at the first cannon netting at Warrington in November 2004.

About 1000 **White-fronted Terns** were roosting at end of the Mole and 32 **Black-fronted Terns** on the mudflats.

Richard Schofield reports that Suzanne saw a **White-fronted Tern** by the river in Balclutha on 3rd February and over the last month or two he has seen a couple by the rail bridge and also at Stirling.

On 8th January 2 **Royal Spoonbill** were on the lagoons in Balclutha, before flying off down river.

Jim Wilson has recently moved house from a Wakari lifestyle block to urban Highgate and was really pleased to hear a **Morepork** call at 11.00 pm on the 20th February. The call was coming from an area of private "bush" between Burwood Ave and Grendon St. and was the first time Morepork had been heard calling in the 6 months they have lived in Maori Hill.

Alan Baker has seen 3 young **Shining Cuckoos** which being fed by **Grey Warblers** - 1 in Newington Avenue, Dunedin Town Belt, on 28 January and 9 February; 1 in the Dunedin Botanic Garden on 19 February and 1 in Hampden on 26th.

He also reports two **New Zealand Falcons**, one a very vocal young bird, at Mt Cook on 29 February and on 1 March he found a **falcon** perched on a fencepost beside Birchwood Road, near Omarama.

Dispersing bush birds include a **Tomtit** seen by Alan in Chelmsford St, Hampden on 2 March and single **Brown Creepers** seen by Derek Onley in his garden at Waitati on 7 March and at Hawksbury Lagoon on 19th.

AA6 a flagged **Variable Oystercatcher** seen by Chris Bell and Mara on 27 February on the Otago Peninsula just in the harbour by the turn off to Weir Road, was banded as adult at Waimea, Nelson. As the first bird to be recorded away from the banding area Rob Schukard called it “a record of utmost significance - for a bird banded as adult.”

On 19 March, close in, relatively speaking, off the end of Huriawa at Karitane, Derek Onley saw 25 **White-capped** and 1 **Buller's Mollymawks**, 100 or so **Sooty Shearwater** and 350 or so White-fronted Terns plus a mere half a dozen **Fluttering Shearwaters** fishing with a couple of huge flocks of **Spotted Shags** (1000+?). More interesting however were the congregations of white birds way out on the horizon. **Black-billed Gulls** on the proposed harbour dredging dump site?



Notices and Business

A Field Trip to Inchclutha



is planned for Saturday 21st April. Various sites will be visited, with target species being Black-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gulls, waders and wildfowl. With luck there may be some early returning Cattle Egrets. Contact me at richard@pcconnect.co.nz or on 03 418 4415 or in Dunedin Graeme Loh at gloh@earthlight.co.nz or 487 6125

2013 OSNZ Conference and AGM, in Dunedin.

The Otago Branch is host to the 2013 OSNZ Conference and AGM, which will be held at Queens Birthday weekend, 1-3 June. The Hutton Theatre at the Otago Museum has been booked as the venue for the Scientific sessions. There is a small steering committee chaired by Bruce McKinlay and we are keen for more people to be involved; the areas that need planning input are the social/dinner events, the scientific programme and field trips. Any members who would like to be involved in any of these tasks should contact Bruce

email bruce.mckinlay@osnz.org.nz phone: 454 4555

Renewal of membership

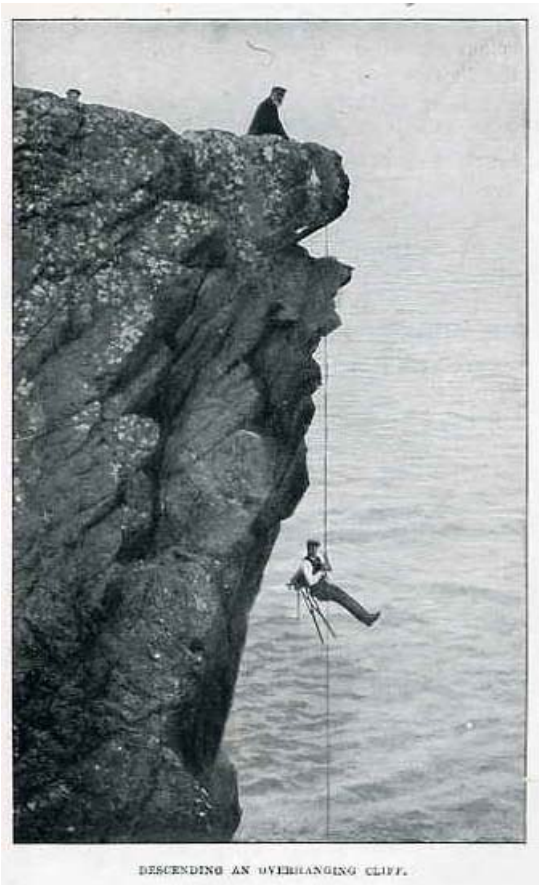
OSNZ members will have received Subscription Renewal Notice some time before Christmas and this is easily overlooked at this busy time of year. So this is a gentle reminder. Payment can now be done on-line and this is the preferred method. Check out the OSNZ website. You will probably, like me, have forgotten your username and password; I found that it was an easy matter to request a new password using your email address on the login page. If you have trouble just ask your friendly RR, Mary, to help. Otherwise just send a cheque in the post to OSNZ Membership, PO Box 35150, Naenae, Lower Hutt 5041.

Local members (who receive the Otago newsletter only) should forward cheques for \$20 (Otago OSNZ) to Mary Thompson.

Notornis back numbers.

Peter Schweigman and Mary Thompson have copies of Notornis from 1970s to 1990s, free to anyone who would like them.

Mystery Photo



No not Graham Loh.

Programme 2012

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

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|-------------------|--|
| Wed 28 March | Indoor Meeting Murray Efford
Counting birds using sound recordings. |
| Sunday 1 April | Hawksbury Lagoon Survey, 10.30am
Contact Derek Onley 482 2831 |
| Saturday 21 April | Fieldtrip to Inchclutha. Leader, Richard Schofield
richard@pcconnect.co.nz or on 03 418 4415
Local coordinator: Graeme Loh
email gloh@earthlight.co.nz phone 487 6125
Leaving from Zoology Carpark at 8.30 am. |
| Wed 25 April | Indoor Meeting Mark Hanger
Restoring seabirds to coastal Otago. |
| Wed 23 May | Indoor Meeting Bruce Robertson
The New Zealand Storm Petrel |
| Sunday 17 June | Winter Wader Count: high tide Dunedin 14.23,
1.9m. Contact Mary Thompson 464 0787 |
| Wed 27 June | Indoor Meeting Kaitlyn White
Kakapo hatching success. |
| Sunday 3 July | Hawksbury Lagoon
Contact Derek Onley 482 2831 |
| Wed 25 July | Indoor Meeting Robert Schadewinkel
Radiotracking of translocated robins in Orokonui. |

- Wed 22 August Indoor Meeting Bryce Masuda
Consequences of brodifacoum operation on Ulva.
- Wed 26 September Indoor Meeting Kerry Weston
Rock Wren
- Wed 24 October Indoor Meeting - to be announced
- Wed 28 November Indoor Meeting Sue Odlin
Bird encounters in UK and Japan.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.
Final date for copy for next newsletter 18 April