



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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Otago Region Newsletter 4/2012 May 2012

Anzac Day on the Caprice



Top left Sooty Shearwater. Even the poorest sailors would have enjoyed the day.

Top right Buller's Mollymawk showing orange gape line

Below left Buller's Mollymawk and Yellow-eyed Penguin

Below right Black-billed Gull

Photos **Craig McKenzie**

NZ Falcon Survey Report 2011-2012



photo Steve Lawrence

Surveying this season concentrated again on Wenita's Akatore forest with the aim of locating breeding pairs from the previous year, monitoring nests and trialling a "Game" camera at a nest.

An early start was made mid September and early October using the call playback system as in previous years to see if we could get responses from territorial males. One male responded briefly from a known territory and another was seen in a different territory so it appears the sound system is not very useful at detecting falcon this early in the season.

A further 5 trips to Akatore were made during November, December and January and to Mt Allan and Toko Mouth forests with good responses to the sound system.

Mt Allan

Wenita requested a survey of forest blocks due to be logged and 15 were checked. One nest with 3 chicks was located on a slope opposite a proposed logging site but beyond any likely disturbance from logging activity.

A falcon was also seen attacking a harrier at the end of Falcon Rd (of course!) but no nest was located.

Toko Mouth

Following up on Wenita staff reporting contract loggers being dive-bombed, we located a nest with 3 eggs inside a block intended for logging. Logging operations had already been relocated so this pair should have succeeded in their nesting attempt; unfortunately I was unable to re-visit this site later.

McLaren Gulley

A report of falcons swooping at people walking dogs in a small Wenita forest off McLarens gulley resulted in the discovery of another nest. This was located 100m inside a fairly open area of mature pines under a log - the female demonstrating great flying skills under the canopy in defence of her chicks.

Nest Sites

Location	Nest	Outcome
Akatore Ridley Rd	3 eggs	3 fledglings
Link Rd	active scrape	nil
Wilkinson Rd	prey delivery	nil
Homestead Rd	active scrape	nil
Rugby Rd	not found	2 fledglings
Toko Mouth	3 eggs	unknown
Mount Allan	3 eggs	unknown

Game Camera

A camera on loan from Wenita was set up at the Ridley Rd nest but did not record any mammalian visitors and this nest was successful. The camera had previously been trialled and was sensitive enough to be triggered by sparrows interrupting the infra red beam. I aim to purchase a camera for

next season as there is obviously some predation at nests occurring at an early stage of the breeding cycle.

Prey

Prey remains and pellets were collected at nest sites and preliminary analysis by Noel Hyde at Wingspan Birds of Prey Trust showed that blackbirds were the main prey followed by thrushes and chaffinches. Redpoll and huhu beetles were also recorded.

Thanks to those who participated in the survey and Wenita Forests for providing access, camera and assistance with travel costs.

Steve Lawrence

Ornithological Snippets

Jimmy and Sandra Suttie from their place on Saddle Hill, heard **Little Owl** last week that they hadn't heard for ages and report no **Moreporks** for a long time.

Mary saw a **Kingfisher** actually fishing in a small man-made pond off Polwarth Road; it perched on a sunny lookout branch and dived into the water every couple of minutes coming back with very small prey.



Cheryl Pullar found an immature **Crested Grebe** on the Catlins estuary yesterday. "First one I've seen around here".

An adult male **NZ Falcon** was around Waitati for a couple of days early in the month and was last seen heading into the Orokonui

sanctuary early in the morning of 12 May. A **White Heron** made a fleeting visit to the Waitati Stream on 5 May. There were several records from east coast south island localities around the same time which may suggest dispersal from the West Coast?

At Hawksbury Lagoon on Sunday 6 May, just after the start of the duck shooting season, there were 1000 **Shovelers**, up from 350 on April Fool's Day and 700 **Mallard/Grey duck**, up from 150. Only the **Grey Teal** seemed to be out there risking it to any great extent, increasing to a mere 320 from 190.

Bal & Inch Clutha



Cattle Egret! Where? (ebirder, right, religiously writing everything down)



Just to the left of the cow.

Dozens of OSNZ members and several hangers-on went down to Inchclutha on 21 April. (I'm sorry I don't know the actual number of participants being far too busy counting all the birds for ebird). Richard Schofield guided us knowledgeably around the district starting in the town park where red and black-billed gulls obligingly joined us for lunch, providing the opportunity for further useful and confusing tips on how to tell them apart. Over the stile at the back of Naish Park and you are on the banks of the Clutha River or more precisely the old channel where paradise duck, shovelers, mallards, grey teal, coot and the odd scaup were present along with the usual collection of white-faced herons, little shags and pied stilts. A couple of fantails, a single bellbird and a kingfisher made up the native contingent amongst a host of the standard commoners of rural New Zealand; the introduced finches, pigeons and magpies - unless

that is you accept that silvereyes and those other recent Aussie immigrants, welcome swallows and spur-winged plovers have been here long enough to qualify for residence.

Then on to Smith Rd, Inchclutha where the first to arrive were treated to 11 cattle egrets close to the end of the road. Tardy arrivals had to be content with fleeting views of half a dozen amongst a herd of dairy cows that were convinced we were going to feed out hay. More R&R on the banks of the Clutha accompanied by feeding black-fronted terns, then to Matau, the northern end of the river. A white heron was fine but further mallard, shovelers, grey teal and pied stilts were beginning to try the ebirders stamina. Off the beach a single sooty shearwater and a gannet were outnumbered by 500 or more Canada geese and 150 or so black swans. Only the 60 or so black-backed gulls and 7 surfing Hector's dolphins convinced you that you were looking out to sea.

Finally we headed north through Kaitangata to watch the sunset over Lake Tuakitoto, extensively de-willed and foot-pathed since my last visit 20 years ago – a much more enjoyable experience. Thousands of wildfowl had even the keenest of ebirders forgoing their notebooks to reflect upon the weather (fine), the company (excellent) and what was in store for tea.

It was great to see so many people turn up for a field trip. At one stage there on Smith's Road the crowd, the array of optical equipment, the cars parked in haste in the middle of the road and the bemused local farmer had me thinking it was just like the UK... . Well, maybe not.



Many thanks to Richard Schofield

Derek Onley

Kayaking at Okarito



We had the opportunity for an afternoon's kayaking on Okarito Lagoon while on the west coast at Easter. The brief was to paddle up the lagoon take the first right travel up the creek up under the road bridge; and go as far as we could before returning down the lagoon to the start point. We were heading on the last of the flood tide and were advised that the ebb tide would start to open up the feeding flats by the time we got back to the main channel.

We headed off in calm conditions and once in the main channel were surrounded by white-fronted terns wheeling above us and diving into the water. In the distance a white shape resolved itself into a white heron feeding alongside the channel. As we watched it launched itself into the air for a short distance to displace a white-faced heron feeding just further down the channel edge. On further examination there were about five white-faced herons quietly mooching along the channel edge fishing quietly.



As we left the main channel and entered the more enclosed creek the birds changed and bellbirds, tui and grey warbler all started making themselves heard. The creek edge was clothed in a dense sward of rushes backing onto tall forest. We were able to get extremely close and make a careful inspection for crakes and bittern but with no success.

We were able to travel through the road culvert which was about 5 metres in diameter and turned around just above. On the way back the paddling was easy as there was no wind and the tide was now on the ebb. Again we coasted quietly alongside the rushes but there were no furtive rustles to attract us.

At the main channel the mudflats were bare and a wide range of waders were present. Banded dotterel (6), Pied oystercatcher (60) and godwits (62) were all present and feeding actively. Four Caspian Tern were roosting with a small flock of Black-billed Gulls.

We coasted back down the main channel, crossing over the channel to make sure we were close to the wharf which we reached in good time.

Bruce McKinlay

Remembering Alan Wright



We were very sad to hear Alan had recently died. Alan and Connie have corresponded with us since 2002 and we are very sorry Alan's health was poor in the last few years

Jenny first met Alan and Connie in Dunedin in the late 1970s and they were our kind neighbours when Alan was in charge of Te Anau Wildlife Park. Alan was there when the park greatly expanded and displayed takahe, kea, kaka, weka and parakeets for the first time.

Alan was well known in Te Anau and involved in community projects with Lions. He had a great love of the natural world and was always willing to share his vast knowledge. His talks were entertaining and humorous. Children liked to see Alan at the bird cages with a kaka on his head.

In the 1980s Alan and I shared two Fiordland fieldtrips. As we struggled through dense vegetation on a bird survey of Lake Te Anau islands Alan muttered "Give me seabirds any day". At Yates Point, north of Milford Sound, Alan was in his element counting Fiordland crested penguin eggs and chicks and watching the fur seals wave surfing.

The Alan and Connie team made a tremendous contribution to bird conservation with their work with northern royal albatrosses and yellow-eyed penguins. Also their support for the latest bird atlas (419 record sheets) and Alan's articles in Notornis.

Jenny and I knew their generosity, kindness and Alan's friendliness and sense of humour. Alan showed us bird study is interesting and fun. We are thinking of you Connie.

Kim and Jenny Morrison

Notices and Business

Winter Wader Count

This is an important event on the Otago programme as we have data for many decades now. This will take place around high tide, 2.20 pm, on June 17th. We need counters for Aramoana, Hooper's, Papanui, Blueskin Bay, Harbour. I already have names of several keen participants. Others who may not have been involved previously are encouraged to join one of the counting teams; please contact Mary 464 0787 if you are available.

Banded Tui and Bellbirds

Murray Efford has been busy again this summer and autumn and has banded another 100 tui and bellbird at his place in Helensburgh. It is crucial for the project that resightings are made and recorded. The tui and bellbirds will be starting to come to feeders soon so keep a good look out. Please send information of any banded birds to Murray Efford email murray.efford@otago.ac.nz; or leave phone message on 476 4668 or post to 60 Helensburgh Road, Dunedin 9010. Include location, date, time, left leg: colour over metal; right leg: top colour over bottom colour. Also take a digital photo if at all possible.

Acoustic Monitoring of Birds

The Otago Branch has just received its own set of 4 of the latest model acoustic recorders for use in our bird monitoring projects. The first highly successful use of this method was the confirmation of a small population of Australasian Bittern in the Waihola/Waipori wetlands. OSNZ members are encouraged to come up with ideas for other projects; talk to your RR.

OSNZ Conference and AGM, Queens Birthday Weekend, Tauranga

Bruce McKinlay and Mary Thompson will be attending the AGM. If any OSNZ member has comments they would like passed on or topics they would like us to bring up for discussion, please let us know.

NZ Threat Classification System

"In 2008, a panel of ornithologists assessed the conservation status of New Zealand birds against the NZ Threat Classification System. The results of this analysis were published in the September 2008 issue of *Notornis* (Vol 55: 117-135). The next revision of the threat status list for New Zealand birds is soon underway. Status will be assessed using the same criteria as used in 2008.

We would be very grateful for any submissions providing new information, especially any census or trend data, on bird species, subspecies, etc. that you consider to be threatened or at risk, or very poorly known but seldom encountered and possibly threatened. We would also be very interested in receiving arguments why you think that the 2008 panel got a particular classification wrong, or where you think that the status has changed sufficiently since 2008 to warrant a change in classification.

The 2012 expert panel will meet to review the classification of New Zealand birds on 12-13 June 2012, so please let us have your submissions by 10 June. More information and submission forms can be found here:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/consultations/current/new-listing-of-the-threatened-status-of-nz-frogs-reptiles-bats-and-birds/> "

These assessments are due to be carried out at 3-4 yearly intervals, and so if your region is a "hotspot" for particular threatened or "at risk" species, then in coming years you may consider a local project to keep tabs on those species to help inform this process.

Hugh Robertson & Rod Hitchmough
Science & Technical Group, DoC, Wellington

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 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 1 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 Craig McKenzie
Photographing Birds |
| 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 20 June