



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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Otago Region Newsletter 1/2013 Jan-Feb 2013

Polaris again

Graeme Loh went out on the "Polaris" water sampling trip on 22 January. "Day was calm sunny but hazy probably from the Australian fires. A three metre swell was running which the birds used to hide from me. The water was very murky all the way out, a beech log was floating 45 km offshore and a blue penguin was more than 40km east of Taiaroa. About 800m deep there! Quite a big list included White-chinned Petrel, Grey-backed and White-faced Storm Petrels, Cape Pigeon, Fairy Prion and Titi but some were found to be mis-identified when the few photos were checked. Derek was not impressed about the mix of species I thought I had seen from right around the Pacific. Maybe a couple of Blue Petrels, Pink-footed Shearwater, three species of storm petrels. Who knows! Very frustrating. More certain about the gadfly petrels that might have been Cook's.

Top centre, bottom left and right Pink-footed Shearwater?. Other 2 ????



Pink-footed Shearwaters are from the Eastern Pacific and have been recorded occasionally in small numbers off Kaikoura.



Grey-backed Storm Petrels

Graeme Loh

Hawksbury Lagoon Summer Count

Species	20 Jan 2013	22 Jan 2012	23 Jan 2011
Little Shag	1		2
Black Swan	124	18	115
Paradise Duck	26	68	9
Canada Goose	76	55	43
Domestic Goose	10	8	25
Hybrid Goose	6	21	11
Mallard/Grey Duck	215	103	508
N.Z. Shoveler	80	158	205
Grey Teal	295	621	655
Pied Oystercatcher	1		
Pied Stilt	154	271	226
Spur-winged Plover	11		3
Black-backed Gull	48	14	22
Red-billed Gull	44	47	43
Black-billed Gull		76	1
White-fronted Tern		1	
Caspian Tern		1	
White-faced Heron	4	1	1
Royal Spoonbill	11	1	4
Kereru			1
Welcome Swallow	9	2	36

Water levels have been high over summer which may account for the lower numbers of Pied Stilts but doesn't appear to equate to higher numbers of ducks. Black Swan numbers are on the rise again and Canada

Geese continue to increase rapidly. Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls nested successfully as did Black Swans, Domestic

Geese, Paradise Duck and Canada Geese. Though there were several broods of Mallard/Grey ducklings and a couple of Grey Teal and Shoveler the smaller ducks did not fare so well. Next count Sunday 7 April, 10.30 am Stewart St. entrance.



Derek Onley

Ornithological Snippets

Barbara Markby reported seeing a **Falcon** flying over her Opoho home about 8 a.m. one day in late November.

On 27 December, Bruce McKinlay saw an **Eastern Curlew** amongst the godwits and oystercatchers at the high tide roost Cabbage Point opposite Pounaweia, Catlins Lake.

Also down south Richard Schofield reported a single **Cattle Egret** with a small amount of colouring on crown and chest near Stirling on 16 December. Also 2 **Black-fronted Terns** and 10 **White-fronted Terns** on a shingle bank by Balclutha Airport. **White-fronted Terns** have been regular on this stretch of the river recently, with up to 20 earlier this week. It's about 12km from the coast as the crow flies, though nearer 25 as the river snakes.



Mary Thompson saw a **White Heron** at Lake Tuakitoto on 30th January at 3 pm, feeding in water up to its body. She later had second thoughts and wondered if it just might be an **Intermediate Egret** from relative length of body and neck.

From below Graeme Loh's Prion Fence at St Clair, "black and white shearwaters, presumably **Hutton's**, have been seen foraging in flocks of 10 to 70 since mid December. **Gannets** are unusual passers by at present and it has been ages since any mollymawks have been seen, must be too hot. On 27 January and all dark skua was harassing **Black-backed Gull** fledglings but was fended off by the adults. From above it looked chunky and all dark but not as big as the gulls. From the **Arctic** I guess."



Graeme also reported hundreds of **Hutton's** or **Fluttering Shearwaters** off Long Beach mid December. The flocks of 50 or so off Aramoana Mole at the same time were mainly **Hutton's** but included some **Fluttering**. Most were in wing moult suggesting they were failed or non-breeders.



Alister Young photographed these nesting **Kingfishers** on his property at Broad Bay. The nest was in the roots of an overturned tree. They were feeding their young quite a variety of food. Small fish, crabs, insects and skinks.

Chuck Landis sent a note to say that Kate saw a **Kaka** at Osborne on 15 January; new for her at Osborne. (Presumably from the Orokonui but after the one at Saddle Hill a few years back you never know). **Morepork** are frequently heard nights at Osborne. **Tui**, **Kereru** and **Kingfisher** are all having a good summer there and at Warrington, where a flock of **Brown Creepers** have also been in the bush after the second week in January.

On 15 January, Graeme Loh and Louis O'Neill were at Wallis Stream on the Catlins River in the picnic clearing listening for **Mohua** and watching a female **Redpoll** foraging in spiders' nests on *Coprosma* just like a Fernbird. The male was attending but not taking much interest in this food.

Over in Knobs Flat, Eglinton Valley, the Mohua team there saw a **Long-tailed Cuckoo** fledged from a Mohua nest on 9 January. We searched for it the next day, we were very suspicious about a mistletoe that the **Mohua** were visiting every quarter hour but it took us more than an hour before we could actually see the cuckoo chick seven metres away. Only when it moved. We heard no begging sounds. When it flew a bit the **Brown Creepers** alarm called and did a little mobbing.

A badly injured **Long-tailed Cuckoo** was handed into the Dunedin SPCA 21 January and



this gadfly petrel was handed in to DOC Dunedin on Wednesday 16 January from the cruise ship Odyssey : presumably confused by lights on its voyage south down the east coast to Dunedin.

The measurements, taken by unreliable hand, (Bill 29.2mm; Tarsus 31.7; Tail 89; Wing 240; Total length 305; Wingspan 760; Weight 179 g) are at the larger, ?male, end of **Cook's Petrel** range but fit with few dark underwing markings and facial pattern.



And from way back on 30 November a report via BirdingNZ net :-



wondering if anyone can help ID this tern - I believe these photos are of the same individual, which I disturbed on the breakwater at Aramoana today - it was smaller than the white-fronted terns that I often see out there (there were a few of those about as well) and it had a softer and more 'musical' call compared to the harsher sounding skittering of the white-fronted –

The consensus was **Little Tern**.

Otago Summer Wader Count 25 November 2012

By the time the count was carried out, after the first attempt had to be cancelled, the weather had improved a lot. Unfortunately Hooper's Inlet was blocked and consequently the water table was far too high to have any roosting places available for the waders we were after. The harbour basin also had a very high incoming tide and again, no roosting sites.

The good news is that the godwits have returned in good numbers.

The Pied Oystercatchers must have gone in hiding as the numbers were very low compared with last year.

Species	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Otago Harbour	Papanui Inlet	Hooper's Inlet	Catlins Lake	Total 2012	Total 2011
Pied Oystercatcher	15	137	39	127	24		40	382	628
Variable Oystercatcher	4	3	2	5	4	1	1	20	49
Bar-tailed Godwit	107	748	270		400		351	1876	1894
Banded Dotterel	2						6	8	3
Pied Stilt	2	7			2	64	6	81	49
Turnstone									1
Knot							12	12	1
Siberian Tattler		1						1	
Spur-winged Plover	6	6	18	2	6	11	9	58	24
White-faced Heron			2	9	6	1	2	20	39
Royal Spoonbill			1		10		4	15	87

Many thanks to all who helped. As last year there will be another wader count, this year on February 10. High tide is late afternoon in Otago Harbour so start is around 2pm.

Contact Peter 4552790. **Peter Schweigman**

Manuherikia upstream of Falls Dam.

Reading the results of a survey of the Manuherikia on 30 October in the November 2012 newsletter, it is interesting to compare the figures with two previous surveys. The survey in November 1967, carried out by Peter and Margaret Child had lower numbers for Pied Oystercatcher and the threatened species, Black-billed Gull and Black-fronted Tern were slightly down.

In early November 1991 the OSNZ Otago, carried out a survey to find out the remaining breeding habitat, since most gravel deposits had been covered. Both Black-billed Gull and Black-fronted Tern numbers were well down but Pied Oystercatcher were up though to less than half the 2012 count. It is reassuring to note both threatened species Black-fronted Tern and Black-billed Gull are still doing comparatively well at this location.

The current Banded Dotterel numbers reflect earlier surveys. However, there have been marked variations in the other 4 species for reasons not apparent at this point.

The huge increase in the Canada Goose population is an ongoing problem with no simple answer.

	Nov. 1967	Nov. 1991	Oct. 2012
Pied Oystercatcher	38	51	120
Banded Dotterel	27	30	32
Black-billed Gull	251	3	275
Black-fronted Tern	71	22	118
Canada Gull	17	102	230

Maybe it might be possible to organise another survey next year.

Peter Schweigman

Notices and Business

Register now for NZ Bird Conference, 1–3 June 2013, Otago Museum

Otago Branch of OSNZ is organizing this year's OSNZ Annual Meeting. We are promising a great conference, unique birding experiences and southern hospitality. So it is most important that as many of our members as possible attend to support this event. This is a great opportunity for Otago OSNZ members to get to go to a conference on their doorstep as it only comes around every 15 years or so. So please set aside Queen's Birthday weekend, 2013 in your diaries now. And MOST IMPORTANTLY, please REGISTER NOW ONLINE at <http://osnz.org.nz/>. Early Registration cost is only \$120 and covers the Scientific Sessions and workshops, including morning and afternoon teas and lunch both days. Or ask Mary or Bruce for a printed Registration Form and Conference Information.

Two days of the conference will be largely devoted to scientific presentations, Saturday 1 June and Sunday 2 June, at the Hutton Theatre, Otago Museum. A choice of workshops will be available on the Sunday morning. The Conference will incorporate the Society's AGM and also the launch of a new internet based encyclopaedia about New Zealand Birds, called NZ Birds On-line. There will be lots of opportunities for socialising with an informal dinner on the Saturday night at the Polytech Training restaurant 'Technique' and the Conference Dinner on the Sunday, which will be held at Cargill's Quality Hotels. Field trips to the Catlins, the back rooms at the Otago Museum, Orokonui and the Otago Peninsula have been organised for Monday 3 June.

Call for Abstracts for Scientific Presentations and Posters at NZ Bird Conference, 2013

We hope to have a good representation of speakers from our region, so if you have some interesting results from your bird studies, please consider writing them up for the conference. This would be a good opportunity for students to participate in a conference, and we have some top-rate research happening here as we have heard at our Indoor Meetings this year.

The conference will have both themed and general sessions on the study, understanding and enjoyment of birds in New Zealand. Theme sessions

that we have identified so far include: bird conservation, Otago ornithology, ecotourism, penguins, beech forest birds, and community contributions to ornithology. More details and Abstract Submission forms can be obtained from Sue Odlin, Scientific Sessions Coordinator (473 8898 waitapu1@clear.net.nz).

Citizen science project on Yellowhammer dialects in New Zealand



Professor Stuart Parsons of the School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland, has been approached for assistance in advertising a new citizen science project being developed by Dr Petr Procházka, Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (<http://www.ivb.cz/staff-rndr-petr-prochazka-ph-d.html>). Details of the project are given below. Professor Parsons has asked the OSNZ to help promote the project and solicit inputs from its members.

Dr Procházka writes: ‘The principal aim of the proposed project is to explore yellowhammer song dialects both in Great Britain and New Zealand. The idea behind this is based on the well-known fact that yellowhammers were introduced to New Zealand from Great Britain and we would like to test how stable over time their song dialects are. The past research undertaken in Europe discovered that yellowhammers show sharp borders between populations with particular song dialects. By mapping the geographical pattern of yellowhammer dialects in Great Britain and New Zealand we might reveal how the newly founded population spread across the free space and whether some new dialects emerged during the process of cultural evolution.’

The recent Czech citizen science project investigating the distribution of yellowhammer dialects in the Czech Republic involved a decent number of people from the public and the results were encouraging. During two years we obtained more than 1700 recordings. The recording it is very easy for the public as common devices (mobile phones, digital cameras or video-cameras) are sufficient for this purpose and yellowhammer song can easily be recognized. The results can be viewed here: <http://www.strnadi.cz/kde>.

The website <http://yellowhammers.net> allows users to upload their recordings and it gives them all necessary information about the project and the study species.

I would greatly appreciate if you could circulate this information among potentially interested people. You can also like and share the Facebook group <http://www.facebook.com/YellowhammerDialects> or use other social networks to spread the public awareness of this new project. Thank you for any help you can provide.'

Peter Frost (OSNZ Project & Activities Committee)

OSNZ Subscriptions

Just to remind you that you will have received from the Membership Secretary notification of Annual Subscriptions with payment due by 1 January. Have you overlooked this with the rush of Christmas? The easiest way to pay is online.



Manuherikia R above Falls Dam

Otago OSNZ Accounts 1 January – 31 December 2012

Balance as at 1Jan.	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
	\$966.11	\$1,916.79
Plus Income:		
Interest	\$0.00	\$0.00
Capitation	\$350.00	\$350.00
Donations/local subs	\$148.28	\$169.55
Transfer from Bonus saver-projects	\$1,000.00	\$500.00
Sale of cards		\$10.00
	\$1,498.28	\$1,029.55
Less Expenses:		
Transfer to savings account	\$12.00	\$12.00
Bank fees	\$5.00	\$6.50
Room hire	\$0.00	\$0.00
Envelopes, stamps, photocopying	\$205.10	\$370.05
Speaker Gifts	\$93.68	\$71.91
Book prize-Science Fair	\$20.00	\$0.00
YEP Trust sub	\$20.00	\$0.00
Bittern study	\$164.56	\$1,640.13
Miscellaneous	\$27.26	\$0.00
	\$547.60	\$2,100.59
Closing Balance	\$1,916.79	\$845.75
Breakdown of Accounts		
Running Expenses		
Balance brought forward	197.33	
Income	529.55	
Expenses	460.46	
Balance		266.42
Falcon Project		
Balance brought forward		250.00
Project Account-Bitterns Project		
Balance brought forward	1469.46	
Income	500.00	
Expenses-bittern	1640.13	
Balance		329.33
Total		845.75
Bonus Saver account		
Balance brought forward	2226.71	
Interest	20.69	
Transfers from cheque	12.00	
transfer for projects	500.00	
Balance		1759.40

Programme 2013

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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| Sunday Feb 10 | Summer Wader Count 2pm
contact Peter Schweigman, phone 455 2790 |
| Wed. Feb 27 | Indoor meeting Derek Onley
0 to 30°C - Birding in UK and Dubai.
plus AGM to discuss future projects. |
| Wed. March 27 | Indoor Meeting Rachel Buxton
Seabirds of the Aleutian Islands. |
| Sun April 7 | Hawksbury Lagoon Survey 10.30am
contact Derek Onley 482 2831 |
| Wed April 24 | Indoor Meeting Emily Weiser
Black Robins of the Chathams – an update. |
| Wed. May 22 | Indoor Meeting Steve Lawrence
NZ Falcon nests of Dunedin forests |
| June 1-3
(Queens Birthday) | NZ Bird Conference and OSNZ AGM
Otago Museum |
| Wed. June 26 | Indoor Meeting Junichi Sugishita
Royal parenting – foraging strategies and risks
in Northern Royal Albatross. |

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
 Many thanks to all who contributed. Next newsletter March
 Final date for copy 22 March.