



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



PO Box 834 Nelson osnz.org.nz

Alan Baker
Regional Recorder
48 Pacific Street
Dunedin 9010

Mary Thompson
Regional Representative
197 Balmacewen Road
Balmacewen
Dunedin
03 4640787

03 4675180

Otago Region Newsletter 2/2013 March 2013

Ornithological Snippets



Spoonbills up - on 1 March there were 77 Royal Spoonbills at Hawksbury Lagoon. On the 11th George Murray saw 52 roosting at Hooper's Inlet and Connie Wright saw about 20 flying from Port Chalmers towards the harbour entrance.

By 21 March there were well over 30 still at Karitane and Merton and at least 20 at

Blueskin Bay. But just in case you're starting to feel that Otago should sell itself as Spoonbill capital of the World (amongst other things) it's worth remembering that there were 300 or so at Lake Ellesmere recently.

Godwits down and out – well – migrating early?

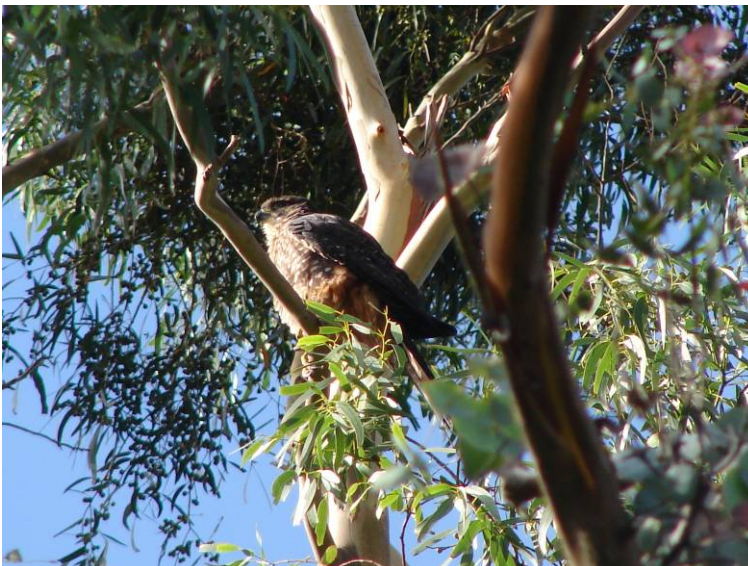
When Peter Langlands saw the flock of **Bar-tailed Godwits** in the Catlins, including 45 marked birds, start to disappear in the first week of March, Phil Battley thought they must have moved elsewhere in Otago and Southland and asked that Otago sites be checked for "his" birds. Mary Thompson checked Aramoana on 15th March and found only 140 birds, all of which were easily checked for bands and none present. This contrasts with 502 on 12 February and 450 on 22nd, of which 6 were banded; 3 from Warrington in 2007, the usual one from Awarua Bay and

one from Victoria. At Blueskin Bay there were 278 on 9 March, down from 813 on 12 February and not a band in sight. Most of the birds remaining at the Catlins migrated around the 15th and by the 18th only a few were left in breeding plumage and only 3 of the 45 adults marked were on the estuary.

848 **Black-billed Gulls** were roosting at Karitane on 24 February. That is about 4.5% of the world population, qualifying Karitane as a wetland of national significance under the Ramsar Convention! About 100 (not quite enough as the cut-off is 1%), along with 150 **Black-backed Gulls** were roosting at Hawksbury Lagoon on 7 March. These birds appeared to come in from far out at sea around 6.30pm. Some plodded across the beach to the lagoon whilst others headed along the coast around Matanaka, possibly to a roost further north.



Neville Peat reported 10 **Caspian Terns** including 3 juveniles at Papanui Inlet on 11 March and at Allan's beach he photographed a distinctly pied looking **Variable Oystercatcher** begging from its banded parent.



A **Falcon**, this year a young one, returned to Waitati as usual about mid-March. Between sitting in the gum trees for hours, it was seen pursuing a **Mallard** and a **Rosella**, so is presumably saving the Orokonui Ecosanctuary goodies for later.

Eric de Leeuw saw a **Little Owl** on Highcliff Rd. just past Centre Rd. on 2 March; most likely the same one as seen twice in mid December last year by his parents when they came over from Canada.

On 14 March Bob Cunninghame reported that “Over the last 10 days we have heard **Morepork** calls from Chingford Park and above the old NEV quarry; on our own property (210 Signal Hill Road); and from the vicinity of the Alhambra Ground. Mostly at night – between 9.00 and 11.00 pm and also early morning – 5.30 to 6.00 am. Our neighbours higher up Signal Hill Road have also heard calls on their property. Whether there is one only, or more I cannot say.” Hamish Spencer in North East Valley reckoned he heard one far off on 14th. At Waitati several people heard one or maybe two birds calling around the village from mid-February onwards; the first calls heard away from the upper Orokonui Valley since late March last year.

Bob also wondered if there has been a paucity of **Shining Cuckoos** in Dunedin this year. “We have heard very few shining cuckoos this last spring and summer. Twice only on our property – once before Christmas and once in mid-January, and I heard one in the Gardens/Opoho Road area in late January.”

Peter Langlands found a **Bittern** on the morning of 18 March at the mouth of the Catlins River (into the "lake"). He also saw one on the roadside nearby about six weeks before and reports lots of fernbirds in the wetland but says that sadly some drainage/clearance work is taking place on the wetland at present.

Several **Arctic Skuas** were seen off Karitane, Warrington and Shag Point in late February and March.

Further evidence of a population of **Pheasants** around Waikouaiti came with a dead female on the side of the road at Cherry Farm on 7 March.

Otago Summer Wader Count No2 12 February 2013

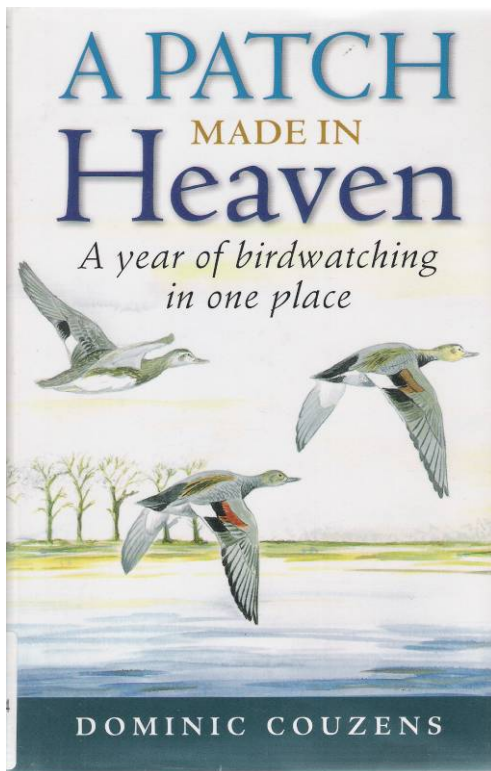
This late summer wader count was very successful. Good visibility, light wind and a good number of birds. Unfortunately Hooper's Inlet was still blocked. The Harbour had far more birds than in November last year. Last November there were 127 Pied Oystercatchers counted in the Harbour and 936 this time, with most on the rooves of the sheds at Port Chalmers. The absence of Godwits at both Papanui and Hooper's was offset by a good number of 502 at Aramoana. The Banded Dotterels were missing there on the day, but 280 were reported on 1 February.

It is nice to be able to complete a wader count in the sun without the ghastly Southerly wind. Let's hope we have the same during the coming winter wader count on 9 June.

Species	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Otago Harbour	Papanui Inlet	Hooper's Inlet	Catlins Lake	Total 2013
Pied Oystercatcher	14	848	172	936	760		246	2976
Variable Oystercatcher	2	30	8	43	30		3	116
Bar-tailed Godwit	39	813	502				391	1745
Banded Dotterel	93	75					65	233
Pied Stilt	13	46	51	6	16	28	1	161
Siberian Tattler		1						1
Spur-winged Plover			25		20		9	45
White-faced Heron				22	25	25	2	74
Royal Spoonbill				7	11		25	43

Many thanks to all who helped. **Peter Schweigman**





New Books- for when the drought breaks.

The following items of ornithological interest were added to the Dunedin Public Libraries' collection in 2012.

A Patch Made in Heaven, by Dominic Couzens – one of the more spiritual additions.

The Bird in Art, by Caroline Bugler

Bird Sense : what it's like to be a bird, by T.R. Birkhead

Birds of Melanesia: Bismarcks, Solomons,

Vanuatu and New Caledonia, by Guy Dutson

Buller's Birds of New Zealand: the complete work of J.G. Keulemans

The Country Diary of a New Zealand Lady, by Christina G. Ferens

Earthflight, by John Downer

Kea : mountain parrot (DVD)

Life on the Wing: a bird chronicle from the pages of The Times, by Derwent May

The Long, Wild Shore: bird and seal seasons on Blakeney Point, by James McCallum

Moa: the life and death of New Zealand's legendary bird, by Quinn Berentson

Nest: the art of birds, by Janine Burke

The Nesting Season: cuckoos, cuckolds and the invention of monogamy, by Bernd Heinrich

Our Garden Birds: a bird for every week of the year, by Matt Sewell

Sentinel Chickens: what birds tell us about our health and our world, by Peter Doherty

Shorebirds of New Zealand: sharing the margins, by Keith Woodley

Sparrow, by Kim Todd

There and Back: a celebration of bird migration, edited by Andy Brown and Michael Warren

The Urban Birder, by David Lindo

Alan Baker.

Notices and Business

Notes of AGM held at the Indoor Meeting, March 27, 2013

The following are happy to continue with tasks to help the running of the Otago Branch and received endorsement by the members:

Regional Representative; Mary Thompson

Finances: Mary Thompson, Hamish Spencer, Louise Foord

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley

Newsletter distribution; Hamish Spencer, Susan Schweigman

Indoor Meeting refreshments; Lesley Gowans

Conference Coordinator: Bruce McKinlay

Branch Projects

Hawksbury Lagoon Survey; seasonal count to be continued; coordinator Derek Onley.

Falcon Study; coordinator Steve Lawrence

Bittern survey at Sinclair wetlands; acoustic recordings to start again from August; Mary Thompson and Murray Efford

Waders and Godwits; coordinator Peter Schweigman

Tui and Bellbird banding by Murray Efford; continue to report sightings.

Urban Morepork Survey; coordinator Cody Fraser; a small steering committee of Cody, Bruce, Murray and Mary formed to plan project and explore possible autumn and spring counts, acoustic recording, and involvement of public. This is our main new project.

Other possible projects

Weekly/monthly survey of birds present in our gardens; Bruce to devise recording forms for those interested

White-faced heron nesting in Otago; report sighting to Peter Schweigman

Nesting biology of Little Shags; if Little Shags nest at the Gardens next year, should we plan to study them?

Society Schemes Beach Patrol and Nest Records

Members encouraged to report any wrecks on beach/take photos for identification/ measurements. Ro East will keep reminding us.

Next spring, please note any nests you come across (see record card on webpage)

Weekend Field Trip

Interest was expressed in a weekend field trip for end of October/beginning of November; possible locations suggested were Ohau (falcon, river and lake birds), Manapouri (bush and river birds), Lake Ellesmere (migratory waders). If one of these was to take place a volunteer would be needed to organise the weekend; let RR know if you are interested in organising a trip.

Mary Thompson

Update: NZ Bird Conference, 1 – 3 June 2013, Otago Museum

We are hoping for a goodly number of Otago members to support the conference. The deadline for earlybird registrations is 31 March so remember to REGISTER NOW ONLINE at <http://osnz.org.nz/> Or ask Bruce for a printed Registration Form and Conference Information. Early Registration cost is only \$120 and covers the Scientific Sessions and workshops, including morning and afternoon teas and lunch both days. There is a choice of field trips to the Catlins, the back rooms at the Otago Museum, Orokonui and the Otago Peninsula have been organised for Monday 3 June.

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.

Offers of help from members would be greatly appreciated; Registration pack filling prior to conference.

Registration desk on Friday evening and Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Mist-netting Workshop: We are looking for gardens that may be used for setting up mist nets for catching silvereyes and finches; could any member who thinks their garden may be suitable get in touch with Bruce McKinlay bruce.mckinlay@osnz.org.nz

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 hear at our Indoor Meetings. Contact Sue Odlin for more details <waitapu1@clear.net.nz>

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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| 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 |
| Sunday June 9 | Winter Wader Count |
| 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.

Final date for copy for next Newsletter 17 April.