



**THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND**



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Otago Region Newsletter 10/2013 November 2013



Graeme Loh has been out on the Polaris again. Above Campbell Mollymawk.

Below, clockwise: Campbell Mollymawk, a dark headed Salvin's Mollymawk, White-headed Petrel, one of three Grey-faced Petrels harassing a Northern Giant Petrel and a Soft-plumaged Petrel.



Polaris 13 November 2013

A choppy breezy day with birds hiding behind the swells and chop and the boat not being held steady. Several birds were only identified once home from the photos and some ill remain fleeting views of something in the storm petrel or Cookilaria groups. There were more mollymawks of the black-browed kind seen today with at least six different individuals and a positive identification of Campbell Albatross. Very little seen in the way of feeding workups. The three Grey-faced Petrels that persistently buzzed an un-perturbed sitting Giant Petrel was a puzzle.

Species seen:-Northern royal albatross; Southern royal albatross; Wandering albatross; Buller's mollymawk; Black-browed mollymawk; Campbell albatross; Salvin's mollymawk; Shy mollymawk; Giant petrel; White-chinned petrel; Grey-faced petrel; Soft plumaged petrel; White headed petrel; Cookilaria petrel; Diving petrel; Storm petrel; Fairy prion; Sooty shearwater; B&W shearwater (Hutton's/fluttering); Spotted shag; Stewart Is shag; Red-billed gull; Southern Black-backed gull; White-fronted tern.

White-winged Black Tern in Otago – just



Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway saw a **White-winged Black Tern** in breeding plumage at the confluence of the Waiau and Mararoa Rivers on 27th October around noon. Both rivers in flood and all control gates open and water overflowing the weir. It was with a flock of about 20 **Black-fronted Terns** and stood out as very distinct with its contrasting

black body and white wings and white tail and Mary had a good view of underwing with black triangle on leading edge of wing. We had binoculars and Sue had one view with telescope. It stayed around for a couple of minutes and then headed up river. There are no reports on eBird of these terns in this area before.

Otago Summer Wader Count 17 November 2013

Species	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Otago Harbour	Papanui Inlet	Hooper's Inlet	Catlins	Total
Pied Oystercatcher	22	161	5	254	6	21	118	587
Variable Oystercatcher	6	8	13	44	5	25	3	104
Pied Stilt	33	7		3	1		3	47
Banded Dotterel	1						4	5
Bar-tailed Godwit	118	615	298			660	301	1992
Spur-winged Plover	4				10	17	5	36
Ruddy Turnstone							1	1
Lesser Knot						2		2
Royal Spoonbill	12		9	2	6	4	2	35
White-faced Heron	nc	nc	9	1	21	10	1	42
Kingfisher	nc	nc			2	4		6

Many thanks to all those who helped out with this count

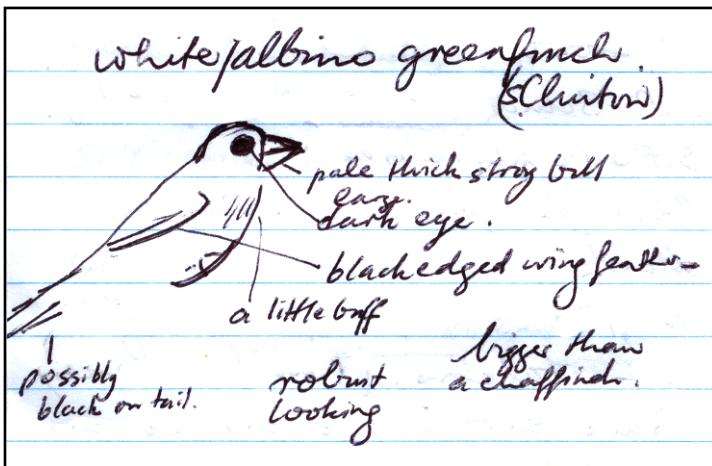


Peter Schweigman

Birding at Manapouri

Mary and I spent a couple of days at Manapouri; we were particularly interested in Black-billed Gull colonies. Many nests had been affected by the recent adverse weather, but as the water level dropped, gulls began to return. Mary had spent the previous days with Sue G at Manapouri, and checked out the sites so was able to make a comparison of gull numbers and shingle bank size. Waiau River – 1000, Oreti River, near Mossburn – 3000 and another near the Oreti Bridge – 2000. On our return from the Supply Bay, Manapouri, we heard, but couldn't see, a Long-tailed Cuckoo. Had great views of Spur-winged Plovers and chicks of various ages, Pied Oystercatchers and chicks and many Paradise Duck and ducklings of various sizes, and observed their different techniques of distraction displays.

We counted large flocks of finches and Redpolls feeding on lucerne along Weir Road. In one field we estimated 500 Greenfinch and 400 Goldfinch, two fields with 400 Greenfinch in each, and a fourth field with 200 Redpoll and 100 Goldfinch.



On our way back to Dunedin, sat on a fence post near Clinton, was a “white” bird. Notebook jottings left. We had it in view along the fence-line for several minutes. It probably was a leucistic greenfinch.

This is the list of birds we observed (37 species):

Australasian Harrier; Bellbird; Black Shag; Black-backed Gull; Black-billed Gull; Blackbird; Canada Goose; Chaffinch; Decoys Grey Teal and Mallard; Fantail; Goldfinch; Greenfinch; Grey Warbler; Kereru; Little Shag; Long tailed Cuckoo; Magpie; Mallard; NZ Falcon; Papango; Paradise Duck; Pied Stilt; Redpoll; Shoveler; Silvereye; Pied Oystercatcher; Skylark; House Sparrow; Spur-winged Plover; Starling; Song Thrush; Tui; Welcome Swallow; White-faced Heron; Yellowhammer.

Sue Odlin

Ornithological Snippets

Dave and Janet York spotted over 40 **Crested Grebes** on a trip round Central during the first week of November, many doing courtship displays: 16 at Lake Hayes, 14 Lake Dunstan, 7 at Wakatipu, 4 at Wanaka (one pair with 2 chicks already), a pair at Conroy's Dam and 1 at Butchers Dam.

Joel Vanderburg saw a single **White Heron** on the Merton Arm of the Waikouaiti estuary on the morning of 6 November and Paul Pope saw another in Abbots creek between Fairfield and SH 1 on 17th.

The birding highlight of Richard Schofield's (predominantly non-birding) trip to South Catlins in early November "was a **Bittern** as we approached the Catlins Lake at the Owaka end. It was flying along the main road at a height of about 20 feet, before veering left and dropping into lakeside vegetation. Not sure where it started its journey - it was flying through trees and farmland when we first saw it - but as far as I am aware it is the first recent record in the area in the breeding season."

Zuni Steer saw 3 **Royal Spoonbills** on 17 November (6pm) at the pond to the left of SH1, just south of Evansdale Cheese Factory and there were another 9 further down the estuary earlier in the afternoon. On 22 October and 18 November Derek Onley saw groups of 14 and 3 **spoonbills** circle to gain height and then leave Blueskin Bay to the south over the Orokonui. Graeme Loh sent the photos below of:- left, "years of a spoonbill nest in



and right, "Same spoonbill nest with bowl one metre below the canopy, How did the spoonbill get in there!"





While at the north end of Green Island on 11 November, while Graeme was trying to work out how to remove mallow, he found a **Black-backed Gull** nest under the Taupata canopy. There was also a colony of **Red-billed gulls** nesting under the taupata canopy in the area. A few of the nests of both gulls had recent hatchlings.

Back in October Richard Schofield reported a potential **Black-billed Gull** colony at the NW end of Inchclutha, just where the river splits. “Suzanne noticed them at the beginning of October and when I checked at that stage, I estimated about 200 birds. A closer look a few

days later revealed in excess of 400 birds, many displaying and some mating. I checked again on Sunday 20th, fearing the worst after the jet boat racing and high river levels, visiting both sides of the river, and counted in the vicinity of 600 birds, some of which appeared to be sitting. I’m not aware of them breeding in the vicinity before, but I will keep an eye on them.” However,

“further to my observation of **black-billed gulls** in Balclutha last month, Suzanne reports that there were no birds present by the beginning of November.”

Not quite as impressive as Graeme’s Polaris exploits, though with minimal risk of sea sickness, Derek Onley also saw **Hutton’s/Fluttering** type shearwaters off Shag Point on 14 November, when well over 1000 passed north in 25 minutes. Of the 80 or so that came close enough to be identified off Aramoana Mole on 11th, 12 were **Hutton’s** and 28 **Fluttering Shearwaters**. He also had to abandon the Karitane wader count when a fishing boat came in past Huriawa followed by over 100 **Black-backed Gulls**, about 40 **Red-billed Gulls**, 5 **Cape Pigeons**, about 15 **White-chinned Petrels** and at least 25 **Northern Giant Petrels**.



Lala Frazer forwarded this photo of 4 dead Paradise Shelduck found on the evening of 15 November by Elm Wildlife Tours at the Papanui Inlet end of Weir Road, Otago Peninsula. All had mysterious injuries. Investigations are ongoing.

Notices and Business

Exploring eBird

As I dig deeper in to eBird I find it is much more than a place to record birding observations. Thanks to some guidance from Bruce McKinley I can now use eBird to guide my future birding efforts and maybe suggest some field trips options for OSNZ Otago.

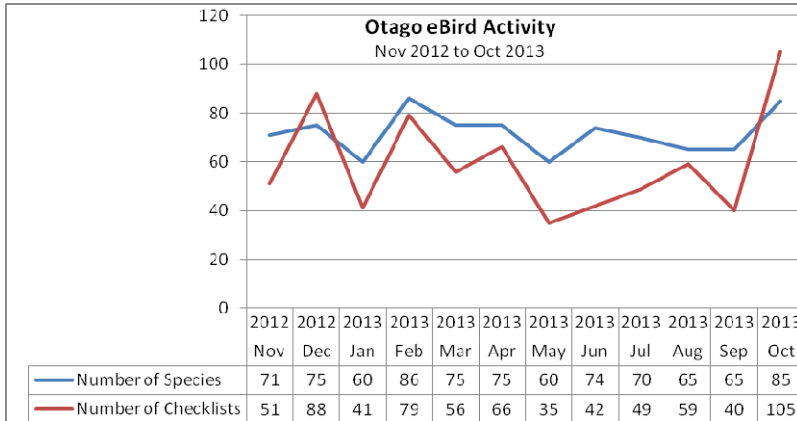
As a way of finding places where no or limited reports have been added to eBird try the following

- Lodge on to the eBird site
- Click on “Explore Data” tab
- Click on “Range and point maps”
- Enter a species - e.g. house sparrow as an indicator of birding activity.
- Enter a location – Otago, New Zealand.
- Scroll in until all you can see is Otago. (If you end up with teardrops you have gone too far)
- Now you should have Otago split into squares
 - o Shades of purple where house sparrow has been recorded
 - o Grey where reports have been submitted with no reference of your selected species
 - o Finally the white squares are where there has been no reports submitted for your selected species.

This tells us that the Western Catlins and the bottom end of the Blue Mountains; also the Styx have had no records lodged in eBird for house

sparrow, a species we could expect to be present throughout Otago. Are these areas possible targets for future birding trips?

Thanks to all of you who have submitted to eBird. The graph left summarises the reported birding activity for the last 12 months. It is really



good to see the number of check lists increase in October 2013. The reporting for October 2012 was 81 species and 73 check lists. Activity in October 2013 was 85 species and 105 checklists.

Jim Wilson, Regional

Recorder.

NZ Falcon Study

Steve Lawrence leads a research group to study nesting NZ Falcons in the Dunedin exotic forests. The aim is to locate some falcon nest sites in Akatore forest again this year to monitor them using two cameras to get more information on predation. A trip on 9th November located one nest in the same place as the last 2 years and Steve put a camera at the nest (3 eggs). No sign of 2 other pairs, and saw a pair go into mature pines but we didn't go looking for them - next trip maybe.

Wenita also want some forest blocks due for logging in Mt Allan checked soon - this will be probably a once only trip.

Could those of you interested in any trips this season please e-mail Steve (steve.eve@xtra.co.nz) to be added to the falcon watch e-mail list.

Dead Shags and Penguins

When people are out and about please look out for any dead shags or penguins (all species, including feathers, bones and eggshell), especially from areas south of Dunedin (Taieri Island, Catlins). The samples will be used for genetic analysis in Martyn Kennedy, Hamish Spencer and Nic Rawlence shag and penguin research. We have a DoC holding permit and

samples can be collected for us without a permit; we just inform DoC (the system we have been using as approved by Bruce McKinlay). If remains are good it would probably be a good idea to place in plastic bag, seal, label! and put in freezer. Contact Nic and he will arrange pick-up.

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E-mail: nic.rawlence@otago.ac.nz

Wainono Lagoon Fieldtrip, 30 November

Wainono Lagoon is located north of the Waitaki on the coast and is an interesting birding area. Spoonbills have been reported to nest on the maimais in previous years. The fieldtrip is planned for November 30 (alternative day if weather unfavourable 1st December). We will leave from the Zoology Car park at 8 am. We are taking a dinghy and canoes for some folks to get to maimais. The rest of us will walk along the stopbank and should get good views of the waders and wildfowl. The aim is to find out if and how many Royal Spoonbill are nesting at the lagoon and we will also do a total count of all waders and wildfowl in the area. It may also be possible to visit Waitaki River Mouth (time permitting). You will need to bring enough food for lunch and possibly high tea, warm clothes, strong footwear as well as sun gear, etc. The lagoon is about 3.5 km long and can be accessed by foot (for most of us) as well as boat. Please confirm with Mary Thompson if you intend to come. 4640787 maryt@actrix.co.nz

Up-dated Plans for Royal Spoonbill Colony and Nest Census

Green Island Plan to travel to island by inflatable and land on island to count nests; weather permitting Sat 7th December or Sunday 8th December or try the following weekend (14th/15th Dec) if not successful. The craft has space for 4 people including the pilot; we have 3 volunteers for the first weekend but please let us know if you are interested in being a backup.

Taieri Island Plan to walk to island tide and weather permitting. We need fit volunteers as the island is quite rugged and has many shearwater and penguin burrows to negotiate. The tide is suitably timed and low for Sunday 8th December and throughout the following week. This is

when the first attempts will be made. Failing that the next possible dates are 4/5 January and 18/19 January. We have a couple of volunteers for each of these dates; please let Mary know dates you might be available.
Spoonbill Nest Count

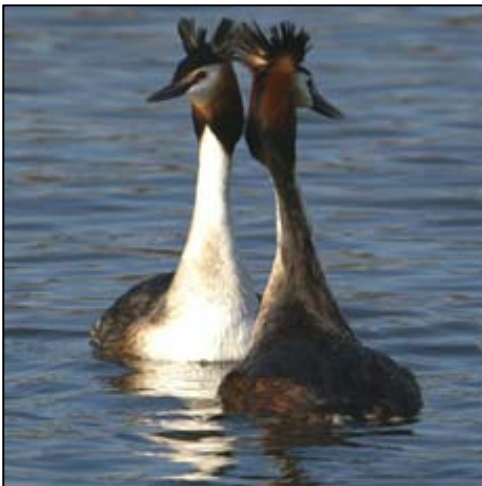
Heywards Point, Maukiekie Island and Tairoa Head

Thanks to Chris Lalas and Lyndon Perriman who have volunteered to survey these areas.

Catlins area Thanks to Richard Schofield and Fergus Sutherland who are surveying their patch; they may require help from us. We will keep you informed.

Please let us know if you hear of other possible nesting spoonbill sites. Volunteers for various trips, offers of help and information; please contact Mary 464 0787 maryt@actrix.co.nz

Notice of national survey of Australasian Crested Grebe / kāmāna



A national crested grebe census is being planned for **Saturday 25 January 2014**, ten years after the last national survey. The census is being organised as a volunteer project by Leslie Jensen and Rosalie Snoyink. We are again seeking the assistance of members of the Ornithological Society, the Department of Conservation, Royal Forest and Bird, Federated Mountain Clubs, Fish and Game, various tramping clubs and enthusiastic individuals. We are hoping observers will volunteer to help count all the South Island lakes listed, and possibly some that were missed in the last survey. **Photo Andre Konter**

If you are able to help please contact:

Rosalie Snoyink rsnoyink@xtra.co.nz or

Leslie Jensen LAJ@xtra.co.nz

6 Homebush Road

Glentunnel 7638

Ph. 03 318 2632

OSNZ Subscription Renewal Notices

Membership Renewal notices have been sent out by email or in Southern Bird posting. This is just a reminder not to overlook this over the busy holiday period as subscriptions are due 1 January 2014. Please figure out a way to remind yourselves to pay.

Indoor Meetings and Activities for 2014

Any suggestions of speakers or topics or offers to speak for the Indoor Meetings next year would be greatly appreciated.

Also suggestions for field trips or offers to organise a birding weekend away would also be greatly appreciated.

Contact Mary Thompson 464 0787 maryt@actrix.co.nz

Prion Wreck on Internet

A high definition version of Te Papa's Science Live event, which focused on Prions collected during the wreck of 2011, has been up-loaded onto the internet. The link is <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2013/10/24/science-live-whalebirds-the-mystery-of-the-storm-riders-success/>

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.

Wed. Nov. 27	Nic Rawlence Ancient DNA research on Moa
Saturday Nov 30	All day Fieldtrip to Wainono Lagoon, leaving from Zoology carpark at 8 am. Contact Mary (464 0787) if you are intending to come.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
Many thanks to all who contributed.

Next Newsletter January. Final date for copy 22nd.