

Birds New Zealand

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Otago Region Newsletter 8/2014 October 2014

Beyond Orokonui Surveys



Maree counting at a site on the Rongamai track

Enthusiastic teams have surveyed the Silverstream area and the Silverpeaks forests above Blueskin Bay during the last two surveys. The weather was excellent for both surveys and about 26 sites were done each time. The vegetation in the City Forest in the Silverpeaks was surprisingly

diverse and full of birds; 3 robins were seen-one banded (some in larch, some in Douglas fir and one on the start of the track to the old Green Hut in kanuka scrub; 3 more heard as well as 2 shining cuckoos and dozens of brown creeper and tomtits and one rifleman.



lunch stop Lesley, Alan, Mary, Francie, Sara and Maree in front.



The icing on the cake: a robin at the final 5MBC site of the day seen by Maree and Jinty.

All photos by Jinty MacTavish

Dates for up-coming surveys: 8 Nov, 22 Nov, and 6 Dec. If you would like to be added to the email contact list, please let Mary know email maryt@actrix.co.nz

Mary Thompson

Progress Report for September for Beyond Orokonui Survey

We have counted in 115 different sites, within ten different broad habitat types. Twenty four different bird species have been recorded within these habitats (not including birds observed flying over). In September 214 silvereyes were recorded, with bellbirds (200) close behind, followed by brown creeper (148), grey warbler (110), fantail (70), blackbird and chaffinch (60), and tomtit (55). For all other species less than 50 birds were recorded, including 13 tui and 10 rifleman. Shining cuckoo arrived in September but have not been recorded in September counts.

These data do not include repeat counts at the same sites, or double counts made at the same site at the same time. Twelve bird counters have recorded counts so far.

Many, many, thanks to all those who have contributed counts so far. We are starting to build a substantial database of counts by habitat. There are no official counts for the rest of October, but people are most welcome to undertake counts in their own time if they wish. All native forest habitats, and exotic coniferous forest, are included within the habitats that require sampling.

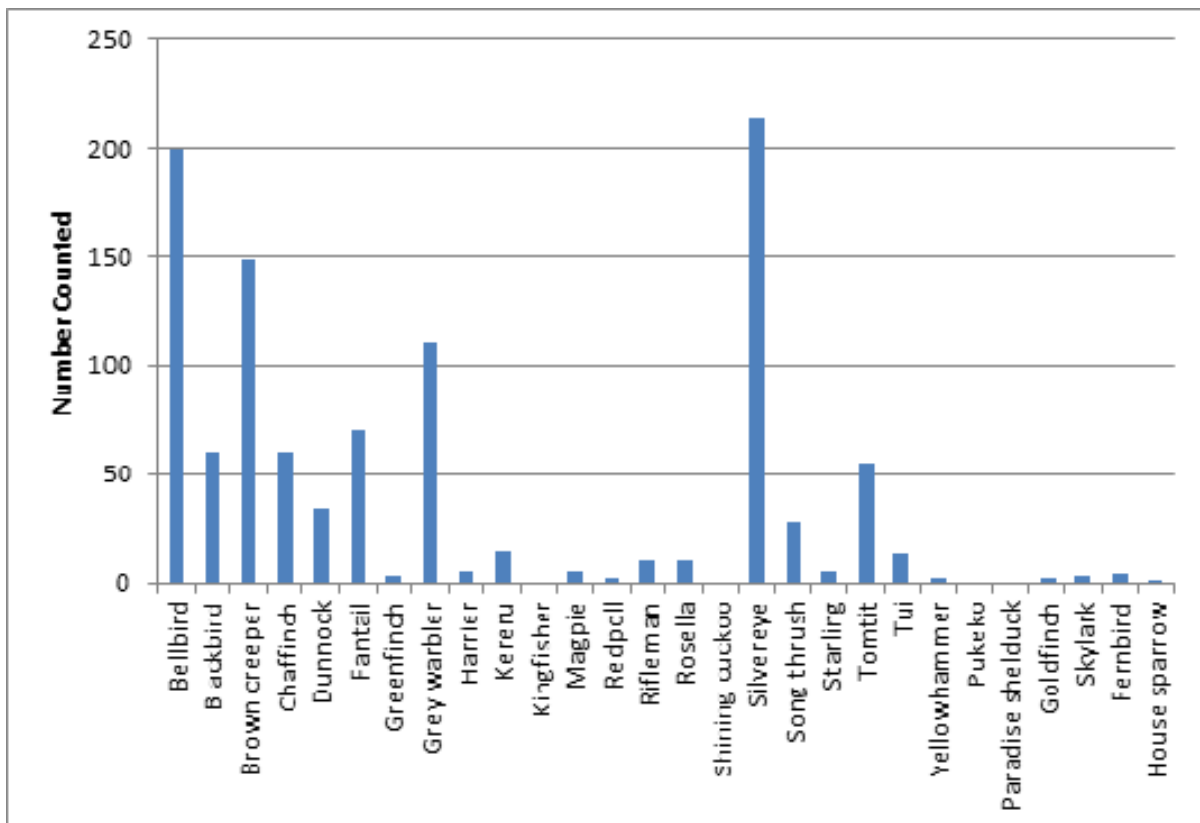


Chart shows species seen

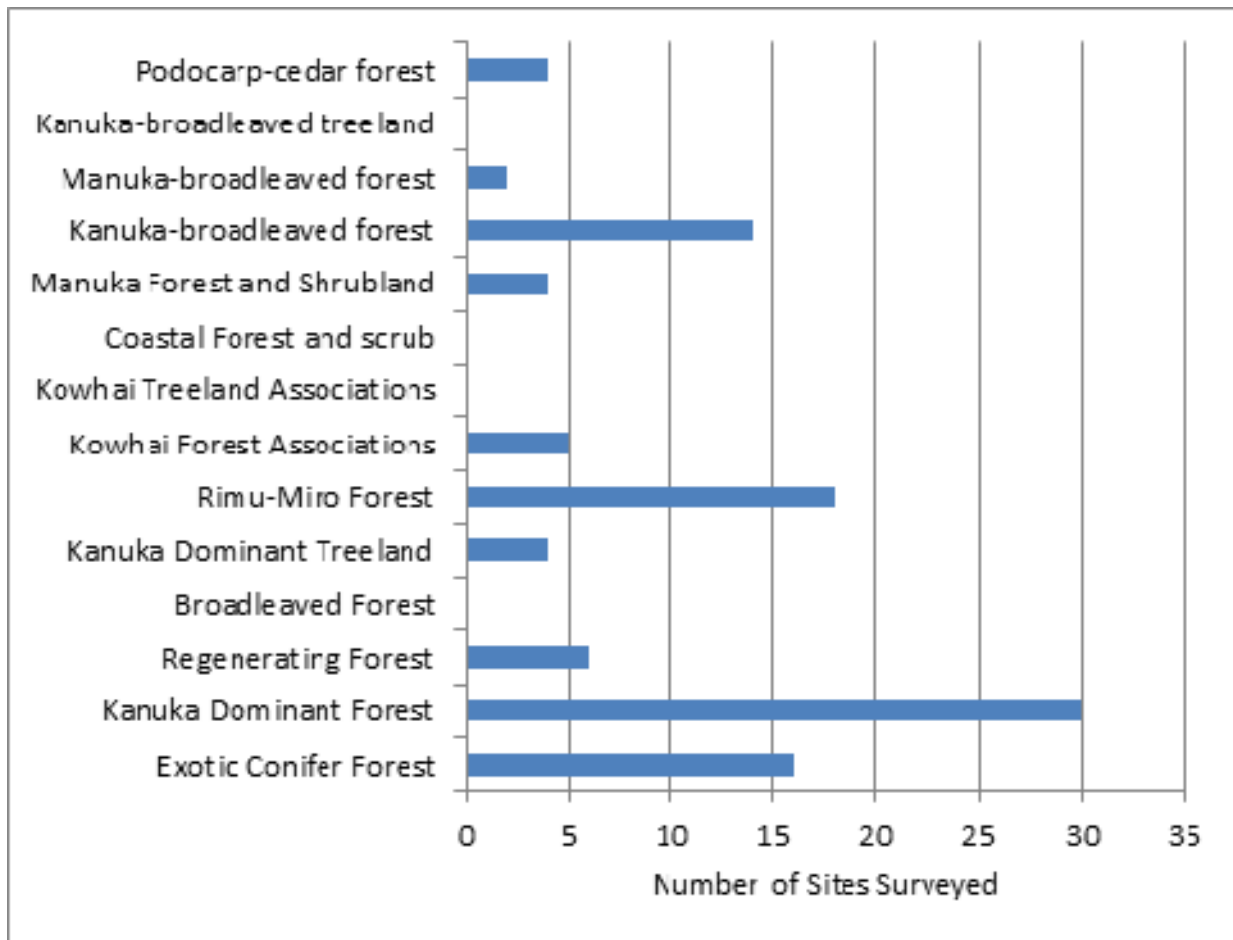


Chart shows habitat types surveyed

Kelvin Lloyd

Ornithological Snippets

Arrivals: Shining Cuckoo: Jan Littleton heard the first above Waitati on 22 September and Maree Johnstone heard one at the top of Mount Cargill Road near Orokonui Ecosanctuary on 24th. Both dates are a week or so earlier than arrivals in the last few years. The next reports were not until 4 October when the first was heard in Waitati village and Mary heard two at Ross Creek.

Bar-tailed Godwit: The 89 at Blueskin Bay on 25 September could well have been overwintering birds but numbers had increased to 290, including 4 juveniles by 8 October when 2 colour banded birds from the 2006 banding session were recorded. 75 at Karitane on 5 October had increased to 101 by 9 Oct

Sooty Shearwaters: Derek Onley reckoned over 200/minute were passing south past Aramoana Mole on 2 October. Some 10,000+ birds in the time he was there. Even more, 290/minute, passed Shag Point on 10 October accompanied by **Fluttering Shearwaters** at a mere 3/minute and a lone **Cape Pigeon**.



For those who don't read the Otago Daily Times, a dead **Buller's Mollymawk** was found in Central Otago on the road from Waipiata to Ranfurly. The finder, Katie, said it appeared to have a head injury and some damage to one of its wings. Sandy Bartle agreed with Derek's identification and said the timing was right for a late fledging juvenile, probably from the Solander Islands. ID features are relatively wide dark leading edge to underwing and thinner bill than the Shy mollymawk group. The underwing would be all dark if it were a juvenile Black-browed, Campbell or Grey-headed Mollymawk. One or two juveniles have turned up inland in Southland over the last 5 years or so.

Notices and Business

Important Advance Notices:

November Indoor Meeting Wednesday 26th November.

This will be the last for the year so lets make this an end of year celebratory event. Franny Cunninghame will be here from the Galapagos and will be talking about her work with the rare Mangrove Finch. It would be great if a few people brought some festive food to enjoy with our tea and coffee.

Weekend Field Trip 14 – 15 February, 2015

Otago Branch of Birds NZ has been kindly invited on this joint trip with Dunedin Forest and Bird. It will be led by Janet Ledingham. The aim is to explore the botanical and bird life of the Upper Taieri scroll plain and Canadian Flats wetland area. We will travel via Old Dunstan Road to Patearoa on Saturday and stay overnight there. On Sunday, we will go up to the Canadian Flats wetland. Please give Janet Ledingham, 4672960, an indication of whether you are likely to join this trip and nearer the time we will need to confirm numbers to organize accommodation. Please put this in your 2015 diary as we won't be having an Indoor Meeting before this event.

Summer Wader Count: Sunday 16th November, starting about 10.00 am

This is a good chance for those who haven't been on a wader count to join a team to count all the waders in one of the estuaries around the Otago area:- Aramoana, Hooper's and Papanui Inlets, Blueskin Bay and Karitane. If you are new to counting then don't worry as you will be teamed up with those who have done it before.

Please let Peter Schweigman know if you are keen to be involved; phone 4552790 or email peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz



NZ Falcon Survey (from NZ Falcon Newsletter)

Commencing on 1 June 2006 the original NZ Falcon Distribution Survey ran for three years till 31 May 2009 and the 1,761 records collected for that period were written up as a Short Note in Notornis. The collection of NZ falcon observation records has continued very successfully as the NZ Falcon Survey. As we now approach the 10 year anniversary (31 May 2016) it is anticipated that a further report will be prepared that will provide a more comprehensive picture of the presence and distribution of the NZ falcon in NZ. There is a total of 11,889 observations records in the database as at 30 September 2014. The Otago region has the second highest number of observations at 1455.

It is very important for everyone to continue to submit all observations of the NZ falcon gained at least until May 2016. All reports are valuable as they provide an insight as to where and when falcons have and are being observed.

Please enter observations online (www.nzfalcon.org.nz) or send to

Dave Bell Coordinator NZ Falcon Survey

Address: 9 Spencer Place New Plymouth 4312

Email: nativebirds@xtra.co.nz

Red-billed Gull Colony National Survey: volunteer coordinator needed

Birds NZ is undertaking a nationwide survey over the next 2 breeding seasons of red-billed gull colonies, with the aim of answering if numbers have declined overall, and/or if redistribution of the population is occurring, and to determine the sizes of colonies. The basic proposal has two parts. First, a scoping survey, to be carried out during this year's breeding season, between October 2014 and January 2015, aimed at locating all current red-billed gull colonies. At this stage we are concerned with determining the location of these colonies, with only a rough estimate of the numbers of pairs. Determining the size of these colonies forms the second part of this proposal to be undertaken in 2015/16 season.

The information from this survey will allow the Department of Conservation to evaluate more precisely the species' conservation status.

At present, the red-billed gull is classified as Nationally Vulnerable, based on a predicted decline of 50–70% over three generations despite an apparently large population of 20 000–100 000 mature individuals.

Lyndon Perriman and Chris Lalas have recently published a study of red-billed gull colonies in the Otago region (*Notornis* 59: 138–147 2012); this means our knowledge of the colonies in Otago is very up-to-date and probably little needs to be done this 2014/15 season. However, we would like to confirm the presence of colonies and approximate size at these sites and look for any additional ones. These need to be entered in the national database.

Mary would be very pleased to hear from someone who might be willing to plan and coordinate this survey in our region, plan the logistics for counting breeding pairs in the 2015/16 breeding season, maintain the database and liaise with DoC and the Birds NZ National Coordinators.

Black-billed Gull Colony Survey.

Rachel McClellan is proposing a 3 year aerial survey of key rivers throughout the South Island, to photograph and count black-billed gull colonies. So far funding has been obtained for Canterbury Rivers and hopefully funds will eventuate for Otago and Southland Rivers. This is a big job and Rachel is looking for volunteers to be involved in flying (I imagine as passenger) and photographing colonies and also for counting birds in the photos thus obtained. If anyone is interested in this project please let Mary know (464 0787) in first instance to get further information.

Little Shag Nesting Areas

During the recent Wader Count Jill Hamel and Lala Frazer were amazed to count 414 Little shags roosting in trees and on boatsheds between Bayfield Inlet and Taiaroa Head. This is the largest number either of them have counted before. This was despite two trees that previously held a large number of Little shags now having been abandoned.

Linden Perriman reports that last season there were between 20 to 30 breeding pairs at Taiaroa Head and Gordon Douglas from Quarantine Island reports nesting there. Lala would like to hear of any other nesting areas in the Dunedin area. Email <lala.frazer@gmail.com>. **Lala Frazer**

Regional Recorders Report

I am pleased to report that Otago has recently had four “Unusual Bird Reports” accepted by Birds NZ. While the sightings have appeared previously in the newsletter I thought it was worthwhile to publicise the actual comments of the Committee as they give us guidance/insight to the data relied on to confirm the sighting and their comments on the frequency etc. of the species make interesting reading.

Little Egret (UBR) CASE #: 2014/37

“Identification of the bird based on the good description provided, and the comparisons that you were able to make with white herons present at the same time.

There are about two dozen accepted records of little egret from New Zealand, though many other sightings have not been submitted to the Records Appraisal Committee or its predecessor (the Rare Birds Committee). There appears to have been an influx of little egrets to New Zealand in autumn 2013, with multiple sightings from Northland to Otago.”

Nankeen Night Heron (UBR) CASE #: 2014/38

“Identification of the bird as an adult nankeen night heron based on the photograph provided.

Other than the birds breeding in the Whanganui river catchment, there have been close to thirty previous records of nankeen night herons accepted from New Zealand. One of these was from the Snares Islands in October 2013, and may have been of the same bird that you saw, or a bird that crossed the Tasman in the same weather or migration event.”

Glossy Ibis (x 2) (UBR) CASE #: 2014/39

“Identification of the birds based on your description and the photograph provided.

A few glossy ibises reach New Zealand each year, or are resident here, with hot spots including Christchurch, Marlborough and the Bay of Plenty.”

White - winged Black Tern (UBR) CASE #: 2014/40

“Identification of the bird based on the detailed description provided.

A few white - winged black terns are recorded from New Zealand each year, but sightings of birds in breeding plumage are mainly from the eastern South Island. There have been a few breeding records from the South Island, most recently in Marlborough in December 2012.”

Jim Wilson Regional Recorder

Programme 2014

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed October 22 Derek Onley. The birds of Hawksbury Lagoon-results of 4 years of surveys.
- Sat October 18 Seabird Trip We will join Forest and Bird. Deborah Bay to beyond Taiaroa Head. Meet Botany carpark (cnr Union and Great King St. SH1 North) 7.30am or Deborah Bay 8.00am. Cost \$100. Bookings essential. Contact Graeme Loh 487 6125 or gloh@doc.govt.nz
- Sun November 16 Summer Wader Count. HT 10.50am, 1.8m. Contact Peter Schweigman 4552790 peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz
- Wed November 26 Direct from the Galapagos
Franny Cunninghame

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

Final date for copy for next newsletter 20 November.