

Birds New Zealand

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Discovery of first breeding attempt of Glossy Ibis in New Zealand at Wainono lagoon.



Wainono lagoon has again turned up trumps for a birding expedition. On New Year's Day 2015, Peter Schweigman, Sue Galloway and Mary Thompson headed off from Dunedin at 7.30am, arriving at Wainono about

9.30 am. The wind hadn't yet come up so canoeing the 1.5 km across the lagoon was a pleasure. The lagoon was festooned with the usual complement of waterfowl: 100s of mallards, grey teal, shovelers (with young still), Paradise ducks (many moulting), and black swans; many Scaup, Canada geese, feral geese and two coots. The maimais sported black shags, little shags, red-billed gulls, two white-fronted terns and we spotted about 6 black-billed gulls cruising around. Another bonus was two adult great crested grebes – we think this is the first record of grebe on Wainono in the summer.

The main reason for our expedition was to check out the Royal Spoonbill nesting colony that we had discovered last season. We landed the canoe well away from the colony and approached it from the landward side to about 50m away and did not disturb the birds. The main spoonbill colony was thriving with nests clustered in two dead willows overhanging the Hook Stream where it enters the lagoon on north west corner, and there were also a few nests 250m away in willows by the main lagoon. No nests were apparent on the maimais this year. We counted a total of 30 nests. The young on the nests were well advanced in development with 22 in full feather but obviously still not able to fly, with shorter bills and no facial markings as in adults. There were also at least 8 nests with adults still sitting either on eggs or very young chicks. Many nests had 2 young standing on them so the season appears to have been very successful. At any one time we counted 45 adults but many would be away on foraging trips. There were also two little shag nests among the colony.

The dramatic highlight of the day was discovering a glossy ibis sitting on a nest. Through the telescope we could see the beautiful chestnut red colours (typical of breeding plumage) on neck and body and the green/purple iridescence of the wings. The nest was at the edge of the spoonbill colony, also in the dead willow, about 3m above the water. It was much more compact in construction than the spoonbill nests, about 50cm across. The ibis was most likely incubating eggs as several times during the 2 hours we were observing the bird stood up and changed sitting position and looked into the nest and appeared to use its bill to 'adjust eggs' before re-sitting. Two other glossy ibis, also in full breeding plumage, were nearby in the willow tree for a short time then flew off and did not return while we observed. This is the first breeding attempt recorded for glossy ibis in New

Zealand. And this discovery is pretty high up as most exciting lifetime birding experience for us.

We planned to return to see if any chicks had successfully hatched. Sue Galloway and Mary Thompson made a return trip on Thursday January 22nd, 2015 – another fine, calm, warm day. The glossy ibis was still sitting on the nest. Two other glossy ibis flew off together soon after we arrived at 10.30 am. Throughout the day the sitting bird often stood up, turned around, looked in the nest and settled down again. The comings and goings of the spoonbills kept us interested the whole day while we waited for some action from the ibis.

The Royal spoonbill colony had been very successful. 41 chicks were counted, including 22 fledged juveniles roosting on the mud by the Hook Stream behind the willow trees, along with some adult ‘mindes’. Three weeks ago these young birds had been on their nests. There were still 5 nests with sitting birds and several nests with 2 young chicks. 50 adults were seen at any one time. The little shags had produced 2 young per nest.

Just as we were packing up to leave the two glossy ibis that had been away all day flew in at 5.40 pm, circled around several times and landed in the willow very near to our sitting ibis on the nest. The two that returned were the same size and smaller than the sitting bird. This suggests it was the male who had sat all day and the other two were females, which are documented to be noticeably smaller. One came down to the nest and opened its wings and poked its bill about briefly (maybe a greeting display?) and then flew off to a nearby branch to roost and preen. Both ‘returnees’ spent some time preening near the nest. Then at 6.30 pm, the sitting bird stood up, preened, sat down, stood up and walked off the nest. The other bird moved down to the nest, appeared a bit restless but sat down – changeover had occurred. The one that had sat all day spent the next 30 minutes preening. We left at 7pm, so don’t know whether this bird eventually took off to feed, but we presume so. It (he) had certainly sat faithfully all day (at least 7 1/2 hours) and the ‘new’ sitter seemed to have settled down to the task. So it seems they still felt incubating was worthwhile.

From reading about the breeding biology of glossy ibis, where incubation is reported to be 20 - 23 days, then if eggs had been laid before 1st January, we would have expected hatching to have occurred as it was now 22 days later. If the chicks were very young they would not have been seen from our vantage point. And it is possible that they had not yet hatched if the eggs had not all been laid by 1st January. Alternatively the eggs may be infertile or a second replacement clutch may have been laid recently. We did not want to disturb the birds by trying to check for eggs or chicks in the nest.



Peter Schweigman, Mary Thompson and Ibis Nest

Top priority next season will be to return to Wainono and see if the Glossy Ibis have also returned to breed.

Mary Thompson

Birding on The Taieri River to Headwaters from the Serpentine Flat, Oxbow and Canadian Flat – February 14, 2015



Taieri Stroll Plains?

photo Mary Thompson

The morning was crisp and overcast as 19 participants from Birds NZ and Dunedin Forest & Bird set out in 5 four-wheel drives. Guided on the way by several rising pipits, past the Great Moss Swamp and Loganburn Reservoir on the Old Dunstan Road, we stopped to view the meandering Taieri River. Up until now we had also seen harriers, black backed gulls and magpies, and by this time the cloud had lifted. The Paerau Scrolls at Serpentine Flat through the telescope revealed several birds on the wetlands which we were keen to view at closer range so we headed down to the Styx and then southwest up the valley. Here were Canadian geese, black swans and pied stilts in good numbers, and lesser numbers of spur winged plover, mallard, white faced heron, grey teal, paradise shelduck, and black shag.

Unfortunately there was quite a herd of cattle standing in the bog on the verge of the River.

Further up the valley to the Oxbow and Canadian Flat there were black and little shag, mallard, grey teal, and the wonderful song of the grey warbler. Also surrounding the ponds were redpoll, yellowhammer, blackbird, thrush, magpie, sparrows.

Interesting use of the names of ox and serpent here: the oxbow a crescent-shaped often ephemeral lake formed in the abandoned channel of a meander (serpent) by the silting up of its ends.

As we headed further up the River to our lunch spot we mustered quite a mob of sheep, and a huge flock of starlings guided us all on the way. After lunch our final destination was high up in the Lammermoor Range overlooking the Taieri River headwaters and its huge rolling catchment of tussock clad hills. The Taieri drains 5,650 sq km, a quarter of which is over 900m.

Back to the homestead to drop off the key, and observe large flocks of sparrows in the surrounding fields.

Francie Beggs

Unusual nest construction of a Welcome Swallow



The nest of a Welcome Swallow is usually attached to a rough vertical surface. It means that the nest is not a full cup. I came across a nest built on a ornamental candle, hanging from a ceiling, sheltered from the elements. The outside diameter was 11cm, most likely influenced by the diameter of the candle. The top of the nest is normally about 15cm from the ceiling, but in this case it was 23.5cm. Four chicks hatched and fledged safe and well.

Peter Schweigman

Watching the tides at Awaroa



Awaroa Inlet is in Abel Tasman National Park and is a place to go if either you have a crib to sponge off extended family members or are rich enough to fly in and stay at the Eco-Lodge. There is no cell phone coverage and the range of habitats is extensive in the coastal and second growth sense.

Most importantly for a bird watcher at Awaroa the tides dictate the time to roost and the time to forage with binoculars on the high tide roost. At low tide on the spit the resident variable oystercatchers run around highlighting the fact that there are half grown chicks present. The white fronted terns roost on the slope above the waves and cycle in and out for feeding followed by a bit of roosting and then feeding again. The recently fledged black backed gulls sit tight on the sand mewing their displeasure at being disturbed and inciting the adults to half-heartedly dive bomb the observer. Across the inlet mouth a number of pied shags and the occasional little shag sit on the sand bank drying their wings; joined on occasion by brethren.



In the scrub around the crib and airstrip the summer has been a bonus year for Californian quail. Broods range from three to 13 and from small bundles of fluff which can hardly push through the cut grass to miniature models of the adults lacking the colour but with the beginnings of a crest. The

broods and adults had a circuit and at the same time on consecutive day the same brood would appear nonchalantly browse their way across the yard and head through the hedge to next door. The light in the evening or early morning highlighted them against the vegetation and for the males

made the colour scheme vivid. Also taking advantage of the strong sunshine in the early morning were silvereyes and around the crib were easily seen perching in the kanuka in the light furiously preening before heading off foraging for the day.

Across the white gravels sands of the inlet little black and white blobs with a flash of white were scattered everywhere – pied oystercatcher feeding. Elsewhere on the flats white faced heron were present. The morning might be consumed by books or a walk along the track to the saddle with lots of silvereyes and bellbirds along the way. If you were lucky the screech of a falcon or the swoop of a kereru tried to be heard above the constant loud hum of cicadas which were present in uncountable numbers; their discarded exoskeletons present everywhere.

As the day proceeded checks of the state of the tide would become more frequent. Eventually notebook, and binoculars would be gathered and I'd set off to the beach and walk to the spit. A world transformed with the first sight being a flock of about 20 welcome swallows perched on wrack and taking off to hawk for insects. The variable oystercatchers are still present with the plaintive chicks still confirming their presence. In amongst the logs small birds were running around cheeping and chirping; banded dotterels. Up to 20 present. Down the end of the spit the oystercatchers were herded up and standing steadfastly into the breeze. Approach too close and a series of ungainly hops, or shuffles often accompanied by a lazy stretching of the wing or wings occurs. A close scan of the legs is justified as on the first day a flag was present on one leg. It is quite a task checking up to 2000 legs for an elusive bit of yellow! Not seen every day but still present occasionally. Other of the oystercatchers were really asleep with bills drooping onto the ground almost like a third leg. A flash of white in the mob was present occasionally: Caspian terns keeping low down behind a screen of black and white. The black backed gulls were keeping close company to the flock and occasionally harassing an oystercatcher into coughing up a feed.

After the walk as the tide dropped the oystercatchers dispersed out to feed the dotterels were early departers heading to the upper inlet to forage. Time to hide in the shade with a book and a cup of tea.

Bruce McKinlay

Ornithological Snippets



Three **Black Stilts** at All Day Bay were first reported by Tom Waterhouse on 18 January (ebird). They were next seen by Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway on 25th with a group of 20 **Pied Stilts** sheltering from the wind. Derek Onley saw 4 there on 4 February and Jason Wilder (photo left)

found 5 there the following day. Jason managed to record the colour bands on three of the birds. Mala at the DoC banding office quickly provided the details:-All three were released in the Tasman river in January 2014 as three month old juveniles. It's most likely the other two would also have been released at the same time. BKYG/BKG is a female that hatched on 26th October 2013, BKYG/BKW and BKYG/BKY are both males that hatched on the 30th October 2013. All three of these birds were raised in a group together, and it's likely the other two birds were also part of this group (BKYG/BKR and BKYG/BKO). One of the four on the 4 February was unbanded. Interesting to speculate where that might have come from.

Sue and Mary also reported 3 sandpipers (probably **Sharp-tailed**) together with about 80 **Banded Dotterels** and numerous **Pied Stilts** seen on mud at northern end of Wainono lagoon from shingle bank on 24th January. In addition three small groups of **Pied Oystercatchers** in V-formation were seen flying determinedly north -probably migrating north?

Over 450 **Bar-tailed Godwit** were still present at Blueskin Bay on 15 February. At Karitane there were 120 on the same day along with 67 **Banded Dotterel**. Jason Wilder came up with 320 Godwits at Aramoana on 17th, along with 35 **Black-fronted Terns**. There were a couple of **Black-fronted Terns** at the end of Aramoana Mole on 10th along with the usual autumn build up of adult and recently fledged **White-fronted Terns**.



Not exactly easy to count but probably numbering well over 400?



Mount John near Tekapo is the place to go if you want to see **Chukar** (rather see them in Turkey myself ed.) Simon and Josselin de Ruyter from the Netherlands, managed to photograph one there on 9 November last year.

Closer to Dunedin, Alan Baker reports the Ross Creek Reservoir **Coot** are breeding. He saw a pair with 3 small chicks on the reservoir on 7 February

Ian Jamieson

Ian Jamieson, who was emeritus professor of zoology at the University of Otago, died earlier this month from complications of a brain tumour. Members will have known of Ian through his work on bird behaviour and conservation. He gave several talks to OSNZ Otago over the years, and his students gave many more. Ian worked on a number of New Zealand species, starting off with Pukeko, whose breeding behaviour was the subject of Ian's PhD at Auckland. He continued this work on moving to Dunedin in 1990, and later expanded his repertoire to include studies of the Pukeko's close relative, the endangered Takahe. Ian soon realized that the long-term survival of Takahe required a better understanding of the effects of inbreeding, and he made a brave and ultimately vindicated career change, to study inbreeding in various New Zealand birds. Takahe and, later, Robin and Saddleback on Ulva Island, were the focus of these investigations, which earned him a name as one of the world's leading experts in conservation genetics. Ian's work utterly changed New Zealand bird conservation and his discoveries make a practical difference every day in the management of many of our animal taonga by the Department of Conservation and numerous private conservation organizations, such as the Orokonui EcoSanctuary. Ian was an outgoing and cheerful character, always optimistic about the future of New Zealand's conservation efforts. OSNZ Otago extends its condolences to Ian's widow, Frances Anderson.

Hamish Spencer

Notices and Business

“The People and the Birds”

Plan to attend this special conference as it is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of OSNZ. This conference will not only look at our unique birds, but also at the people, projects, activities and history of the Society and its members, and then take a peek at our future direction. There will be field trips on the Monday. This should be a fantastic weekend to mark this historical occasion! And as it is being held in Blenheim it makes it easier to get to. Registration is Online at the Birds NZ website.

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2015

A reminder that the annual membership subscriptions were due 1 January 2015. This is all too easy to overlook this during the Christmas New Year period. There are 24 of us who have forgotten to pay. You can renew subs online. Thanks. Mary Thompson, Regional Representative.

NZ Bird Conference & AGM, Blenheim, Saturday 30 May to Monday 1 June 2015

Teen Field Camp, 7-11 April 2015 on Mana Island.

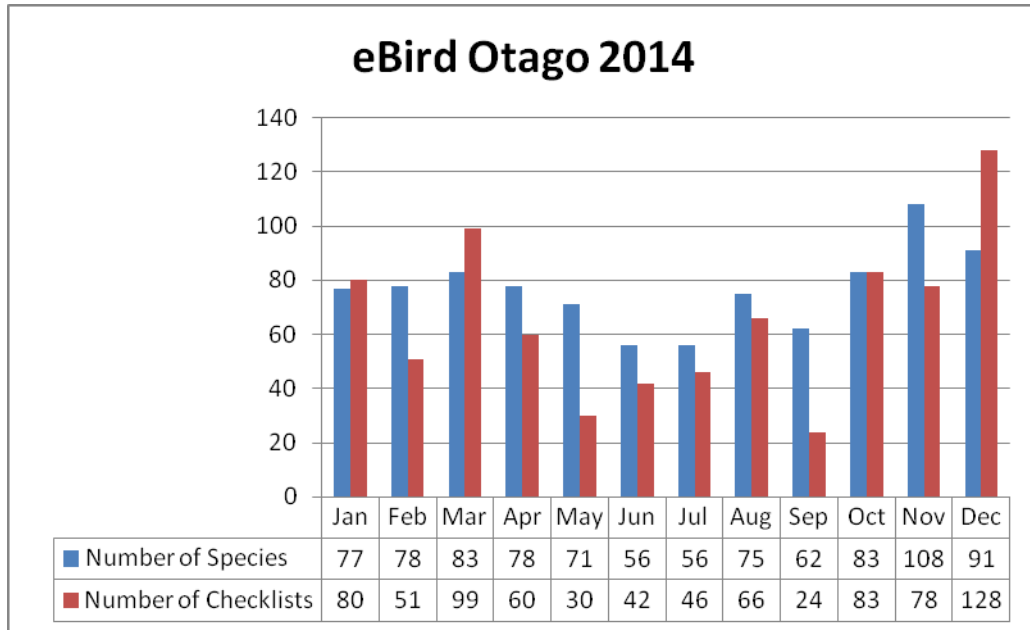
The one week field camp is for 10 to 12 teenagers in Year 12/13 or aged 16-18 (if not at school) - and a pilot for what will hopefully become an annual event!

This field camp is for teens to get a hands-on experience with birds and develop skills in bird ecology! If you know of a teenager please let them know of this fantastic opportunity.

All details and an application form are available on our website <http://osnz.org.nz/node/581>

Regional Recorder's eBird Report

The graph below summaries birding activity report for the 2014 calendar year. With 128 reports for December it was clearly a busy month and thanks to those of you who logged their data promptly. If you are yet to try out eBird please give it a go. Not only are you adding to the body of birding knowledge but you can also recall your own birding information on “My eBird”.



Jim Wilson



Adult & juvenile Black-fronted Terns, Aramoana 17 Feb. Jason Wilder.

Programme 2015

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

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| Wed February 25 | Bruce McKinlay
Birding experiences around the world. |
| Wed March 25 | Peter Langlands
Update on research on godwits and other birds |
| Wed April 22 | Janet Ledingham
Birds of Shetland and the Farne Islands |
| Wed May 27 | Neil Roberston
Birds of Equador |
| Wed June 24 | Wray Grimaldi
Disease in Adelie Penguins |
| Wed July 23 | Hamish Spencer Classification of the
World's Cormorants and Shags |
| Wed Aug 26 | Kelvin Lloyd
Update on the Beyond Orokonui project. |

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for contributions to next newsletter: February 19.

Mary is still asking for speakers or topics for this year's Indoor Meetings. If you would like to talk at an Indoor Meeting or if you have suggestions please let Mary know. Ideas for field trips, especially if you are willing to act as a leader/organiser, would also be greatly appreciated.