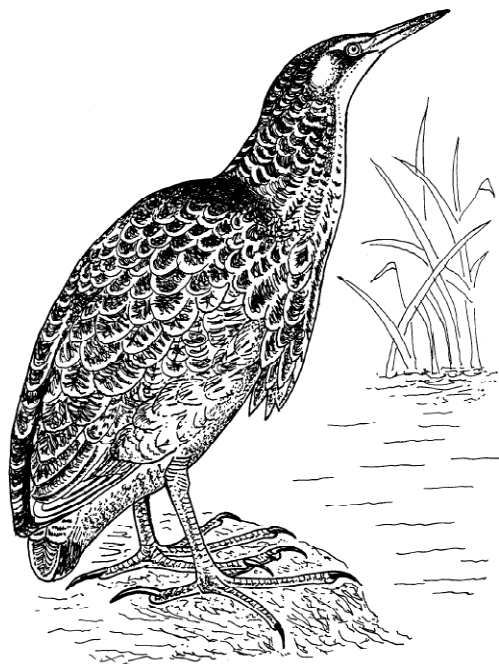


MATUKU

WAIKATO REGION NEWSLETTER

Ornithological Society of New Zealand

February 2010



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Programme

- 13 February: Kawhia and Aotea Harbour census. Back up day in case of bad weather – 14 February.
Contact Bruce Postill or Laurie Hoverd.
- 17 February: Monthly meeting. Dr Jonathon Banks, University of Waikato, 'Barcoding birds: investigating New Zealand bird taxonomy using DNA'.
- 7 March. Miranda Shorebird Centre fieldtrip. 'Autumn Migration Day' (a Miranda run event), 10am.
Contact the Miranda Shorebird Centre.
- 17 March: Monthly meeting. Local AGM.
- 20 March: OSNZ picnic. At this stage it will be at Maungakawa Reserve, but this may change closer to the time. Further details to come.
- 17 April: Fieldtrip to Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve, Gordonton. Joint trip with the Waikato Botanical Society. Contact Dai Morgan.
- 21 April: Monthly meeting. Iris Broekema, DOC, "Bird Monitoring in the Coromandel".
- 19 May: Monthly meeting. Phil Brown, MEIT photographer extraordinaire. 'Bird photography 101, and stories behind the photos'.
- May fieldtrip TBA.

Reintroducing bellbirds to Hamilton – help needed

The bellbird or korimako is an endemic honeyeater and is the only living member of the genus *Anthornis*. Before human arrival bellbirds were distributed widely throughout the whole of New Zealand. In the mid-late nineteenth century bellbirds disappeared or drastically declined throughout most of the country, starting in the north and sweeping southwards. In southern and central parts of New Zealand bellbird numbers subsequently recovered to some extent, however they remain largely absent in the northern mainland.

The University of Waikato and Landcare Research are leading a proposal to translocate bellbirds into

Hamilton City. The aim of this translocation is to initiate reestablishment of a bellbird population in the city, part of the former range of this species. The reintroduction of bellbirds will complement the urban restoration of native flora that has been occurring over the last several years; as at October 2003, 187 ha was under restoration of some form.

The intention is to translocate 50 bellbirds, half coming from Tiritiri Matangi Island and half from Tawharanui Open Sanctuary, to Hamilton in May 2010. The work is collaborative with an Auckland group (Auckland Regional Council, Auckland DOC, and others) who are catching a further 150 bellbirds at the same time to go to Motuihe and Waiheke Islands in the Hauraki Gulf. Following release, monitoring will be undertaken at all release sites, with a subset of the birds being fitted with radio transmitters.

The release of bellbirds in Hamilton is intended to occur at the Hamilton Gardens. Sugar-water feeders will be set up at the release location to 1) encourage the birds to stay around the release area, 2) provide a supplementary food source while the birds adjust to their new surroundings, and 3) provide a focal point for observations; it is likely that we will need volunteers to help with monitoring at feeders. People with experience in reading colour band combinations would be especially useful.

For further information, or to enquire about volunteering with monitoring efforts, please contact Calum Ninnes, University of Waikato, ph: 07 838 4466 ext. 6153 email: cninnes@waikato.ac.nz

OSNZ Waikato - Lake Census, Cambridge, Annual Report 2009

The count of birds at Te Ko Utu (Cambridge Lake) is scheduled to take place on the 3rd Sunday of each month [on the 2nd Sunday counts are carried out at both Rotoroa (Hamilton Lake) and Rotokaeo (Forest Lake)]. When weather is unsuitable, or personnel are not available on the 3rd Sunday, the Cambridge count is done on another day as close as practical to that date. If you would like to take part on any occasion, please contact the convenor a few days before the due date to check the actual date and time in case this is going to be different to the regular date and time.

Lake Species

The count is primarily intended for birds (“Lake species”) which are there to utilise the lake and its contents. This includes species that feed mostly in the water (and Kingfisher), but also Welcome Swallow which feeds above the water, and Harrier which visits to prey on species which feed in the water.

The standard method of carrying out the count is to walk one circuit around the lake, endeavouring to ensure that birds counted from one position are not counted again from other positions. This can be difficult when large numbers of birds are present and constant movement is occurring. Concealment of birds in lake and lakeside vegetation is another difficulty, and this varies with the amount of plant growth through the year.

The most numerous species is Mallard (and its crosses), for which a tally counter is normally used. When large numbers of Mallards are present it is difficult for one observer to count them and to observe and count other species at the same time. If only one observer is present then two circuits of the lake may need to be walked, to count Mallards on one circuit, and other species on the next circuit. If two or more observers are present then one will concentrate on the Mallard, while the other(s) count the remaining species.

Non-lake Species

Other species (“Non-lake species”) are also recorded. This small park lends itself particularly well to recording these other species, as it forms a discrete area. The lake is in an amphitheatre, being encircled on three sides by a high wooded scarp. The surrounding park includes some lawn areas. It is in the town of Cambridge, surrounded by industrial, residential and central business district areas.

For “Non-lake” species the number of individuals is not recorded but each species is simply recorded as seen (S) or heard (H) or both. In Table 2 below, H is shown if the species was heard only. S is used if the species was seen, whether or not it was heard as well.

Results of the 2009 counts are shown in Table 1 for “Lake species” and in Table 2 for “Non-lake species” (Species are listed in order of “The Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand”, 3rd edition, 1990).

Thanks are due to the following people who have participated in counts during 2009: Hugh Clifford, Zoë Clifford, Margaret Westgate, Steve Westgate.

Hugh Clifford,
Convener, Cambridge Lake Census, OSNZ Waikato
 22 December 2009

Table 1. Number of birds of each “Lake species” recorded during monthly counts of Cambridge Lake in 2009

	20 Jan	16 Feb	14 Mar	17 Apr	15 May	20 Jun	18 Jul	14 Aug	20 Sep	17 Oct	15 Nov	18 Dec
Shag, Black	-	1	1	-	-	8	1	-	-	1	-	-
Shag, Pied	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shag, Little	-	1	1	3	3	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shag, Little Black	-	10	10	11	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mallard – adult	378	631	527	1,014	2,207	1,339	696	229	84	39	120	167
Mallard – juv.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	3	3	-
Teal, Grey	-	-	-	39	2	19	1	-	-	-	-	-
Shoveler, New Zealand	-	3	6	3	13	9	1	35	-	-	-	-
* Duck, Domestic	2	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	4	2	2	2
Harrier	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pukeko – adult	2	1	6	1	6	5	10	6	7	7	2	3
Pukeko - juv.	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Coot, Australian – adult	24	14	19	20	15	24	26	24	33	30	26	23
Coot, Australian – juv.	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Kingfisher - adult	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	4	-	-
Swallow, Welcome	5	1	-	4	4	1	-	6	17	-	5	-

* Note: Domestic breeds of duck. Birds in this category were recorded in every month. Presumably someone dumps such birds here, as being surplus to their requirements or maybe because they think the birds will give pleasure to people who like to come and feed ducks. Such birds are sometimes recorded in several successive months before disappearing.

Why do such birds disappear? Are some of them they capable of flight or does someone remove them? They are usually not seen on the main body of the lake but near the carpark on the grass or on the small part of lake there – this is the area where duck-feeding by human visitors is carried out.

Among the large numbers of “mallards” which frequent the lake are often individuals with non-mallard colours and occasionally non-mallard shapes. These are assumed to be crosses between mallards and domestic breeds, but are lumped in the category “Mallard” in Table 1.

Table 2. Presence of “Non-lake” bird species during monthly counts of “Lake species” of birds at Cambridge Lake in 2009

	20 Jan	16 Feb	14 Mar	17 Apr	15 May	20 Jun	18 Jul	14 Aug	20 Sep	17 Oct	15 Nov	18 Dec
Rosella, Eastern	-	-	-	S	-	H	-	-	S	S	-	-
Blackbird	S	S	H	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Warbler, Grey	-	-	-	H	H	-	-	H	-	-	-	-
Fantail	-	-	-	S	-	S	S	S	S	-	S	-
Tui	-	-	-	-	H	H	-	H	S	-	-	-
Silvereye	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	S	-	-	-
Chaffinch	-	H	-	H	-	-	S	H	S	H	S	-
Greenfinch	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	H	S	-
Goldfinch	-	-	-	S	-	S	S	S	S	S	S	-
Sparrow, House	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	S
Myna	-	S	-	-	H	-	-	-	-	-	S	-
Magpie, Australian	-	H	-	-	-	-	-	-	H	-	-	-

Recent bird sightings

Tui, 1 at Woodlands Homestead, Gordonton, on 11 October. Also single birds twice seen flying overhead (David Riddell and Annette Taylor) and heard singing in tree (John Riddell), Woodlands Rd, Gordonton,



The royal spoonbill that visited Hamilton Lake in October.

in February. 1 regularly seen in Leamington garden throughout October (per Barry Friend). ‘Flocks’ of tui are in Cambridge at the moment. They can be heard at most times of the day and I have seen up to five birds flying between different food trees. Kowhai are all in flower at the moment, which is presumably what is pulling them into town. Anecdotally, there appear to be many more birds in the town than last year and I think it is absolutely brilliant (Dai Morgan and most of the Cambridge members).

Kokako, 1 at Waipapa, 8 October, near the corner of Ranginui Rd and Fletchers Rd (not signposted), just a few metres off the road (Neil Fitzgerald).

Tern species: 1 in Collins Rd area, 4 November (Mark Caunter).

Eastern rosella, 2 in Garden Place on 6 October (Mark Caunter).

Kaka, 1 regularly seen in Leamington garden throughout October (per Barry Friend).

Australasian bittern, 3 at Whangamarino (Falls Road lookout) on 30 October (Chris Gaskin).

New Zealand Falcon, 1 female at Mapara on 30 October (Chris Gaskin).

Blue Duck, pair with 4 ducklings next to the bridge over the Whakapapanui River on the road to the Chateau on 31 October.

Banded Dotterel, pair in the tephra fields a few kms up the Tukino Access Road (off the Desert Road) on 31 October (Chris Gaskin).

Royal Spoonbill, 1 at Hamilton Lake, October 16-24 (David Riddell).

Caspian Tern, 6 circled round Hamilton Lake a couple of times before heading off past Waikato Hospital, presumably towards the river in September. This was a greater number than the one or two occasionally seen at the lake (Stella Rowe).

Correction

On the bottom line of the second table in the Grey-faced petrel report in the previous Matuku, the figure 97 has slipped across from the third column to the fourth column.

Tui sightings soar

Tui sightings in and around Hamilton have soared over the past month. In September Environment Waikato reported there had been about 70 sightings between 18 July and 18 September. Since then the number of sightings reported to EW has climbed to more than 260, said biosecurity officer Ben Paris. That compares to about 40 sightings reported in all of 2008.

“Obviously recent publicity about tui will be encouraging more people to report sightings, but it seems clear there are definitely more of the birds about this year. That’s an encouraging sign that our Halo project to control possums and rats at tui breeding sites around Hamilton is having a solid impact on the number of birds visiting the city and nearby.”

The Halo project is aimed at controlling possums and rats ahead of the tui breeding season from October to

January. It has finished its active pest control work for 2009. The cost of Halo operations was \$93,835.

This calendar year, six sites around Hamilton were treated. – two were at Old Mountain Rd near Whatawhata, while the others were at Te Miro Reserve, Maungakawa Reserve, Tirohanga Rd near Maungatautari and the Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve. A total of 1024 hectares were treated using 1957 bait stations with a variety of toxins including brodifacoum, cholecalciferol, diphacinone and 1080.

Mr Paris said public comments in sighting reports showed how much people appreciated the presence of the tui. Comments included:

- “[It] made my day hearing a tui singing from our house.”
- “Musical! Seen daily over last month. First time seen in 36 years!”
- “No doubt with what I saw, definitely a tui sighting. Am absolutely rapt!”

Public photos and comments about Hamilton’s tui can be viewed on Halo’s Facebook and Twitter page at www.ew.govt.nz/hamiltonhalo.

from Environment Waikato press release, 21 October.

Southern Ocean birds prominent on beach patrols

OSNZ Waikato has a programme of monthly patrols of five North Island west coast beaches. During 2009 quite low numbers of beach wrecks were generally found, but November saw an increase. This includes Antarctic Fulmars which were a hot topic on the Birding-NZ forum, but plenty of other species as well.

Between 19 and 27 November we patrolled 31.5km, and found 101 birds (3.2 birds/km). The number of each species was Alb/Molly sp. 1, Bullers Shearwater 3, Sooty Shearwater 33, Short-tailed Shearwater 3, Fluttering Shearwater 5, Huttons Shearwater 4, Diving Petrel 1, Cape Pigeon 1, Antarctic Fulmar 4, Antarctic Petrel 1, Fairy Prion 18, Thin-billed Prion 2, Prion sp. 8, White-headed Petrel 1, Gannet 15, Red-billed Gull 1.

Hugh Clifford

Maungatautari updates

This season we’ve had the first hihi breeding in the central NI for maybe 130 years, the first successful wild kaka breeding on Maungatautari for many decades, and probably had the first successful breeding of whiteheads on Maungatautari for maybe 20 years (our field staff reported what was likely to be a family group). John and Stella Rowe have done most of the hihi breeding monitoring.

We have also had a clutch of yellow crowned kakariki hatched in our aviary, and we’ll start our reintroduction programme for that species by releasing those young birds this summer.

Most of our adult kiwi have bred and produced young, and some are now second-clutching - our best breeding season for them so far. We’ve got over 30 in the enclosures now.

Chris Smuts-Kennedy

Bird surveys at Horseshoe Lake for 2010

Horseshoe or Waiwhakareke Lake is a 3ha peat stained lake on the north-western side of Hamilton within the City boundary. The area surrounding the lake has long been farmed, but in 2005 the Hamilton City Council agreed to enter into a joint partnership to develop much of this land. A residential development is planned for part of the catchment; however, 66ha of land has been set aside and has been transformed into the ‘Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park’. The University of Waikato, WINTEC, and Tui 2000 are all contributing to restoration efforts with the clearing of weeds, planting, and lake and invertebrate monitoring. It seems, however, that the birds have been forgotten about so the Waikato OSNZ thought that we could help out in that regard.

On a windy Sunday afternoon on 20 December, a small group of us visited the lake to check out the logistics of conducting surveys. We were pretty successful and quickly found three different vantage points that enabled all sections of the lake to be seen; therefore, we decided to start counts that day! We counted ten different water species, with mallard ducks being the most abundant. Three different shags species were also seen and a lone grey teal was spotted lurking amongst the mallards. See below for a complete list.

If you are keen to be involved, please get in contact. The lake is fairly close to the Zoo, so not too difficult to get to, and there is a good meeting place about halfway down Baverstock Road next to the Lake's information sign. We feel that this is going to be an exciting new project and are hopeful that as the restoration work takes hold, and the quality of the lake and surrounding areas improves, there will also be an increase in the abundance and diversity of the bird life. We are planning to conduct monthly counts at the lake for 2010, so there will be plenty of opportunities for people to get involved.

Dai Morgan

Horseshoe Lake Survey, 20 December 2009

Present: Hugh and Zoe Clifford, Bev Woolley, Ken Wedgwood, Andrew Styche and Dai Morgan

Water species		Land birds seen or heard	
mallard duck	121	blackbird	
hybrid duck	1	song thrush	
grey teal	1	grey warbler	
pukeko	10	starling	
black shag	2	house sparrow	
little black shag	1	goldfinch	
little shag	2	skylark	
Canada goose	8	silveryeye	
spur-winged plover	5	rock pigeon	
harrier hawk	2		

Ornithological Art



This fine sketch of a sparrow is by Ashleigh McPherson.

Hamilton Lake Census, Sunday 10 January 2010

Present: Barry Friend & Liz Wang

10.10 am – 12.00 pm

SPECIES OF BIRD			TOTAL
COOT (17 families) + 3 nesting	181	28	209
MALLARD DUCKS (3 families)	963	6	969
DOMESTIC DUCKS	2		2
FARMYARD / CROSS DUCKS			
GREY DUCKS			
MUSCOVY DUCKS			
CANADA GEESE	3		3
DOMESTIC WHITE GEESE	14		14
WHITE FACED HERONS			
KINGFISHERS	1		1
PIED STILT			
PUKEKOS (11 families)	75	24	99
NEW ZEALAND SCAUP (BLACK TEAL)			
(LARGE) BLACK SHAG (CARBOS)	1		1
LITTLE BLACK SHAGS			
LITTLE SHAGS	1		1
PIED SHAGS			
BLACK SWANS			
WELCOME SWALLOWS	1		1
SPUR-WINGED PLOVERS			
PARADISE SHELDUCKS			
GREY TEAL			
SHOVELLER DUCKS			
FERAL ROCK PIGEONS	153		153
HARRIER HAWKS			
WHITE DOVES	4		4
Other: Blackbirds, Fantail, Goldfinches, Magpie, Mynahs, Silvereyes, Sparrows, Starlings, and Thrush.			
DEAD : 2 Mallard ducks			

Previous weather: A real mix of cloudy days and warm sunny ones. Often cold in the mornings and evenings with temperatures reaching 24C in the day. Some showers, already water sprinkler restrictions and Council staff being told to save water by not washing vehicles.

Today's weather: Like so many recent days, started cloudy with a light breeze later warming up when the sun came out.

A good start to the year with the Mallard figures increasing as per normal. 28 Coot chicks and 24 Pukeko chicks were counted. 3 Coot were nesting and we could clearly see 2 eggs as the sitting adult moved around. Only two Shags today, no visiting Black Swans.

Conditions: Water fairly calm. Not as many people as normal for January. Brown bulrushes out and lots of water lilies – white, pink and yellow. Dragonflies and plenty of other insects. Lots of small fishes. Water fairly clear except for by the inlet pipes. Three waka type boats on water.

(Revisited 17th January. Lots of people, many yachts, model boats, hire pedal boats and more Shags and ducks! Birds seemed hungry.)



The Lake Domain c. 1920

NEXT CENSUS is on Sunday February 8th - Hope to see you there.

Barry.

Waikato Cattle Egret Counts- August 2009

On the morning of the 22nd Martin Day and Betty Seddon counted 11 cattle egrets feeding amongst a herd of Friesian diary cattle near Lake Ngaroto. They were on the same farm in Lake Road as in previous years.

On the 27th at Rangairiri John and Stella Rowe found 114 cattle egrets feeding amongst their favoured black and white herd on Horahora Road. A loose flock of 14 white-faced herons were stalking their prey in the same pasture but did not fly up when the cattle egret moved on. We are grateful to Trevor Simpson for allowing us access over his property each year to monitor what is still, as far as we know, the largest winter flock of cattle egret in New Zealand.

Stella Rowe

Field Trip to Hamilton Gardens, 23 August 2009

After a cool picnic lunch in the Rose Garden gazebo, eleven of us explored the wilder edges of the gardens, especially the banks of the Waikato River. We noted several kingfishers and that finches were still in mixed flocks. It was not until we came to the cemetery up the river from the gardens that we found the tui we had been seeking. There were two and also two eastern rosellas in the same group of trees. We were fascinated to watch one of the tui imitating the sonorous repeated notes of a typical rosella call. Who knows what the rosellas would make of that.

It is only in very recent years that tui have returned to Hamilton City. Although sightings are becoming increasingly common, it is still exciting to see and hear these special birds in the suburbs and gullies of the city.

Another highlight followed when Bev Woolley pointed out the black fantail that frequents the area.

Bird list: black shag, mallard duck, pukeko, spur-winged plover, eastern rosella, kingfisher, welcome swallow, blackbird, song thrush, grey warbler, fantail (including the black morph) silvereye, tui, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch, house sparrow, starling, myna.

Dai Morgan