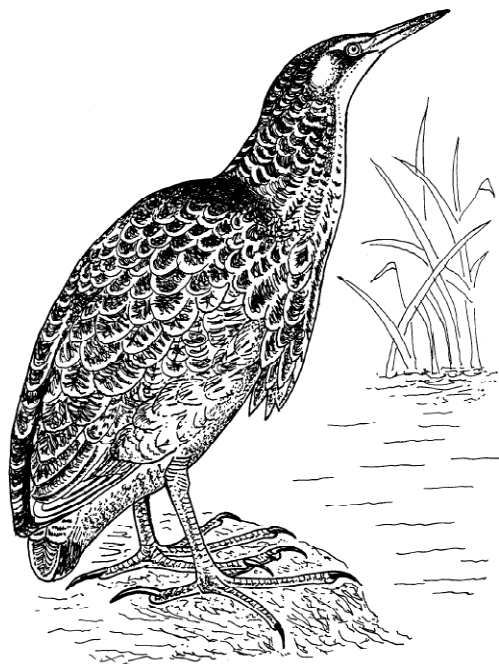


# MATUKU

## WAIKATO REGION NEWSLETTER

Ornithological Society of New Zealand

June 2010



### Regional Representative

Dai Morgan  
20a Walsh Street  
Forest Lake  
Hamilton 3200  
Phone: 07 8482522  
Email: magpie.morgan@gmail.com

### Regional Recorder

Andrew Styche  
C/- Dept of Conservation  
Private Bag 3072  
Hamilton  
Phone: 07 858 1013  
Email: astyche@doc.govt.nz

### Programme

- 16 June Monthly meeting: Mid-winter pot-luck dinner. This will be a great way of having a relaxing dinner with members and friends in the coldest part of winter! Would those people with last names beginning with an A-M, please bring a dessert; those N-Z'ers please bring a main. This will all be held at the DOC offices on Northway Street- a place with great ambiance, but few dining utensils! Therefore, please BYO plates and cutlery. Dinner starts around 6pm. For further information, please contact Bruce Postill (bpostill@doc.govt.nz).
- 21 July: Monthly meeting: Oliver Overdyck (DOC). General overview of threatened fauna conservation within Waikato Conservancy.
- 24 July: Howarth Wetland (Te Aroha). Contact Geoff Foreman 07 8894228.
- August: Mokoia Island day trip (date to be arranged).
- August: Lake Ngaroto cattle egret census (date to be arranged). Contact Stella Rowe 07 8435199.
- 18 August: Yuki Fukuda (Conservation Volunteers). A talk in two halves: Part 1- Waterhole use by large bouncing marsupials in inland Australia; Part 2- Conservation Volunteers' work within the Waikato Region.
- 21 September: A spring picnic at the Taitua Arboretum. Contact Dai Morgan 07 8482522.
- 15 September: Monthly meeting. Craig Purvis (DOC). Conservation at Snares Island.
- 20 October: Monthly meeting. Dr Cilla Wehi, Massey University. Ecology of the tree weta in the Waikato.

### Kaka Watch - Request for sightings

Only a small number of Kaka sightings reported so far for 2010 - a normal pattern of sighting reports for summer. Where are the Kaka during summer? Are they active in the Northland, Auckland, and Coromandel/northern Waikato regions? Or do most Kaka spend the majority of the summer on breeding territories in the Hauraki Gulf Islands? Hopefully we can provide some answers to these questions too.

This is a reminder to keep an eye out for Kaka in your area. I'm keen to get your Kaka sighting reports again this year. If you could mention kakawatchnz contact details to friends and neighbours too, that would increase our potential for getting good coverage.

Autumn tends to see increasing numbers of Kaka active on the mainland, so please pass on any sightings with the usual details when possible; location, date and time, number of Kaka, type of activity observed, type of vegetation used, type of food taken, and anything else of note (eg. mating behaviour, play etc).

Look forward to hearing from you.

Suzi Phillips  
Co-ordinator, KakawatchNZ  
www.kakawatchnz.org  
kakawatchnz@gmail.com

## Recent Bird Sightings

**Tui:** 1 banded bird (YM-BR) in Silverdale garden on 9 March (Bev Woolley). Says Neil Fitzgerald: "That bird has an interesting story. It (and another) was captured by a family at Pauanui (presumably blown from nest) who took them home near Tamahere and cared for them. They planned to release both birds as soon as possible so we banded them first (Jan 24 2008). Great to hear it is still going well because it looked like it may have had some sort of wing injury (was seen being chased by dog before capture). It was seen by the family for a while after release but this is the first record away from there that I have." 1 over Morrinsville on 24 April (Geoff and Raewynn Foreman). 4 in gum trees by Horotiu Bridge on 4 June (David Riddell, Annette Taylor). Tuis feeding on green Five finger berries in Cambridge garden every day, 15 May onwards (Betty Seddon).

**Royal Spoonbill:** 1 at Hamilton Lake, 1 April (via Barry Friend).

**Kaka:** 7 or 8 on 16 May in Morrinsville for their annual winter visit. Anyone interested can see them by the Piako River Bridge on the eastern edge of the town; they also (in the past) spend much of their time at the golf course (Geoff and Raewynn Foreman).

**Falcon:** 1 on 22 May on south side of Maungatautari. No indication of breeding there since the restoration programme started in 2002, but Laurence Barea suspected them of breeding on the mountain in the early 1990s when he was doing his MSc on falcons in the central NI. (Chris Smuts-Kennedy, Anne & Basil Graeme).

**Brown Teal:** 2 in inlet on south side of Lake Karapiro where the big pylons cross the lake on 7 May. They were amongst many spent shotgun cartridges floating on the water (this was the Friday after the opening weekend of the shooting season). That inlet is just across the lake from David & Juliette Wallace's 'Warrenheip' property on Fergusson Gully Rd, where they have a 17-ha pest-proof-fenced private reserve, in which a small number of brown teal were released some years ago. They have bred there in the past, and David Wallace says he is aware of previous sightings on the lake (Chris Smuts-Kennedy).

**Morepork:** 1 in late May for several nights roosting in large dense trees on Cambridge suburban half-acre property (maybe longer). "In late afternoon it sometimes gets mobbed by blackbirds and sparrows, but it has stood its ground so far. At night it takes its revenge by raiding the sparrow roost in the dense kanukas etc in our 'bush corner', and frantic sparrows (and a blackbird on one occasion) have hit the house windows at night (Chris Smuts-Kennedy).

**Arctic Skua:** 1 at Waikorea Beach on 27 April, harassing White-fronted Terns just offshore. It is at this time of year that the White-fronted Terns seem to spread along the coast after they depart from their breeding colonies. Perhaps it is also the time that the Arctic Skuas are moving north preparatory to their long migration to the Arctic to breed (Hugh Clifford).

## From the Hamilton Library files of the Waikato Times: Published March 8 1911

The Hamilton Domain Board placed two white swans upon the Lake this morning. The birds, which came from Kaikoura, are at present in an enclosure, and should they escape the board will be grateful for any information regarding them, while anyone interfering with them will be severely dealt with. It is to be hoped

they will not share the fate of the last occupants of the enclosure. Mr Thomas Holden, who takes an interest in such matters, built at his own expense a wire-netting enclosure and placed therein a number of mallard ducks. Soon afterwards a local sportsman came along, and after an enjoyable bit of shooting returned home with a good bag; he was one of those who like to have their game tethered for them. Unfortunately his identity never transpired; otherwise he would have probably paid dearly for that Sunday's dinner.

## Update

Today, Hamilton Lake is home to hundreds of birds including mallards, coots, pukeko, shags, and a few others besides. But Waikato Ornithological Society member Barry Friend says it was not always this way.

“If you look back at the photographs from 100 years ago you'll see there really were not very many birds on the lake.”

Mallard ducks are currently the most common birds he says, because they breed easily and had a bit of help from the Auckland Acclimatisation Society. Plus, they have us humans figured out. “Ducks are quite clever. They know that where there are people, there's food. They've also worked out that it's safe in the city, and when the shooting season starts in May they all come to Hamilton Lake.”

Other residents who have done well on the lake are the coot and pukeko – who Barry refers to as the “comedians of the bird world”.

“Hamilton Lake used to be the largest inland breeding lake for coots. They disappeared entirely for a few years following 1989 when the aquatic plants died off, but the council has done some excellent work and the coot have come back. We counted 298 last August.”

When Barry came to Hamilton from Britain in 1978, he remembers seeing a sea of black swans on the lake. “It was fantastic for me, because I'd only ever seen white swans. There are no resident black swans on the lake now, only visitors. The black swan is a bit of a sad story. People weren't kind to them. A few years ago the swans were often attacked by dogs and fed lead pellets. They were taken to the arboretum after that, where it's safer for them.”

The Waikato branch of the Ornithological Society has been monitoring bird numbers on Hamilton Lake since 1982, when they did a census three times a year. But when Barry became involved in the 1990s, it was decided to conduct the census every month and he and other members have done this ever since – even when it's raining.

“In that case it may just be me. But everyone is welcome to join in, it's a nice walk around the lake, takes about two hours, going slow and counting all the birds. Council uses our figures for their lake management plan, so it's a worthwhile job to do.”

The society also monitors Cambridge Lake, Forest Lake and will soon be doing censuses for Horseshoe Lake, too. As well as the regulars, Hamilton Lake gets occasional visits from less common birds, such as white heron and royal spoonbill. It's also one of the few inland lakes where it's possible to find four species of shag. “It would be really nice to see more paradise shelducks, grey teal, dabchicks, shoveller ducks and New Zealand scaup on the lake. But it's still come a long way.”

The bird count takes place on the second Sunday of the month, meeting at 10am opposite the new Verandah café.

Iris Riddell

Reprinted from the Waikato Times

## Hamilton Lake Census Annual Report 2009

Both the lake and the land around it have changed with history and human evolution. It is our job to record these changes. We count the number of lake bird species individually and note any other non-lake birds. We have regular records dating back to 1982. We also observe bird behaviour and trends as well as monitoring their habitat including changes in and around the lake environment.

2009 followed the normal pattern of previous years with the Mallard Ducks coming back from breeding in the first few months of the year and peaking at 2,490 in May during the shooting season.

All four species of Shag were present on four of the twelve months. The maximum counts were ten Little Blacks in September, Nine Little in July, eight Black (Carbos) in February and three Pied in June.

Canada Geese continued to come and go with 25 counted in January. The Domestic Geese peaked at 18 in May.

The Coot continue to flourish and breed at the Lake with a maximum total of 300 in August – that was 52 more than the Mallard count that month!

Pukekos also continue to breed well – 103 counted in July. Black Swans are now rarely seen - just one sighting of a visiting one with a cygnet in December. Other birds seen include Kingfishers, Spur-Winged Plovers, Farmyard Cross Ducks, Domestic Ducks, usually being the same two White Aylesbury, Five Pied Stilt in March, two Grey Ducks in May, White Faced Herons – one in January, November and December and a Caspian Tern was present in July.

Non-lake birds include White Doves from the nearby houses opposite Innes Common which often breed with the numerous common Rock Pigeons. John counted a record 524 in June. In October there was a cull of pigeons resulting in lower counts of between 120 and 340 for the following months. Rosellas were seen in February, June and November.

Other species present were Blackbirds, Chaffinches, Fantails, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Grey Warblers, Magpies, Mynahs, Silvereyes, Sparrows, Starlings and Thrushes. The rarest visitor never stayed for the Lake Census Count but certainly did not go unnoticed. That was a Royal Spoonbill in October which made the local paper.

The Hamilton City Council continues to improve the Lake Domain and follow the guidelines of the “Reserves Management Act” and other legislation in place. At the end of the year a “Minor Review of the Operative Hamilton Lake Domain Management Plan” was started. This is aimed at removing arsenic from the sediments of the lake. This is a consequence of placing chemicals into the lake to kill nuisance aquatic weeds in the sixties.

A display on the lake featured on level three of the Hamilton City Library in December.

A popular event was the opening of the new café-restaurant and function centre “The Verandah” in July. The Lake remains an important recreational, educational and environmental attraction in the heart of our busy city. We are lucky to have it.

I would like to thank all those that have taken part in the census during 2009: Paul Cuming, June and Jeff Friend, Gladys Hollick, Stella and John Rowe, Bev Woolley, Liz Wang and her friends Elaine, Rosa and Andrew. Thank you.

Barry Friend

## **OSNZ Waikato - Te Ko Utu (Cambridge Lake) Census: 21 March 2010**

Present: Hugh Clifford.

Time: 10.43– 11.13am, Weather – Partly cloudy.

### **Lake species recorded**

Coot	9 (including 1 juvenile)
Mallard/Mallard cross	727
Pukeko	1
Kingfisher	1
Shag, Little	1
Shag, Little Black	3

### Other species seen/heard

Fantail	H
Myna	S
Sparrow, House	S

### Comments

Lake level was lowish and there was a lot of scum on the surface at the inlet end of the lake.

Mallards had increased since last month, as is to be expected, but no Shovelers were present this time. The mallards were quite vocal and restless as if it was shooting season already.

Pukeko and Coot were present in very low numbers. A regular dog-walker who stopped to talk to me when he saw I was looking at birds, said that he had seen a number of dead ducks and pukekos about 3 weeks before.

Hugh Clifford

### Photo Corner

Taio Kessels took a quick walk up the Red Tarns track at Mt Cook on 5 April (1200m asl) with his father, Gerry Kessels. Says Gerry: “After about half an hour of unyielding climb from Mt Cook Village, while listening to keas calling in the tarns above us we spotted this NZ war-bird preening itself and surveying its domain with a relaxed, regal air. Taio crept right up to it and took several photos and a couple of videos from about 3m. It was quite happy in our presence until some stupid tourists blundered by.”



## OSNZ Waikato Kawhia Harbour Census: 13 February 2010

Tide: 1050, 3.9m. Weather: Light wind, overcast

Personnel: L Hoverd, J Hoverd, S Rowe, J Rowe, G Saunders, M Lellman, B Postill, Dion (DoC).

	Oparau River & Ellis Pt	Opeope Rocks & Shore- line	Mid Har- bour	La- goon	Har- bour Mouth	Nth Har- bour	Te- Motu Island	TeMotu Sand- bank	Total
Gannet			1		1				2
Black Shag			2			1			3
Pied Shag		16				1			17
L B Shag			6						6
Little Shag				1					1
WF Heron	30		45						75
Reef Heron									
Spoonbill									
Black Swan			414				260		674
P. Shelduck									
Mallard									
CanadaG.	150								150
SI PO	510	285			80	65		1,500	2,440
V.OC		2		5	6	4	6		23
Pied Stilt	180	7							187
Black/hybrid stilt									
Red Knot							3		3
B. Dotterel					57		46		103
NZ Dotterel					2				2
SW Plover					3				3
Godwit	147						3,000	240	3,387
Bkb Gull	6	17		10	15	5		3	56
RB Gull		5		2	6			1	14
Caspian Tern	1	6			4			32	43
WF Tern		18							18
Kingfisher									
East.Curlew							1		1
Whimbrel							1		1

## OSNZ Waikato Aotea Harbour Census: 13 February 2010

Tide: 1050, 3.9m. Weather: Light wind, overcast

Personnel: H Clifford, Z Clifford, M Lewis, M Caird, C Annandale.

	Aotea Lagoon	Upper Harbour	Morrison's Roost	Harbour Entrance	TOTAL
Gannet					0
Black Shag					0
Pied Shag		18			18
L. Black Shag					0
Little Shag			1		1
WF Heron		3	1		4
Reef Heron					0
Spoonbill					0
Black Swan		104	170		274
P. Shelduck	16				16
Mallard	60				60
Canada Goose					0
Harrier					0
SIPO	390	770	390		1,550
VOC	1			5	6
Pied Stilt		20			20
Black/hybrid					0
Red Knot					0
Banded Dotterel				30	30
New Zealand Dotterel				10	10
SW Plover		2			2
Godwit	2,300	600	9		2,909
Blackb Gull	1	3	13	10	27
RB Gull	17	11		2	30
Caspian Tern	1	22	2		25
WF Tern					0
Kingfisher					0
Turnstone					0
Asiatic Whimbrel					0
SootyShearwater		1			1





## Horseshoe Lake Counts

In December 2009 monthly counts were started at Horseshoe Lake. Extensive ecological restoration has begun at the lake by various stakeholders; however, it became apparent that there was no plan to document changes in bird composition or abundance over time. Therefore the Waikato Branch of the OSNZ thought that we could fill this niche.

Below is a summary of the first six counts. If you would like to help out with a monthly count at some stage, please get in contact.

Numbers of water birds on Horseshoe Lake counted during monthly surveys (December 2009-May 2010)

	December	January	February	March	April	May
mallard duck	121	159	133	98	49	207
hybrid duck	1	3	0	0	0	0
grey duck	0	2	0	0	0	0
grey teal	1	0	0	0	0	0
paradise shelduck	0	1	3	4	2	4
pukeko	10	8	10	17	15	51
black shag	2	5	2	0	0	0
little black shag	1	1	0	0	2	0
little shag	2	0	1	1	1	0
Canada goose	8	4	0	39	29	53

Dai Morgan

## OSNZ Waikato Grey-faced Petrel Project

Field work for the Autumn/Winter banding period is drawing to a close about now. Paul Cuming and his team of volunteers have been working busily at Mauao (Mount Maunganui), though the frequent spells of wet stormy weather from the easterly quarter have been a handicap.

So far, 77 Grey-faced Petrels have been banded in the period, and 172 banded birds have been recaptured. We are always excited when one of 'our own babies' is found back home for the first time, but there has been only one of them recorded in this period – it was banded in 1999 so is 10 years old at first recapture. There is another bird in a rather similar category but not quite the same. It fledged from Mauao in 1999/2000 and this is the first time we have caught it as an adult. It was actually hatched on Motuotau Island but translocated to Mauao as a chick with 29 others in the artificial rearing trial carried out by Graeme Taylor that year. This is the 4th one of those translocated chicks to be caught as an adult at Mauao. We don't know if any have returned instead to Motuotau as we haven't been working there regularly since 2000/01.

Another aspect of interest is birds which have been caught at another location as well as Mauao. One such bird was banded at Moutohora (Whale Island) in 1994, but we have just captured it at Mauao for the third time since 2007, so it looks as though it has made Mauao its home now. Another well-travelled bird was captured at Mauao for the 4th time since 2005, but it also had one capture in Australian waters off the coast at Wollongong in 2005. Its New Zealand and Australian bands are on different legs – no Kiwi/Aussie friction on this bird!

During the years that we were working on Grey-faced Petrels at Motuotau Island as well as at Mauao we were banding other species of petrels and shearwaters which breed on the island too. One of the Northern Diving Petrels that we banded in 1996 was found washed up dead on Waihi Beach by a member of the public last week. We know it is at least 14 years old as that is the length of time since it was banded, but its age may be greater than that as it was banded as an adult so could have been a few years old at the time of banding.

The oldest Grey-faced Petrel of known age we have caught in this current period of banding is 18 years old. It was banded at Mauao as a chick in 1991. We will almost certainly have caught older birds in this period,

without knowing it. This is because the majority of the birds we band are adults and we have no way of knowing how old they are at the time of banding.

Hugh Clifford

### **May OSNZ Fieldtrip: Mangakara Walk on Mt Pirongia**

Ten members and friends met at 9:30am at the end of Greys Road on Mt Pirongia. Present were Sue and Ashley Reid, Katherine Row, Betty Seddon, Ralph Skinner, John and Stella Rowe, Sandra Ortiz Valderama. Sandra brought a tracking aerial to try and locate bellbirds equipped with radio transmitters recently released in Hamilton Gardens. We were pleased to be accompanied by Kate Parr who manages the Pirongia Forest Park Lodge and her 3-year-old daughter, Sophie.

The Mangakara Walk is a delightful loop track starting and finishing at the Lodge. Four passes through original forest with abundant tawa and kohekohe and some emergent podocarps. Though the day was fine and sunny, the forest interior was cold. Most birds were seen on the bush edge near the Lodge while we were having lunch. Here too Sandra was thrilled to locate one of the radio-tagged bellbirds though it never came close enough to be seen.

Birds seen/heard: bellbirds were the most commonly heard birds in the forest; tui were spotted by Betty feeding on kohekohe flowers; fantails were in moderate numbers as were silvereyes; heard occasionally were grey warblers, one tomtit and a kereru; chaffinch, magpie and blackbird were present in the bush while harrier, kingfisher, welcome swallow, eastern rosella and house sparrow were noted in more open country.

The day was pleasantly rounded off in near-by Pirongia township where we looked around the historic museum, had a coffee at the newly Clydesdale cafe and visited Hilary Ramage's admirable Baffin Street gallery.

Stella Rowe

### **Beach-cast birds**

Beach patrols in January and February produced quite a number of birds but subsequent months have yielded relatively few. A contributing factor may have been that so much of our weather in the last couple of months has been from the easterly quarter. From January until 9 June there have been 27 patrols, yielding 277 birds. Some of the species we have found but normally see rather infrequently have been - Grey-headed Mollymawk, Bullers Mollymawk, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Little Shearwater, Pycrofts Petrel. Species that are often numerous but have not been this year are Sooty Shearwater and Short-tailed Shearwater. These two we normally get on their southward migration to their breeding grounds in spring and on their northward migration in autumn/winter. So far this autumn/winter we have recorded only 5 dead birds of each species, so maybe the recent weather patterns have been kind to them. One specimen proved to be a puzzle to identify. It comprised a few bones and attached primary wing feathers and establishing its species proved beyond our local resources. For the experts at Te Papa with all their reference material it was easy – a Bar-tailed Godwit!

Hugh Clifford

### **DOC Banding Training Course**

Over the past several years DoC has been upgrading the Banding Scheme in a number of ways. Those of you who have banding permits and submit banding records will have experienced the changes from the former paper-based system to the current electronic one. This has no doubt contributed greatly to the efficiency of administering the scheme, and to its value for long-term research.

Banding permits are now issued for a 5-year term (for lengthy projects) or a 3-year term for shorter projects, which is certainly easier for everyone than the previous annual basis.

Also the banding certification scheme now separates banders into three levels of banding experience:

### **Level 1 Trainee**

Novice banders who will be closely supervised. They will only be allowed to catch and band birds in the direct presence of a Level 3 bander.

### **Level 2 Intermediate**

People with some experience of capturing and banding a limited range of bird species and who are competent to capture and band birds without direct supervision from a Level 3 bander.

### **Level 3 Supervisor/Trainer**

Experienced bird banders who are capable of using a range of bird capture methods and have handled many birds and species. These people will be needed to pass their banding skills on to the Level 1 banders.

The Banding Advisory Committee aims to implement consistent training methods for the whole country, and to run training courses for all three levels of banders, starting with Level 3. The first of these courses was held at Somes Island in Wellington in May 2008, with subsequent ones in Kaikoura, Tawharanui, Borland Lodge (Southland), Manawatu, and finally, in April 2010, at Tauranga.

Attendance was by invitation and at the Tauranga course the majority of attendees were DoC staff, but there were non-DOC people including two OSNZ Waikato members (Hugh Clifford and Chris Smuts-Kennedy) and one ex-Waikato but now BoP member (Paul Cuming). The attendees were currently working on banding projects from Northland to the West Coast of the South Island, but many of them had a very long history of previous bird banding on numerous species in far-flung locations. This made it a very stimulating and knowledgeable group to be with.

The training course was run by Graeme Taylor (Banding Officer, DoC), David Melville (OSNZ Banding Liaison Officer), Sharon Alderson (R&D Training Officer, DoC). The course was conducted over four days and covered a very large number of topics of relevance to bird banding. There were also two field sessions, one on mist-netting in an orchard area, and the other on night banding of Grey-faced Petrels at Mauao. This is the twentieth year of our Grey-faced Petrel Project there, so a lot of the birds are accustomed to being caught by us once or twice a year. On this occasion the birds probably didn't realise that they were privileged to be handled by a very notable and select group of experts!

Another important aspect of the enhancement of the banding scheme is the production of a greatly revised and improved Bander's Manual. This has been written for DoC by David Melville and is extremely comprehensive. It is approaching its final form and will be a great asset to banders and to other ornithologists.

Hugh Clifford

### **For Sale : Ornithological Library**

Well over 200 individual monographs for the 'ornithology' list; many are 'out-of-print' or have been imported into New Zealand direct from publishers/vendors. Most are 'as new' or in 'very good' condition.

I am not a commercial bookseller and have genuine reasons for selling this substantial collection. I may be prepared to deliver (in the greater Waikato/King Country/Volcanic Plateau region) to buyers requiring substantial numbers of titles, or multi-volume sets. The collection is being offered preferentially to OSNZ Waikato members prior to being advertised on "Trade-Me".

Multi-volume sets - includes a full, 'fine' (condition) set of HANZAB and all published volumes of the Handbook of the Birds of the World. Unfortunately, multi-volume sets will not be 'split' to accommodate buyers with requirements for less volumes than those available.

Two MS Word-formatted lists are available - 'Ornithology' (however, includes NZ flora/fauna, botany, general biology and ecology) and 'Palaeornithology' (includes dinosaurs, vertebrate palaeontology, taphonomy). Both lists include audio/CD-ROM/'mixed media' titles.

No pricing is included on lists – potential buyers can contact me for my costs to purchase new/fm the vendor, however it's relatively easy to find typical prices for the titles listed; negotiations can start from there and generous discounts will be available to buyers selecting multiple titles totalling more than \$100.

For lists, please contact:  
Manukau (David) Lewis

Work 07 872 6692  
Home 07 878 3080

Manukau.Lewis@corrections.govt.nz  
mahe\_manukau@clear.net.nz"

### **Just room for one last picture...**



Hamilton Lake, about 100 years ago. Note absence on ducks!