

# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

## Wellington Region Newsletter

### OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

June 2015

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

Greetings

The June Newsletter has a number of reports on the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting held in Blenheim over Queen's Birthday weekend. A most enjoyable and fitting occasion to celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. For those who did not manage to get to the meeting I can strongly recommend any of the field trips as worthwhile birding experiences.

Congratulations to Sharon Alderton and her team for running a very successful Teen Camp. This was an excellent initiative as part of the drive to encourage more youthful members into our organisation. The expectation is that Teen Camps will be held annually, at different locations throughout the country.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to the newsletter. Members are encouraged to send me information for the newsletter which are produced four times a year.

Regards

Geoff de Lisle

Regional Representative, Wellington OSNZ (Birds New Zealand)

## Upcoming Monthly Meetings WHERE and WHEN

Meetings are held at Te Papa's collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up the steps and across the carpark. First Monday of the month, 7. 45pm.

### July Meeting

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> of July. "Habitat Use of Primarily Forest-Dwelling Brown Teal, Pāteke (*Anas chlorotis*) at Zealandia". Katie Sheridan

### August Meeting

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, Julia Loepelt, Cognition and foraging behaviour of kaka.

### September Meeting

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> of September, Kevin Hackwell will speak on "Pest-Free New Zealand".

### October Meeting

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> of October, Helen Gummer and Shane Cotter will speak on the progress of the seabird translocations to Mana and Matiu/Somes Islands.

## Report of Monthly Meetings

April Meeting. **Camping with emperor penguins' by Colin Miskelly.** Colin gave an illustrated talk of his visit to Antarctica in November / December 2014 when he was a guest lecturer for Adventure Network International (ANI). Many of Colin's activities in Antarctica have been summarised in a

series of 8 blogs on the Te Papa website <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/author/colinmiskelly/page/2/> . In 1985 ANI became the first country to offer flights to Antarctica. They have high standards of biosecurity and environmental practices. For example, all garbage is removed from Antarctica and nothing is burned or buried. All human waste (urine and faeces) from the base camp on Union Glacier is removed for appropriate disposal in Chile. Where practical solid waste is removed from field camps, including Mount Vinson and within one degree of the South Pole. Part of Colin's duties was guiding tourists visiting an Emperor penguin colony. Given the logistics of getting to the penguin colony is not too surprising that this trip of a lifetime is expensive, costing \$41,900 (US) for a 9 day tour. <http://www.adventure-network.com/>

**May Meeting. Beautiful, brave, poorly-known, and critically endangered in New Zealand: the Eastern Rockhopper Penguin – Kyle Morrison.** In this talk Kyle summarised some of the major findings of PhD studies on the Eastern rockhopper penguin on Campbell Island. Between 1942 and 1985 this penguin population crashed by an estimated 94%, from 800,000 to 51,500 breeding pairs. Subsequently there have not been major changes in the total number of birds on the island with some colonies decreasing and others expanding. While changes in food supply associated with climate change is thought to be a major factor in the change of penguin numbers, predation by skuas, giant petrels and seals was also a factor. Kyle showed a number of startling videos of penguins being predated.

**May Meeting – Additional seminar. "Birds on the Edge: desert birds and climate change in Southern Africa" Dr Susan (Susie) Cunningham.** During a short visit to New Zealand from South Africa Susie gave a seminar on her recent studies on the potential effects of climate change on a range of different bird species. She is well known to many Wellingtonians through her prior association with OSNZ and Zealandia. Following the completion of a PhD at Massey University she moved to the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of Ornithology in Cape Town. Her studies in South Africa took place during the summer in the Kalahari Desert using behavioural investigations to assess the vulnerability of arid-land birds to temperature extremes. In the Kalahari Desert temperatures reach over 40°C. Her studies indicate that there is a difference between species on the effects of high temperature. Important factors responsible for these difference include body size and diet. Some birds are able to mitigate the effect of high temperatures through behavioural changes. For example, Southern Fiscals (fiscal shrike) were making a trade-off on hot afternoons, compromising foraging intake in return for thermal benefits.

## Field Activities

*(1) Mist netting and passerine banding* – Peter Reese reports;

In spite of a bad forecast we managed to get a good day's banding in at the Zoo on Saturday (June 20), we had a good turnout of both birds and people. We caught 158 birds of 7 species with 109 new and 49 recaps.

Blackbird – 1 (0)

Chaffinch – 3 (0)

Dunnock – 0 (1)

Greenfinch – 21 (4)

House Sparrow – 27 (7)

Yellowhammer – 2 (0)

Silvereye – 65 (37) including some pretty old recaps.

Some more info and a few photos can be found on our blog – <http://wgtnnzbanders.blogspot.co.nz/>

The next session at the Zoo is likely to be on Saturday 18 July. If you would like to be involved in the occasional session at other sites let me know

<http://wgtnnzbanders.blogspot.co.nz/>

*(2) Zealandia / Karori Sanctuary five minute bird counts*

These counts are being carried out every 3 months. This is a great opportunity to learn the five minute bird-counting technique. Please contact Colin Miskelly

for details. [Hakawai@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Hakawai@xtra.co.nz)

(3) Shag and Red-billed gull surveys. Summaries of the last 12 months results will be sent out to members shortly. The summaries will also include the programme for the next 12 months.

## Bird Snippets – Wellington

### Royal Spoonbill Plimmerton Firestation [Jim J](#) » Thu Apr 09, 2015

A lone bird there today - first I've seen at this spot. Always a good place to scan if you're passing. Usually a couple of species of shag, variable oystercatcher, w/f terns, gannets off-shore etc - every so often reef heron, b/f tern - unfortunately no shore plover for a long time but always the possibility that maybe 1 or 2 survived ex Mana Is and may still be around. BirdNZ.net

### NZ Falcon Te Ahumairangi Hill [ledzep](#), Sun Apr 19, 2015

I seem to be seeing Falcons now each weekend. Today I had great views of one that swooped low over me as I was going up Colonial Knob - I saw the black and white barred underwing and moustache. It sat in a dead tree slightly north of -41.143868 174.813593 (my location). It took off west and in a couple of minutes I had more views of it over the hills harassing a group of about 40 starlings (or where they harassing it?) and at the same time a Harrier soared higher overhead with a Spur-winged Plover harassing it. (About 10 minutes later there were 2 Spur-winged Plovers dive-bombing the same Harrier). The Falcon went south, turned round, and headed back north above the tops of the hills. This one appeared light underneath so was probably an adult. They seem to be at home on the Western Wellington hills. BirdingNZ.net

### Kokako Kapiti Island

Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2015



While volunteering on Kapiti Island we have been regularly hearing and seeing kokako on the Trig and Wilkinson (public) tracks. The most kokako seen in one day was 6 with another one heard while we were having afternoon tea in the Red House. The photograph was taken the following day feeding on the grass outside this house.

### Inner city biodiversity [Nikki McArthur](#), Sun Apr 26, 2015

Heard and saw a NZ falcon dive-bombing a harrier high overhead above the Tinakori shops about mid-afternoon today. Flock of three kaka also seen at the Founder's (Tinakori Rd) entrance to the Botanic Gardens a few minutes earlier.

And spotted from the train into town: 14 little shags, 17 little black shags, 6 spotted shags, 4 VOC, 1 gannet, 1 w-f tern, 1 fluttering shearwater, red-billed gulls & black-backed gulls. BirdingNZ.net

### Inner city biodiversity

**Nikki McArthur**, Mon Apr 27, 2015

Spotted another NZ falcon in central Wellington City today, this time a bird swooping down low across Oriental Parade, upsetting a nearby tui and a few red-billed gulls. BirdingNZ.net

### Two karearea in our Lower Hutt backyard

**Nick McBride**, Fri May 01, 2015

I thought I'd post that we had two juvenile falcon flitting around our backyard. We've been living here adjoining the Hutt River Trail in Belmont for 12 years and I've never see anything like it. I think I saw a karearea at Belmont Regional. BirdingNZ.net Park. Comment on photograph by **Raptor**, Sat May 02, 2015

Nick - the photos are of an adult NZ falcon. There is believed to be a breeding pair in Belmont Park.

Note: During the last three months falcon have been seen on a number of occasions from our property at the top of Blue Mountains Road.

### Cook Strait seabirds, 2 May

**Michael Szabo**, Mon May 04, 2015

It was a pretty damn good day for seabirds off the south Wellington coast in Cook Strait on Saturday 2 May on board Seafarer II with skipper Jonathan Delich of Cook Strait Fishing Charters.

Here's the species list: BirdingNZ.net

southern royal albatross	short-tailed shearwater
northern royal albatross	Buller's shearwater
gibsoni Antipodean albatross	fluttering shearwater
Buller's mollymawk	spotted shag
black-browed mollymawk	black shag
white-capped mollymawk	pied shag
Salvin's mollymawk	little black shag
northern giant petrel	little shag
Westland petrel	white-fronted tern
Cape petrel	black-fronted tern
common diving petrel	red-billed gull
	kelp gull
	welcome swallow
	variable
	oystercatcher
	sooty shearwater

### Nankeen kestrel - Miramar Peninsula

**Colin Miskelly**, Mon May 25, 2015

I have received an email report (followed up with a phone call) of a likely nankeen kestrel seen hunting at Shelly Bay on the afternoon of 24 May. It was not described as doing the classic rapid wingbeat/hover, but was holding a constant position into the wind, and spiralled down to take something on the ground. It was only seen from below, and had cream underparts. BirdingNZ.net

### Antarctic petrel, Wellington

**Colin Miskelly**, Thu May 28, 2015

This polar blast has apparently brought some interesting birds north. A live Antarctic petrel was picked up at Avalon on 27 May (it died at Wellington Zoo overnight).

### New Zealand records

The first New Zealand record of an Antarctic petrel was one storm-wrecked in September 1973, followed by three in 1975 and one in 1977. These were followed by the phenomenal influx of September 1978, when 77 were found. Subsequent wrecks have occurred in 1987 (9 birds), 1991 (19), 1992 (8), 1995 (8) and 1999 (10), with most birds found August to October. Most Antarctic petrels

have been found on west coast beaches between Wellington and Cape Reinga, with high encounter rates also on Southland beaches. NZBirdsonline

**Two Falcons: Maungaraki, Lower Hutt Charlotte,** Sun Jun 07, 2015

Less than 15 minutes ago we heard and then saw two Falcons, a female and male very clearly. They were in our backyard on patrol before flying out towards Normandale. Lots of calling and flight manoeuvring, we were less than 3-4 meters from them while they were perched. BirdingNZ.net

**Black-billed gull, Island Bay Marine Reserve, Wellington, Michael Szabo,** Sat Jun 13, 2015

I found a black-billed gull on the beach in Island Bay today inside the marine reserve boundary resting among a small flock of red-billed gulls. This is the first time I've seen this species in Island Bay. BirdingNZ.net  
Note: Keep an eye out for banded black-billed gulls. See article on black-billed gulls in this newsletter.

**NZ falcon taking a goldfinch: Wellington Botanic Gardens, Peter Frost,** Mon Jun 22, 2015

I watched a male New Zealand falcon take a goldfinch in Wellington's Botanic Gardens. It flew past me from the direction of the Met Service building, down and across the open grassy area in which the Henry Moore

sculpture is situated. When it reached the scattered trees near the end it plucked out of the air one of 2-3 goldfinches that were feeding on the ground and which took flight just as the falcon arrived. BirdingNZ.net  
<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=4654>

**Kerguelen Petrel, Porirua City, Lisa Argilla, Wellington Zoo.**

Found alive in Porirua City and handed in to SPCA. Subsequently treated at Wellington Zoo and released on 22/6/15 (banded Y17584). Photographs – Lisa Argilla



Lisa Argilla, zoo vet reports, This bird presented as a standard storm wreck patient in that it was weak and underweight and anaemic but no injuries. We gave it some TLC and good nutritious food (fish slurry) while in hospital. He was allowed to swim in our salt water pool and was eventually strong enough to swim for 8 hours which is the benchmark we use before we are happy to

release a pelagic species. They must be 100% waterproof and able to spend 6-8 hours on our salt pool without getting wet or exhausted. We released him at red rocks on the South Coast and he took off and headed toward the south island but then retreated into the hills to hide from a black backed gull that found him interesting. He was banded before release which is a standard practice for most natives we see. It is useful for post-release monitoring of rehabilitated wildlife to have some sort of ID. We have had the odd recapture reported to us and there are species like Tui and Kereru and silvereyes that we fixed up that are still doing well many years later which is terrific!

<http://www.wellingtonzoo.com/content/nest/default.aspx>





## Bird strikes – an ongoing problem?

Bird strikes are a major problem – the photo is the result of a miss-guided kereru. We were surprised that a bird flew into this window as the bedroom is poorly lit and there is no obvious flight path for a kereru. The window was programmed to be double glazed the following week. Good news! the bird suffered no major injuries and

immediately flew off when taken outside. We have WindowAlert Decals on our other windows and these appear to be very effective in preventing bird strikes. Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle



**PROJECT KERERU** currently import **WindowAlert Decals** into New Zealand. For more information please email us at: [sales@projectkereru.org.nz](mailto:sales@projectkereru.org.nz). WindowAlert recommend 1 decal per 3ft square area of window. Also available from Bird Rescue Wanganui/Manawatu, PO Box 981, Wanganui 4500 and from Tiritiri Matangi - <http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz/miscellaneous>.

## GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

27 June – 5 July 2015

Birds New Zealand members are encouraged to participate. The instructions can be found on the Landcare website -

<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/plants-animals-fungi/animals/birds/garden-bird-surveys>



**Landcare Research**  
**Manaaki Whenua**

## Wellington & Wairarapa members rise to the challenge of the “Global Big Day” - Nikki McArthur

On Saturday, the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology ran an inaugural “Global Big Day”, a world-wide challenge to bird-watchers to see how many of the world’s 10,500 or so bird species could be recorded in a single day. By using the eBird database to collect and collate observations as they came in, participants had a fascinating opportunity to watch how the day was progressing in real-time, and to get a very good sense of how their own personal observations contributed to the global tally. And world-wide, the day was a staggering success, with some 800 000 species lists being submitted to eBird, summarising observations of 6,013 bird species made by some 13,000

birdwatchers from 127 countries – in other words, nearly 60% of the world’s bird species were observed and logged in eBird in a single day!

In the Wellington/Wairarapa region we had a very good turn-out, with 17 people managing to get out and about birding on May the 9<sup>th</sup>. Between us, we managed to record 84 species checklists, summarising observations of 74 of the 172 bird species previously recorded in eBird for the Wellington/Wairarapa region, or 43% of the region’s bird species.

Duncan Watson and Dianne Parker had a very productive day on Saturday, logging a total of

59 species during a tour of sites from the Wellington south coast to the Otaki oxidation ponds, via Zealandia, Porirua, Nikau Valley and the Waikanae Estuary. Highlights of their day include being the only group to record California quail on the day, managing to spot the single, elusive NZ dabchick on Zealandia's Upper Reservoir and being one of only two groups to record redpolls on the day.

Meanwhile, myself and Annette Harvey followed a remarkably similar itinerary and managed to record 60 species on the day. I started my day by catching an early ferry from Picton, in the hope of recording a few pelagic seabirds once the ferry entered Wellington coastal waters. Unfortunately, conditions on Cook Strait were rather calm, so birds were few and far between. Perhaps the most interesting birds I encountered were the several small flocks of goldfinches and greenfinches that I saw flying both north and south across the path of the ferry, apparently crossing Cook Strait. Nonetheless, I did manage to spot several common diving petrels within Wellington waters (a first for my regional list!), along with two little penguins swimming in Wellington Harbour off Point Dorset. Following this fairly slow start, I then met up with Annette for a whirlwind tour of Zealandia, before we set off together up the Kapiti Coast with stops at Whitby, Pauatahanui, Waikanae, Pharynz Reserve and Pekapeka Beach (no emperor penguin, unfortunately!) At Waikanae Estuary we were fortunate to cross paths with Janice Woon, and together we visited the boardwalk from which fernbird can often be heard and seen. No luck there unfortunately, but we managed to get lovely views of two brown teal on the pond at the end of Takahe Drive, and Janice had additional success that day, being the only person to record a ring-necked pheasant on the day. One of our final stops of the day, Hadfields Creek at Pekapeka Beach turned out to be a highlight, with a flock of seven black-billed gulls present, a couple of dozen variable and SI pied oystercatchers foraging on the beach, and a single juvenile black-fronted dotterel lurking at the point where Hadfield's Creek enters the sand-dunes. This latter bird turned out to be a

"lifer" for Annette, which provided another highlight to our day. From there, we returned to Wellington for an unsuccessful night-time excursion along the Zealandia boundary fence, in the hope of hearing both morepork and little spotted kiwi. We had no luck in the windy conditions unfortunately, but Annette later heard that little spotted kiwi had been heard during one of Zealandia's night-time tours, so we did manage to add this species to eBird, if not to our own day's total!

Several other people were also successful at recording the day's only observations of number of species. Joanna McVeagh and Colin Shore spent several productive hours touring a few birding hotspots near Masterton and managed to record mute swans at Henley Lake as well as a very large flock of Australasian shovellers at the Masterton wastewater treatment plant.

Meanwhile Katherine Clements and Igor Debsky had arguably the most intrepid day of all of us, tramping the Southern Crossing between Otaki Forks and Mount Hector. Among the 21 species they managed to record for the day were the region's only observation of tomtits, and one of only two observations made that day of eastern rosellas, redpolls and riflemen.

While Katherine and Igor opted to take the "high road", several others took the "low road", covering a number of sections of the Wellington and Wairarapa coastline and between themselves managed to catch up with a number of our regionally-rare coastal species. Denise MacKenzie visited Onoke Spit and managed to find an unusually-large flock of black-fronted terns, while Peter Reese spent some time on the Wellington south coast and also encountered a black-fronted tern, along with New Zealand pipit. Tansy Bliss, a visiting DoC ranger and keen birder from the Chatham Islands spent the day out on Matiu/Somes Island and managed to record little penguin, reef heron and spotted shag among her list of 21 species for the day. Daisy Abraham spent some time birdwatching in the Eastbourne Bays, and also did extremely well to spot both a reef heron and spotted shags, as well as recording one of only two of the day's riflemen observations.

Several other local folk made additional valuable contributions to the day's list. Peter Hodge spent part of his day at some of his regular sites on Miramar Peninsula, recording species such as Australasian gannet, fluttering shearwater, little black, little and pied shags. Meanwhile Wairarapa Regional Representative Robin List checked out a couple of sites in Masterton and clocked up a respectable list of 13 species. Mel Whiting visited Maidstone Park in Upper Hutt, and managed to find bellbird among a number of other native forest bird species. Nina Wortman also paid a visit to the Eastbourne bays and did very well to record one of only two observations made that day of black-billed gulls, which are fairly rare visitors to the Eastbourne coastline.

All in all, this represents an impressive combined effort – certainly not bad for our first attempt at a regional big day! Scanning through the eBird checklists for the day, it's interesting to note some of the species that we missed as this can give us a bit of an indication of what sort of combined total might be achievable with a little bit of additional forward-planning and

coordination. From a quick scan of eBird, the following 13 species were not spotted on the day, but should be feasible to add to a Wellington/Wairarapa "big day" total: NZ falcon (Zealandia?), morepork (almost anywhere), yellow-crowned parakeet (Mana Is, Porirua SR, Tararua or Rimutaka FPs), rowi (Mana Is), NI kokako (Mt Bruce, Kapiti Is), cirl bunting (Baring Head), sulphur-crested cockatoo (Paraparaumu SR), weka (Kapiti Is), fernbird (Waikanae Estuary), Australasian bittern (Lake Wairarapa), NI brown kiwi (Rimutaka FP), barbary dove (Waitohu Estuary) and NZ dotterel (Riversdale Beach). In addition, and given the right conditions, an organised pelagic birdwatching trip would also have the potential to add another dozen or so species to a day's list, potentially taking a regional total to within a whisker of 100 species.

...Next year perhaps!! For more information on the 2015 Global Big Day, visit the eBird website:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/globalbigday?siteLanguage=en>  
<http://ebird.org/ebird/globalbigday?siteLanguage=en>



Paul Dibble sculpture, the Square, Palmerston North. Examples of Paul Dibble's works can also be seen in Upper Hutt.





## The 2015 New Zealand Bird Conference and Birds New Zealand AGM – Blenheim, 29-31 May.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) was held in Blenheim over Queen's Birthday weekend. The 156 attendees enjoyed a pleasing combination of formal talks, workshops, field trips, and social events. I suspect there are still arguments over some of the quiz questions. Congratulations and thanks to the organising committee for a most enjoyable conference and one befitting the celebration of our 75<sup>th</sup> year. At the AGM, three major events took place:

- a new "[Strategy for Birds New Zealand - 2015 to 2014](#)" was adopted
- a "[Memorandum of Understanding](#)" between Forest & Bird and OSNZ (Birds New Zealand) was signed and
- the 4th revised edition of "[The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand](#)" was launched.

There were a series of talks summarising 75 years of birding. The conference paper abstracts are available on the OSNZ website - <http://osnz.org.nz/sites/osnz.org.nz/files/publications/2015%20Abstracts.pdf>. Kyle Morrison won one of the two "best talks prizes" for his presentation on rock hopper penguins on Campbell Island.

Workshops were held on measuring birds, mist netting/banding, ebird and developing bird projects. Biz Bell ran the measuring birds workshop and included an interesting collection of seabirds collected as by catch from fishing vessels. A notable attendee of this workshop was OSNZ Fellow, Chris Robertson (pictured).



Banding photographs – Dallas Bishop

The people attending the mist netting / banding workshop had an early start but were rewarded with a good selection of birds. Two harriers were caught in the trap set for them.



## Kaikoura Pelargic trip – Albatross Encounter

[http://www.albatrossencounter.co.nz/albatross/ocean\\_tours/](http://www.albatrossencounter.co.nz/albatross/ocean_tours/) -

This is a great way to see a good selection of seabirds and comes highly recommended. The following table is Duncan Watson's eBird entry for the field trip during Annual Conference. The photographs were taken by Duncan. Birds of particular note were the short-tailed shearwater and soft-plumaged petrel. Duncan also reports that there were a couple of Hutton's shearwater near the coast, in addition to a larger number of Flutters. He also



reported that "we also saw a Humpback whale, a few Hector's Dolphins, and a large flock/school of Dusky Dolphins". The sea conditions for the trip were a little challenging for some of the party with more delicate constitutions.

**Mon Jun 01, 2015 12:12 PM**, Party Size 12. Duration: 4 hour(s), Distance: 12.399 mile(s)

Buller's albatross	4	Soft-plumaged petrel	1	Spotted shag	14
White-capped albatross	8	Fairy prion	60	Black-billed gull	10
Black-browed albatross	4	Westland petrel	8	Red-billed gull	200
Royal albatross	1	Sooty shearwater	3	Black-backed gull	50
Royal albatross (northern)	1	Short-tailed shearwater	2	Black-fronted tern	5
Wandering albatross (Gibson's)	1	Hutton's shearwater	5	White-fronted tern	15
Southern giant petrel	2	Fluttering shearwater	12	Rock pigeon	1
Northern giant petrel	6	Common diving petrel	1	House Sparrow	2
Cape petrel	40	Australasian gannet	2		
Grey-faced petrel	1	Pied shag	2		



Pictures, Top left; Southern royal albatross, above left; Short-tailed shearwater, above right; Grey-faced petrel.



## Queen Charlotte Sound – Dolphin Watch Ecotours

<http://www.naturetours.co.nz/new-zealand/Birdwatchers/>

This was one of the popular field trips of the conference which can be taken with Nature Tours at other times of the year. Two boat loads of OSNZers took a tiki tour down the sounds looking at birds. In the inner sounds groups of little penguins and rafts of fluttering shearwaters were



observed. A side-trip to the salmon farm revealed very large numbers of red-billed gulls. A major ornithological attraction of the sounds is the king shag. They were present roosting in small numbers in the sounds. We were fortunate in the sea conditions being benign and consequently we were able to visit White Rocks at the outer sounds where king shags were nesting. Nesting spotted and pied shags were also present in the sounds. Queen Charlotte Sound has a number of islands that are now



King shag nests



King shag

predator free. We visited Moturoa Island where we had great views of South Island saddlebacks, including juveniles (Jack birds) which unlike the North Island saddlebacks do not have the coloured saddle. Bulmine Island is noted for the recent introductions of orange-fronted parakeets and mohua (yellowheads) – unfortunately neither were seen during our short visit to the island. We were most fortunate in having a fine and mostly sunny winter's day. Lunch was held at Ship's Cove where we joined by the resident weka. There is a weka in this picture – centre, under the table.



Spotted shag

## Wairau Tours

<http://www.driftwoodecotours.co.nz/>



Prior to the RRs meeting they had the opportunity to join a tour of the Wairau lagoon and wetlands. This trip was also run as a field trip for members on the Monday of Queen's Birthday weekend. The Wairau lagoon and wetlands is a large area containing a good selection of birds, including waders and waterfowl. Our host Will Parsons has a good knowledge of birds and the best spots for viewing them. Furthermore, Driftwood Eco- tours has permission to visit the settling ponds which are not open to the general public. These ponds contain large numbers of waterfowl including some rarities. On our trip neither dabchicks nor bittern were seen. The attached photograph is of some of the RR group trying to spot a cirl bunting amongst large numbers of other passerines. Shortly after the conference 6-7 cattle egret and a white heron were seen at Spring Creek on the road to the Wairau bar.



## Black-billed Gulls

Claudia Mischker, from Wildlife Management Ltd, presented at the conference a summary of her work in the Marlborough / Tasman region on the Nationally Critical, black-billed gull. With the help of OSNZ members chicks have been banded since 2009. Considerable movements between river catchments of breeding and non-breeding birds have been observed. The attached pictures



P88 begging food from parent

were taken during the conference near the fountain in Blenheim. P88 was banded on the 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 on the Wairau river at Renwick. Note the white band with a number P88. This banding system was used instead of colour banding for identifying individual birds. Here band colour is used to identify banding location – i.e., birds banded on



the Wairau were given white bands, those on the Clarence yellow bands and those on the Buller, red bands. P88 was still harrasing its parent(s) to be fed. Distinguishing black-billed gulls from red-billed gulls can be challenging. The following is from NZBirdsOnline, *"Similar species: in non-breeding plumage, black-billed gulls have a bi-coloured bill and red legs, and may be confused with red-billed gulls. Juvenile black-billed gulls are most confusing, as they have a dark outer leading edge to the wing (this is white in older age classes). In all plumages, black-billed gull has a longer, finer bill. Red-billed gull is darker grey with a black patch through the middle of the outer primaries, diagnostic in flight. The red bill (which is shorter and thicker) and legs lose the brighter tones of summer during autumn/winter. Adult red-billed gulls do not acquire a contrasting bi-coloured bill, though do have darker shades of red near tip and through the middle of the bill."*

## Mana Teen Camp – Sharon Alderton

On the afternoon before departure, and on close inspection of the weather forecast, it was decided to turn the "Mana Island Teenage Field Camp" into the "Mana/Matiu Teenage Field camp". Unfortunately with rain and gale force winds predicted for several days and the sea too rough to get out to Mana Island it was decided to go to Matiu/Somes Island until the weather



improved. While the logistics were quite rushed, it was a fortunate change of plan because we had an opportunity to see penguins and tuatara up close on Matiu, and experience another island.



By **Thursday** the weather had abated enough for us to get out to Mana Island. By the time we got off Matiu/ Somes and up to Plimmerton and out to Mana it was mid afternoon. We were able to get mist nets up for a couple of hours before the rain again set in. On **Friday** the mist netting was again affected by periods of rain but with putting nets up and furling them during periods of rain we were able to have a reasonable catch rate. On **Saturday** we had our first fine day of the week and were able to mist net in the morning before getting ready for an early PM departure.

Although we did not catch big numbers of birds we had a great variety and sufficient to be able to give trainees experience and by the end of the trip they were all competent in handling birds. We colour banded a number of birds to give added experience. We caught 6 birds of an amazing 16 species.

Species caught were - all new, we had hoped to catch some of the original transferees of Bellbird, Yellow Crowned Parakeet and Whitehead but were unsuccessful.

Bellbird - 17 all colour banded.  
Blackbird - 4 also colour banded.  
Chaffinch - 1  
Greenfinch - 1  
Goldfinch - 3  
Dunnock - 6 colour banded.  
Yellow Crowned Parakeet - 11  
Fantail - 1 colour banded.

Grey Warbler - 1  
Whitehead - 7  
NI Robin - 1  
Kingfisher - 3  
Tui - 2  
Silvereye - 3  
Welcome Swallow - 1  
House Sparrow - 1 colour banded



We encourage visitors to keep an eye out for band combinations and report these to the Birds New Zealand Wellington regional recorder: [nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com](mailto:nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com)

As well as the mist netting teams under the guidance of Graeme and Shane went to the Sooty Shearwater colony and were able to band over 40 chicks.

A smaller group of teenagers were given the opportunity to do non-bird work at various times, being on Mana was too great an opportunity to see awesome lizards to miss! Our late arrival did limit what we could achieve so on an adjusted schedule Dominique, Cameron and Lynn headed over to the original McGregors skink site where Don Newman did his research. We were hoping to find and set up the original 20 pitfall traps and catch some of the marked animals. Luckily the site has some good land marks because the site looked completely different from 5 years ago when the traps were last opened. Vegetation had increased height and density, and all tracks were overgrown. We searched for about 1/2 an hour for one trap without luck and Lyn, who had confidently claimed it would be easy to find them, declared a new plan. Instead we started looking in new sites to see if we could extend the known range of the populations which has spread very quickly in recent years. Many of the Friends will be interested to hear that McGregors are now found close to the Lockwood within the known range of spotted skinks!

Teenagers also had the opportunity to spotlight geckos at night and most got to see goldstripe geckos and raukawa geckos which were out in abundance just outside the lockwood. The response to flax weevil was mixed, even without telling of the remarkable population explosion on Mana since the reintroduction. Other lizards seen included glossy brown skink, northern grass skink and copper skink. Several giant weta were found when looking for goldstripe geckos.



## **New developments in the Beach Patrol Scheme for recording information about seabirds found dead on New Zealand coastlines – Ian Armitage**

### **Provide help with data entry into one of New Zealand's longest running citizen science projects**

The *Birds New Zealand* Beach Patrol Scheme commenced in 1951 (although some records date from 1943) and for more than 60 years has aimed to systematically document the identity, location and numbers of seabirds found dead on New Zealand beaches. Regular beach patrols by members provides a unique long-term record and the data collected has helped to establish the occurrence and to some extent the distribution of more than 110 seabird species in New Zealand coastal waters. It has also provided information leading to an improved understanding of the seasonal movements, migration and causes of seabird deaths. However, the present Beach Patrol data management system has technical limitations which has contributed towards incomplete analysis and reporting since 2004.

The development of a new internet-based data management system has commenced that will overcome existing technical shortcomings and it is hoped will engage society members in sharing the beach records data entry effort. This approach will ensure that the database and data analysis is kept up-to-date. You can help to make this new system effective if you have the inclination, some time and a computer at home that is connected to the internet.

We are looking for volunteers to help enter data from more than 25,000 scanned cards into an online database. This can be done anywhere as long as you have a computer and access to the internet. If you would like to help with data entry, please contact Ian Armitage, Project Coordinator ([ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz)), or ask local Regional Representative for guidance.

A link will soon be established in the Beach Patrol Scheme page on our website <http://osnz.org.nz/beach-patrol-scheme> that will direct interested members to a 'log-in' page to the

secure Beach Patrol data entry website. A password will be issued once a member registers their interest in wanting to help. A set of instructions will be provided and, if necessary, some training can be arranged.

Data entry is partly automated and will involve transcribing data from scanned beach patrol records into a database entry form; a scanned card appears on the left side of the screen and a database entry form is on the right, as shown in the image below.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://beachpatrol.dragonfly.co.nz/submitentry.php?scan/1250/>. The page is titled "Beach patrol" and "Beach Patrol Scheme | B...". Below the browser window, there is a "Download" button and a "Save" button. A yellow banner at the top right says "A whole number of birds (e.g. 11)".

On the left, a scanned "BEACH PATROL CARD" is shown. It includes fields for "Name of Beach" (27471), "District" (SD), "Date of Patrol" (31/7/03), "Total Seabirds" (3), "Observer" (L. Eiler), "Previous Weather and Remarks" (C. Eiler is Makara Rd, Chalky Rd, Sandcamp), "Species Found" (Bulwer's Petrel, Pbk Sp), "Total Number Found" (1, 2), "Age" (Adult, Juv, Imm), "Freshness" (A, B, C, D), and "Ident by" (LE, CE).

On the right, a database entry form is shown. It includes fields for "Name of Beach" (Dist), "District" (SD), "Date of Patrol" (31/07/2003), "Total Seabirds" (3), "Observer" (L. Eiler), "Previous Weather and Remarks", "Species Found", "Total Number Found", "Age" (Adult, Juv, Imm), "Freshness" (A, B, C, D), and "Ident by". The form is pre-filled with data from the scanned card.

After a little practice it will be easy to and transcribe data from the card on the left to the database form on the right. Once data for a card is transcribed and saved, a new card and blank data entry form arrives on the computer screen automatically. There is no paper or cards to handle at all; all scanned cards and the database entry forms are stored electronically.

You do not have to have any earlier beach patrol experience, although that would of course be helpful, just some time and an interest in contributing to this long-running citizen science project. Transcribing data carefully takes about 1 minute (more or less) for each form – and data entry shouldn't be tackled for long periods, just 20 to 30 minutes for each session is quite enough. Have a rest and tackle more later!

Development is expected to take about three years with the aim of completing the project by 2018. The design and testing of a new internet-accessible database system commenced earlier this year under contract to Dragonfly Science in Wellington.



## Wellington Region Contacts

Regional Representative: Geoff de Lisle (04) 527 0929 or [osnzwelly@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com)

Regional Recorder: Nikki McArthur [nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com](mailto:nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com)

Birds New Zealand Regional Roundup: Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929

[osnzwelly@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com)

Shag Survey - Geoff de Lisle

Mist netting and passerine banding - Peter Reese (04) 387 7387 or [Ruth.peter@actrix.co.nz](mailto:Ruth.peter@actrix.co.nz)

Zealandia 5 minute counts - Colin Miskelly [Hakawai@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Hakawai@xtra.co.nz)