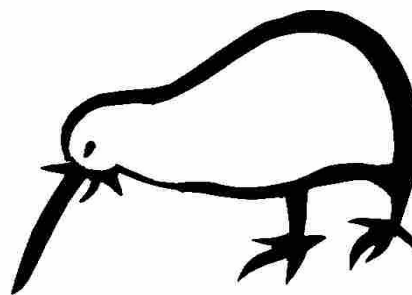


# APTERYX

Issue 20

**April 2008**



## NEWSLETTER OF THE FAR NORTH REGION OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

It has been an ornithologically eventful year in the Far North so far. We have had 2 well-attended indoor meetings, some of us went on Auckland group's Easter trip to Tawharanui and a Forest & Bird visit to Big Sand Island in the Kaipara Harbour; a successful wader count at Parengarenga Harbour took place in February and 2 members were on the very exciting 4 day pelagic to the Three Kings in early April.

Imm Royal Spoonbill  
Awanui Wharf, 25  
April 08  
(DD)

PHOTOS BY  
DETLEF DAVIES  
(DD) CAROL  
DAVIES AND  
KEVIN MATTHEWS  
(KM)



There have been some superb rarities among the bird sightings. These include a **Sooty Tern** at Paua, 3 **Barn Owls** at Kaitaia, **White-necked**, **Gould's** & **Kermadec Petrels** & **Long-tailed** & **South Polar Skuas** on the Three Kings Pelagic, a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** on the pelagic & another at Tawharanui & as we go to press a **White-winged Black Tern** at Awanui Wharf. Although outside our area, Tawharanui also hosted 2 **Fairy Martins** for a month or so in March & were seen by many people.

Far North membership is at an all-time high at 42. We welcome **Robin Booth** and **Verna Brevig** from Kerikeri, **Jo Hill** from Kaeo & **Terri Cottier** from Roberton Island to the Society.

Carol organised a window display at the Proctor Library in Kerikeri for 2 weeks in April for which we brought in some of our books and bird magazines and brochures. We discovered that OSNZ has very little by way of promotional material, something which I propose to raise at the Regional Reps' meeting in June. Another 2 weeks have been reserved at Proctor Library in October.

Carol & I will be abroad between 5 June & 14 August, firstly in Peru and then in Europe. We usually have a wader count in July to see how many Arctic waders stay in New Zealand over the

southern winter. We hope that while we are away, there will be some volunteers to arrange a visit to our usual counting sites (OSNZ pays towards petrol costs); also to keep the group going by getting out at weekends and generally keeping in touch.

From time to time I circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times and meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email, please give me a phone number so I can contact you with this information.

Detlef Davies

### The Far North Regional Officers are:

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### RECENT EVENTS

#### 18 Jan INDOOR MEETING - BORNEO and GARDEN BIRDS

Detlef and Carol gave a presentation on their holiday last year in Borneo, not only on birds but also Orang Utans, Proboscis Monkeys, insects, frogs etc. We had some problems with the technology which cut the show short so we may repeat this some time. In the meantime we welcomed Eric Spurr who talked about the recent Garden Bird Survey in which many members had taken part.

#### SOOTY TERN



On Saturday 23 Feb, during the wader count weekend, an adult **Sooty Tern** flew westwards past the campsite at Paua to the delight of Detlef, Adrian, Keith and Barry. Although widespread in the tropics, the nearest colony (a small one) is on the Kermadecs from where this bird probably drifted from. None of the recent pelagics to the north of New Zealand have recorded this lovely bird. These photos were taken on the Abrolhos Islands off Geraldton in Western Australia in 1991 (DD).

## 22 – 24 Feb WADER COUNT

With a forecast of strong winds and rain, there was a feeling that this weekend was going to be a wash-out. In fact it was a great success and Adrian Riegen, Keith Woodley, Barry Stevens and Detlef traveled as far as Te Hapua School where arrangements had been made to give a presentation to the schoolchildren on the Friday. So while the wind howled outside we made very good use of the time talking about wading birds, Godwit migration, Alaska, etc. We were joined next day by Anthea Goodwin and Isabella Godbert and made our way to Kowhai Beach where after a long walk in the rain, we found a large Godwit flock at the far southern end. Finally on the Sunday the weather cleared up, a boat from Te Hapua took us to Kokota Sandspit and we had a superb day. Meanwhile Kevin Matthews managed a count at Rangaunu Harbour.

Results of the count appear on pages 8 and 9.

## 20 March INDOOR MEETING - SPITZBERGEN

We enjoyed a fascinating presentation by Ian and June Wilson who encountered a variety of Arctic birds along with Polar Bears, Arctic Foxes and cetaceans on their visit to the world's very Far North last year. If you missed it, Ian will repeat this talk at the BOI Travel Club on 29 August.

## 22 – 24 March TAWHARANUI REGIONAL PARK

An Easter weekend trip focusing on bird monitoring and organized by Auckland group. Detlef and Carol went along and their report appears on page 14.

## 5 – 8 April THREE KINGS PELAGIC

Detlef and Ian joined this seabird bonanza which is written up on pages 10 & 11.

### RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

This covers the Far North region since December 2007 and the extent of the sightings over the last 4 months shows how much there is to enjoy in the Far North. Prepared by **Laureen Alston & Detlef Davies**, other contributors included **Kevin Matthews, Michael Winch, Anthea Goodwin & Isabella Godbert**. This report includes the **Three Kings Pelagic (3KP)** and the wader count sightings but the latter are set out in the charts on pages 8 & 9 in the usual way. Please send all interesting sightings in the Far North to Laureen Alston for inclusion in this section of the newsletter.

**North Island Brown Kiwi** Male calling at Angemate Bay, Orokawa on 19 March. A pair calling from north headland of Awa-awa-roa Bay, Moturua on 30 & 31 March. Also a sprinkling of sightings on Purerua & Aroha Island

**Australian Little Grebe** One on Lake Rotokawau (near 90 mile beach) on 26 Jan, 11 there on 25 April, same number a few days earlier.

**New Zealand Dabchick** 5 on Lake Rotokawau on 26 Jan & 4 (incl. a chick) there on 25 April. 3 on a lake in Henderson Bay Rd on 23 Feb.

**Wandering Albatross** 60+ on Three Kings Pelagic (3KP) between 5 & 8 April, most identifiable as **Gibson's** but up to 4 were likely **Antipodean**.

**Southern Royal Albatross** 1 on 3KP

**White-capped Albatross** 20+ on 3KP

**Campbell Albatross** 30+ on 3KP, nearly all adults

**(Northern) Buller's Albatross** 8 on 3KP, all at sea (none seen on land at the Three Kings where a few breed). One dry specimen found in Otupoho bay 21 March.

**Buller's Shearwater** At least 200 on 3KP, in view most of the time.

**Sooty Shearwater** Just 2 on the 3KP (more typical further south)

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** Hundreds on 3KP, often many following the boat.

**Fluttering Shearwater** Hundreds on 3KP

**Little Shearwater** 6 on 3KP

**Common Diving Petrel** c.500 on 3KP, up to 40 seen at a time.

**Black Petrel** Over 100 on 3KP, often following the boat.

**Cook's Petrel** 10 on 3KP identified as this species, many more pterodroma petrels not specifically identified.

**GOULD'S PETREL** 3 on 3KP, a speciality of the seas north of NZ with few previous records

**Black-winged Petrel** 45 seen over the 4 days of the pelagic, an impressive number.

**WHITE-NECKED (White-naped) PETREL** 17 seen on 3KP, another warmer sea speciality which is likely to be found more frequently as these trips become more popular.

**Grey-faced Petrel** c.80 on 3KP, often feeding close to the boat with Flesh-foots & Black Petrels.

**KERMADEC PETREL** 9 on the 3KP (2 dark phase, the rest intermediates), also surely more regular than the few records suggest.

**Fairy Prion** 500+ on 3KP

**Wilson's Storm Petrel** 2 on 3KP

**White-faced Storm Petrel** 6 between Moturua and Moturoa on 8 Jan. 2 seen on 3KP.

**RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD** Distant one on the 3KP; also one at Tawharanui (see report later).

**Australasian Gannet** 200 or so around the Three Kings; a few seen in a number of places elsewhere.

**Black Shag** 3 at Waipapa Basin on Feb 20; 9 on 7 March; 1 on 15 March. One on the Three Kings on 6 April.

**Pied Shag** c. 50 at 2 colonies in Otaio Bay, Urupukapuka on 7 March, 15 birds incl 1 **Little Shag** at roost in Oke Bay on 3 April.

**Little Black Shag** 3 to 6 at Waipapa Basin through April. Flock of c. 30 flew in and fished their way downstream on 13 April.

**Cattle Egret** Some seen recently in the Spoonbill roost at Awanui Wharf, over 20 there on 25 April.

**Reef Heron** 1 at Moturua on 8 Jan, 2 at Black Rocks on 14 Jan, 1 at Tokeroa Beach on 26 Jan, 1 at Tapuaetahi estuary on 6 March, 1 at Otaio Bay, Urupukapuka on 7 March, 1 at Deep Water Cove on 7 & 8 March, 1 at Urupukapuka Bay on 10 March, 1 at Oke Bay on 1 April, 1 at Doves Bay on marina walkway on 24 April. One at Mangonui on 25 April.

**Royal Spoonbill** Increase from 5 birds on 26 Jan to well over 200 on 25 April at the roost at Awanui Wharf (Unahi Road).

**Australasian Bittern** One Henderson Bay Rd on 23 Feb. Recent reports from Lake Ohia, (Karikari)

**NZ Scaup** 3 on lake in Henderson Bay Road on 23 Feb.

**Brown Quail** 2 on track between Wai-iti and Mangahawea, Moturua.

**Banded Rail** Some sightings along causeway at Aroha Island

**Variable Oystercatcher** 18 Kokota Sandspit in Feb, (not a high total)

**South Island Pied Oystercatcher** c.400 Parengarenga on Feb wader count,

**Pied Stilt** Max 72 Parengarenga on Feb wader count

**New Zealand Dotterel** 2 at Mangahawea, Moturua on 8 Jan; 62 on Kokota Sandspit on wader count in Feb, 5 at Taupo Bay, 3 at Tauranga Bay, 8 at Te Ngaere Bay, 6 at Matauri Bay on 27 Feb; 13 at Tapuaetahi estuary on 6 March. John Dowding caught and banded 2 males at Lagoon Beach, Motuarohia on 11 Apr.

**Banded Dotterel** Max 108 at Parengarenga on Feb wader count, 8 at Tapuaetahi estuary on 6 March.

**Wrybill** Max 64 at Parengarenga on Feb wader count.

**Pacific Golden Plover** Flock of 68 on Kokota Sandspit on 24 Feb.

**GREY PLOVER** One with the Pacific Goldies on Kokota Sandspit on 24 Feb.

**Turnstone** Max 332 at Parengarenga on Feb wader count.

**Red Knot** c.300 Parengarenga on Feb wader count, c.700 Kowhai Beach.

**Curlew Sandpiper** 2 on Kokota Sandspit on 24 Feb.

**Red-necked Stint** 7 on Kokota Sandspit on 24 Feb.

**Whimbrel** Flock of 47 on Kokota Sandspit on 24 Feb.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** Max 3000 at Parengarenga on Feb wader count, c.610 at Kowhai Beach

**Grey-tailed Tattler** One Kokota Sandspit on 24 Feb.

**Arctic Skua** 2 with White-fronted Terns in Patanui Bay, Te Puna on 5 Feb. One on the 3KP, 2 dark phase birds off Mangonui on 25 April.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA** 5 on the 3KP, all were adults coming into breeding plumage but showing a faint breast band and with short tail projections.

**Brown Skua** 1 on 3KP

**SOUTH POLAR SKUA** 3 on 3KP, another surprise species which may migrate through these seas in small numbers at this time of year

**White-fronted Tern** c. 70 at Taupo Bay on 27 Feb, over 40 at Awanui Wharf on 25 April.

**Eastern Little Tern** 17 on East Beach on 24 Feb.

**SOOTY TERN** An adult flew westwards past the campsite at Paua on 23 Feb.

**WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN** An adult in non-breeding plumage was found in mid-April with the White-fronted Terns at Awanui Wharf (Unahi Road) and is still present at time of writing.

**GREY TERNLET** c.130 on 3KP including a flock of c.100 close to the islands where they no doubt breed.

**Shining Cuckoo** One seen near the causeway at Aroha on 6 Jan.

**Long-tailed Cuckoo** One seen by the Kerikeri River near Kemp House on 13 March (Michael Winch). Several heard and occasionally seen at Honeymoon Valley during March (Wayne Parsonson & Yvonne Steinemann)

**BARN OWL** 3 birds were found by Mark & Jo in Church Road, Kaitaia early in April. One was injured and taken into care, the other 2 are still present.

**Morepork** Superb sighting of adult and young by the road junction just east of Aroha on 17 Jan.

**Bellbird** Heard singing on the Three Kings, a distinct race occurs here.

**Fernbird** Reports from Aroha Island and Kawakawa River as usual

**New Zealand Robin** Between 8 and 12 estimated on Ponga, Trout and Willow trails on Moturoa Island on 14 Jan.

**Tomtit** Female on Moturoa Island on 14 Jan, 1 on the Cape Brett track on 8 March. Female in Kohumaru Road in Feb.

## RECENT RARITIES



### BARN OWL Church Road, Kaitaia

This is the individual which was injured and taken into care, 2 other birds are still present in the area. It is assumed that the 3 birds have come across the Tasman from Australia where they are common.



Photos by  
Kevin  
Matthews



### **WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN** Awanui Wharf

Found by Phil Hammond while up here from Auckland to see the Barn Owls in mid-April. A rare vagrant from Asia but annual in New Zealand. Note size difference from White-fronted Tern. This is a non-breeding bird which becomes sharply black and white in breeding plumage. Photos: DD

## **PROGRAMME**

All Far North OSNZ indoor meetings take place at Detlef & Carol's house at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri unless otherwise stated, 7 pm for 7.30. We provide drinks & nibbles but contributions welcome. From now on we hope to make these meetings monthly but cannot really make the day consistent, it will usually be Thursday or Friday; we appreciate Bill Campbell's offer to use his home as an alternative for some of our meetings.

Friday 2 May Far North AGM & talk by Tony Beauchamp. Tony, a Conservancy Advisory Scientist at the DOC office in Whangarei, has a number of pet subjects including Wekas, Pipits and Penguins. An Agenda for the AGM will follow by email.

Friday 16 May Indoor Meeting – It is hoped to have a meeting tonight at Bill Campbell's house at 21 Spicer Road, Coopers Beach but do not yet have a speaker. We could have a members night with several short sessions; let us know if you would like to contribute in this way. Another idea is to repeat our curtailed (but now fixed!) Borneo talk. Further news by email.

Fri 30 May to Mon 2 June 2008 OSNZ CONFERENCE & AGM, KAIKOURA.  
Anyone still hoping to go please let me know as soon as possible.

Thurs 17 July Forest & Bird lecture by Ewen Cameron (Curator of Botany at Auckland Museum) at Wharepuke, Kerikeri. Details from Margaret Cooper (09 407 8570)

Thurs 28 August. We hope to have an indoor meeting with **Barbara & Ray Walter** of Tiritiri Island fame. More details later.

## **BEACH PATROLS**

These take place every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at 90 Mile Beach and less frequently on Karikari Peninsular. More volunteers would be welcome. Please contact **Isabella Godbert** on 09 407 8058 or **John Dawn** on 09 407 8658. Anyone finding bands on beach-wrecked birds should inform **Laurie Howell** on 09 430 2287

## KIWI CALL COUNT MONITORING

May and June are the months when Kiwis are particularly vocal so it is a good time to monitor their numbers. If you wish to take part, the following arrangements are available:

### Northland Kiwi Monitoring

24 May to 12 June (the dark phase of the moon) with a back-up around 22 June. Contact Wendy Sporle on 09 408 4241 or [kiwendi@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kiwendi@xtra.co.nz).

### The Kiwi Foundation

Dates not yet set but likely to be over a similar period. Phone Greg & Gay Blunden on 09 407 1119.

### Puketi Trust

24 May – 12 June with back-up starting 22 June. Contact Ian Wilson on 09 401 9056.

### Waimate North Landcare Group

Friday 23 May to Wed 11 June with a back-up from 23 – 30 June. There is a training night on Monday 19 May at the Sunday School Hall, Waimate North Church at 7.30 pm. Contact Daryl Way on 09 405 9981.

### Mahinepua Radar Hill Landcare Group.

Contact Marj Cox on 09 405 0683 or [nicox@ihug.co.nz](mailto:nicox@ihug.co.nz). There is also a training night.

## KIWI WORKSHOP

### Carol Davies

I represented the local branch of OSNZ at the Dept of Conservation Public consultation meeting in Kaikohe re North Island Brown Kiwi Taxon Plan on Wednesday 17 October 2007. Recent research suggests that there are now 5 species of Kiwi so that the Kiwis occurring in the North Island mainland are different from the Brown Kiwis on the South Island and Stewart Island. As most North Island Brown Kiwis are north of Whangarei, their protection here is a major priority.



North Island Brown Kiwi, Aroha Island, (Carol Davies)

Kevin Matthews from the Bushland Trust and Terry Higginson, attended the Public Consultation in Kaitaia. They are also Far North OSNZ members. So as an organisation we had a fair amount of representation.

The overall impression of the Public Consultation was it was a great opportunity to build links with other like-minded people and it was a chance to raise the awareness of the plight of the North Island Brown Kiwi. Northland has a unique problem with Kiwi management. Majority of Kiwi are on private land!

### General Points arising from the Consultation

- Establish a Northland Recovery Group Committee
- Networking and establishment of a database of community groups involved in Kiwi work.
- Public Education – a need for more awareness and understanding of the problems associated with dogs.
- Ecotourism – Urban populations of Kiwi can be seen as an opportunity to businesses although must be done RESPONSIBLY!

# WADER COUNT, FEBRUARY 2008

## Ornithological Society of New Zealand - WADER CENSUSES 2004 - 2009

OSNZ REGION	<b>Far North</b>	MAIN SITE Parengarenga Harbour, Kowhai Beach, Rangaunu Harbour									
YEAR	<b>2008</b>	COMPILER Detlef Davies & Adrian Riegen									
MONTH	<b>February</b>	COUNTERS Detlef Davies, Adrian Riegen, Keith Woodley, Barry Stevens,									
CENSUS DATES	<b>22-24 Feb 2008</b>	Anthea Goodwin, Isabella Godbert, Kevin Matthews									
DATES	24-Feb-08	24-Feb-08	24-Feb-08		22-Feb-08	22-Feb-08	23-Feb-08	23-Feb-08	24-Feb-08		
TIME >					19:15	19:15	14:00	08:30	10 & 14:00		Highest totals
COUNTERS >	ACR. K.W.	ACR	ALL		ALL	ALL	ALL	ALL	ACR		
LOCAL SITES >	Central Kokota Sandspit	Ocean Beach Kokota Sandspit	South End Kokota Sandspit	Total Kokota Sandspit	Paua Inc Paddocks	Paua Shellbank	Paua and harbour	Paua Inc Paddocks	Te Hapua	Total Rest of Pareng	
SITE TOTALS >	362	18	3800	4180	435	550	671	142	78	1508	

### SPECIES TOTALS for Parengarenga v census

Pied Oystercatcher	103			102	102	180	3	402		402
Variable Oystercatcher	18	14	2	2	18			1		1
Pied Stilt	72					10		72		72
New Zealand Dotterel	62	59		3	62					
Banded Dotterel	108			90	90	17		18		18
Wrybill	64			64	64					
Pacific Golden Plover	68			68	68			1		1
Grey Plover	1			1	1					
Spur-winged Plover	5					5		4		5
Turnstone	332	286		46	332	72	45	4		72
Red Knot	300			300	300					
Curlew Sandpiper	2			2	2					
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper										
Pectoral Sandpiper										
Red-necked Stint	7			7	7					
Eastern Curlew										
Whimbrel	47			47	47					
Bar-tailed Godwit	3000			3000	3000					
Black-tailed Godwit										
Grey-tailed Tattler	1	1			1					
Wandering Tattler										
Marsh Sandpiper										
Terek Sandpiper										

### OTHERS

Dabchick										
Black Swan	300						250		50	250
Paradise Shelduck	70			39	39	11		31		31
Mallard	5					5		2		5
Scaup										
Grey Teal	20			20	20					
White-faced Heron	12					12		6		12
Reef Heron	1								1	1
Bittern										
Little Shag	7						7			7
Pied Shag	4						4			4
Black Shag										
Red-billed Gull	114		14		14	100			23	100
Black-backed Gull	18	2	2	2	6	7	1	4	4	7
Caspian Tern	23			7	7	16	1	3		16
White-fronted Tern	500						500			500
Little Tern										
Sooty Tern	1							1		1
Gannet	3							3		3

MAIN SITE TOTAL > 5268

**WADER COUNT FEB 08**  
(CONT)

23-Feb-08	23-Feb-08
10:30	11:00
ALL	ALL
Henderson	Kowhai
Lake	Beach
28	1396

Pied Oystercatcher		
Variable Oystercatcher		11
Pied Stilt		
New Zealand Dotterel		19
Banded Dotterel		8
Wrybill		7
Pacific Golden Plover		
Grey Plover		
Spur-winged Plover		
Turnstone		23
Red Knot		700
Curlew Sandpiper		
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper		
Pectoral Sandpiper		
Red-necked Stint		
Eastern Curlew		
Whimbrel		
Bar-tailed Godwit		610
Black-tailed Godwit		
Grey-tailed Tattler		
Wandering Tattler		
Marsh Sandpiper		
Terek Sandpiper		

**OTHERS**

Dabchick	3	
Black Swan	1	
Paradise Shelduck		1
Mallard	20	
Scaup	3	
Grey Teal		
White-faced Heron		
Reef Heron		
Bittern	1	
Little Shag		
Pied Shag		
Black Shag		
Red-billed Gull		9
Black-backed Gull		3
Caspian Tern		3
White-fronted Tern		2
Little Tern		
Sooty Tern		
Gannet		

The chart opposite did not in the end include Rangaunu Harbour.

**Kevin Matthews'** count included:

**Bar-tailed Godwit** 30  
**VOC** 72  
**Wrybill** 1  
**NZ Dotterel** 1  
**Eastern Little Tern** 17

Weather conditions were such that there was no room on East Beach for a large flock of Godwits or Knot because of the height of the tide.

A few days later Kevin commented:

"Popped down to Kaimaumau to do a few jobs and took a run down to East Beach just after the high tide. No Godwit or Knot to be seen so not sure where they roosted or may have left to go up harbour. The tide was 3.5 so there was little room on Walker Island.

Anyhow, counted approx 385 **SIPO**, the most I've recorded on the beach, the 50 odd **VOCs** were generally closer to the water or straddled along the beach The **SIPO** were in 3 main groups, 70, 100, 200 and a lot of 15.

Saw 5 **NZ Dotterels** along the beach, one **Wrybill**, 2 **Banded Dotterels**, 2 small lots of restful **White-fronted Terns** and lots of fledged **Black-backs**.

The Dunes have really had a hammering after all this rough easterly weather and so I guess likewise some of our sea going birds."

On 25 Feb **Anthea Goodwin** visited Wallace Road on Karikari where waders sometimes roost in the paddocks. There were no Godwit or Knot but 180 **Pied Stilts**, 24 **Caspian Terns** and 5 **White-faced Herons**.

## THREE KINGS PELAGIC 5 – 8 APRIL 2008

Text & Photos: DETLEF DAVIES



7 keen seabirders, Brent Stephenson & Sav Saville (from Wrybill Birding Tours), Tania Ireton, Ian Southey, Colin Lunt, Ian Wilson & myself met at Houhora on Friday 4 April & boarded the 'Demelza' whose skipper, 'Tank' Barker got us going before dawn next morning, heading for North Cape and then north-westwards towards the Three Kings. The relatively shallow water on the first day still produced the first **Black-winged Petrels**, **Long-tailed Skua** & **White-necked Petrel**.



We anchored off the Three Kings that night. I was amazed at the extent of this group of islands (at least 40 islets) and next day we made for the steep drop to the deep water of King Bank to the north-east of the islands. This was a highly productive day, enhanced by 'chumming' sessions using skipjack which were the most frequent catches from the fishing lines. Highlights included close (but not prolonged) views of more **White-necked Petrels**, **Buller's Albatrosses** (of which a few pairs breed on the islands) among the commoner **White-capped**, **Campbell**, &

**Wandering Albatrosses**; really superb encounters with **Kermadec** and **Black-winged Petrels** more **Long-tailed Skuas** & a distant **Red-tailed Tropicbird**.

**Black Petrels** & **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were almost constantly behind the boat. We returned to the islands in the evening.



Top: Three Kings from NE  
Centre: Campbell Albatross  
Left: Kermadec Petrel  
Right: Buller's Albatross

The better quality fish caught such as tarakihi and blue cod formed the main part of our delicious evening meals. On Sunday night we enjoyed the sound of singing **Three Kings Bellbirds** and the sight of a **Fur Seal** chasing squid under the boat at night. Also on the larger island close to where we anchored there was a **Harrier**, a **Black Shag** and a **Kingfisher**. Brent put on his diving gear and brought up some crayfish.

The third day we headed back in the direction of North Cape but keeping to the edge of the deeper water. Many of yesterday's birds were again present, **Black-winged Petrels** in double figures, a **Long-tailed Skua** was seen in hot pursuit of a **Fairy Prion** but new for the trip were 3 **Gould's Petrels**, seldom seen in New Zealand waters. **Storm Petrels** were in quite small numbers, perhaps 20 **Wilson's** and 2 **White-faced**; no sign of any White-bellied which must sometimes wander this far south. We anchored off Tom Bowling Bay.



Each day had produced some **Grey Ternlets** which breed on remote rocky islets, one of 3 **South Polar Skuas** came right up to the boat enabling comparison with **Brown Skua** which was also recorded.

On the last day we cruised well east of North Cape where we spotted our only **Southern Royal Albatross** but the big surprise was the hauling in of a 2 metre **Striped Marlin** which was smoked for us later and we shared this delicacy between us, still plenty left as I write. The stormy weather which had been forecast for today never reached us and the first rain of the trip began as we entered the calm of Houhora Harbour at c.5 pm after what had been an amazingly successful trip.

The plan is to repeat this pelagic next year, perhaps a little earlier; again on a straight cost-share basis; however, I hear that 4 of the 7 places are already taken. With enough interest, however, Far North group could easily arrange a similar pelagic, perhaps at a different time of year. For many of us, seabirds are the 'cream' of New Zealand birding.



Top: Black-winged Petrel  
Centre: Fairy Prion  
Lower: Long-tailed Skua

## MIRANDA FIELD COURSE Jan 2008

### Carol Davies

After enjoying the Dotterel Ecology course at Miranda last year, I decided to partake in this 6 day course. 12 participants made their journey to Miranda from as far apart as Kerikeri and Invercargill.

The course began with an introduction to binoculars and telescopes. We were given plenty of opportunity to identify birds in the field. It was hard to pull away sometimes.



Photo Wader Watch at the Stilt Ponds



Photo Evening birding

Much of the time spent was on wader ID, taxonomic categories with emphasis on the differences between the subspecies of godwits, bird topography including moult and accurate



Photo Example of a Chenier shellbank

recording in the field, helped by the various field guides available in the Centre library.

Bill Brownell, founder of Ecoquest Education Foundation has dedicated his time to the protection and enhancement of ecological values of the Firth of Thames. Time spent with Bill was wet and muddy.



Photo Maori Musk *Mimulus repens*

Keith Thompson explained that 85% of the plants which have been identified here are introductions but a gem amongst the 15% is the native *Mimulus repens*, more commonly known as Maori Musk. He talked to us about Chenier Plains and RAMSAR sites of which the Miranda area is both.

Later lectures included migration, conservation of habitats and population dynamics in the in the East Asian Australian Flyway by Dick Veitch, and mist-netting and cannon-netting (for shorebirds) with Adrian Riegen who has travelled widely through his interest in wader migration.



Photo Peter Maddison leads a night walk

Dr. Peter Maddison, National President of NZ Forest and Bird, introduced us to entomology. An invertebrate night walk gave us a closer view of the night life and some 'tree bashing' sessions. We also learnt insect capturing techniques e.g using Pitfall Traps around the Centre and Limestone Works area.



Photo Muddy feet

A practical session involved dissecting a white-faced heron. Any time spare was used to make bands.

We were given the chance to erect the mist nets the previous evening and early in the morning we caught passerines in them. Processing them included, weighing, measuring wings and bills, moult check, and finally banding them.



Photo Checking an adult Fantail wing length

### **Mist netting results**

Species	New	Retrap	Juveniles	Adult
Blackbird	14	7	6	15
Song Thrush	5	1	3	3
Silvereye	2		2	2
Fantail	2		3	
Goldfinch	4		1	1
Greenfinch	14			13
House Sparrow	44		15	29
Chaffinch	3		2	1
Total	88	8	32	64

**Cannon Netting.** A very early 4.30 a.m, start was necessary to set these nets before the shorebirds became aware of our presence.

**I would highly recommend this and the other courses available at Miranda.**



Photo Boom the cannons go

### **Catch for the Day**

Species	New	Retrap	Including Juveniles	Total
SIPO	64	1	3	65
Wrybill	182	57	24	239
Total	246	58	27	304

The SIPO retrap had been banded at Taramaire. Of the 57 Wrybill retraps one bird had been banded in 1993!



Photo Checking moult of an adult Wrybill



Photo Class of 2008

## TAWHARANUI REGIONAL PARK

Detlef and Carol Davies

We spent most of Easter weekend taking part in the OSNZ bird survey at Tawharanui, organised by Suzi Phillips of the Auckland group. About 16 of us stayed at the bunkhouse and information centre and enjoyed superb weather. Tawharanui is a long peninsular east of Warkworth and has large areas of native bush, ponds and wetlands, steep cliffs and some lovely sandy beaches.

The shape of the peninsular lent itself to the idea of making a pest-free area and a predator-proof fence has recently been erected. This has shown results in a short time. Bellbirds have colonised the area by themselves by flying over from Tiritiri Island and Whiteheads and NZ Robins were introduced last year. It is these three species which were the main subject of the survey but we counted all species present in selected areas of the bush.



**Bellbirds** were at times as common as **Tuis** and **Robins** were conspicuous along the trails and individually distinct by their band combinations. **Whiteheads** were noticeably less common and may need more time to become established. We checked the cliffs at the far north-east end of the reserve for **Grey-faced Petrels** which may re-colonise the area in due course; we found no sign of any yet.

We had heard that at least 2 **Fairy Martins** had been picked out among the large flocks of **Welcome Swallows** and with some effort

we managed to find them. While watching from a hillside one evening we enjoyed the sight of 2 **Kakas** flying right overhead.

Our biggest surprise was still to come. On Monday morning while walking past Anchor Beach an adult **Red-tailed Tropicbird** flew past, allowing a good but brief encounter as it turned away towards the cliffs.

**BELLBIRD** (above) and **NZ ROBINS**  
known from band combinations as  
PRYM, PGYM and YRYM (DD)



Note the different plumages of  
these Robins

