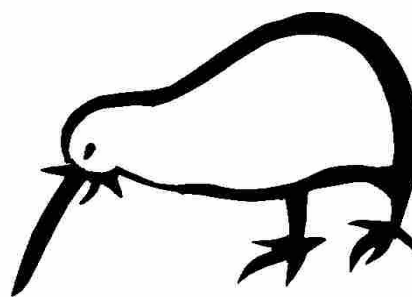


# APTERYX

Issue 27

**August 2010**



Photos: Detlef Davies (DD)  
Kevin Matthews (KM),  
Robin Booth, Sharon Kast

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



KAKA – Quarry Road, Kaitaia, 18<sup>th</sup> July, DD

### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

This issue of Aptyeryx is being produced early as the Editor and our Promotions officer will be leaving on 8 August for 2 months abroad. There have been some interesting winter sightings even though we have not run a wader count since March. There nearly wasn't a pelagic trip either but we have just managed a day at sea, as we go to press, and this has been hastily written up on page 7. Kaka have been seen in a few places, even as far north as Kaitaia and in numbers up to 10. Cattle Egrets have formed small flocks in the paddocks between Awanui and Houhora.

This year's Garden Bird Survey has been very successful and has led to some new ventures involving local schools. Hopefully this will stride forward in the summer and that schools as far north as Te Hapua will get out into the field as planned.

I often 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.

### The Far North Regional Officers are:

<b>Regional Representative &amp; 'Apteryx' Editor</b> Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 <a href="mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com">detlefdavies@yahoo.com</a>	<b>Treasurer</b> Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 <a href="mailto:godbert@xtra.co.nz">godbert@xtra.co.nz</a>
<b>Regional Recorder</b> Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8747 <a href="mailto:lm.alston@actrix.co.nz">lm.alston@actrix.co.nz</a>	<b>Secretary &amp; Publicity</b> Carol Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 <a href="mailto:carolanndavies@yahoo.com">carolanndavies@yahoo.com</a>

## RECENT EVENTS

### 15 May – Kiwi Monitoring, Berghan Point

This was a successful and well-attended event organised by Whakaangi Landcare Group. We gathered at Colin Salt's house where Wendy Sporle explained the procedure and sent us off in pairs to the monitoring sites. There was a breeze which may have affected call numbers in some areas but there were some good results. Wendy Sporle has these and she also co-hosted the Kiwi Hui at Whangarei on 30 June at which Carol Davies represented the OSNZ.

Kiwi monitoring has also been carried out in a number of other sites in the Kerikeri area. The results are still being assessed but information can be obtained through the Kiwi Foundation.

### 28 May - Far North AGM & NZ Bird Video

The minutes of our AGM appear on page 3. After the formal part, we showed Alan Shaw's video of New Zealand birds. The footage of 44 species is of a very high standard. We have one spare copy of this video available for \$35.



**Cirl Bunting**  
♂ (Kaikoura)  
DD

### Early June – OSNZ Annual Conference & AGM, Nelson

Detlef, Carol & Laureen represented the Far North at this annual event over Queens Birthday Weekend. It was Nelson's turn to host the event and after the usual high quality scientific presentations (the transcripts of which can be obtained through the Society), there were 2 days of field trips. The excursion by coach and boat to Abel Tasman National Park went ahead despite nearly continuous rain. Other options the following day in better weather included St Arnaud for forest birds (where some of us saw NZ Falcons) and visits by car to Blenheim where Black Kite & Cirl Bunting were on offer.

### 21 – 26 June – Library Display

In her role as Promotions Officer, Carol put on a most attractive and educational display in the entrance to the Proctor Library. This has been done before but we take this opportunity to mention the value of this form of advertising in a central and busy position in Kerikeri. After the allocated week, the display was re-erected at Kaeo Rugby Club which hosted a Conservation Network event, again giving great publicity.



## **26 June – 4 July – Garden Bird Survey**

This annual survey was more extensively publicised than in previous years and accompanied by an attractive poster with identification features of the common garden birds. Interest was shown by some local schools, particularly Oromahoe School where member Pauline Stephinson is a teacher. Detlef & Carol conducted a survey at the school with 20 pupils many of whom showed considerable knowledge & interest. We have already been back for another birding session around the school. We hear that Eric Spurr has had more than twice the number of survey forms back than last year.

## **23 July – Gwenda Pulham's talk on Fairy Terns**

We had the pleasure of Gwenda's company tonight complete with 2 enthusiastic Fairy Tern wardens, Paulla-Jean & Rangi and a full and fascinating talk on New Zealand's rarest native bird, taking us through the species' life-cycle and some amazing camouflage techniques.

### **FAR NORTH AGM - MINUTES**

Meeting took place at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri & commenced at 7.52 pm. Those present were: Detlef (Chairman) & Carol Davies, Laureen Alston, Isabella Godbert, Anthea Goodwin, Bill Campbell, Chris & Maria Lamens & Kerry & Jane Walshe. Apologies from Paul & Enid Asquith, Derry Godbert & Kevin Matthews.

Detlef read the minutes of the 2009 AGM and these were approved (proposed KW, seconded LA). As for matters arising, Anthea said as she had received only 2 nest record cards, it was not worth pursuing. This was accepted and Detlef later wrote to David Melville informing him. There is not enough support for such a project in the Far North.

Detlef gave an oral overview of the year's activities including the membership numbers, indoor & outdoor meetings & attendance, the speakers who have entertained us; mentioning also the regular beach patrols, wader counts and the recently initiated pelagic trips to the seas east of our region. He covered news of the other conservation groups operating locally, the Kiwi monitoring programme, the forthcoming Garden Bird Survey, plans to involve local schools, unusual species seen during the year and Kevin Matthews' article in 'Notornis' about the Kaitia Barn Owls. Report approved (proposed LA, seconded AG).

Isabella gave the Treasurers Report. Funds were a little on the lean side, account produced was for 1 June 2009 and current balance calculated at \$185.82. We were due the annual contribution of \$350 in mid-June. Anthea proposed vote of thanks to Isabella. This and the Report were approved (proposed AG, seconded LA).

Detlef & Carol wish to stand down from their positions at the end of the year and may be moving to Australia. Replacements should be considered in good time as there were a lot of tasks to be taken over. Detlef gave an account of the tasks involved and listed them on the back of the Agenda. They will probably necessitate a division of labour. Members would need to consider over the next few months whether they can assist with any aspects of the RR's job. In the meantime there were no other nominations so all committee positions would remain for the time being. Proposed KW, seconded BC.

The remaining items on the agenda can be summarised as follows:

Laureen could keep the boxes of archived items usually kept by the Regional Rep.

Bird recording in the Far North – it was agreed that the extent of information in the newsletter could be reduced to just the more significant sightings but the annual report for the Society should be more comprehensive.

Anthea enquired about the cost of the RR's visit to the Annual Conference – the expenses claimable had recently been reduced. The local group's funds were not used for this purpose.

E-Bird – recording sightings this way had not yet been initiated here through lack of time but it is hoped that ultimately someone will have time to devote to it.

Pelagics – there had been an excellent start although weather would always be a limiting factor and there are bound to be cancellations and re-scheduling. Bill Campbell mentioned potential boatmen operating out of Houhora which would suit those living further north.

Communication with conservation groups had improved considerably and much more interaction is expected in future.

Carol spoke about progress so far with the Projects & Activities Committee.

Kerry gave some news about Kiwis, mentioning that 3 injured Kiwis have recently been taken to the rehabilitation centre in Whangarei and that a Kiwi house was proposed for Urupukapuka Island.

There was demand generally for field trips suiting less experienced members and a coastal day out would be arranged for later in the year.

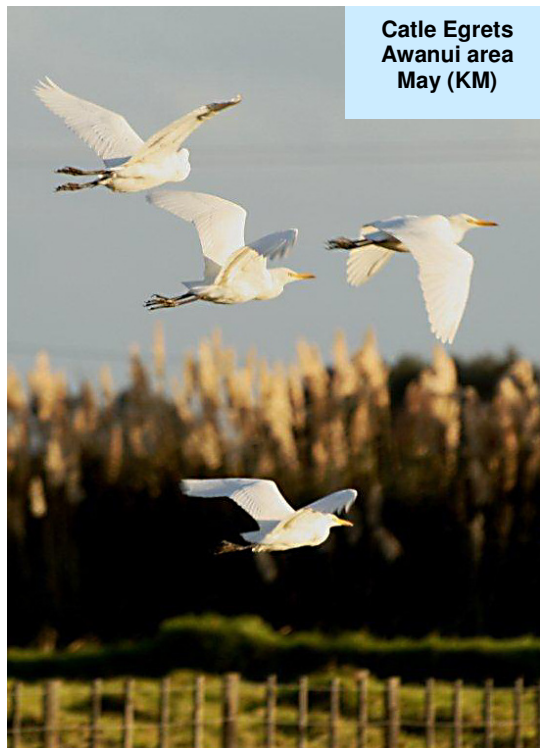
Meeting closed at 9.25 pm.



## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Laureen Alston & Detlef Davies

This covers the Far North region from late April 2010 to 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Contributors include: Laureen Alston, Bruce Collett (BC), William Cook, Murray Creighton, Detlef & Carol Davies (DCD), Richard & Helen Horrobin, Peter Ladd, Gary Little & Asta Wistrand, Kevin Matthews (KM), Gerald Messenger, Gery Shore (GS). We regret that we do not have observers' details for all the more interesting sightings. The birds on the very recent Whangaroa pelagic are **not** included here (see later).



Cattle Egrets  
Awanui area  
May (KM)

**North Island Brown Kiwi** One heard calling 4am 6 April at Awa-awa-roa Bay, Moturua, 2 male calls followed by female, 7.30pm, male again 8.30, Doves Bay on 12 April. Seen Bulls Gorge in July. Recent kiwi call monitoring in the Kerikeri area recently with variable results. Further information available from the Kiwi Foundation.

**New Zealand Dabchick** 3 seen on Lake Waiparewa on 24 April. 4 seen on Lake Rotokawau, one on Lake Ngatu on 10 May. 2 seen on Lake Rotokawau on 18 July.

**Australian Little Grebe** At least 10 seen on Lake Rotokawau, 4 on Lake Ngatu on 9 May. At least 11 seen at Lake Rotokawau on 18 July.

**Sooty Shearwater** 2 seen at Cape Reinga on 18 May.

**Pied Shag** 20 or more with 6 Little Shags seen at Kaimaumau on 24 April.

**Little Black Shag** 4 seen with 1 Little Shag at Lake Waiparewa on 24 April. About 20 off Opito Bay heading seaward. 3 roosting at Tauranga Bay estuary on 20 June. 2 Unahi Wharf 18 July.

**Cattle Egret** A good showing. 6 on harbour at Kaimaumau on 26 April. About 20 seen at Unahi Road on 4 May. 20 flying across paddocks west side of

Rangaunu Harbour on 6 July. 24 seen at Waiharara on 9 July. Flock of 28 in paddocks at Waiharara on 18 July. (KM, DCD)

**Reef Heron** One seen twice at Coopers Beach in June. One seen in Taipa Estuary on 18 July.

**White Heron** A large group seen up river on Pupuke side of Whangaroa Harbour on 20 May (GS).

**Glossy Ibis** One reported and well described in paddocks near Kaeo on 29 June (per BC).

**Royal Spoonbill** 256 or more seen at Unahi Road, Awanui on 25 April. 200 at least moving from mudflats to trees near Awanui Wharf, about 50 in paddocks on 9 May. At least 200 seen at Te Hapua, Parengarenga on 10 May. 200 or more roosting and about 80 in paddock at Awanui Wharf on 18 July.

**Australasian Bittern** One fledgling seen from Whangaroa Road near the Rugby Club, on 18 April (GS). Also



Australasian Bittern – Robin Booth

one near Tauranga Bay Road on same day. One seen at Spains Road, Awanui on 29 June (KM). The superb photo was taken by Robin Booth at Oparau near Kawhai (west of Hamilton) on 10 May.

**South Island Pied Oystercatcher** 16 seen on trip along Ninety Mile Beach north of the Bluff on 9 July; also several inland flocks..

**Variable Oystercatcher** 27 seen at Opito Bay, Kerikeri Inlet on 6 May. 52 on Opito Bay beach high tide on 22 May. 62 counted on reef at entrance to Doves Bay on 10 June. 2 on spit Tauranga Bay, 8 on beach, 6 on grass at Matauri Bay, 2 at Te Ngaere, all on 20 June. 22 seen on trip along Ninety Mile Beach to Te Paki on 9 July.

**Pied Stilt** About 50 seen coming and going at Kaimaumau, 4 seen at Lake Waiparewa, 24 April, many reported from flooded paddocks after rain during July.

**New Zealand Dotterel** 15 or so on grass behind Centre at Otehei Bay regularly, March, April. GO-YR and unbanded mate with one young at Urupukapuka Bay, April. 1 seen at Te Hapua, Parengarenga, 10 May. 1 partly coloured bird seen at Matauri Bay, 2 lightly coloured at Te Ngaere Bay, 12 at Tauranga Bay, one male in full breeding plumage, others lightly coloured, also the female with metal band, all on 20 June. Three seen on Ninety Mile Beach north of the Bluff on 9 July.

**Banded Dotterel** 12 seen flying into paddock at Kaimaumau on 24 April. 8 or more seen at Te Hapua on 10 May.

**Turnstone** About 10 seen at Te Hapua, Parengarenga on 10 May (DCD).

**Bar-tailed Godwit** 6 seen at Kaimaumau on 24 April.

**Caspian Tern** 6 seen roosting with flock of Spur-winged Plover on far side of Lake Waiparewa on 24 April. One bathing in estuary at Tauranga Bay on 20 June.

**White-fronted Tern** Flock of 300 or more on Ninety Mile beach opposite Matapia Island on 11 July.

**Kaka** A good selection of sightings of this winter visitor to the region. One on foreshore at Lagoon Bay, Motuarohia on 30 April. 10 or less seen and heard regularly over last 2 months, at southern end of Waimate North Rd, about 3 km north of junction with Te Ahu Ahu Rd. One in puriri tree in Quarry Road Kaitaia on 18 July (DCD & earlier by KM).

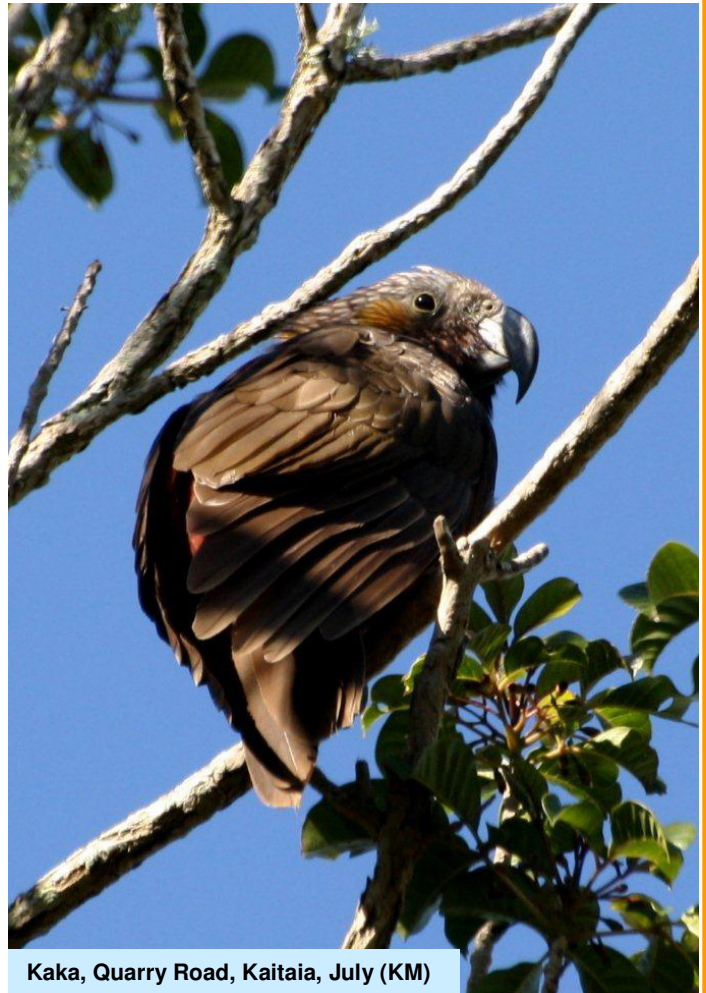
**Barn Owl** Two still present in Church Road, Kaitaia & another 2 just north-west of airport in July (KM).

**New Zealand Pipit** about 5 seen at Spirits Bay on 10 May.

**Tomtit** One male seen from track to water tank, Otehei Bay Urupukapuka, 11 April.

**Tui** 8 or more seen from track to water tank, Otehei Bay, Urupukapuka, 11 April. Also flocks this size elsewhere.

**Redpoll** 3 seen with other finches at Spirits Bay on 10 May.



Kaka, Quarry Road, Kaitaia, July (KM)

We have had a report of a **Girrl Bunting** at Taumarumaru Reserve, Coopers Beach on 14 April. This species is not known anywhere near that area and further enquiries are being made.



## PROGRAMME – INDOORS and OUTDOORS

### Friday 30 July – Kokako at Mataraua Forest

This has also been publicised by email. At last we have a date for a visit to this rich area of forest south of Kaikohe. We have referred to the area as being at the southern end of Waima but the site is actually **Mataraua**. We aim to get to the farm at the start of the forest, north of Tutamoe at 7 am where we will meet Matt Calder from DOC – however, please let me know if you are coming so that we can car-share. The object is to learn about monitoring Kokako and hopefully hear and see the birds which are in good numbers in this part of the forest. Phone Detlef or Carol on 09 407 3874.

### Thursday 5 August – Tawharanui – Grey-faced Petrels

Detlef and Carol spent an exciting night at Tawharanui (see Grey-faced Petrel article on this page). Another monitoring session will take place on this date, weather permitting. Travel down midday on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>, return next morning. We are going again and can offer a lift to up to 2 more people.

### Saturday 6 Nov – Coastal birds

By popular request, we are leading a day trip northwards as far as the Karikari peninsula today. The focus is on recognition of common coastal birds, particularly for beginners. Car-share, take packed lunch. Hopefully lots of you will take the opportunity. Phone Detlef or Carol on 09 407 3874.

### Friday 12 Nov – Indoor Meeting, Kerikeri – Rifleman Translocation

Simon Fordham, Regional Representative for South Auckland group will give a presentation on the introduction of Riflemen to Tiritiri Island, a project in which he played a large part.

## GREY-FACED PETREL MONITORING

Detlef Davies



Grey-faced Petrel, Tawharanui, 7 July (DD)

The Grey-faced Petrel is a seabird occurring in small numbers in the seas surrounding New Zealand and breeds locally on offshore islands and some mainland headlands in the north of the North Island. The fact that it is susceptible to introduced predators, that it breeds in the New Zealand winter and only comes ashore at night make it a difficult bird to locate. Even at sea, it keeps well away from the coast; we saw none on either of the summer Far North pelagics earlier in the year.

We recently took the opportunity to take part in monitoring at Tawharanui Regional Park near Warkworth. We travelled down on 7 July and met the rest of the group (c.10 of us) at the 'Vol – Hole' – the volunteers accommodation just inside the predator-proof fence. Chris Gaskin of Kiwi Wildlife Tours organised the event and we set off at dusk in 2 4WD vehicles towards the end of the peninsula. After a 15 minute walk, we took up positions on the densely vegetated promontory at Elephant Point. Already we could hear the high-pitched squeaks of the birds arriving and some could be picked up in the spotlights. There are at least 3 distinct calls, one of which is usually uttered by birds on the ground. After about an hour and a half, a message came through on a CB radio that that call had been heard and as we gathered at

that spot, Chris disappeared into the dense flax and returned a moment later holding an adult Grey-faced Petrel! As the birds normally do not come into contact with humans, they have no fear. With a second bird found a short while later, the evening had been a great success and judging from the sounds and sightings, it was going to be worth trying to locate burrows as a forthcoming project.

Grey-faced Petrels used to breed quite widely in the Far North but disappeared from many sites through predation. With predator control, the birds are starting to come back. They are already back on pest-free Moturoa Island and who knows where else. We hope that similar monitoring will take place closer to home as the birds are likely to recolonise the pest-free islands in the Bay, Cape Brett, Berghan Point and more.

We hear from Matt Calder at Kauri Coast DOC office that Grey-faced Petrels have been recorded breeding at South Head on the southern side of the Hokianga where monitoring may begin at the next suitable time.



Celebrating the first capture of an adult Grey-faced Petrel at Tawharanui (Sharon Kast)

## PELAGIC from WHANGAROA HARBOUR Monday 26 JULY – We finally went!

Detlef Davies

After weeks of planning, getting people interested & excited, weather setbacks, postponements, phone calls & messages, we finally set out from Whangaroa Harbour today. On board were skipper Brian Candy; Kevin Matthews & Steve Amon from Kaitia, Suzi Phillips & Judy Bendall from Auckland, Derek Bettsworth from Whangarei & Derry Godbert & myself from Kerikeri. The harbour at 7 am was shrouded in thick fog but as we passed Stephenson Island, we suddenly emerged into a fresh sunny morning and calm sea.



Wandering Albatross at sea off Whangaroa, 26 July (DD)

Flocks of **Fluttering Shearwaters** formed a big dense raft not far beyond Stephenson Island and with many more seen later, we estimated c.1,200 birds. **Common Diving Petrels** were seen quite well on the water instead of just shooting past in flight. Typical summer seabirds like Buller's, Flesh-footed & Sooty Shearwaters & Black Petrels were completely absent, as were storm petrels.

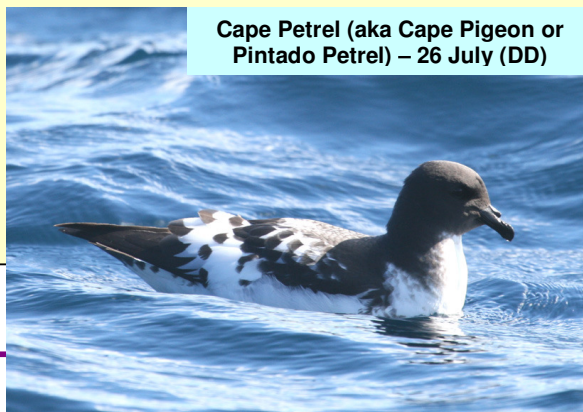
However, albatrosses were very evident and were attracted to the boat with berley & fish-oil. We had frequent visits by **White-capped, Wandering & Campbell Albatrosses** which would sit close

by on the water but whose numbers were hard to estimate as the same birds may have been returning to check us out a few times. There were also **Fairy Prions** in their hundreds, a couple of **Cape Petrels** posing by the boat and one **Giant Petrel** (probably Northern).

We saw a large whale which surfaced a few times and was probably a **Bryde's Whale**.

Towards afternoon, **Grey-faced Petrels** started to appear and we probably saw 30 or more; it was good to see a few **Little Shearwaters** too, both these species breed in winter and we wondered where they would be landing that night.

We hope to resume pelagic trips in the spring and summer so watch this space!



## MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

### BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

**Carol Davies**

We have access to bird & wildlife books through a book club so are able to offer these to members and guests at meetings at very economical prices. If anyone has items with a wildlife aspect which they wish to sell, please bring them to meetings.

Non-members are reminded that the Atlas of New Zealand Birds (worth \$99) is still free to prospective members on joining the society.

### CASPIAN TERNS

**Detlef Davies**

The Society's Caspian Tern survey is to start next year but we are encouraged to locate birds at any time so that when the survey starts, we will have some knowledge of where to look and count. Although this is a widespread species in the world, the New Zealand population is considered to be in decline.

### BIRD SURVEYS WITH AUCKLAND GROUP

**Carol Davies**

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> successive year Far North OSNZ has been allocated 4 spaces with the Auckland group for each of these 2 island surveys. To join in either of these weekends please contact Mike or Sharen Graham on 09 817 5537 or [mike@jvaelectricfences.co.nz](mailto:mike@jvaelectricfences.co.nz). Spaces are limited, first come first served.

#### **2 to 3 Oct - Motutapu Island Survey**

Just recently, Bellbird have been recorded on Motutapu Island for the first time in over 100 years - within a year of the eradication effort. Kakariki have also appeared already and have been successful in breeding.

#### **26 to 28 Nov - Tiritiri Matangi Island census**

A great chance to visit this famous island & see the latest arrivals – Riflemen.

### BIRD BANDING OPPORTUNITY

**Carol Davies**

I have received the following message from Peter Frost from Wanganui, our Projects & Activities Convenor.

#### **Do you want to help band waterfowl?**

Each year, the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council band about 4,000 Mallard and Grey Duck (and their hybrids), along with smaller numbers of other species. Because these species are hunted, recovery rates are high, up to 15 % of banded birds in any given year. From the details provided by hunters of where and when individual birds were shot, valuable information on the birds' movements and survival are being obtained. Together with data on the sex and age ratios of the captured birds, this is helping the council gain a better understanding of the structure and dynamics of these species' populations, from which better management decisions can be made.

The council is happy to have volunteers help with catching, processing and banding birds. Most banding is done in summer, from January onwards, at various sites between Helensville and Te Awamutu. Some banding is also done at other times of the year, depending on needs and circumstances. You will be working with experienced banders as part of a team for as long or short a period as you choose. This is a great opportunity to develop or enhance your bird banding skills, as well as contribute to a vital research programme. If you would like to help, please contact John Dyer, Senior Wildlife Manager, Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council ([johnDYER@clear.net.nz](mailto:johnDYER@clear.net.nz)) to register your interest and availability.