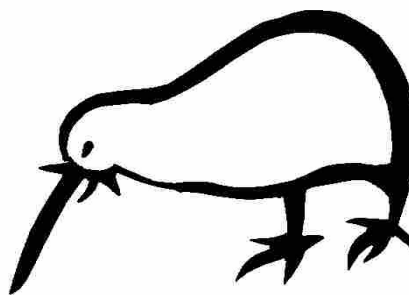


# APTERYX

Issue 25

**December 2009**



Photos by Detlef Davies  
(DD) & Gary Little

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



New Zealand Dotterel – Kowhai Beach, 8 Nov 09 (DD)

### **EDITOR'S COMMENTS**

The Far North newsletter has for the last 4 years benefited from the sponsorship of Kerikeri Unichem Pharmacy during the proprietorship of Kerry & Jane Walshe. Kerry & Jane have now retired and we wish them the very best for the future. We are confident that the newsletter will continue to thrive and produce material of interest to Far North bird enthusiasts.

With the end of the 'official' 5 year wader count programme in February this year, funding for boats, accommodation, fuel costs etc for our regular November, February and June/July counts ended. The Society hoped that the regions would carry the project on, perhaps twice a year, on an entirely voluntary basis. As counting in the Far North is far more difficult, time-consuming and expensive than most, if not all the other regions, I applied for funding from the Projects Assistance Fund. Whilst in fund-application mode, I also applied for money for beach patrols. Unfortunately both applications have been turned down on the basis that the money does not justify the benefit of the data we are providing.

So I regret we are on our own. I would like all members to let me know what they would like the Far North region to be doing by way of outdoor birding activity. Are the events we arrange (or try to) too technical, too

expensive, too ambitious or the opposite? We should chat about this at meetings. More experienced members are always ready to welcome newcomers to birding with a view to learning more.

I expect to keep 'Apteryx' to 8 pages from now on so some items are postponed to April including another Conservation Round-up & an article on Far North birding sites.

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.

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## RECENT EVENTS

**18 Sept – Tiritiri Island.** The award-winning author of the book on Tiritiri Island, Anne Rimmer, gave us a full and well-illustrated talk on her speciality island to the delight of 20 members & guests.

**7 – 8 Nov – Spring Wader Weekend** 7 of us took part this weekend full of anticipation of good numbers of birds. There were not enough of us on Kokota Sandspit to cover the area thoroughly so we failed to find the main flock of Godwits at their roost; however, many were seen flying in at Paua as the tide receded and a very approachable flock was on Kowhai Beach. A chart of the results appear on pages 6 & 7.

**27 Nov – Limestone Island / Matakoho**  
Another island featured at this meeting when we had Gerry Brackenbury here from Whangarei to talk to us. In a very entertaining way Gerry described the transformation of Matakoho from cement works to forest with birds and lizards.

**12 – 13 Dec – New Zealand Dotterels**  
Although not officially OSNZ events, some members came to the 2 presentations made by Detlef & Carol for DOC to bring the public's attention to our region's precious Dotterels; these took place at Russell & Whangaroa. The Sunday event was followed by a visit to Tauranga Bay where our target bird was seen in some numbers and shown to the attendees, along with some very obliging Pied Stilts & Caspian Terns.



Pied Stilt – Tauranga Bay, 13 Dec 09 (DD)

## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Laureen Alston & Detlef Davies

This covers the Far North region from August 09. Contributors include Laureen Alston, Anthea Goodwin (AG), Kevin Matthews (KM), Detlef & Carol Davies (DD; CD), Isabella & Derry Godbert



(IG; DG), Gary Little, Asta Wistrand, Alan Cordery (AC), Heather Peat, Lindsay Alexander (LA), Michael Winch (MW). All records from Awanui northwards were on November wader count.

**North Island Brown Kiwi** Many heard and some seen in usual places.

**New Zealand Dabchick** 1 with a chick seen at Lake Manuwai, Kerikeri in November (DG). Derry thinks this may be a first!

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** Regularly seen in Bay of Islands and along adjoining coasts.

**Buller's Shearwater** Small numbers regularly seen in the Bay and along adjoining coasts.

**Fluttering Shearwater** Small numbers regularly seen in Bay of Islands area.

**Blue Penguin** Mating calls heard in Opunga Cove on 20 Nov.

**Australasian Gannet** Recorded at usual coastal sites.

**Black Shag** 1 Unahi Road, 8 Nov, surely plenty more are around.

**Pied & Little Shags** Usual numbers at Urupukapuka Bay colonies.

**Little Black Shag** 10 counted from Unahi Road, 8 Nov.

**Cattle Egret** 13 at Wallace Road, 8 Nov (Anthea Goodwin). Also a flock of 15 seen between Skudders Beach & Reinga Road, Kerikeri in early August (MW)

**White-faced Heron** 12 Houhora Harbour, 1 Kokota Sandspit, 7 Nov, 9 from Wallace Road, 8 Nov.

**Reef Heron** One on Doves Bay marina walkway 5 Sept, 2 Houhora Harbour, 7 Nov.

**Royal Spoonbill** Houhora Harbour 7 Nov, 44 Unahi Road, 8 Nov.

**Australasian Bittern** 1 in flight over marsh beside Arethusa Cottage, Pukenui, 7 Nov. (DD)

**North Island Weka** 2 birds (maybe a pair?) within 2 metres of each other, Russell Coast Road near Russell end, in a paddock opposite the quarry entrance on 1 Dec and on subsequent dates (AC); also some sightings in the Russell area in mid-December (LA).

**Paradise Shelduck** 75 Houhora Harbour, 4 Kokota Sandspit 7 Nov, 13 at Wallace Rd, 8 Nov.

**Pied Oystercatcher** 66 on Paua Road paddocks, 7 Nov, 1 on Walker Is, 8 Nov.

**Variable Oystercatcher** 2 pairs at Urupukapuka Bay on 4 Aug, 27 on Doves Bay marina walkway, flew to oyster rocks as tide fell, 7 Sept. 2 on Lagoon Beach, Motuarohia 24 Oct, 13 Paua Road paddocks & 1 on Kokota Sandspit, 7 Nov, 14 on Kowhai Beach, 7 on Walker Is, 8 Nov.

At Urupukapuka Bay: 1 pair with one egg nest on dune, west end, 1 pair feeding 2 large chicks, east end, on 21 Nov. 1 pair with nest between roots of pohutukawa tree on grass by beach at Otehei Bay on 21 Nov. 1 pair with 3 egg nest at Mangahawea, Moturua on same rock slide as they used last summer, 22 Nov.

**Pied Stilt** 50 on Paua Road paddocks, 7 Nov, 20 from Unahi Road, 8 Nov, pair with 2 young at Lake Owhareiti, early December.

**New Zealand Dotterel** 6 at Urupukapuka Bay, 2 at Otehei Bay on 28 July. 1 at Mangahawea, Moturua. 5 (3 with bands), most in breeding plumage at Urupukapuka Bay on Aug 4. 2 (one banded), at Cable Bay, 4 (3 banded) on Urupukapuka Bay, 2 (one banded), at Lagoon Bay, Motuarohia, all Aug 17 by DoC personnel. 2 (one banded) at Otehei Bay, 11 Sept. 4 (one banded) at Motuarohia on 24 Oct. 5 on Kokota Sandspit, 7 Nov, 7 on Kowhai Beach, 2 on East Beach, 8 Nov. One pair (1 banded), with 3 egg nest, west end; 1 pair (both banded), with nest, east end Urupukapuka Bay, 1 pair (one banded), with 1 well grown chick, on 20 Nov. At Tauranga Bay 9 chicks are running about! 2 Dec, still at least 9 birds there on 13 Dec but mostly adults.

**Banded Dotterel** 2 on Kokota Sandspit, 7 Nov, 5 on Kowhai Beach, 8 Nov.

**Pacific Golden Plover** 1 on Paua Road paddocks, 39 on Kokota Sandspit, 7 Nov.

**Spur-winged Plover** 2 on Paua Road paddocks, 1 at Wallace Road, 7 Nov.

**Turnstone** 40 on Kowhai Beach, 30 on East Beach, 8 Nov.

**Lesser Knot** 20 Houhora Harbour, 7 Nov, 500 Kowhai Beach, 8 Nov.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** 300 at Houhora Harbour, 91 on Paua Rd paddocks, 40 at Kokota Sandspit, 3000 on Paua mudflats, 7 Nov; 850 Kowhai Beach, 3500 on Walker Is, 12 East Beach, 8 Nov.

**Black-billed Gull** One reported by visitors to the area at Te Haumi, Paihia in early November.

**Black-backed Gull** 50 at breeding area on Kokota Sandspit, 7 Nov.



White-faced Heron, Brisbane Aug 09 (DD)



Shining Cuckoo  
Rangitane, Nov 09 (DD)

**Caspian Tern** 4 on Kokota Sandspit, 4 on Kowhai Beach, 7 Nov, 1 Unahi Rd, 1 Wallace Rd, 8 Nov, 8 Tauranga Bay 13 Dec.

**White-fronted Tern** 400 on Walker Island, 2 from Unahi Road, 8 Nov.

**Shining Cuckoo** Common this season with many singing around Kerikeri and Kaitaia. At least 2 corpses of birds flown into glass, one of these found by Isabella Godbert was bronzy-rufous above instead of green.

**Morepork** Many recent sightings around Kerikeri.

**Fernbird** Seen at Alan Cordery's Weka site near Russell on 6 Dec (DD, CD)

**Tomtit** Male calling & feeding a juv nr summit of Waipoa - Otupoho track, Moturua, 22 Nov.

**North Island Robin** The translocated birds in Puketi Forest are heard and seen regularly.

## PROGRAMME

### 17 & 31 January 2010 – Whangaroa Pelagics

As indicated in recent emails, we have been trying to organise pelagic trips in the region. The tentative November dates were postponed through bad weather. Our tame boatman is Brian Candy of Kuri Charters whose boat leaves from Whangaroa Harbour. He can take up to 9 people and with this number the cost is less than \$100 each for a full day trip, well out to sea and within range of a number of pelagic seabirds which do not normally approach coastal waters. We will be looking for various species of albatrosses, storm petrels, skuas, perhaps Black-winged, Pycroft's & White-necked Petrels. The trip on 17 Jan is already full but 5 places are left for Sunday 31 Jan.

### Sometime! – Waima Forest – Kokako search

As with the pelagics, this has been hard to organise too. A number of members have expressed interest but a weekend when Matt Calder has been available to assist bringing us in has not yet occurred. We will stay closely in touch with him and something may be arranged at short notice. Watch this space.

12 – 14 February Indoor Meeting followed by trip to Warawara Forest. We have asked Simon Fordham to talk to us on the Friday evening on Riflemen and then spend the weekend at Warawara to look for the birds themselves. Simon was involved with the translocation of Riflemen onto Tiritiri Island last year. More news about this will follow by email.

### April / May 2010 Kiwi Monitoring

Whakaangi, bordering Doubtless Bay, is home to the most northerly population of kiwi in N.Z. For 6 years Whakaangi Landcare Trust have been carrying out an intensive pest eradication program over 2400ha resulting a very satisfying increase in numbers. Now it is planned to hold an additional one off intensive call count over 1 or 2 nights in April/May. We will need a big team to do this and anyone who is interesting in visiting this fascinating area please get in touch. Training will be given. Initial contact – Anthea - [bushcrank@actrix.co.nz](mailto:bushcrank@actrix.co.nz) phone 406 1533

## Sailing Snippets from the Bay

Laureen Alston

Heading home from the Islands I spotted a single Gannet shallow diving amongst small fish accompanied by 2 Fluttering Shearwaters, one each side a short distance behind. When the Gannet dived the Shearwaters alighted too and no doubt managed to find some frightened small fish to capture very easily. As soon as the Gannet took off they again took up their flying position astern! This went on for some time until I was too far away to see -- yes, I know I should have tried for a photo but too busy sailing.

Another time, with a friend on board we notched up a count of close to 50 Blue Penguins in groups of 2 to 4 on the short stretch from Motuarohia across to Moturoa. The next day there was a severe gale and heavy seas from outside the Bay. Built in barometers we surmised!

It is common to see Arctic Skuas harassing White-fronted Terns to persuade them to drop the fish they have in their bills, no doubt for a chick somewhere. The acrobatic flying involved is fascinating to watch. However, one time as I sailed through a flock of Fluttering Shearwaters doing their usual 'duck diving' to catch small fish, I saw an Arctic Skua sitting quietly amongst them and taking fish out of their bills as they surfaced! Maybe they are not all Bird Brained!

## FAR NORTH BEACH PATROLS

Short-tailed  
Shearwater  
Hauraki Gulf (DD)

These take place every other Sunday and alternately at **Ninety Mile Beach** and **Karikari Peninsula**. Please phone **Isabella Godbert** on 09 407 8058 or **John Dawn** on 09 407 8658 for further information. The full year's results for Ninety Mile Beach are set out below.



MONTH	Jan-24	27-Feb	Mar-22	May-24	29-Jul	16-Aug	Oct-11	15-Nov	Dec-13	Total
DISTANCE	25 kms	27 kms	21 kms	26 kms	28 kms	28 kms	20 kms	36 kms	28 kms	239 kms
Wandering Albatross							2		1	3
Light-mantled Sooty Alb.					1					1
Buller's Albatross						1				1
Yellow-nosed Albatross				1						1
Shy Albatross				1						1
Mollymawk sp.	1				1			1		3
Southern Giant Petrel					3	1		2		6
Cape Petrel				1			1	1	1	4
Hutton's Shearwater	2				1					3
Buller's Shearwater				1				14	1	16
Sooty Shearwater	2	1	1	9			1	4	3	21
Short-tailed Shearwater					1			1	1	3
Fluttering Shearwater	3			2	57	11		3	5	81
Flesh-footed shearwater					1		1		1	3
Little Shearwater	1								2	3
Antarctic Fulmar						1		1		2
Grey-faced Petrel								1	3	4
Common Diving Petrel					19	4		2	1	26
Fairy Prion					11	4				15
Prion sp.					2	1				3
Mottled Petrel			1	1						2
White-chinned Petrel	1									1
White-headed Petrel				1				8		9
White-faced Storm Petrel									1	1
Blue Penguin	20	3	1	3	11	5	1			44
Australasian Gannet	28	2	2	7	4	2	7	13		65
Sthern Black-backed Gull	1	10	6	4	1	3		1	1	27
SBBG Juv	1		3							4
White-fronted Tern							1		1	2
Caspian Tern					2					2
Pied Shag		1								1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>358</b>
Duck sp.	1				1					2
Shining Cuckoo							1			1
Homing Pigeon								1		1



# SPRING WADER COUNT

Results from weekend 7 – 8 November

OSNZ REGION	FAR NORTH	MAIN SITE	Parengarenga / Rangaunu							
YEAR	2009	COMPILER	Detlef Davies							
MONTH	NOVEMBER	Tide Height, Time, Weather etc								
CENSUS DATE	7 & 8	High tide on 7th 11.48 am, 1.01 m; on 8th 12.38pm, 0.98 m. Sea swell, windy, dry, mainly sunny & warm.								
DATE >	07-Nov	07-Nov	07-Nov	07-Nov	08-Nov	08-Nov	08-Nov	08-Nov	08-Nov	
TIME >	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	10.45-14.30	15.00-16.00	1.00-15.00					
PRINCIPAL COUNTER>	KM, IG	All	All	DD	DD, CD	KM, IG	KM, IG	KM, IG	AG	
LOCAL SITES >	Houhora Harbour	Paua paddocks	Kokota Sandspit	Paua mudflats	Kowhai Beach	Walker Island	East Beach	Unahi Road	Wallace Road	
SITE TOTALS >	415	223	147	3002	1425	3908	44	78	37	0
SPECIES v TOTALS										
Pied Oystercatcher	67	66		#		1				
Variable Oystercatcher	35	13	1	#	14	7				
Oystercatcher Hybrid	0									
Pied Stilt	70	50		#				20		
Black Stilt/Hybrids	0									
New Zealand Dotterel	14		5		7		2			
Banded Dotterel	7		2		5					
Black-fronted Dotterel	0									
Large Sand Dotterel	0									
Mongolian Dotterel	0									
Shore Plover	0									
Wrybill	0									
Pacific Golden Plover	40	1	39							
Grey Plover	0									
Spur-winged Plover	3	2							1	
Turnstone	70			#	40		30			
Lesser Knot	520	20		#	500					
Great Knot	0									
Sanderling	0									
Dunlin	0									
Curlew Sandpiper	0									
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0									
Pectoral Sandpiper	0									
Red-necked Stint	0									
Broad-billed Sandpiper	0									
Ruff	0									
Eastern Curlew	0									
Whimbrel	0									
Little Whimbrel	0									
Bar-tailed Godwit	7793	300	91	40	3000	850	3500	12		
Black-tailed Godwit	0									
Hudsonian Godwit	0									
Wandering Tattler	0									
Siberian Tattler	0									
Common Sandpiper	0									
Greenshank	0									
Marsh Sandpiper	0									
Lesser Yellowlegs	0									
Terek Sandpiper	0									
Red-necked Phalarope	0									



Godwits, Knot & Turnstones, Kowhai Beach, 8 Nov 09 (Gary Little)

		Houhora Harbour	Paua paddocks	Kokota Sandspit	Paua mudflats	Kowhai Beach	Walker Island	East Beach	Unahi Road	Wallace Road	
	0										
Black Shag	1								1		
Pied Shag	0				#	#					
Little Shag	0				#						
Little Black Shag	10								10		
Black-backed Gull	53			50	#	3					
Red-billed Gull	0				#						
Black-billed Gull	0										
Caspian Tern	10			4		4			1	1	
White-fronted Tern	402						400		2		
Fairy Tern	0										
Little Tern	0										
White-faced Heron	22	12		1	#					9	
Royal Spoonbill	50	6							44		
Mallard	0										
Paradise Shelduck	92	75		4	#					13	
Reef Heron	2	2									
New Zealand Pipit	3			1		2					
Australasian Gannet	2				2						
Cattle Egret	13									13	
	0										
	0										
	0										
	0										

**MAIN SITE TOTAL > 9279**

#### COMMENTS

1. No sign of the main roosting flock of Godwits & Knot on Kokota Sandspit because of insufficient observer coverage. The figures for all waders later on Paua mudflats are extremely approximate.
2. Houhora Harbour Godwits & Knot are duplicated with birds seen next day on Kowhai Beach.
3. Walker Island Godwits seen at very long range, estimated between 3000 & 4000.
4. # means birds were not specifically counted (e.g Knots on Paua mudflats). The 'self-calculator' should be adjusted accordingly.
5. Counters were Detlef & Carol Davies, Kevin Matthews, Isabella Godbert, Anthea Goodwin, Gary Little & Asta Wistrand.

#### BANDS & FLAGS were reported as follows:

All were on Kowhai Beach, the only place where birds could be approached closely & all thought to be on right legs.

KNOT: one white flag with black writing.

KNOT: one black band above white band

KNOT: one orange flag

GODWIT: 2 birds each with orange flags

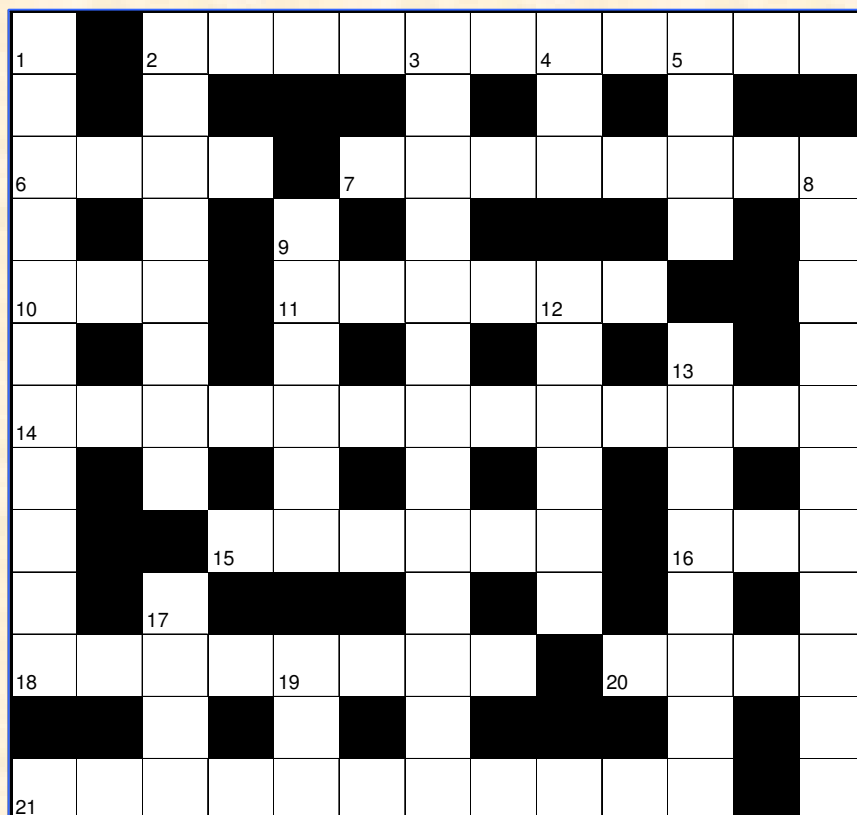


Godwits & Knots – Kowhai Beach (Gary Little)

# CHRISTMAS CROSSBIRD PUZZLE

© DETLEF DAVIES

Solution in April issue of Apteryx



(You shouldn't need this clue!)

## Clues across

**2** (& 1 down) Hey presto I've a slack drip but I'm a South American bird with a monotonous song (5-6, 6-5)

**6** Understatement to describe 11 across

**7** Very elegant water bird

**10** Ugandan antelope

**11** May still exist on Molokai (Hawaii)

**14** Mexican seed-eating bird (6,7)

**15** New Zealand forest bird

**16** French habitat for water birds?

**18** On backs of cattle in Africa

**20** Our Coot at specific level

**21** Common Neotropical bird (4,7)

## Clues down

**1** See 2 across

**2** Search for this American wader on the internet?

**3** Secretive Asian marsh bird (6,7)

**4** The law has a long one

**5** Significant colour on 7 across

**8** Fiery outback birds (6,5)

**9** Find this town when birding in Spain or Ohio?

**12** A pied 8 down in southern Africa

**13** A high country hummingbird

**17** Another 21 across has this gem on its crown

**19** Feline