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Otago Region Newsletter 7/2007 August 2007

Leopard Seal Eats Stewart Island & Little Shags

A Leopard Seal was seen in the Otago Harbour from 3 to 16 July 2007. Sean Heseltine of Monarch Wildlife Cruises reported that nearly every time it was seen it, it had been dining



on shags, spending about 10 minutes tearing small portions of flesh from the carcass before moving on. He noted also that the shags being eaten were all black variants of both **Little** and **Stewart Island Shags** - none had any white plumage at all. During the time viewed he saw 8 shags eaten and he noticed that within 300 – 400 m of each kill there were carcasses from previous kills – in one instance 3 kills nearby. He could safely say that the seal had eaten over 30 shags. The kills were distinctive, with all head and wing feathers intact but no feathers at all on the body – “degloved”?

It is possible that the seal may have been landlocked. Most of the viewing was in the upper harbour but the seal made kills near Careys Bay and Wellers Rock. During the latter it was harrassed by a young male Sea Lion. This resulted in a short chase and the Leopard Seal nipping the Sea Lion on the nose, the latter then swimming away at high speed not to be seen again.

Newsletter Mailing List Purge

To help reduce the costs of mailing out this newsletter, we ask that if you wish to continue receiving it, you fill out and return the form below. We are trying to reduce the number of copies we send out, and intend to purge the address list in the next few months. If possible, please also include a cheque for \$15 to help defray the costs. Consideration is currently being given to sending out the newsletter by email, so please do include your email address, too. This option may be available from next year, but a printed version would still be sent to those who prefer it.

Some more Rare Birds in Otago:

Some Very Early and a Few Firsts for New Zealand



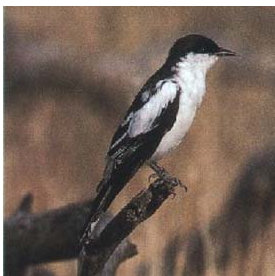
On 17 Sept 1951 “a specimen of the **Pallid Cuckoo** (*Heteroscenes pallidus*) (a different generic name during that era) was sent in for identification from Craig Flat”. Reference: *Bull. OSNZ 2: 1942, p73*. It must have been sent to the Zoology Dept of the Otago University, since the identification was made by Brian Marples. It ended up in the Otago Museum with Ref No. AV 3095. Andy

Anderson observed and recorded the second one, in Omarama on 12 Jan 1990.

Reference: *Otago January Newsletter No. 90/1*.

On 21 April 1968 Mr. Marsh Smail observed a dabchick on a dam near Arrowtown. George Chance followed this up and on 29 Nov 1968 located the grebe and was able to identify it as an **Australasian Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*). It was still present on 17 Jan 1969. Reference: *Notornis Vol 16 (1969): 4-5*. The first breeding record for New Zealand.

Another early record, and also a first for New Zealand, was a single **Dusky Moorhen**, (*Gallinula tenebrosa*), seen by Maida Barlow et al on 11 Aug 1968 at Lake Hayes. The last sighting was on 10 Oct 1968. Reference: *Notornis Vol: 16, 1969, p81-84*



A **White-winged Triller** (*Lalage sueurii*) was observed in a suburban garden at Macandrew Bay by Brian McPherson on 26 Feb 1969. It stayed in the area for almost 4 months; the last sighting was 21 June 1969. The only one ever reported in New

Zealand. Reference: *Notornis Vol 20: 1973, p46-48*. Note: scientific name now *Lalaga tricolour*.

Alan Wright, back in 1970, witnessed a **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** (*Phoebastria palpebrata*) circling Taiaroa Head on 15 March. It stayed long enough to be able to be identified. Reference: *Notornis Vol 20 : 1973, 72*.

Ken Gager spotted and identified a **Marsh Sandpiper** (*Tringa stagnatilis*) at Hawkesbury Lagoon on 6 Feb 1985. It was last seen on 23 Feb 1985. Reference: *Otago February Newsletter No. 85/1*.

On 19 Dec 1988 a **Gould's Petrel** (*Pterodroma leucoptera*) was found under a truck in South Dunedin in weak condition and died that same night, reported by David Hawke. Reference: *Notornis Vol 36 (1989): 189-190*. Identification was confirmed by John Darby and is deposited in the collection of the Otago Museum, reference no. AV 936.

A **Kerguelen Petrel** (*Lugensa brevirostris*) was seen by Jenny Morrison alive at the Chisholm Park golf course on 7 Sept 1999, but found dead the following morning. Reference: *Rare Bird Report, Notornis Vol 47 (2000): 70* and *Otago Newsletter No. 1999/6, December 1996*. This specimen is now in the collection of the Otago Museum, Reference no. AV 6587. In this newsletter it was stated that it was a first for Otago, which was, unfortunately, incorrect. Another Kerguelen Petrel was found dead on St. Kilda beach years ago, but no data is available. It supposed to be in the Otago Museum's collection, but I have not found it yet.

One **Oriental Cuckoo** (*Cuculus saturatus*) was seen by Robert and Christine Brown and Alan Wright at Portobello Rd, Broad Bay on 17, 19, 24 & 25 March 2001. Reference: *UBR 31/01 in Southern Bird No. 6 June 2001, p9*.

Another **Oriental Cuckoo** turned up at Kakanui, seen by Barry Stevenson and his family on 27 Dec 2001. Reference: *UBR 12/02 in Southern Bird No. 10 June 2002, p5*



Robert Clearwater (via Alan Wright) reported the sighting of two **Dollarbirds** (*Eurystomus orientalis*) seen at Okia Flat between 20 Nov and 10 Dec 2001.

Reference: *UBR 19/02 in Southern Bird No. 10 June 2002, p5*

A real find, a first for New Zealand, was the **Franklin's Gull** (*Larus pipixcan*) seen on 2 July 2002 at Tomahawk Lagoon by Dave York. It was seen by a very happy few, and all confirmed the sighting being a Franklin's Gull. Reference: *Notornis Vol 51 (2003): 68*. Last sighting was in the afternoon of 3 July. A local resident stated that it had been present for about 2 weeks.

A message came from Peter and Joan Kettle, on their way back to Wellington on 24 Jan 2003, who came across a **White-necked Heron** (*Ardea pacifica*). This was confirmed by Tony Hocken, with photographic evidence. Reference: *UBR 28/03 in Southern Bird No 14 June 2003*

And the one that isn't supposed to exist and consequently didn't reach the Rare Bird Committee, the **Clutha Pond Heron** ("*Ardeola suzanneae*"). But it was seen and seen well on 13 October 2002 by Richard and Suzanne Schofield. Refer: *Otago Newsletter 6/2002, December 2002*. Lengthy discussions about the identity didn't come to a conclusion other than that it must be a hybrid of maybe a **Cattle Egret** and something else? It was sighted again on 13 July and 2 & 6 August 2003. I took the liberty putting a name to this bird, since it didn't have one.

Peter Schweigman

Ornithological Snippets



On 24 and 26 July 2007, at 6.45am, Charlotte Morris heard a **Morepork** calling, for about 5 minutes. She heard it at her home in Malvern St, near Patmos Ave., in the Leith Valley. There is bush over the road, and Ross Creek reservoir is close too. She hasn't heard **Morepork** for several years, and was very pleased to hear one again.

Programme 2007

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street at 8 p.m. Please be on time: the door will be locked after 8 p.m.

Wednesday, 22 August Indoor Meeting Speaker: Yolanda van Heezik
Topic: Birds around Dunedin: What influences their diversity and how many do domestic cats eat?

Saturday, 1 September Sinclair Wetlands Field Trip. 3.30 p.m. onwards. The aim is to stay into the evening to listen for bittern, but also including a survey of other birds in the area (fernbirds, grey teal, scaup, etc). Take a picnic tea, warm clothes, torch, tape-recordings of bittern and fernbird calls. We will organise car-pooling for those who want it; otherwise meet at the Sinclair Wetlands Education Centre.

Contact Mary Thompson, ☎ 464 0787

- Wednesday, 26 September Indoor Meeting Speaker: Jamie Newman
Topic: Tracking Titi for 64,000km and Other Recent
Findings from the Titi Research Team
- Sunday, 14 October Hawkesbury Lagoon Spring Count. Leaving Dunedin
after lunch at 1.00 p.m.
Contact Jim Wilson, ☎ 476 3235
- Wednesday, 24 October Indoor Meeting Speaker: Phil Seddon
Topic: Loving Them to Death: How Tourism is Putting
Pressure on our Penguins
- Sunday 18 November Summer Wader Count: High tide at Aramoana 10.36
a.m.; Backup date Sunday 2 December (high tide at
11.26 a.m.)
Contact Ken Gager, ☎ 487 6670

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