



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

PO Box 12397
WELLINGTON

Frank Austin
Regional Recorder
8 Dunblane St
Maori Hill
Dunedin
☎ (03) 467-5214

Mary Thompson
Regional Representative
197 Balmacewen Road
Balmacewen
Dunedin
☎ (03) 464 0787

Otago Region Newsletter 1/2007 February 2007

From your RR

The Programme for 2007 is filling up fast. Please note dates in your diary.

Orokonui Ecosanctuary: please note that help is always needed for the monthly bird counts of Orokonui (contact Derek Onley, ☎ 482 2303). We will have a special tour of the area guided by Derek Onley in April and later in the year we may be involved in bird counts before and after predator control. Up-coming Newsletters will have more details.

Mohua in the Catlins ARK, field trip guided by Graeme Loh, in March, will be a special treat for members so I hope many of you are free to come. This is a day trip, but if there is an interest, some of us may stay the Saturday night in Pounaweia and look for waders and banded **Godwits** on the Sunday as well. Please let Mary Thompson know if you are interested in the overnight option, ☎ 464 0787.

Those with sea-worthy constitutions will be able to see the bird life way out from the Dunedin coast on the **Return of the Muttonbirds** boat trip. The rest of us will just have to hear about your experiences with envy.

Later in the year we are hoping to hunt for **Bitterns** in the Waihola, Sinclair and surrounding wetlands. Another one off, would be a concerted effort to spend an evening listening for **Morepork**. Any reports of calls would be greatly appreciated.

Mary Thompson

Monthly Meetings!

We are moving to monthly indoor meetings this year, which we hope will increase attendance. All indoor meetings will be in the Department of Zoology's Benham Seminar Room at 340 Great King Street, starting at 8 p.m.

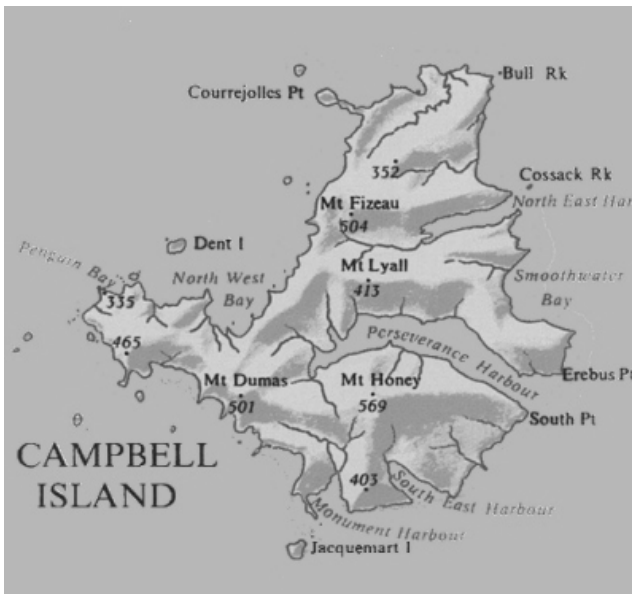
Campbell Island Teal Translocation 2006

After much speculation about what and where, a 1975 expedition to Dent Island confirmed the presence of 30-50 of **Campbell Island Teal** (*Anas nesiotis*) there. A captive population based on one female was established in New Zealand but nothing further happened at Campbell Island until Norway rats were eradicated in 2001.



Since then two translocations led by Pete McClelland of DoC Southland had supplemented local productivity. Winter 2006 was scheduled for a third and final translocation. Fifty four teal from Mt Bruce and Peacock Springs arrived in two batches at the Southern Islands Quarantine Store in Invercargill on 22 August. After checking that band numbers lined up with travelling box numbers, and a weigh to check the status of each bird, we were given a crash course by vet Rose Colleen in learning how to tube feed ducks. The teal were then loaded into a van and taken to Bluff where they were loaded onto the MV Clan MacLeod. Skipper Alan MacLeod delayed departure due to a front passing south of Stewart Island and so at about noon next day we set off into an almost calm Foveaux Strait.

The routine on board was pretty simple with tube feeding each morning and evening and a change of water each day. Tube feeding was a bit of a performance involving three people crammed into a small, smelly, cabin: 1 person to extract the teal out of the travelling box; handing it to number two who held the teal; while number three had filled a 30 ml syringe with a pellet mush. After this has been successfully, gently, forced into the teal the syringe is washed, the teal is replaced and the process is repeated until all 54 teal have been fed. In good weather with little swell it took about three hours to complete. We were lucky to have good sailing with little wind so feeding the teal was generally straight forward.



The Clan MacLeod arrived off Campbell Island before dawn after 2 1/2 days at sea. We motored up Perseverance Harbour and anchored off Beeman Base. After waiting for the breeze to drop the unloading process of handing teal boxes into the dinghy started – a total of twenty trips.

Pete took the first passengers ashore who raced up to the base and started erecting pens for the teal. Each pen included a water bowl large enough for

the teal to swim in, a food bowl, and covers for the teal to get shelter. In addition, we cut dracophyllum scrub for more cover in each pen. Each bird was weighed and given a check up before being placed in a pen. Soon the noise of teal splashing in the water bowls was audible.

Next morning started with cleaning out food bowls and washing out travelling boxes. Then the first birds for release, to North-East Harbour, were chosen. The 20 birds who had the poorest recorded weight gain on the boat were first up, and they were loaded back into travelling boxes, and back onto the Clan MacLeod. The four passengers who were heading back to Invercargill also boarded and the boat headed down the harbour and around to North East Harbour. The six of us who were remaining on the Island (Pete, Ross from Burwood Bush, Michelle from Hawaii, Kari from Rakiura, Jeanette from St Arnard & I) headed off up the board walk and hunkered down out of the screaming wind on the Col and watched the Clan MacLeod make its way up North East Harbour. In the half light of the dusk we could just see the dinghy set off from the boat for the last part of the teal's journey into the creek estuary.

The next day was much the same with cleaning out pens, replacing water and food and choosing the next 20 birds for release. These birds were destined for North-West Bay so we made up cardboard pet boxes, placed a divider in each, and installed two teal. A gentle walk around the head of Perseverance Harbour was followed by a climb up onto the ridge and a steep descent to Capstan Cove. Here a small creek empties out into the sea and a series of wallows, made by elephant seals made ideal teal habitat.

In turn each box was opened and the teal were gently tipped out and allowed to enter the water. Soon 20 teal were scooting around on the water and climbing back up the mud banks to explore the next wallow. After the obligatory photos we set off back to Beeman Base.

The next day was much the same but this time there was no discussion about which birds to choose as all those that were left were going to Six Foot Lake on the south coast of Campbell Island. Again all the birds were fed and placed in pet boxes with dividers and we set off around the head of Perseverance Harbour to the south coast.

The climb out of Perseverance Harbour is gentle and crosses a number of gullies with scrub to shelter from the wind. Eventually the track takes a turn to the east up the slopes of Mount Honey. It is here that GPS's were produced and a reference to the track noted and the party swings back to the south looking in the mist and gloom for a rock overlooking Six Foot Lake. The lake is in a wide open basin with high hills all around. The lake looks to have a direct outlet to the sea; I was looking forward to the opportunity to investigate it more closely as this was the locality where snipe had first been recorded on main Campbell Island. A steep descent down an old slip in gradually deteriorating weather was followed by a plod across a sphagnum bog towards the creek. We were almost there when a squall came in from the south with

hail so we found a handy patch of dracophyllum and burrowed into it and ate our sandwiches while the squall passed.

Once the sun was out again we walked to the creek and started to unpack our boxes of teal. Before long, however, we were an item of interest as a bull NZ sea lion started to walk up the creek to see what we were doing!

Just as Pete thought that he had faced the sea lion down around the corner appeared two more female sea lions that were not just content to look at proceedings but proceeded to race up the creek at high speed. They passed in front of the rest of us who were standing there rather gobsmacked with cardboard pet carrier's in hand leaving a large wake.

Rather tentatively we started to unpack boxes of teal while expecting at any time to be revisited by speeding sea lions and wondering what the fate of any slow teal might be. However within five minutes of being released all the teal were investigating cover under overhanging shrubs. The weather continued to deteriorate with strong wind and occasional rain showers coming in from the South west. So after packing up our boxes we turned tail and headed back up the hill for home.

This trip was the last planned release of Campbell Island teal. Already there are promising signs of teal breeding on the main island with unbanded birds being recorded. Also some of the early releases had radio tagged birds and some individuals have been recorded high on the slopes of Mt Honey and other high hills. The implication of this that teal are not restricted to salt water areas but can utilise wet areas throughout the Island. These observations may mean that eventually the whole of Campbell Island is available for teal to utilise.

Thanks to Pete, Jeannette, Kari, Ross and Michelle for a really good time.

Bruce McKinlay

Chestnut-breasted Shelducks in Coastal Otago



On 22 December 2006, a UK birder, Ben Miller reported 2 female **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks** at Hooper's Lagoon, on the Otago Peninsula. On 15 January 2007, Paul Davey saw 3 females and 1 male at the same place, and Hamish Spencer saw them there 2 days later. Derek Onley reported that the male bird was still there on 24 January.

On 18 January 2007, Peter Schweigman led a party to the Kaikorai Estuary where, to their surprise, they came across another 3 **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks**, 2 males, 1 female. At low tide they were non-stop feeding in the corner near the golf course, close to the Brighton Rd. At high water on the evening of 20 January 2007, they were again feeding, but this time well upstream near the landfill area.



So, these observations make it 7 of these Australian immigrants for Otago. Lake Ellesmere has had 9 reported. All together, these figures suggest a minor irruption of birds from Australia, possibly driven here by their drought or maybe El Niño.

Breeding Black-fronted Dotterel

Brent Stephenson, from Havelock North, in his travels hunting for **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks**, came across a nest of a **Black-fronted Dotterel** at the Kaikorai Estuary, on 30 January 2007. This record is the first confirmed breeding of this species away from Central Otago and Outram. The nest was located on farmland adjacent to the estuary, below the housing estate at the far end of Wavy Knowes Drive. Those involved in the Kaikorai Estuary survey back in 1989 and 1990 might recall the sighting of up to 3 adults in that same paddock. But that was in winter, July and August and the housing estate didn't exist back in 1989/90. The only other sighting was on 28 September 2000, when one adult was seen flying (and calling) at the DCC Green Island Landfill, nearby.



Peter Schweigman

Twitching Dunedin

On the last day of January 2007, three of us – Ian Jamieson, Ian McLean and Hamish Spencer – went off on a trip to see how many bird species we could spot in a single day around Dunedin. Hamish's previous record was 54, so we wanted 55 at least!

Starting at 7 a.m., a quick trip to the Botanic Gardens quickly netted the first 13 species, including one of only two **Tuis** seen all day, and the first of many **Redpolls** seen at almost every spot and between spots as well. We then headed up Mount

Cargill, aiming to see a **Fernbird**. Although one of the Ians (Ian J.) did see one, the others missed it, and so it didn't add to the list. The trip was worthwhile, however, in adding two easily missed species: **Greenfinch** and **Rosella**. We headed back down at 8 a.m. with 19 species.



We made a quick circuit of the Ross Creek Reservoir, hoping to see a **Rifleman**, but again drew a blank. We did add nesting **Little Shags** and **Tomtit**, however. We then stopped in one of the few remaining Douglas Fir stands on Three-Mile Hill and added **Robin** and **Brown Creeper**. A side-trip to Whare Flat again failed to provide a **Rifleman**, but did give superb views of **Brown Creeper**. By 10 a.m., we were at 27 species.

We next drove to the Sinclair Wetlands, adding a number of waterfowl, including our only **NZ Shovelers** of the day. By noon we had reached 36 species. We lunched at Lake Waihola, where we added **Black-billed Gull**, **Royal Spoonbill** and **Black Shag**, as well as **Feral Goose**. Over the hill we went, to Taieri Mouth, where we added our first shorebirds and one seabird: **Sooty Shearwaters** that were wheeling just offshore. Some likely Shy Mollymawks were wheeling around behind a fishing boat, but too far offshore for a confirmed identification. We were now at 3 p.m., with 47 species; surely we could break 54.

But our next few spots gave us several more misses. The Taieri Gorge Walkway revealed no new species. We could not find the reported breeding **Falcons** south of Brighton, nor could we find the **Black Stilt** and **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks** at Kaikorai Estuary. We were running out of time by now and decided to forgo the Peninsula (and hence **Yellow-eyed Penguin**). By 5 p.m., on the road to Aramoana, we were only at 48.

Fortunately, this road gave us several good birds: a **Kingfisher** on a branch over the road, and two further shags. The only Asiatic wader of the whole trip was at Aramoana – **Bar-tailed Godwit** – and although we added one tern (**Black-fronted**), we missed another (**Caspian**). A **Little Blue Penguin** swimming off the Mole was our last bird of the day, at 6.30 p.m., but it was No. 55!

So, a new high for us in Dunedin, but there is certainly room for improvement. Our outstanding misses were **Yellow-eyed Penguin** (we simply did not have time to go to the Peninsula), **Cattle Egret**, **Chestnut-breasted Shelduck**, **Coot** (at Sullivan's Dam or Sinclair Wetlands), **Falcon**, **Black Stilt**, **Caspian Tern**, **NZ Pipit**, **Fernbird** and **Rifleman** (in spite of several stops for these last two). And, with luck, a second Asiatic wader at Aramoana, or a seabird blown inshore, we could add 10 or more species. We admit to using playback to find the **Robin**, and a squeaker to call in **Fernbird** (which failed). But, the odd rail and crane could also be added to the list using technowizardry.

What we saw (in order of sighting):

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Bellbird | 20. Skylark | 39. White-faced Heron |
| 2. Silvereeye | 21. Australian Magpie | 40. Black Shag |
| 3. Starling | 22. Mallard | 41. Feral Goose |
| 4. Grey Warbler | 23. Rock Dove | 42. Variable
Oystercatcher |
| 5. Kereru | 24. Little Shag | 43. Pied Oystercatcher |
| 6. Redpoll | 25. Tomtit | 44. Grey Teal |
| 7. Dunnock | 26. Brown Creeper | 45. Pied Stilt |
| 8. Back-backed Gull | 27. Robin | 46. White-fronted Tern |
| 9. Fantail | 28. Paradise Shelduck | 47. Sooty Shearwater |
| 10. Blackbird | 29. Spur-winged Plover | 48. Banded Dotterel |
| 11. Tui | 30. Australasian Harrier | 49. Stewart Island Shag |
| 12. Song Thrush | 31. Pukeko | 50. Spotted Shag |
| 13. House Sparrow | 32. Welcome Swallow | 51. Kingfisher |
| 14. Red-billed Gull | 33. Canada Goose | 52. Bar-tailed Godwit |
| 15. Greenfinch | 34. NZ Scaup | 53. Black-fronted Tern |
| 16. Yellowhammer | 35. Black Swan | 54. Northern Royal
Albatross |
| 17. Chaffinch | 36. NZ Shoveler | 55. Little Blue Penguin |
| 18. Eastern Rosella | 37. Black-billed Gull | |
| 19. Goldfinch | 38. Royal Spoonbill | |

Hamish Spencer

Naseby Birds

After four year break, I finally got back into active birding over Christmas. On 4 January 2007 I was rewarded with 3 **Australian Coot** on Lower Coal Pit dam adjacent to Naseby. From then until 18 January, the number of **Coot** ranged from one to four. The checks were carried out nearly every day. All birds were adult with the white shield. A further **Coot** was seen on a farm pond adjacent to the Naseby end of the St Bathans loop road. On both ponds the water levels were high enough to give the **Coot** unlimited access to willow growing in the water. The St Bathans' bird was seen or heard on 7, 13 and 18 January, but checks of Blakely's Dam, Ranfurly Sewage plant, Naseby Sewage plant, Hoffman Dam all failed to produce any further sightings. It needs to be noted that there is a significant amount of surface water on the Maniototo with Lower Coal Pit having a surface area comparable to Upper Coal Pit. I have seen a single **Coot** (once) at Lower Coal Pit previously and I would be keen to here from of any other sighting from the area.



On 8 January 2007 I was rewarded at 10:30 hrs with a **Falcon** flying in on the Naseby side of the Danseys Pass. The other highlight of the break was the sighting of a **Tui** in Naseby. The bird was seen at 14:50 hrs on 17 January, flying over Larch Ave.

After 25 plus years of visiting Naseby and the Maniatoto, this is the first time I have recorded **Tui** in this area. Once again I would be keen to hear of other reports.

Jim Wilson
j.j.wilson@actrix.co.nz
03-476-3235

Lunching with Southern Royal Albatross



Recently I visited Campbell Island and dotted all over the hillsides, looking like sheep, were **Southern Royal Albatross**. They were sitting on slightly raised nests, amongst the colour megaherbs, some distance from each other. The nests are round, and according to our guide, Aleks Terauds, take one & a half days to build. One bird stands in the centre moving round and round while the other passes the local foliage. They are unconcerned about people but we were advised to keep 5 m away. However they are disturbed by small birds, like **Tomtits**, flying around their heads, presumably looking for insects. We ate our lunch sitting on an abandoned nest 5 m away from an incubating **Albatross**.

Other birds seen from land were; a moulting **King Penguin**, **Silvereye**, nesting **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross**, **Yellow-eyed Penguin**, **Dunnock**, **Blackbird**, **Redpoll**, **Pipit**, **Red-billed Gull**, **Black-backed Gull**, **Antarctic Tern**, and **Brown Skua**. **Campbell Island Teal** were seen by birders on another ridge.

Lesley Gowans

Ornithological Snippets

Alison Nevill reports that on 19 Dec 2006, her husband, Stuart, saw at least 2, possibly 5 **Great Crested Grebe** on Lake Wanaka. He was launching his boat at the ramp at the Makarora end of the lake and was nonplussed as to what the birds were. He saw two first but could not identify them. The birds were diving. A bit further out on the lake he thought there were another 3, and did get close enough for a clear view to recognize the **Grebe**. We had seen them there before, many years ago, in 1971/72. Two birds were definitely sighted at once, but there were possibly another three, that could not be positively identified.

Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway saw a **Crested Grebe** on Lake Manapouri every day for about two weeks over the Christmas New Year period; or was it two birds and they didn't see the swap-over at a nest site? They also had an excellent close-up view of 13 **Turnstones** at the far end of the road on a gravel bank at Awarua Bay on 17 December.

On 29 Dec 2006 Paul Davey saw a **Northern Giant Petrel** just off the shore from Pilots Beach. It was being mobbed by a group of **Black-backed Gulls**, and one of the gulls actually took hold of one of the petrel's wings with its bill, latching on for a few seconds before leaving the harassed bird to be furthermore chased back out of the harbour. This activity lasted for about 10 minutes at around 10.20 in the morning and the petrel was being pursued not only around Pilots Beach, but also near the Spit at Aramoana.



On 21 Jan 2007 Paul Davey found a group of 17 **Royal Spoonbills** feeding in the shallow tidal lagoon opposite Burkes in the Otago Harbour. He has come to know these past few months that the spoonbills are regular visitors to the four inlets along this road from Ravensbourne to Roseneath, but the largest number he has ever seen in a single lagoon was 7 on the 24 Dec 2006. Adding to the 17, another **Royal Spoonbill** was seen in the lagoon (largest one) in Blanket Bay, and yet another in the first lagoon as you drive to Port Chalmers from Ravensbourne. This makes a total of 19 **Royal Spoonbills**, most of which, if not all, were adult birds in breeding plumage. It was a rising tide at about 3.00pm. He wonders if it is possible that this is a combined group of Heyward Point and Taiaroa Head colonies? Surely a single colony from either of these places cannot comprise of at least twenty adult birds? He suggests that this flock is a combination of the colonies congregating in preparation to head off to winter in northern estuaries, but, of course, they could be from the Green Island colony.

Also on 21 Jan 2007 Paul Davey saw were five **Caspian Terns** roosting on mudflats in the small bay (western side of Hoopers Inlet) which is fed by Stewarts Creek and Weipers Creek. By the looks of it there was one juvenile and the rest were adults. Their feet were partially submerged so he was unable to check for bands.

Louise Foord saw at least 12 **Coots** on Sullivans Dam on 22nd January. Lesley Gowans reports a **Morepork** at Fruitvale, Ettrick on 21st Jan 2007. It was disturbed from an old disused stable and flew into nearby tress to be given a loud scolding by some Blackbirds.

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, 28 February	Indoor Meeting	Speaker: Bryan Rhodes
	Topic: Prothonotary Warblers: Neotropical migrants on the move	

Saturday, 17 March

Field Trip Leader Graeme Loh ☎ (03) 487 6125
Mohua in the Catlins ARK
Meet at 8.30 a.m., Department of Zoology Carpark
All day trip to see the **Mohua** stronghold in the Thisbe
Stream and the rat control operation. If conditions are
good there will be a mist netting attempt. Bring
gumboots and lunch.

Wednesday, 28 March

Indoor Meeting Speaker: Pascale Michel
Topic: Breeding-site Selection of Stewart Island Robin
and South Island Saddleback

Saturday, 14 April

Field Trip Leader Graeme Loh ☎ (03) 487 6125
Return of the Muttonbirds
Meet at 9 a.m., Karitane Wharf.
Going out with Alan Anderson's yacht to see
mollymawks, albatrosses, petrels and, of course,
shearwaters. Aim to head offshore a fair way to see
the different birds further out. \$100 each until we get
to 10 people. Up to 15 people. Bookings essential.

Newsletter Editor: Hamish Spencer, 50 Grey Street, NEV, Dunedin, 9010.
hgspencer@xtra.co.nz

