



THE  
**ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
(INCORPORATED)

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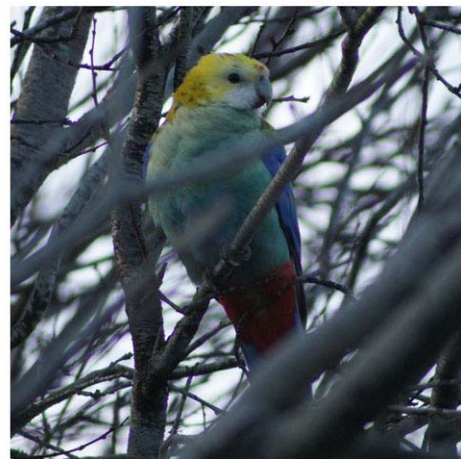
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*Otago Region Newsletter 7/2009 July 2009*



Dr Otto Hyink sent Mary Thompson these photos (left and top right) of an oddly coloured Eastern Rosella that he saw in his garden at the end of June. The photo on the bottom right was taken in Queensland.

The bird looks very similar to the Pale-headed Rosella (*Platycercus adscitus*), the Queensland version of the familiar Eastern Rosella which occurs in SE Australia. Eastern, Pale-headed and Northern Rosellas are sometimes regarded as separate species and sometimes colour phases of one species whose range extends from Victoria, through New South Wales and Queensland around to the Northern Territory. That is not to say that one made it across the Tasman but maybe it's an indication that the genes for such variation are still floating around in our local "Eastern" population? Or maybe it's just an aviary escape?

## Ross Creek Survey June Results

Mary Thompson, Les Buchanan and Alan Baker contributed section bird lists.

(There is a map of the area and sections in the June newsletter)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Black Shag				S			
Little Shag				S			
White-faced Heron				S			
Paradise Duck				S			
Mallard				S			
Californian Quail		S					
Spur-winged Plover				S			
Black-backed Gull				S			
NZ Pigeon		S		S	S	B	
Welcome Swallow				S			
Dunnock	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Blackbird	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Song Thrush	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Brown Creeper		S			S	S	
Grey Warbler	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Fantail	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Tomtit	S			S	S	S	
Silvereeye	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Bellbird	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Tui	S	S	H	S	S	S	
Chaffinch	S		S	S	S	S	
Goldfinch				S			
Starling	S		S				
Species Total 23	11	11	10	20	12	12	7

S = seen; H = heard only; B = indication of breeding (in this case collecting twigs)

On 14 June, Mary counted the reservoir birds: Mallard 54, Spur-winged Plover 2, Little Shag 1, Black Shag 1. She also noted a flock of 50+ Silvereeyes in section F.

The record of a Californian Quail appears to be very unusual. Locally it was only recorded in two squares in the recent Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ: near Woodside Glen in the Taieri and close to Waitati.

Please send all July results to me by August 7. Our second group survey will be held on Sunday August 2. We will meet at 1 pm at the end of Cannington Road.

**Alan Baker** 4675180 48 Pacific St., Dunedin 9010

### Winter Wader Count.

This winter's wader count went well. There was no threat of cancellation and we even had some sun. The Banded Dotterels were a pretty sight actively running around on the exposed sandbars. A pity about the sandbars. A predicted high tide of 2.0 m strangely never eventuated and some of the birds continued feeding rather than going to roost which made counting somewhat difficult.

Compared with last year there was not a great change. The numbers of Pied Oystercatchers and Banded Dotterels were down, the other waders were up, especially the Pied Stilts.

It was interesting to see an increase in the various non waders. Last year we had 4 White-faced Herons, this time we counted 37. Kingfishers last year 9, this time 17.

	Aramoana	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Harbour West	Harbour East	LPG Depot	Total
Pied Oystercatcher	135	197	64	152	56	45	649
Variable Oystercatcher	2	8	11	2	25		48
Bar-tailed Godwit	111		40				151
Banded Dotterel	101	78					179
Pied Stilt	8	12	17		67		104
White-faced Heron		31	5		1		37
Caspian Tern	3						3
Kingfisher	5	4	8				17
Paradise Shelduck	29	56	219		2		306

### Ken Gager and Peter Schweigman

#### Ornithological Snippets

After the spate of **Falcon** sightings last month Fergus Sutherland emailed to say that "We regularly see falcons now in the Catlins River Valley - they range beyond the forest to our place at Mohua Park" There was an adult male at Waitati on 25 June. (Eastern Falcons are classified by DoC in the gradual decline category. Locally it appears records have been increasing over the last 5 years. Increased observer awareness?)

Mary Thompson reports two **Cattle Egrets** on east side of flood free highway (Taieri Plain) across the overflow channel, near the Taieri River bridge end on 10 July at 11.30am. A rarity these days.

Mary also counted all **Harriers** seen from car on a 300 km trip from Dunedin to Manapouri on 10 July. "Total 39 making 1 bird every 7.6km. This compares with the greatest yield of sightings reported in the September issue of Notornis. ( 3 dead ones not included). The birds were flying low so not really easy to see so this will be an underestimate."

## Overseas News

Graeme Loh had two days off in Sydney and went out first with SOSSA (Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association) from Wollongong, and later "Halicat" (google that) from Sydney to see seabirds. "Great trips on very different waters to our edge of the Southern Ocean. The East Australia current is sweeping south at 2 knots, still about 19 degrees C, was 22 in June! Cuttlefish were spawning and the spent adults dying, bringing the albatrosses inshore. Special for me were pelicans, Yellow-nosed Albatross and Providence Petrels. Special for them were kelp gulls (Southern Black-backed Gulls), Buller's Albatross and Cape Pigeons. Just shows, don't take your locals for granted. The most noticeable difference for me was having no shags at sea. Humpbacked whales were rather common. Two jumped in duet for us. Both trips went 40 km offshore to where the Wandering Albatrosses are common. We went inshore to Curl Curl my childhood shoreline to inspect the Peregrine Falcons that were nesting on the urban cliffs. That's new since I was young! No falcon in those days.



SOSSA people plumage assessing, measuring and banding a Yellow-nosed Albatross.  
G Loh

Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association run the trips to educate and to support their seabird studies which include capturing albatross from the burley trail behind the boat. This provided the news of the day with the capture of a black-browed albatross from Crozet with an old corroded monel band.

If you have a spare \$100 in Sydney get on one of these trips, they happen once a month. Met a great bunch of people.”

Graeme

Reports on SOSSA trips are regularly posted on BirdingNZ website.

## **Notices and Business**

### **Saddleback Records**

Bryce Masuda reports that the saddleback sighted outside the sanctuary in a Waitati garden –see last month’s newsletter - was previously sighted three times within the sanctuary in completely different areas each time. So it looks like that bird is quite the traveler.

If you have any sightings to send to Bryce, please note the change of email address to [bryce.masuda@otago.ac.nz](mailto:bryce.masuda@otago.ac.nz)

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### **Harbour Survey**

You may have noticed that Rainbow Seafoods, who harvest clams (cockles) in Blueskin Bay, have been given the go ahead to harvest in Otago harbour on the two banks that emerge at low tide either side of Quarantine Island off Port Chalmers. The Port is also proposing to deepen and widen the dredged channel to allow the “new generation” of large container ships to enter the port. So now is a useful time to repeat the harbour surveys of twenty years ago. (See also Time to Count the Harbour Again? in the February 09 newsletter)

The exercise involves counting birds over high tide around the edges of the harbour every month for a year. The main species involved are shags, terns, gulls and the godwit and oystercatcher roosts. Luckily you do not have to walk the 50 or more kilometres as there is a road around all but a few 100 metres of waters edge. We envisage starting by Spring. We need vehicles with observers as well as drivers so as not to cause chaos on the narrow roads nor injure any of our small, ageing membership.

So this is an appeal to all those interested who can commit to at least some of the 12 Saturdays or Sundays in a year, to put their names forward now so that we can see if a survey is feasible.

contact Derek Onley [derekonley@yahoo.com](mailto:derekonley@yahoo.com) or 03 4822831

Information on previous counts is also available from Derek.

## **Falcon Study Group**

Some interested people from OSNZ have formed a study group to learn more of the status of falcon around the greater Dunedin area. Initially we aim to locate and monitor nest sites in the pine forests owned by Wenita Forests and possibly others where access is available.

Peter Schweigman already has experience with locating falcons in these forests and will be a great help with the project.

Through contacts at Massey University I have discovered that a trial by students in locating breeding pairs was successful using vocalisations played over a loudspeaker system. I will obtain the specifications of the sound system to use in this project, aiming to start this spring. We may qualify for a grant from the OSNZ Project Assistance fund towards the sound system.

Initially locating nest sites and recording fledgling success will keep us busy but I think in time there will be further studies we can undertake.

If there are any other members interested in this study I would be pleased to hear from you, so that you can be kept informed.

**Contact: Steve Lawrence.**

**E-mail: falco1@xtra.co.nz**

**Ph 03 486 2569**

## **Records wanted for the 2008 N.Z. Bird Report**

Many thanks to the two people who have sent me their 2008 records for the Bird Report. I would really like to hear from more of you. I have been through the newsletters, but I am sure that people must have more records which are suitable for the report. In addition, the information in the newsletters is not always easy to convert to the report format. For example, some observations lack dates and, in other cases the observer is not named. This is not a criticism of the newsletter, which has a different purpose from the report, but I hope it explains why I would appreciate an annual list of records from as many of you as possible.

Please could I have all 2008 records by the end of August, so that I can start organizing them. My address is at the top of the newsletter. Thanking you in anticipation. **Alan Baker, Regional Recorder.**

## **Which records to Send?**

Records suitable for the report include not only the rare and unusual but series of counts at a site, maximum and minimum counts, indications of changes in status throughout the season or compared with previous years, arrival and departure dates for migrants, counts at breeding colonies, new or abandoned nesting sites etc.

For some species whether to send in the record will be relatively obvious: for example all records of falcons will be welcome. For commoner species some indication of context or the reason for sending in the record will be helpful. For example, 13 Canada Geese in Blueskin Bay may need to be qualified by “only seen irregularly in the bay” whereas 13 at Karitane might require a comment along the lines of “usual number over the last few years”.

Generally speaking however, the yet to be published 2007 bird report suffers from a lack of records; a dire lack in some regions. If in doubt it is better to send in more information and let the recorder and compiler sort it out.

**Derek Onley**

### **Nest Record Scheme for Blackbirds and Thrushes**

The AGM supported a concerted push for the nest record scheme and some written notes for "Nest Record 2010" will be published in the new Southern Bird so that members can be active as soon as the first eggs are laid. The aim will be to get nest records for blackbirds and thrushes with a focus on first laying dates for the two species throughout the country. I'm sure there are other aspects that could be learnt from a good sample of hi-quality nest records: - relative incidence of predation, preferred tree or shrub species, differences in nest height, differences in nesting success, differences in clutch size. The other aim of course is to encourage members in those aspects of ornithology that involve finding nests, observing what is happening and recording this well. Recording should be on the standard nest record form (available from the website); nest visits should take care not to be disruptive - perhaps using a mirror on a stick to check contents; frequent visits are more valuable - allowing determination of first laying date, clutch size and fledging success with more confidence. In the first instance, please send completed records to your RR.

**Peter Gaze (OSNZ Council member)**

### **Colour Banded Bellbirds and Tui**

Murray Efford is colour banding Bellbirds and Tui in Wakari and would be interested to hear of any sightings. The left leg has a colour over metal band and the right leg two colours. The colours are dark blue and green (not always easy to distinguish), orange and red (can be awkward until you have seen a couple) and an easy yellow. He may add white when he can get some. Murray is away for several months but still would like to receive any sightings by email – [murray.efford@clear.net.nz](mailto:murray.efford@clear.net.nz)

### **Email Newsletters are in glorious colour!**

Many of you will have received a pdf copy of this Newsletter by email as well as mail. It is quite a big job to photocopy, collate, address and post the newsletters so if you are happy to receive the newsletter **only by email**, or if you would like to but do not, please send your email address with your request to:

[mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz](mailto:mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz)

## **Mystery Photos**

All will be revealed about last months mystery photo (below) next month, as I have run out of time!

The bird below, photographed off Fiordland recently, was tentatively identified as an Amsterdam Albatross. Was it?



**Photo Keith Larner**



## Programme 2009

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.

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|----------------------|--|
| Wednesday 22 July    | Dr Bruce McKinlay "The Albatross of Taiaroa Head."   |
| Saturday 25 July     | Hawksbury Lagoon Winter Survey.  |
| Sunday 2 August      | Ross Creek Survey. Meet at 1.00 pm at the end of Cannington Road. Contact Alan Baker, phone 467 5180 |
| Wednesday 26 August  | Indoor Meeting TBA   |
| Wednesday 23 Sept.   | Indoor Meeting TBA   |
| Wednesday 28 October | Indoor Meeting Graham Parker<br>"S I Robins of Dunedin."   |
| Sunday 1 November    | Ross Creek Survey. Meet at 1.00 pm end of Cannington Road. Contact Alan Baker, phone 467 5180        |
| Wednesday 25 Nov.    | Indoor Meeting TBA   |
| Sunday 11 October    | Spring survey of Hawksbury Lagoon  |
| Saturday 28 November | Summer Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.22.  |

**The speakers for the indoor meetings for September and November are now unfortunately unable to come along. Are there any offers out there to replace them?**

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[derekonley@yahoo.com](mailto:derekonley@yahoo.com)

Many thanks to all who contributed,  
Final date for copy for next newsletter: 18 August