



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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From your RR

Monthly Indoor meetings

You will see from the Programme that Indoor Meetings are being planned for each month on the 4th Wednesday, so please keep this day for OSNZ. If you haven't made it to an Indoor Meeting before, it's easy to find: just turn into Great King Street from Frederick Street and go past the Dental School. Near the end just before the cul de sac, on the left, is the Zoology Building with an off-street car park in front, which you are welcome to use. The Benham Building is the new building set back from the street and there will be someone to meet you at the door and tell you where to go. So please, plan to come to hear our speakers and to meet other bird enthusiasts.

Report of Weekend in the Catlins



Ten of us had a magical day with the **Mohuas** at the Catlins Mohua Ark in the Thisbie Stream area up the Owaka Valley on Saturday, 17 March.

Graeme Loh ferried us across the paddocks and through streams via 4WD to the start of the beech forest. The first group was met by an active flock of **Mohua** – a great start.

Graeme is the DOC person in charge of this incredible undertaking of making this huge area of beech forest mohua friendly with a sustained rat and stoat trapping and poisoning programme. The Catlins Ark has about 25% of the total **Mohua** population in NZ. Graeme's wide knowledge of the natural history of the area also gave us insights into rare plants, the mistletoes and the long-tailed bats that also live in this area. After lunch, persistence by Graeme had us head off the track following the distant chatter of **Mohua**; soon we were face-up to the tree-tops with a flock of at

least a dozen birds, and the **Tomtits** and **Fantails** that had been accompanying us were ignored for a while. With some encouragement from Graeme the **Mohua** obliged us by coming right down to the lower levels so we all had close-up views of these amazing birds with their bright yellow heads, energetically foraging through the branches. A big thank you to Graeme for organising and leading this trip.

Four of us stayed the Saturday night at Pounaweia and could even enjoy viewing birds from the motel windows. The estuary and surrounds provided us with 24+ **Spoonbills**, 40+ **Banded Dotterels**, 90+ **Godwits** (60 checked for bands), 6 Hooker's Sealions, a paddock crammed with 35+ **White-faced Herons** and, out over a very stormy sea, huge numbers of **Sooty Shearwaters** and mollymawks, close enough to be visible with binoculars.

Mary Thompson

Orokonui Update & Field Trip

As you may well know, the work on the predator proof fence for the Orokonui Sanctuary is now well underway and eradication of rats, possums, mustelids, goats, hedgehogs, any remaining cattle and hopefully mice is planned to take place in late winter. A group of a dozen or so volunteers, including a couple of members of OSNZ have been surveying the birds in the sanctuary and in two control areas for almost two years. We now have over 2000 5-minute counts that give a reasonable idea of what is currently in the area and we will be able to compare the changes that occur in the fenced sanctuary with counts from the control areas at Volco Trust's land and on the Purakanui side of Mopanui Road. Results so far indicate that the area has lots of **Blackbirds**, **Song Thrushes**, **Dunnocks** and **Redpolls**, reasonable numbers of the commoner native bush birds such as **Brown Creeper**, **Tomtit**, **Bellbird** and **Rifleman** but few **Kereru** and only fleeting visits by **Tui** which nest in small numbers in the adjacent farmland and gardens. And then there are the **Rosellas**. As far as I am aware this is the first time such extensive base data has been collected before a predator proof fence has been built.

The sanctuary will provide many opportunities for research, not only on the responses of the commoner birds (including introduced species which considering their origins and adaptations to predators may well be very interesting) but also on rarer re-introduced endemics such as **Saddleback**, **Robin** and **Kiwi**.

On Sunday 15 April there will be a field trip to Orokonui consisting of a downhill walk around the outside of the western predator proof fence for the less adventurous and a circumnavigation for those still keen when we reach the bottom of the valley. The idea is to familiarise members with the project and maybe discuss ways in which the society can contribute to research. Meet at the car park for the tallest tree at 2 p.m. (Go through Waitati, right onto Orokonui Rd and continue until potholes appear. Carpark is on the left just before archway entrance to the Orokonui "park".)

For those of you who would like to come along to the regular bird surveys (no experience necessary, training given) the dates for this autumn are on Saturdays: 24 March, 7 & 21 April and 5 May, with the following Sunday the fallback option if weather is poor. Counts start around 7 to 8am and take about 3 hours. Please phone 482 2831 or email derekonley@yahoo.com and you will be put on the mailing list.

We also hope to carry out more intensive surveys immediately before and after trapping and poisoning takes place, in part to try and provide some more concrete evidence on the direct effects of poisoning, if any, on the bird populations. This is likely to take place in late winter and we will need as many volunteers as possible.

Derek Onley

Report of Bush Wren?

On 23 February 2007, Bruce McKinlay received a phone call from Warren Grey, who described to him a pair of birds that he had seen the previous week (around the 14/15 Feb 2007) in the forest opposite the Blue Pools walk in the Makarora Valley (approximate Grid Reference G38/124647). The birds were seen in the bush along the ground not far from the road. Mr Grey described a bird which was bigger than a rifleman, about the size of a sparrow, which did not have a tail. It was brown in colour and had a white eye stripe. Bruce responded that the bird was believed to be extinct but that he would let people know to be able to follow up.



Tracking Banded Waders

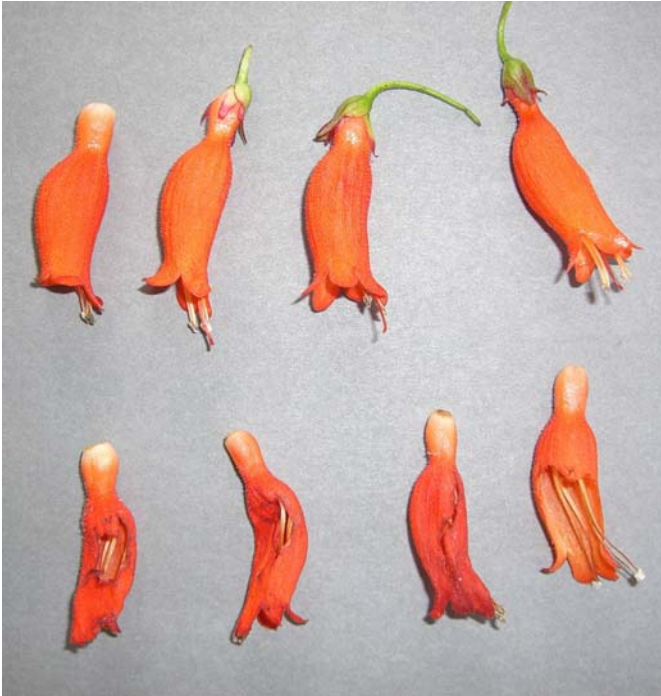
Several days, but mainly the weekend of the 17 February, were rather profitable band-wise. A total of 23 complete colour band combinations with an additional 9 partly complete combination, were recorded. The best effort was at Hoopers where Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway managed a good haul with the aid of Sue's kayak slowly guiding the birds to Mary for observation. I'm told that with the help of a third observer, the result would have been even better. All we have to do is to entice Sue to be willing to come again, hopefully in the same balmy weather.

The godwits at Blueskin Bay didn't turn up at the Warrington Beach, but concentrated at Evansdale, all 600 plus. All birds roosted a bit too far for proper identification. Standing on one leg (the birds that is) didn't help. Karitane was easier, since the birds used the right edge of the Waikouaiti River to come slowly to the outlet to roost. But there were no banded godwits there, just a very high number of 229. There was,

however, a bonus for Audrey and Peter, who saw a solitary **Golden Plover**. These numbers suggest that we have at least 2000 godwits in Otago.

Peter Schweigman

Thieving Silvereyes



In my garden I have a number of South American shrubs with tubular flowers and have observed them from my bathroom window. The climbing shrub, *Mitraria coccinea* (Gesneriaceae) has tubular flowers about 45mm long. Initially, I thought that the **Silvereyes** were feeding on insects on the *Mitraria*, but then I noted that the **Silvereyes** were quite interested in the flowers. Their beaks are much too small to reach the nectar and when I examined the flowers more closely I discovered that they were ripping open the flowers to get at the nectar. The picture to the left shows intact flowers and others that have been

assaulted by the birds.

Peter Bannister

Northern Royal Albatross at Taiaroa Head

A total of 24 chicks hatched this season, and 23 have made it through to several weeks of age. This is the second highest number of chicks recorded for the headland and the highest success rate of hatchlings for the last 12 years!! (and in that season there were just 12 chicks). Just over the last few days some of the chicks have entered the post-guard stage whereby they have been left alone while both adults forage. They tend to become very nervous around anything bigger than themselves (rangers and juvenile albatross mostly) and it takes us some time to build up their confidence with us weighing them during their “weekly weigh-ins.”

Pukekura's 500th chick, named “Toroa,” is doing fine, and is visible via a web-cam which is a joint initiative between the Otago Peninsula Trust (concessionaire) and DOC. Go to <http://www.albatross.org.nz/webcam/webcam.html>. Toroa is now at the post-guard stage, so expect to see him on the webcam by himself for long periods.

The removal of most rabbits out of the reserves and the construction of a rabbit-proof fence has led to areas of long rank grass, which, although not a problem for wildlife, is still of concern as a fire risk. Our main concern now is predator control while albatross chicks are at their most vulnerable.

Lyndon Perriman

Grey Plover at Warrington

These birds were photographed on 6 December 2006 at Warrington beach by Craig McKenzie. Derek Onley and Adrian Riegen have identified the front-most bird as a **Grey Plover**. A stunning photograph of a great bird for Otago!



Ornithological Snippets



At around 11.00 a.m. on 25 of February Paul Davey saw two **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks**, one male, one female, at “Little Hoopers” in Hoopers Inlet.

Ian McLean saw a **NZ Falcon** at Logan Park High School on 26 February 2007.

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 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. We 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.
- Sunday, 15 April Field Trip Leader Derek Onley ☎ (03) 482 2831
 Orokonui Sanctuary
 Meet at 2 p.m. at the car park for the Tallest Tree.
- Wednesday, 25 April Indoor Meeting Speaker: Ian McLean
 Topic: Predation & Artificial Nests in Dunedin
- Wednesday, 23 May Indoor Meeting Speaker: Graeme Loh
 Topic: A Visit to Svalbard
- Wednesday, 27 June Indoor Meeting Speaker: Bruce McKinlay
 Topic: Fernbirds

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