



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

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WELLINGTON

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*Otago Region Newsletter 10/2009 October 2009*

**Falcon Study Group**

Akatore Forest survey results 10th October

Peter Schweigman, Ian Douglass and I surveyed most of the northern portion of the forest on Saturday in fairly average weather but worth the effort.

After a small change in plans, due to a large numbers of motorcyclists entering the forest at our intended entrance, we went on further and checked out a number of skid sites off the Taieri beach road. Amazingly, at the first attempt at broadcasting the falcon calls after 20 seconds a pair came in sight kekking and started attacking a harrier.



Photo Nathan Parker

Phew- it looks like the system does work, even with North Island falcon calls! We concentrated on broadcasts from open areas where the sound could be projected into gullies and valleys, often from skid sites with Peter taking GPS records.

Towards the end of the day we located a female falcon responding to the broadcast near the edge of farmland, so we have 2 likely territories so far for further investigation.

I noted the different habitat here where the falcons could have nest sites on bluffs and small clearings amongst mature pines, compared to Kaingaroa forest where the falcons were only in recently clear-felled blocks on fairly flat land.

At Wenita's request, Peter also recorded the other bird species present.

Despite the weather my wife and I surveyed a little more of the forest on Saturday 17 October, until it got too wet, and got a response to the calls at a new site.

No falcon were sighted but a whining call was heard several times – I would expect it to be a female on or near a nest, so it will need closer investigation.

No trips are planned for Labour weekend.

If you are interested in further surveys contact: Steve Lawrence.

E-mail: [falcol@xtra.co.nz](mailto:falcol@xtra.co.nz) Ph 03 486 2569

## Hawksbury Lagoon



On Sunday 11 October, Peter, Derek, Ian, Helen, and Verity braved cold, near gale force winds to carry out the “spring” survey of Hawksbury Lagoon. Greg Kerr from the Hawksbury Lagoon Committee also came along. The committee intends to improve the habitats and amenities of the

lagoon and have already commissioned a report from Wildlands consultants which mainly looks at the possibilities of native vegetation restoration.

	28 Sept 2008	25 July 2009	11 Oct 2009
Start time	1.00am	2.00pm	10.15
Black Shag	0	2	0
Little Shag	4	0	1
White-faced Heron	0	1	1
Royal Spoonbill	1	0	4
Black Swan	64	16	41
Canada Goose	12	12	9
Greylag Goose	c14	22	14
Canada/Greylag Hybrid	c25	0	13
Paradise Shelduck	96	34	10
Mallard/Grey Duck	181	299	108
Grey Teal	25	60	114
NZ Shoveler	143	205	77
Harrier	2	0	2
Pied Oystercatcher	0	1	1
Variable Oystercatcher	2	0	0
Pied Stilt	9	13	26
Spur-winged Plover	6	3	8
Black-backed Gull	6	12	14
Red-billed Gull	24	10	65
Kingfisher	1	0	0
Welcome Swallow	6	0	4
Total	580	690	512

Breeding was noted for Black Swan, 4 nests and 2 pairs with 3 & 4 cygnets; Paradise Shelduck, 1 pair with 8 2-3 day old ducklings; Mallard, 3 pairs with 10, 11 & 3 small ducklings and Shoveler, 1 female with 10 small ducklings. There was also a Feral Goose, hybrid Canada/Feral Goose pair with 4 Goslings.

Changes from winter and last year include a large decrease in numbers of Paradise Duck, lower numbers of Shoveler and Mallard and higher numbers of Grey Teal.

Derek Onley

Photos by Helen



## Ross Creek Survey. September Results

Mary Thompson, Les Buchanan and Alan Baker contributed last month. Some lists included numbers (transect counts). Numbers are the highest reported for each section, otherwise:- S = seen; H = heard only; B = indication of breeding.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Little Shag				3			
Paradise Duck				2			
Mallard				14			
Black-backed Gull				2	S		
NZ Pigeon	S	S	S	2	1	3	S
Rosella				1	2	1	
Rifleman					H	2	
Welcome Swallow				3			S
Dunnock	S	S	S	2	1	1	S
Blackbird	B	S	S	5	4	2B	S
Song Thrush	S	H	S	S	S	S	
Brown Creeper		S				S	
Grey Warbler	S	S	S	1	5B	3	
Fantail	S	S		2	2	2	S
Silvereye	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Bellbird	S	B	S	2B	3	4	S
Tui	S	S	S	3B	1	S	
Chaffinch	S	S	S	S	2	H	S
Greenfinch				S			
Goldfinch				S			
Redpoll	S						
House Sparrow	B			S			
Starling	S			S			
Species Total 23	13	11	9	20	12	13	8

Mary saw Grey Warblers lining a nest with feathers. Bellbird, Tui, Blackbird and House Sparrow were seen carrying nest material. Mary also reported a Tui washing in damp bushes. Fuchsia was a popular food source used by Tui, Bellbird, Silvereye and Rosella.

Could I please have all October results by November 7.

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

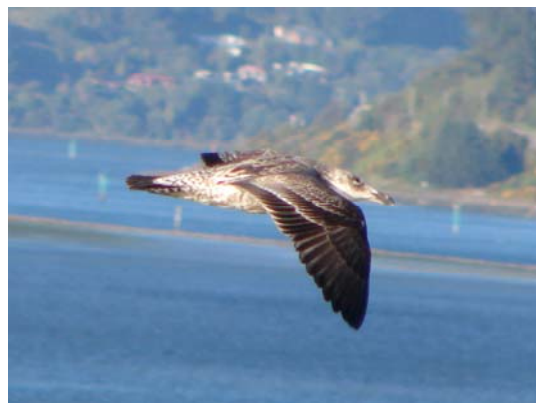


## Harbour Survey September 27 2009 22 years on!

Species	Section							Total		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	27.9.09	9.10.77	25.9.87
Black Shag	3							3	0	0
Little Shag	19	45	80	64	66	52		326	299	455
Stewart I Shag			3		7	1	4	15	4	18
Spotted Shag			2		1			3	3	35
White-faced Heron			1		1	8	13	23	75	3
Royal Spoonbill						2		2	0	0
Black Swan			2		5	34	32	73	105	144
Feral Goose				4	9	2		15	0	2
Paradise Duck			3	6	6	3	5	23	0	0
Mallard	3	27	17	12	23	18		100	166	79
Grey Duck								0	2	2
Domestic Duck					1			1	0	1
Unidentified Duck								0	5	62
Shoveler							2	2	2	0
Pied Oystercatcher	4			3	92	63	16	178	150	141
Variable Oystercatcher	22				1	22		45	1	0
Spur-winged Plover	1							1	10	2
Bar-tailed Godwit							172	172	250	44
Pied Stilt			2			2	2	6	22	7
Black-backed Gull	61	5	34	48	60	20	27	255	1708	1275
Red-billed Gull	62	47	47	316	192	300	30	994	1201	912
Black-billed Gull									0	3
Caspian Tern									1	0
White-fronted Tern			1	9		76		86	8	12

The sections are:

- 1 Inner Harbour Leith to Vauxhall
- 2 Waverley to MacAndrew Bay
- 3 Ravensbourne to Sawyers Bay
- 4 Broad Bay and Portobello
- 5 Port Chalmers to Te Ngau
6. Harwood to Taiaroa Head
- 7 Aramoana



It is early days to come to any conclusions but there does seem to be a dramatic drop in the number of Black-backed Gulls. Thanks to all of you for completing counts in sometimes dubious weather and getting the returns into me so promptly.

Bruce McKinlay [mckinlaywakelin@actrix.co.nz](mailto:mckinlaywakelin@actrix.co.nz)

## Ornithological Snippets

Last month Lynley Littlejohn contacted DoC to say “I live in Musselburgh Rise, Dunedin and I saw an unusual bird in a tree at the bottom of my garden last Thursday (17 September). It was either black or a very dark grey, the size of a small hawk or a heavily built magpie. It had a straight heavy beak like a raven and made an odd clicking noise as it walked around in the tree. There were blackbirds, sparrows etc near it and they didn't seem to be afraid of it. It flew away but came back later and just poked around in the light foliage. I was fascinated as my first thought was it was a raven but didn't know if there were any in NZ.”

Graeme Loh replied Sounds like it might be Rooks. There is a population near Middlemarch that the Regional Council are trying to eradicate. Very unusual to find a bird in Dunedin.

Subsequently Lyndon Taylor reported “Thanks for that sighting report, we had 2 birds that were living around Highcliff area last spring but they disappeared”

Recently there were a couple of reports of large black birds in the Port Hills near Christchurch. The Christchurch birders were much less conservative than Graeme, suggesting they might be Australian Ravens.



This Morepork was hit by a car in the Eglinton Valley. The driver brought it to Dunedin where it recuperated with a local owl enthusiast and was returned by the driver to the Eglinton Valley after receiving a band from the Knobs Flat Morepork study team. Its eye came right!

The first Sooty Shearwaters were reported at Taiaroa Head on 1 October and there were thousands off there by the 3rd along with a few White-capped and Buller's Mollymawks.

There were 172 Bar-tailed Godwits at Aramoana on 27 September and 141, including one banded bird on 30<sup>th</sup>. 178 and one banded bird were at Karitane on 13 October and Peter Schweigman guessed there were about 600 at Hooper's Inlet on 15th of which 2 were banded. Numbers reached 577 at Warrington by 13 October but there was still only one juvenile and none of the regular colour banded birds had returned. Instead there was one orange flagged bird, banded in SE Australia several years ago (possibly the same bird that has returned to Warrington for at least three years) and a white flagged bird that appears to be one banded in Auckland last year. The white flags have black letters on them but unfortunately they are almost unreadable to anyone other than a bird watcher rich enough to possess a telescope considerably more valuable than a car and the patience to crawl on their belly, face blasted by sand, to within 30 metres of the bird.

There were 6 Royal Spoonbills at Blueskin Bay on 14 October and 15 the following day. In the evening these birds took off and circled high over the bay heading somewhat unconvincingly southward. The 15 that Bruce McKinlay saw at Anderson's Bay on Saturday 17 may have been the same ones?

Len Buchanan saw 9 Spoonbills at Brighton Swamp on 19 September and 7 with a White Heron and a Black Stilt on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Neville Peat reports a Gannet from the Broad Bay area of the harbour since July and 2 on October 15. A single Gannet was seen by Peter Schweigman and Verity Harrison in several places on the Harbour survey on 18 October. There are one or two Gannets regularly around the coast over winter but they appear to be unusual in the harbour.

### Mystery Photos



The boot is size 11 and the photo was taken by Nathan Parker on Rabbit Island Blueskin Bay. Suggestions please to the editor.

What kind of bird is the anonymous Doc officer strangling?

It was found in Ross Creek Reserve after strong easterlies on Sunday 4 October and successfully released at Lawyers Head the next day



## Godwit Cannon Netting

Rob Schuckard and his cannon netting team will be in Dunedin again to try for more godwits to colour band. The dates for this are 14 and 15 November and 5 and 6 December.

If you would like to be involved in this please give your name to **Peter Schweigman**.  
**Ph 03 4552790**

## 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 28 October | Indoor Meeting      | Dave Bell “ Results of the national survey of NZ Falcon”                   |
| Sunday 1 November    | Ross Creek Survey.  | Meet at 1.00 pm end of Cannington Road. Contact Alan Baker, phone 467 5180 |
| Sunday 15 Nov        | Harbour Survey      | High Tide 15 29, Start time 1 30 pm  |
| Wednesday 25 Nov.    | Indoor Meeting      | TBA  |
| Saturday 28 November | Summer Wader Count. | High tide at Dunedin 13.22.  |
| Sunday December 13   | Harbour Survey      | High Tide 12 20, Start time 2.20 pm  |

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