



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Launch of OSNZ Bird Atlas

On Monday 13 August I was fortunate enough to be in Wellington and so was able to attend the launch of the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004*.

The launch was held in the Ballroom at Government House. By the time I arrived the room was 3/4 full of familiar faces and lots of unfamiliar ones as well. The ballroom has spectacular chandeliers and artwork, with a small dais opposite the entrance. A small army of people circulated with an endless supply of beer, wine and food.

We were eventually called to order by a Secretary who introduced Dame Sian Elias, who, as Administrator of the Government, was standing in for the Governor General. The GG was visiting Samoa and the Tokelaus, presumably bird watching (no, I made that last bit up!). Dame Sian talked about the project and how the resulting volume was attractive, and was an appropriate outcome for all the voluntary hours that had gone into its creation, but also for the technological and graphical design which supported the initial field data gathering.

Chris Robertson spoke next and emphasized the long chain of completed data sheets to completed database. At the same time digital terrain models were being developed to provide a background to the data sets. This part of the production process was slightly complicated as the key data manager had moved to Edinburgh for a time just at a critical period.

Chris Carter, Minister of Conservation, spoke next and talked of the contribution made by the Terrestrial and Freshwater Biodiversity Information System (TIFBIS) to the project which enabled a high quality product which would enable further research into the distribution of birds in New Zealand and also changes in that distribution to



be undertaken.

The final speaker was Don Stewart from Birdlife International. Like most other speakers he emphasized the contribution the *Atlas* will make to our understanding of birds. He highlighted the fact that the data collection and initial curating was completed by volunteers. Estimates of the total cost of the *Atlas*, if all the labour was paid for, of between 10 and 12 million dollars were made by some of the speakers.

Another highlight of the evening was the creation of Chris Robertson as Fellow of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. It is recognition of a long commitment to birds and the Society and was received by acclamation of those gathered.

Copies of the *Atlas* were available for Society members to pick up on the evening and soon people were wandering around with a weighty parcel under one arm. After the speeches the socialising continued until, with some tact, the lights were turned off and the remains of an animated group of birders were ejected into a Wellington night, later to reconvene at a nearby Chinese restaurant.

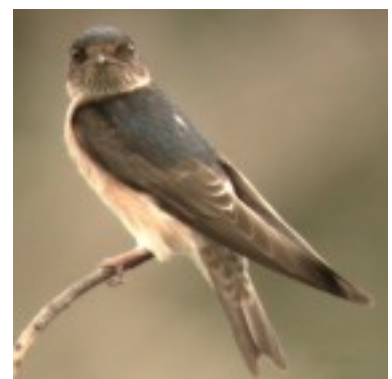
By now you will have received your copy of the *Atlas*. Enjoy.

Bruce McKinlay

And Some More Rare Birds in Otago

Little Black Shag (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*). It was not so long ago that two of this shag species were seen at Hawkesbury Lagoon on 17 July 2002, by Dave York. Reference: *Otago Newsletter No 2002/4*. And one was seen by Derek Onley on 21 September 2002 at Karitane. Reference: *Otago Newsletter No. 2002/5*. The statement back in 2002 that it was a first for Otago, was incorrect. After digging a bit I came across two earlier reports: in *Notornis Vol 19 suppl. (1972): 17*. Otago, S. Sharp stated that a few **Little Black Shags** have been about Otago Peninsula for the past 10 years. Recent sighting at Pipikaretu (J.H., 1965). And: Otago Harbour 9//11/75, eleven, scattered, observed by Dr. G van Tets (AW). Reference: *Notornis Vol 24: 253 (1977)*. And just over two and a half years ago, on 25 Jan 2005, Dave York and Dawn Palmer came across one at Lake Hayes, roosting with 10 **Little Shags** (pers. comm. Dave York).

In summer 1981/1982 Alison Nevill saw regularly up to two **Tree Martins** (*Hirundo nigricans*) around Lake Holm Farm at Berwick. And again in summer 1982/1983 she



saw a maximum of three around the farm. And these were joined this same summer by a **Fairy Martin** (*Hirundo ariel*) . Reference for both species: *Notornis Vol 31: 173-175 (1984)*. And again one turned up on 5 Jan. 2000 and last seen on 27 Jan, again at Lake Holm Farm. (pers. comm. Alison Nevill). Note: Classified Summarized Notes for 1974-75 mentioned in *Notornis Vol 22: 335 (1975)* a rather vague sighting: **Tree Martin**, 1975, reported at Waipori near Lake Waihola (MLF).

In mid-summer of 1971-72 two species of Australian wood-swallows, the **White-browed Wood-Swallow** (*Artamus superciliosus*) and the **Masked Wood-Swallow** (*Artamus personatus*) were reported by John Darby from Naseby Forest. Reference: *Notornis Vol 19: 114-117 (1972)*. Peter Child in *Notornis Vol 21: 85-87 (1974)* reports on these wood-swallows in the Naseby Forest during 19972-1973, including the first breeding record of wood-swallows in New Zealand, with a follow-up in *Notornis Vol 22: 67-68 (1975)*.

Peter Schweigman



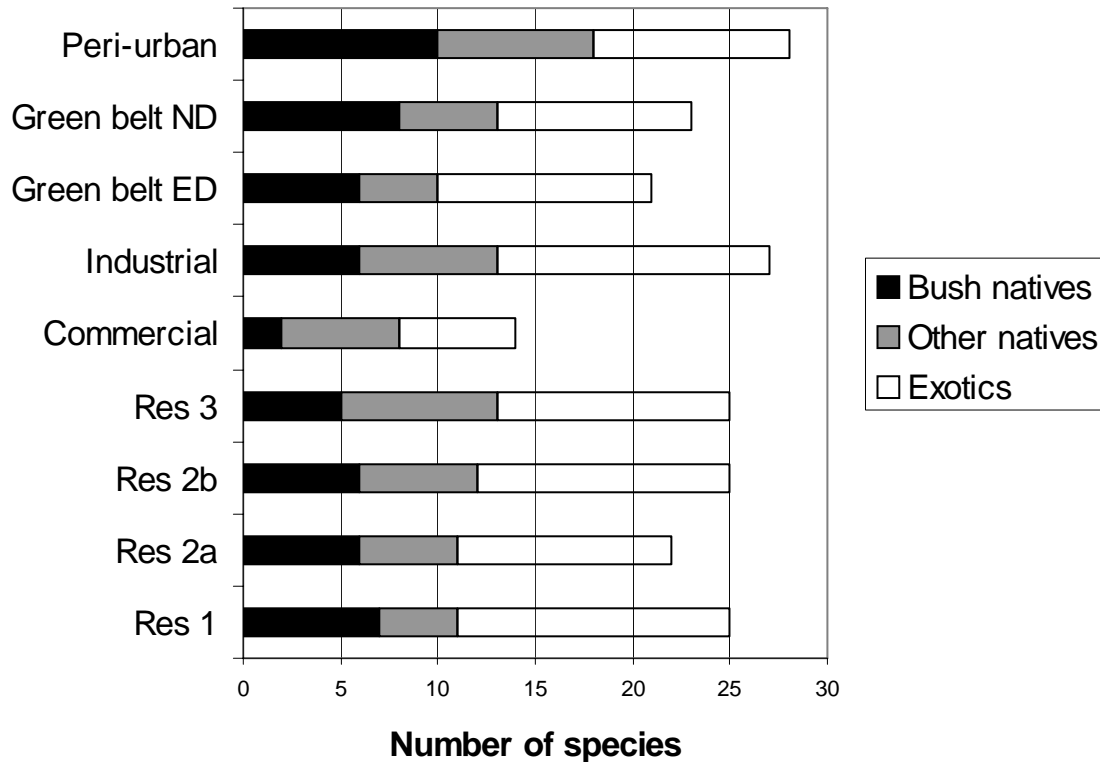
Crested Grebe Winter Gathering

Daniel Druce was out with Fish and Game on 22 August and came across about 35 **Crested Grebe** just down from the Hunter River/Lake Hawea confluence. The photo shows some of these birds.

Report of August Meeting

About 20 members attended the August Indoor Meeting to hear Yolanda van Heezik speak to us. Yolanda is an urban ecologist and has studied what factors of the urban environment determine relative abundance and variety of native bush birds. Not surprisingly, older residential areas with larger gardens and trees had 25-30 species and the highest number of native bush birds with six species dominating: **Silvereye, Bellbird, Kereru, Tui, Fantail and Brown Creeper**. Much discussion ensued about whether current town planning, which seems to eliminate gardens and trees, might lead to Dunedin losing its title of “wild-life capital of NZ”. Yolanda also presented some startling estimates of cat predation by extrapolating from data obtained from the prey caught by 180 cats in her study to all the cats in Dunedin: 18,000 **Silvereye** caught per year!

Yolanda has provided us with the graphs which summarise her studies and the one showing the number of species in different areas is reproduced here. Ask Mary if you would like a copy of all three that she talked to us about.



Report on Field Trip to Sinclair Wetlands, 1 September 2007

The northwest wind kept the southerly change away and 9 of us enjoyed exploring the wetlands and were rewarded with excellent close-up views of several **Fernbirds**; they emerged from the top of coprosma bushes and out of the depths of flax and tussocks to look at us and sing for over 15 minutes. In all at least 6 **Fernbirds** were seen or heard and a total of 23 species were recorded, but the numbers of ducks



were surprisingly few, although well over 80 **Scaup** were counted. The photo is of intrepid birders on top of Ram Island looking over the wetlands for **Bittern**, but with no luck.

Mary Thompson

Proposed Weekend Fieldtrip to Glenorchy, 21 - 24 March, 2008

This is the Easter weekend and also coincides with Otago Anniversary. The plan is to stay at Glenorchy and explore the surrounding areas; it may be possible to organise a trip up the Rees or Dart. At this stage we need to have a good idea of how many are likely to come so that suitable accommodation can be arranged well ahead. Please let Louise Foord (☎ 467 5041) know as soon as possible if you are at all interested.

Ornithological Snippets

Keith Payne reports 4 **Caspian Tern**, 4 **Royal Spoonbill** and 1 **White Heron** (which flew overhead, landing in tall pines for about a minute, before flying away) on 22 May 2007 at Hawksbury Lagoon. Four days later, there were still 4 **Caspian Tern** and 4 **Royal Spoonbill**. By 18 August 2007, there was just a single **Royal Spoonbill**, looking a bit worse for wear, missing a few feathers on upper chest.



Janet York recently heard a **Morepork** heard calling in North East Valley, probably from quarry area. And Alan Baker reported a **Morepork** calling from Ferntree Reserve, Taieri Road.

Alan Baker reports **Tuis** from Oamaru, a spot where they are unrecorded in the *Atlas*. On three occasions, 14 & 15 July and 4 August 2007, they were feeding on the nectar of kowhai and gums on the South Hill. On 14 July he saw 5 in the air above the Lookout Reserve, but there were none to be seen on 27 August.



New OSNZ Council Member

Otago members will be pleased to learn that Bruce McKinlay has been coopted as an OSNZ Council Member. We know that Council will benefit greatly from Bruce's expertise and wide experience in many aspects of bird study and conservation. And it will be great for us having the possibility of direct input into discussions in Council via Bruce.

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, 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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