



ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington Region Newsletter

July 2007

www.osnz.org.nz and www.notornis.org.nz

Monthly Meetings

The venue for our monthly meetings is the new Head Office of the Department of Conservation ("Conservation House" – Te Whare Atawhai), 18-32 Manners Street, Wellington. Conservation House is located on the south side of Manners Street, between the western end of Manners Mall and Willis Street. Please wait outside the glass entrance door for a DOC staff member / OSNZ member to admit you to the meeting room on the 4th floor. Access is available between 7:30 p.m. and 7:45 p.m. Our meetings are held on the first Monday of the month (January and June excepted), commencing at 7:45 p.m.

We extend a warm welcome to several new Wellington-based members of the society.

Meetings from July 2007 to February 2008

July 2nd: Dr. Graeme Taylor, DOC, Wellington. *"Conservation of New Zealand's endangered petrel species and population trends from a 17-year monitoring project of three petrel species at Bethells Beach, Auckland."*

Additional July lecture arranged by Te Papa: July 11th: Dr Peter Ryan, Percy Fitzpatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa. *A visual tour of the Socotra archipelago (off the Horn of Africa), with a focus on its birds.* Te Papa laboratories, 169 Tory St, commencing at 7 pm. (Free car parking is available up the ramp, off Tory St).

August 6th: Dr. D. Houston, DOC, Wellington. *"Recent progress in Studies of Penguins."*

September 3rd: Mr. Chris Robertson, OSNZ NZ Bird Atlas Convenor. *"The Atlas of New Zealand Birds: a retrospective"*. A look back over 40 years at the evolution of the Atlas of New Zealand Birds.

October 1st: Dr. Murray Williams, OSNZ. *"Duck Tales"*. A long-term overview of New Zealand's waterfowl and their ongoing responses to the many changes in the NZ environment over the past 100 years.

November 5th: Dr. Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Senior Lecturer in Ecology. Bio-protection and Ecology Division, Lincoln University, Canterbury. *"Seabirds, Biological Constraints and Conservation Concerns"*. A broad review of issues concerning seabird conservation.

December 3rd: Ms. Delia Small, DOC, Wellington. *"Progress with Studies on Orange-fronted Parakeets"*.

February 4th, 2008: *"Members Evening"*. An opportunity for members to make short presentations on their summer bird watching, bird study and bird conservation activities.

Notable Recent Bird Sightings and Activities in the Wellington Region

A range of bird species were seen and reported recently. Julia White saw a pair of **black shags** roosting on Karori Park. Stuart Nicholson reports **spur-winged plovers** flying high over Brooklyn. Mary McEwan spotted **spur-winged plovers** and **black shags** flying over Karori in April. In early May, Mary heard a **morepork** in central Karori, the first time she has heard one in Karori for many years. Ralph Powlesland came across a **morepork** and a **black fantail** on the south-eastern side of Mount Victoria. Jean Luke saw **black-fronted terns** on the Waikanae coastline. Several members have again reported and photographed the long-staying **little egret** in the Waikanae River estuary and a second **little egret** has been seen and photographed in the Hutt River estuary. When did we last have two little egrets at the same time in the Wellington Region?



Waikanae River little egret



Hutt River little egret

In early autumn Ian Armitage heard a **bellbird** in forests on the south-western hills of Tawa, the first in this locality. Several members have reported early calling of **song thrushes** in May, usually linked to spring weather! Peter Reese and others have again banded **silvereyes**, **tui**, **chaffinches**, and other species, at recent zoo banding days. DOC staff report that **pied shags** continue to roost on the macrocarpa trees on Mana Island and are now nest building. Andy Falshaw has seen two **shore plovers** at the northern end of Titahi Bay (birds that have flown from Mana Island; one bird is known to regularly move between the island and Titahi Bay).



Pied shags on Mana Island

Beach Patrols

We welcome Ms. Sharon Alderson as the new *Beach Patrol Coordinator* for the Wellington Region. After many years in this role, Jean Luke arranged for Sharon to take over. Sharon's contacts are listed in the directory at the end of this Newsletter. Sharon is the Acting Manager - Training Section, Research, Development & Improvement Division, Department of Conservation. Prior to Sharon's move to Wellington in late 2006 she was an active OSNZ member in Auckland and South Auckland. Sharon has volunteered to act as Beach Patrol Co-coordinator as she is keen to improve her knowledge of seabirds - and those discovered during beach patrols do at least tend to stay put long enough to check their identifying features!

In early autumn Jean Luke patrolled 7 kilometres of Kapiti Coast beaches, finding 2 **shy (white-capped) mollymawks**, a **little blue penguin**, and a **black-backed gull**. A **grey-headed mollymawk** was also found on the Kapiti coastline. No dead birds were found by Reg Cotter on Petone Beach in March but in April Reg did pick up a dead **little blue penguin**, a **spotted shag**, and a **red-billed gull**. Near Te Horo Jean found 2 **mollymawks** (not identified), a headless **priest**, and a **fluttering shearwater**.

Contract with DOC to Survey Bird Populations at River Mouths

Field work for a contract that the Wellington Region has had with the Department of Conservation to survey the occurrence and populations of birds in the vicinity of 10 river mouths is now complete and data has been delivered to DOC. The survey extended from the Orongorongo River in the south-east to the Ohau River in the north. Three of the 10 rivers are in the Manawatu Region and with Manawatu's agreement we surveyed those rivers. A total of 40 visits were made to the 10 river mouths, 20 in summer (on high and low tides) and the second set of 20 winter visits were completed in late June.

Some recent observations from the winter surveys are (a) banded dotterels at most Pauatahanui-Kapiti-Horowhenua river mouths and one black-fronted dotterel at the Waikawa River, (b) black-fronted terns at Waikanae River mouth, (c) two over wintering bar-tailed godwits and three wrybill on the coast at the Ohau and Waikawa River mouths, (d) royal spoonbills at Ohau River, (e) pied oystercatchers at several river mouths and in Porirua and Pauatahanui Harbours, and (f) pied shags are breeding at Makara.

Another observation is that roosting 'real estate' for birds is scarce at high tide in Pauatahanui Harbour as the photograph of seven species crowded on or near a small salt marsh shows. Perhaps there is a need for a study that examines crowding and conflicts amongst birds on small high-tide roosts in Porirua and Pauatahanui Harbours. Does anyone want to take this idea up?



Seven species on or near a small saltmarsh in Pauatahanui at high tide (caspiian tern, black shags, little shag, spur-winged plovers, variable oystercatchers, mallards, black-backed gull).

Kapiti Island Forest Bird Survey

A new survey of the forest birds on Kapiti Island will commence in April 2008 and will involve week-end counts over a three year period. Society members have been undertaking forest bird counts on Kapiti Island since the 1970s and we are, once again, being invited by DOC to participate in this new survey. Colin Miskelly is co-ordinating the survey.

East Harbour Regional Park Bird Survey

Surveys of birds continue each month in the South Block of East Harbour Regional Park, involving observations in the Pencarrow lakes and on adjacent Cook Strait coastline. Observations are carried on weekdays to avoid disturbance that can be caused by weekend visitors. The survey will conclude in October, three years from commencement, then data analysis will commence.

Mist-Netting and Banding of Passerines in Wellington

Mist-netting and passerine banding activities are continuing throughout the year, mostly at Wellington Zoo but sometimes at Karori Cemetery. The sessions are usually held on Saturdays; if the Saturday is too wet, the programme is postponed to Sunday. Further details are obtainable from Peter Reese.

Proposed Survey of Dabchicks in the Kapiti and Horowhenua Districts

There is interest from some members in planning and undertaking a survey of dabchicks next summer in coastal lagoons in the Kapiti and Horowhenua Districts and possibly further north into the Manawatu. It will take some effort to arrange and implement and at this stage it is hoped that a small core of members will take the lead to get the survey going. Cooperation and collaboration with Manawatu members is likely to be needed. If you wish to contribute please let Ian Armitage know.

Summary of Organized Field-Trips and Activities for OSNZ Members

East Harbour Regional Park Bird Survey: monthly surveys of Pencarrow lakes area.

Mist-netting and Passerine Banding: various Saturdays during the year, at Wellington Zoo and at Karori Cemetery.

Manawatu Estuary Wader Viewing: a day-trip, during March and November.

Fluttering Shearwater Chick Transfers: feeding chicks on Mana Island during January.

Kapiti Island Coastal Bird Survey: yearly, in November, a day-trip.

National Twitchathon: any 24 hour period of your own choosing in January.

Wairarapa Caspian tern and black-backed gull banding, Onoke, Wairarapa – helping OSNZ Wairarapa; a day trip.

National AGM and conference: Held in various regions of New Zealand, over Queen's Birthday week-end. It includes field-trips. In 2008 the AGM is at Kaikoura.

Notes on Recent Events

2nd April 2007: Wellington Region Annual General Meeting. A draft annual report for our region was presented that summarizes the diverse ornithological work that we have been engaged in through the year. Stephen Sharp presented a financial report. Ian Armitage was re-elected as Regional Representative and Stephen Sharp was re-elected as Treasurer for the next year.

Following the AGM Dr. Mary McEwen recounted her father's (Sir Charles Fleming) wanderings and activities in the Auckland Islands group and on Campbell Island during the WWII coast-watching expedition in 1942-43. Sir Charles noted all the birds that he saw in a comprehensive diary that included many sketches of birds and of local geology. He included location maps of

nests and identification features of birds. Detailed behaviour descriptions, some photographs and records of bird weights were recorded of wandering, royal, and sooty albatross chicks. He checked the growth of one particular Wandering Albatross chick with many visits between March 1942 and the following February. Other birds encountered were yellow-eyed penguin, Buller's mollymawk, giant petrels, muttonbirds, little shearwater and red-billed gull. Our thanks to Mary for a fascinating account of sub-Antarctic island biology.

7th May 2007: Professor Darryl Jones of Griffith University, Brisbane, explained aspects of his research on the Australian magpie and, in particular, whether supplementary feeding of birds in suburban areas leads to dependency. In Australia the magpie is the commonest bird at suburban feeders. The study compared foraging and reproduction of "fed" and "unfed" magpies and revealed that most food obtained was natural for both "fed" and "unfed" adults and their chicks. There was no difference in the number of young produced. "Fed" birds commenced breeding activities (nest building, egg laying, hatching and fledging) consistently earlier than their "unfed" counterparts; laying began 15 days earlier. Prof. Jones concluded that magpies are dependent on supplementary food. Only one species was studied and feeding may change species' densities and composition. Our thanks to Darryl for a really interesting talk.

Newsletter by E-mail

If you would like to get your newsletter by e-mail, and also be on an e-mail address list for news, lectures, projects and trips that come up at short notice, and to receive other birding items, please give your email address to Ian Armitage. 82 percent of Wellington members now receive notices about OSNZ and bird study topics by e-mail. Remember too that newsletters of other regions can be downloaded from the OSNZ website, www.osnz.org.nz

First-Aid Kits, Telescope, and HANZAB books for Loan

Our region has some first-aid kits if members want to borrow one for use on their OSNZ trips. Our telescope is stored by Ian Armitage and can be borrowed by members for observing birds and their activities and habitats. Our branch also owns four volumes of the "Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds" – Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks; Volume 2: Raptors to Lapwings; Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons; Volume 4: Parrots to Dollarbird; Volume 7: Passerines (divided into 2 books); these books can be borrowed for a while by any member. (Volume 4 is recent purchase.) Contact Ian if you wish to use of any of these items.

Contact Phone Numbers / Email Addresses

Regional Representative	Ian Armitage	232 7470	
	ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz		
Regional Recorder	Stuart Nicholson	934 5940	
	nicholson@paradise.net.nz		
<i>Southern Bird</i> Regional Roundup	Ian Armitage	232 7470	
East Harbour Regional Park bird survey	Reg Cotter	568 6960	
Fluttering Shearwater chick transfers	Colin Miskelly	479 1662	
Rock Pigeon nesting project	Ralph Powlesland	386 3323	
Beach Patrol Coordinator	Sharon Alderson	04 298-3707	
	salderson@doc.govt.nz		
Mana Island robins and sooty shearwaters	Geoff de Lisle	527 0929	(evenings)
Mist-netting and passerine banding	Peter Reese	387 7387	
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**** Photocopying has kindly been provided by Beca: Engineers, Planners and Managers. ****