

# The Wrybill

**Newsletter of the Canterbury Region,  
Ornithological Society of New Zealand**

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**July 2010**

**What's on at OSNZ Canterbury:  
June to December 2010**

## **Indoor Meetings**

Evening meetings take place at 7.30pm on the last Monday of the month at the Mahaanui Area DOC office, 31 Nga Mahi Drive, off Blenheim Road, Sockburn. Plenty of parking is available at the premises and on the road.

Monday 26th July: Lorna Depp from Canterbury University will talk about her current PhD work on the Chatham Island Albatross.

Monday 30th August: Simon Elkington from DoC will speak about the conservation of the Orange-fronted Parakeet.

Monday 27th September: Peter Langlands will explain the work he has been doing for DoC on "The National Bittern Database and the Conservation of Bittern in Canterbury."

Monday 1st November: Dr Frances Schmechel, Ecan ecologist will talk about Ecan bird monitoring projects including braided river and Banks Peninsula 5-Minute Bird Counts.

Monday 29th November: Dr Laura Molles will update us on the Tui Translocation Project on Banks Peninsula.

## **Field Meetings**

Saturday 17th July (back-up 18th July): Ashburton Lakes Waterbird count. Early start to get to Mt Somers where groups are sent out to each lake. Meet promptly at 7.45am at Islington Tavern, first pub after leaving Hornby, Main South Road on right at entrance to Templeton just after Alpine View motor camp/motel. Contact, as soon as possible, Ron Nilsson, ronandsue@paradise.net.nz or Jan, shesagreen@gmail.com, so they know numbers and can organise car pooling.

Saturday 14th August: North Canterbury birding and picnic. Meet Belfast Tavern just before motorway, 9am. Contact Bev, birdiebev@xtra.co.nz

Saturday 11th September: Welcome back to the waders at Southshore Spit, New Brighton, with Forest and Bird, starting at 3pm. Contact Nick, nick\_allen@xtra.co.nz

Saturday 2nd October: Ashley River Survey. Meet at south side of Ashley River Bridge on Loburn Road

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out of Rangiora, 9am. Contact Eric Spurr, [spurreb@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:spurreb@slingshot.co.nz) Tel: 03-313-8283 or 027-210-3883, or Bev as above.

Weekend 15th-17th October: Peel Forest. Bush and river birds. Contact Ron Nilsson, [ronandsue@paradise.net.nz](mailto:ronandsue@paradise.net.nz), Tel: 338-8936.

Saturday 20th November: Ashley River Survey – details as for 2nd October.

Saturday 4th December: Summer Wader Count, Lake Ellesmere followed by BBQ at Colin and Cherry Hill's. Contact Colin Hill, [cherryhill@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cherryhill@xtra.co.nz) or Jan. Meet at end Embankment Road, Greenpark at 9am.

**\*Any members interested in a Field Trip to Auckland to visit places such as Miranda Bird Sanctuary, Tiritiri Matangi Island and the sewage works, please contact Nick Allen or Jan Walker, emails above.**

### Droppings from the Regional Rep

You will have found the programme for the next six months preceding this dropping. This alteration was made to make the meetings list more accessible and easier for people to print off. You may only need to set the printer for 2 pages at most. Please let us know if you have any comments on this change.

The annual OSNZ AGM and Conference was held in Nelson this year and attracted over 130 members, 21 of them from Canterbury. The food wasn't quite up to our expectations, given the previous fare at the Shorebird conference, but we are in straightened times and the caterers had changed. The scientific day papers were excellent; I think the use of power-point greatly enhances the style of presentation nowadays, but it doesn't make up for shoddy data, though this was mostly absent. There were some good papers about braided river birds which we in Canterbury are much involved with, so this made for fascinating listening.

As usual, rain fell in abundance on the fieldtrip day, but a small group much enjoyed a visit to the Nelson Lakes Mainland Island at Lake Rotoiti, in relatively mild drizzle. The 60 or so who chose the boat up the Abel Tasman Coast to Totoranui had to weather large swell, rain and lack of birds, though 2 Reef Herons were seen. Most of the Monday morning half-day trips were cancelled.

Two new Councillors were elected, Colin

Miskelly and Murray Williams, both from Wellington. Peter Frost from Whanganui was confirmed as a Councillor after being co-opted previously. There is no-one from Christchurch currently on the Council, though there are a few from Dunedin and Nelson.

The RRs' meeting takes place the day before the Conference begins and was very full with topics this year. These are the main points:

A National Survey of Caspian Tern colonies is proposed for 2011-2013. This is presently being considered by the Scientific Committee of the Council for its methodology and practice aspects.

A possible reduced membership fee for over 65s will be examined. Otherwise the Ordinary fee will go up to \$70 per annum.

Regional advocacy of our purpose as a Society should be made through press releases and advertising of our meetings etc.

We should circulate a list of good speakers and talks around the branches, to help those who find it hard to get speakers.

In order to broaden the appeal of OSNZ we need to emphasize the particular skills we can offer in terms of accurate bird recognition and effective bird studies that include 'hands-on' experience of birds such as bird banding. More local training for 5-minute bird counts was suggested to increase the involvement of OSNZ in productive research.

Should Canterbury take up the offer of extra

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Southern Bird copies to be placed in public libraries, waiting rooms etc? This would be in order to stimulate more local interest in birds.

Inter-regional projects, camps and weekends should be encouraged.

A redesign of nest record cards and of moult cards is being considered.

The 2011 Conference will be in Upper Hutt, Wellington Region. There will probably be 2 scientific days of papers. As Wellington has more scientists per sq.metre than any other city, they will have no problem filling the slots. Some of the indoor days may be offering workshops with hands-on moult training, banding training, etc.

Proceedings of the AGM will be published in the September issue of Southern Bird. But an important part of that meeting was the awarding of a Meritorious Service Award to one of our longest serving Canterbury birders, Kathleen Harrison. A profile of Kathleen's birding exploits will appear in the next Wrybill.



Photo: Ann Sherlock  
Kathleen receives her Award from Jan

Our meetings over the last few months have been memorable and well-attended, culminating in June's talk on Black Robins. Twenty-nine people were treated to a wonderful summary of Euan Kennedy's research into the extinction vulnerability of the species, related to its genetics. Dave Bell came to the Members Night in February and gave a great presentation on the Falcon and the sightings database that he manages. Our members had interesting slots on Kakapo-minding, Wrybills, and birds in the UK.

Ron Nilsson talked on 'The South Island Kokako Story' after the AGM in March and has been

busy checking out good spots for the bird during the autumn, with some success, apparently. Some superb photos of birds in Iceland accompanied Kath Varcoe and Liz Burtt's talk in April and in May Paul Scofield gave us his intriguing and problematical expose of the birds of Miocene NZ through the results of the St Bathans excavation.

The Farewell to the Godwits event was well populated. Members with scopes showed hundreds of people how to recognize wading birds. Many membership forms were distributed, so people at least know we exist. We also attended the 'Soggy Feet at Boggy Creek' event for World Wetland Day at the end of January and again showed people waterbirds at Lake Ellesmere. If you hear of an event that has a bird or ecology connection that we could take our publicity posters to, please let us know. In late June I spent the day at Diamond Harbour with groups from around Lyttelton Harbour at a workshop talking about Indigenous Biodiversity. Sheila, Ann and I continue to do 5-minute bird counts at several places along the Port Hills and a few on Banks Peninsula to add data to the valuable set being built up. If you are keen to get involved with this, we can provide training and there will be a lot of bush areas that would benefit from your counts.

Jan Walker

### Recent Sightings

Late January: Jan Walker and Sheila Petch found Greenpark Sands "wall to wall with small waders" including 17 Pacific Golden Plovers, 6 Turnstones, 3 Red Knots, 25 Bar-tailed Godwits, 3 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, ~20 Red-necked Stints, hundreds of Wrybills and thousands of Pied Stilts. Andrew Crossland commented on the northward migration of Wrybill, Banded Dotterel, SIPO and Caspian Terns. Wrybill and Bandies fly parallel to the Port Hills from Lake Ellesmere up the Avon-Heathcote Estuary and then northwards along Pegasus Bay. Ben Rodriguez reported a Skua at Cooper's Lagoon.

While involved in World Wetland Day at Lake Ellesmere Jan saw 5 Cattle Egrets, 2 in breeding plumage, at Boggy Creek. Jan wondered if Cattle Egrets could be summering over and even

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breeding here.

February: Andrew and Phill Crutchley found a possible Mongolian Plover among ~500 Banded Dotterels at Kaitorete Spit. On an Albatross Encounter expedition from Kaikoura Alex Thompson saw a Great Shearwater, possibly only the third sighting of this bird in NZ according to Paul Scofield. The Glossy Ibis returned to Travis Wetland on the 16th, in breeding plumage. Bev Alexander and Jill Hanna both reported 9 Cattle Egrets, 4 in breeding plumage, at Drain Road, Lake Ellesmere which is very unusual for this time of the year and lends support to the suggestion these birds have remained in the country. John Allen's sightings at Lake Ellesmere included 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Pectoral Sandpipers, 20 Turnstones and 4 Red Knots. A few days later Jan and Colin Hill's visit to the same area included 31 Pacific Golden Plovers beginning to turn colour, many Wrybills still not returned North, 25+ Red-necked Stints, some getting breeding plumage, 25+ Sharpies starting to display and have stand-offs, and 2 hybrid Stilts. Andrew saw 4 White-winged Black Terns at Kaitorete Spit tip and, at the CCC Reserve, Birdlings Lagoon, one Little Tern feeding with Black-fronted Terns along the lake shore.

March: Steve Wratten found a Little Stint among Red-necked Stints in the Clarks area of Greenpark Sands. Some days later Jan, Sheila, Bev and Colin had a good view of the Little Stint (possibly male) amongst other waders and found 7 Cattle Egrets at Drains Road. Andrew and Niall Mugaan searched for a "strange" gull sighted by Tim Barnard at Lake Ellesmere, possibly a Laughing Gull or Franklins Gull, but found nothing. Sheila reported 2 Black Stilts still at Ashley Rivermouth. At Birdlings Flat on 28th March Andrew and Niall Mugaan saw 12 Arctic Skuas (an increase from 7 seen one week earlier), 38 Black-fronted Terns and 1276 White-fronted Terns. At Jarvis/Clarks Road, Lake Ellesmere they found 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 52 Red-necked Stints, 7 Red Knots and 86 Wrybills. Colin and Steve Wratten also found 4 Turnstones at the Lake. At Lower Selwyn Huts Jill Hanna observed a White Heron and 2 Royal Spoonbills and at Lake Road 9 Cattle Egrets.

April: Jan and Sheila saw a Bittern at Embankment road. Steve and Colin's survey of Lake Ellesmere revealed 272 Wrybills, 22 Red-necked Stints, 4 Curlew Sandpipers, 25 Pacific Golden Plovers, a White Heron, 7 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 2 Bar-tailed Godwits, a Turnstone, a Caspian Tern and a Royal Spoonbill. There were no Red Knots or Little Stint. Andrew summarised Skuas seen in the past few weeks – 5 Kaitorete Spit, 12 Birdlings Flat, 5 Rakaia Rivermouth, 3 Avon/Heathcote Estuary and frequent sightings of birds along Pegasus Bay, Banks Peninsula and the South Canterbury Coastline. Sheila found 20 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in Prices Valley. In Okuti Valley she saw Brown Creeper and a Tomtit, the first she has seen in this valley. At Lake Forsyth she counted 13 Royal Spoonbills and 79 Crested Grebe, 13 juveniles, and at Lake Ellesmere a Crested Grebe and 48+ Royal Spoonbills. Jan had 2 Native Pigeons in her garden, the first time she has seen two birds together there for 20 years. At the end of the month there were still Godwits in breeding plumage at Bexley Wetland and the Glossy Ibis remained at Travis Wetland.

May: Nick Allen observed 2 Falcons (falcon and tiercel) attacking a Harrier at Hanmer Springs and a tiercel, probably the same bird, at the golf course there. David Riddell saw a White Heron and a Crested Grebe pair with a youngster at Lake Forsyth. Peter Langlands found a Chestnut Teal at the Avon/Heathcote Estuary, the first he has seen in NZ. (The first South Island record was in January 1993 at Karitane, Otago and the second was made by Sheila Petch and Tony Crocker at Kowhai Rivermouth, North Canterbury in August 1993). On 9/10th May Niall Mugaan reported thousands of Silvereyes on the move overnight at New Brighton. They were first heard at 10pm and flocks were still moving overhead at 6.30am, all heading north. At Lake Ellesmere Sheila, Bev and Jan observed a Pectoral Sandpiper, 4 Red-necked Stints, 2 White Herons, a Crested Grebe, 3 Mute Swans and a Curlew Sandpiper (3 were seen a few days before by Steve and Colin, one getting breeding plumage). They also saw a leucistic Goldfinch amongst thousands of Goldfinches, with only yellow and black in the wings and a bit of black in the tail. The face and body were completely white. At Drains Road 8 Cattle Egrets were observed. Erna Smith saw three Long-tailed

Cuckoos in her garden at Methven, feeding in a flowering-cherry tree. Jan reported a bellbird sipping nectar from the flowers of a Tree Lucerne in her garden, something she had never seen before and she wrapped up the month with her report of a “small autumn eruption” of Tuis from Hinewai which were being seen down Kaitorete Spit, in McQueens Valley near Tai Tapu and again at Governors Bay.

June: At Westlake Reserve, Halswell, Peter saw an immature black shag trying to swallow a live short-finned eel ~1kg in weight and three other eels in a partially digested state on the ground, suggesting shags can have a significant impact on eel fisheries in smaller water bodies. At the June meeting Colin said migrant waders (2 Curlew Sandpipers, a Pectoral Sandpiper and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper) were still to be found at Lake Ellesmere. Bev reported a Mute Swan at Northbrook Lake and Cattle Egrets at Waikuku. Peter said Cape Barren Geese were at Conway Flats and New Zealand Pigeons were being seen in more areas of the city.

### Members Matters

#### Photo Award:

Congratulations to member, David Hallett, whose photo below of Godwits arriving back at South Shore Spit in September 2009 won well deserved acclaim at the Qantas Media Awards 2010. An “Oh, yes!” photo which captures all our feelings for these charismatic birds.



Photo: David Hallett  
Best Single Photo, Qantas Media Awards 2010

#### The Wrybill Logo

We would like to thank Dianne Parker and Rob Evans for permission to use as our Logo the delightful photo taken by Rob of a nesting Wrybill. Last Spring Dianne discovered the nest on the Waimakariri River near their home and she and Rob kept a close watch on the nest to ensure the birds were not disturbed.

#### White-flipped Penguins

Chris Challies is happy to take OSNZ members on visits to the colony on Godley Head again this spring. If you are interested please contact Jan, shesagreen@gmail.com

### Easter Field Trip

We had a frustrating day in the Hawdon Valley on Sunday 14th March, trying to see Orange-fronted Parakeets as part of a Canterbury OSNZ weekend at Arthur's Pass. We all met up at the shelter at the end of the road before 9am, with our guide for the day John Kearvell, and his wife Mabel. John has worked on OFPs for many many years and is an acknowledged expert in finding them. The bad news was that the birds had seemingly run out of food. A couple of months previously they had been breeding non-stop for over a year. Now they are quiet, and there may be many fewer in the valley - some possibly having left to find some tucker. The birds in the nearby Poulter Valley are still breeding, there being some beech seed still around there - but those birds are a 6-hour tramp in.



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The birds were doing what they normally do when not breeding in autumn - following flocks of Brown Creepers (with sometimes other species mixed in). The problem initially was finding the Brown Creepers. We were shown a nest hole used just a few months before, right next to the main track on the true right of the Hawdon River. The sheets of tin and a local profusion of traps give nesting trees away.

Eventually we found a Brown Creeper flock, after transferring from the main track (actually the A trap-line) to the next trap line at the base of the slope - the B trap line. After getting onto a couple of parakeets, the disappointment was they were only Yellow-crowns. We walked the B line to Unknown Stream, which was a little on the dessicated side, before lunch, encountering another couple of Brown Creeper flocks on the way, and 3 of the team getting stung by wasps after one of us stepped on a wasp nest when venturing off-track. [Fortunately Nick had a supply of anti-histamine tablets. That's what you get when a Pharmacist comes along - Jan].

After lunch an hour or so was spent on the other side of Unknown Stream looking for a lone male Yellowhead which lives there in the area between lines B and C. In spring it sings its heart out apparently and is easy to find. In autumn and winter it ranges through the red beech there with Brown Creepers - but we found neither, nor any OFPs. We headed back out of the valley along the B line listening for Brown Creepers. Eventually a large flock was found and followed on track by most, off track by John, who was joined by Sue. A shout went up and John and Sue, who were walking back to the track having given up, had got incredible views of an OFP. The problem was joining them as the group scrambled over fallen trees brushing aside bush-lawyer. By the time we got there the birds had, naturally, scarpered and blended into the greenery.

Thus reluctantly we followed the B line further down the valley. The Brown Creeper flock being ahead - and probably parakeets with it. Another 10 minutes and either the same birds, or maybe others were seen from the track, three-quarters of the way up a mountain beech. Some saw the orange stripe of one bird - most had to be content (me included) with seeing the bird, but not its most distinctive feature. Oh well, there's

always another time - preferably when they are breeding and a nest can be watched.

You really have to respect the persistence and hard work of those people, like John, who study and conserve this species - the birds are hard to find and seemingly do their best to make identification difficult, before melting away silently into the green background. We entered the forest a little after 9am. We found the birds about 3pm. I left the forest foot-sore after a rather frustrating day, but one where I learnt quite a bit about bird-watching in the bush and parakeet behaviour.

The wasp sting is still itching..."

**Nick Allen**

### Rock Wren

Sadly hopeful birders on the Branch Field Trip at Easter failed to see Rock Wren in the Otira Valley, in spite of detailed information on their location. Rob Lawrence had previously found birds amongst the large boulders at the entrance to the upper valley and Warren Jowett, another frustrated birder in search of Rock Wren, reported that according to DoC, two families were in the valley, one at the footbridge and another with four young birds (in February) at the rock garden 30 minutes above the bridge. A pair could also be found at the top of the 4WD track up to the Rock Garden in Temple Basin.

The good news is that this year has produced quite a rash of Rock Wren sightings. It seems that this little bird can be most elusive until it decides to show itself, when it will come very close for quite some time with no appearance of being nervous. In April Rob and I were tramping on Lewis Tops above the Lewis Pass, a trip we have done many times. Six years ago relatives saw Rock Wren in the alpine scrub and rocks under the Grand Duchess Range, but seeing is believing for me and not having observed them myself I was doubtful! This time, we had barely sat down in the sun to wait and watch when a first male bird appeared. 70 metres further west in a separate rock fall two birds, one male and one female, also entertained us. It was great to confirm Rock Wren are still living in an area where the last official recording was in 1982.

In early April Udo Benecke reported seeing a pair whilst on a family trip to Chancellor Hut above Fox Glacier, at ~1450m. He watched for half an hour as they “hopped, ran, flitted,” catching insects on the ground amongst the boulders and herbfield vegetation, apparently unconcerned by his presence after an initial cautious look. Then, at the end of May, Vern and Louise Pearson were hunting above the bush line when they saw two pairs of Rock Wren, one at ~1400m and the other at ~1500m, “bouncing around in the creeks of the lower Gunn River”, a tributary of the Whataroa River on the West Coast.



Photo: Louise and Vern Pearson  
Female Rock Wren in Gunn River

After seeing these tiny birds, one has to wonder how they survive through the winter at this altitude, above the bush line and exposed to rain, snow, winds and bitterly cold temperatures. The answer is that no-one really knows, although in the past Birding NZ has had a spate of correspondence on the matter. Suggestions that Rock Wrens become torpid or hibernate, which one writer said would put them at great risk of predation, or that they go to lower levels or to the bush line, have never been substantiated. Graeme Taylor has checked under the scrub and rocks where the birds are found in summer and found “a subterranean world of tunnels and open spaces under the snow”. Ian Southey summed things up by saying he believes Rock Wrens remain on site all year round in their “stunningly well insulated nests – like a down sleeping bag... Maybe they are sometimes active under the snow or when they can get out and maybe sometimes torpid.” And as Ian says, actually finding out what they do would be “another of those great facts of New Zealand ornithology.”

**Ann Sherlock**

## Tui Translocation Update

It's been another busy month for our Peninsula tui, and an equally busy month for tui-spotters. In May we had over 200 reports of tui (heard, seen or radio-tracked)! Since 1st May, 29 of the 2010 releasees have been sighted or tracked, along with at least 16 of the 2009 releasees. Even more encouraging have been the frequent sightings of unbanded juvenile birds, hatched on the Peninsula over the summer, who are mingling with released birds and, in some cases, starting to warm up their vocal chords.

The Narbeys' property and sugar-water feeders in Long Bay continue to be extremely popular with birds from both releases and an assortment of rowdy fledglings. On one morning trip during May, I identified 22 different banded tui plus a bare minimum of 3 unbanded youngsters. According to the Narbeys that's a pretty typical morning, so they must be going through several pounds of sugar a week! Tricia Hewlett has also spotted several birds in an apple tree at the Otanerito homestead, including regular visitors Mahina (who appears to be quite "bossy!") and Ila. Radio-tracking data and sightings suggest that many of the birds spending time in Long Bay/Otanerito are regularly commuting between there and Akaroa. Mingus, who spent some time in Wainui in early May, has returned to Akaroa for the time being.

Akaroa residents have been kept on their toes by an ever-expanding horde of town-loving tui. At first, sightings were typically of single birds (usually Manu). Then Manu began travelling with an entourage (at least 2 fledglings, and sometimes an additional unidentified adult), and by the end of May, groups of 6 were roaming around the Smith Street/Rue Balguerie area, feasting on Coprosma berries and Banksia nectar. Manu gives regular virtuoso singing concerts and some of the young birds are attempting to do the same, with little success. Getting the right mix of gurgles, chimes and wheezes does take a lot of practice, so hopefully the locals won't mind a bit of awkward noise between now and next spring. At the moment, it looks like there are three reasonably distinct groups of tui in town - one in the Rue Balguerie area, one near the top of Muter Street, and a couple of solo birds who frequent Glen Bay and

Garden of Tane.



Photo: Lew Matthews  
One of Manu's virtuoso singing concerts

In addition to the multiple sightings coming in from Akaroa and Otanerito, we've had reports of tui from other areas around the Peninsula, including Takamatua, French Farm (the first tui one resident had seen there for 59 years), and "quite a chubby little fellow" (unbanded) in Le Bons Bay. Two tui were sighted on two consecutive days at Kaitorete Spit, and at least two were spotted flying overhead in Diamond Harbour. Single tui have been reported from the Christchurch suburbs of Richmond, Beckenham, Opawa, Westhaven, and Fendalton, but we can't confirm whether these city birds originated with the Peninsula release. It's certainly possible, however, as we do have one confirmed sighting of a 2010 releasee in Governors Bay. The first Governors Bay sighting reported was on 21 May, but we don't know whether there is only one bird or multiple birds in the area. The confirmed tui has been identified as Hebe. She has certainly covered a lot of ground since her March release; she was spotted at the Narbeys' in April and early May, photographed in Akaroa on May 20th and photographed in Governors Bay on June 2nd, where she was also sighted on 6th June.

All in all, a very encouraging month in spite of the wet, windy weather! As always, many thanks to Rob Grigg and John McIlroy for collecting and compiling the Akaroa information - it may be a very busy winter!

**Dr Laura Molles**  
Lecturer in Vertebrate Biology

### John Warham 1909 –2010

We wish to pay tribute to Dr John Warham, the internationally renowned ornithologist and wildlife photographer, who has died at the age of 90. Dr Warham was born and brought up in England; he began work as a laboratory assistant in 1937, served in the British Army in WWII and after a brief return to work in Britain, he and his wife travelled through Australia as amateur environmentalists and conservationists. They explored the country from 1952-1961 in a termite-proofed ex-RAF Bedford truck, recording and researching wildlife, mainly birds, financing their work by selling articles and photographs. They visited many offshore islands pursuing a special interest in seabirds, writing up their findings in ornithological journals. Some years ago Dr Warham spoke to our Branch about their survey of breeding birds on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait.

In 1961 Dr Warham studied for a degree in zoology at Durham University and after graduating in 1965 returned to NZ as a lecturer at the University of Canterbury. He completed a PhD at UoC in 1973. Dr Warham's major research work was a continuation of earlier work on penguins started at Macquarie Island. He organised and led a series of expeditions to the Antipodes, Snares and Campbell Islands.

John Warham retired from his position as Reader in Zoology in 1985. The University of Durham conferred on him an honorary Doctor of Science degree for his seabird research. He published a two-volume synthesis on petrel biology – *The Petrels: Their Ecology and Breeding Systems*, and *The Behaviour, Population Biology and Physiology of the Petrels*. His last project was a key-worded bibliography of petrels, a 5,000 page work containing 14,387 citations from Aristotle to the present. Dr Warham received many prestigious awards and medals. He was made a Fellow of the Ornithological Society in 1999 and a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2001 for services to ornithology.

Our sincere condolences go to his wife, Pat.

**Jane Lucas assisted by John Warham**



## OSNZ Polo Shirts and Hats

Waikato Branch are fundraising by selling good quality cotton polo shirts, sizes Small (52cm), Medium (56cm), Large (58cm), XL (62cm) (true sizings), in moss, white, navy and light blue, cost \$35, and hats, sizes Medium-Large and Large-XL, dark blue and dark green, cost \$19. If interested, please send your order, with payment, to Jan Walker, 305 Kennedys Bush Road, Christchurch 8025. There is no postal charge if you can collect your order from Jan. If you prefer home delivery, please add \$5 postage for polo shirt (and hat if required), or \$3 for hat only, multi orders \$5.



## A Bit of History...

From John Hurley

My grandfather was Oliver Hunter, who planted Church Gully in Church Bay. I used to spend my holidays with him and his second wife, Mabel. He was an amateur naturalist and had a nature column in the Lyttelton Times. From him I was introduced to the creatures of the Gully - the bats, geckos, lizards, woodhen, kaka and a German owl which preyed on the native pigeons, and the eels and kokapu which lived in the stream. Olie was also a great story teller. This is a story he told me about his father after I had taken him for a drive along the Summit Road which, with a little persuasion, he wrote out for The Press who published it on 23rd February 1974:

"Just above us as we passed through Pigeon Bay the other day, perched two beautiful blue-green native pigeons. They were special because Pigeon Bay was named after their species. And they brought to mind the wonderful affinity there once was between the birds of Banks Peninsula and those of Westland, as native birds from the West Coast forest migrated to the peninsula in the autumn, following the ripening of numerous coloured berries and forest fruits.

They came every season to spend winter on the sunny slopes of the peninsula, Pigeon Bay being the main choice for the kereru. These birds were there in thousands, as were the colourful kakas; and lovely smaller birds of great importance to the health of New Zealand forests. But they were burnt out, shot out, killed by vermin and so on until they became very rare on Banks Peninsula. The kaka became especially rare and it is uncommon to hear many native wood pigeons about the peninsula today. However, there are still a few about as I was glad to see.

But it was a different situation in the early days there as on the West Coast. My father was a miner at Ross over 105 years ago and after his death I found ample evidence of the abundance of native birds which were there. The poor harmless native birds of the Westland bush were so tame that they took little notice of human beings and when they fed on the low branches

## Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of NZ (WReNNZ) Conference 7/8th August 2010 Antarctic Centre Christchurch

For those involved in Avian Vet practice  
DOC Staff, Rehabers and those interested in  
Wildlife.

Speakers and Workshops  
Native bird care  
Husbandry, first aid etc

In keeping with the new minimum standards

For further Information & Registration  
Please Contact Jackie Stevenson  
Ph. 03 3831488  
Email [gary.stevenson@xtra.co.nz](mailto:gary.stevenson@xtra.co.nz)

of the trees that bore the fruit they liked, the miners had only to take a heavy stick – called a waddie – and knock them off the branches.

Not only pigeons but kakas too were very tame and being birds of a fair size they were welcome to the miners for their eating value and feathers. Miners had feather mattresses made of them. My parents slept on a feather mattress in their old home at Church Bay and after my father died I was sent out by my mother to empty and burn the feathers. Lo and behold, when I tipped the mattress out the predominant feathers were the beautiful blue-green pigeon feathers, white feathers from their breasts, woodhen feathers and the beautiful kaka ones – pink, red, green, yellow and soft grey.

The last kaka I saw on Banks Peninsula was a solitary one up Monument Gully in Purau. Kaka did not seem to migrate so much as the wood pigeon. In fact we came to regard them more as blown-away birds from the West Coast and I had what seemed to be proof of that on two occasions. There had been a heavy storm and the wind was still high. My father, brother and I were working along Church Bay beach when we heard the call of the kaka. My father, immediately returning to the art of his younger days, applied his thumb and fingers between his teeth and whistled, imitating its joyous flute-like call. The bird fluttering high overhead heard and came down like a stone. Father kept calling and the bird settled in the nearest small gum tree, near where we were repairing a boat on a slip. The bird took a good look at us, as we did at it, and remained there for a time before flying away.

On another occasion we were coming through Church Gully by a short cut from the back paddock and had just passed what we call “the lasses' gate” on the narrow track home when my brother heard the call overhead of a blown-away kaka. My father was carrying home a load of red-berry coprosma for firewood. He stopped in his track, leaned against a rock and let the coprosma rest back against the bank. He put his fingers between his teeth and whistled the kaka call again. Down came the kaka as father whistled and settled in the dead branch alongside his bearded face, looking long and hard for its mate. But there was no mate to be

found.

These incidents demonstrated to me the ease with which miners and others in those early days slaughtered so many of our native birds, believing, as my father said, that they would be ever plentiful.”

Thanks to Tina Troup for bring this item to our attention. Ed

### Hutton's Shearwater Colony

The project to create a third colony on Kaikoura Peninsula progresses well. There will be an update next issue. In the meantime you can support the ongoing work of the Trust by becoming a Friend and receiving their newsletter. (Individual \$15; Family \$20; Corporate \$100 or Life \$250) Please send your cheque to Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust, PO Box 58, Kaikoura 7340

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