

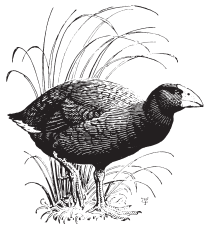


No. 8 December 2015

Birds New Zealand



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



Birds New Zealand

NO. 8 DECEMBER 2015

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We are thrilled with our decision to support Birds New Zealand.

Fruzio's aim is to raise awareness of the dedicated work of Birds New Zealand and to enable wider public engagement with the organisation. We have re-shaped our marketing strategy and made a firm commitment of \$100,000 to be donated over the course of the next 3 years. Follow our journey on: www.facebook.com/fruzio.

QUOTE

Do you ask what the birds say?
 The Sparrow, the Dove,
 The Linnet and Thrush say "I love and I love!"
 In the winter they're silent - the wind is so strong;
 What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
 But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
 And singing and loving - all come back together.
 But the Lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
 The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
 That he sings, and he sings; and forever sings he --
 "I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"

The Language of Birds by
 Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1772-1834

COVER PHOTOS

Front cover: Variable Oystercatcher
 Rear cover: Blue Duck
 Both photos by Les Feasey.

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We welcome advertising enquiries.
 Free classified ads are available to members at the editor's discretion.

Articles for inclusion in *Birds New Zealand* are welcome in any form, though electronic is preferred. Material should be related to birds, birdwatchers, or ornithologists in the New Zealand and Pacific region, and can include news on birds, members, activities and bird study, literature/product reviews, letters to the editor, birdwatching sites, and identification. Illustrations are especially welcome, though they must be sharp. Copy deadlines are 10th February, May and August, and 1st November. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc.

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President's Report



▣ Launch of the Fruzio-Birds New Zealand partnership

Editor *Birds New Zealand* Magazine:

As you will be aware from earlier reports we have been seeking a replacement for Nick Allen, who expressed the desire to retire from his role as editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine at the end of this year. This means that this will be the last edition under his guidance. Nick has done an outstanding job for the past 12 years in developing the magazine to its present high standards.

At the November Council meeting applicants for the position were considered and Council chose to accept the application by Michael Szabo from Wellington. Michael will be well known from bird watching circles and has previously been the editor of *Forest & Bird Magazine*. A fuller introduction is in this issue of the magazine.

In making the changeover we must acknowledge the wonderful work that Nick has done over the years. It is likely that the new editor will introduce changes, but he has a solid base to work from and that is largely due to Nick's quiet work.

Moult Scheme:

Dr Ben Bell has been the convenor of the moult scheme for the past 35 years, since it was launched in 1981. A report on the 35 years under Ben's convenorship will appear in this publication in due course.

Ben has indicated that he wishes to retire from this position and I acknowledge his term in this role as probably the longest serving officer of the Society.

In his report Ben has advised that there are almost 6,000 records in this scheme covering 133 species. This is a huge dataset held by the Society but it is a scheme that has been underutilised in recent times. The recording of moult can be done by any member, either at the time they are banding birds, or utilising road killed specimens or specimens collected off the beaches. Individual records have little significance but when they are accumulated over a long period of time they will provide very important data.

Council is now looking for a replacement for Ben to convene this data collecting scheme that forms an important role in our data collection role for birds in New Zealand. If you have an interest contact me at president@osnz.org.nz.

Fruzio Partnership:

As mentioned in my previous report the Society has entered into a partnership with FSL Foods who operate under the Fruzio brand. They are a major supplier of frozen fruit which can be found at Pak'nSave supermarkets throughout New Zealand. Look out for the specially branded packing with our logo on them.

I was able to attend the launch in Nelson, which was attended by major business leaders from Nelson, the associate Minister of Conservation and the local mayors, and hence was an ideal platform to promote the *Birds New Zealand* brand.

David Melville made a presentation on the activities of *Birds New Zealand* and we were able to distribute copies of *Birds New Zealand*

magazine and membership forms to everyone who attended.

As mentioned during my brief speech an important aspect of the sponsorship arrangement, apart from the financial benefits, is the fact that a successful business has recognised the work that the volunteers in *Birds New Zealand* do through all of our projects. This was also mentioned by the Chairman of FSL Foods, who acknowledged the excellent work that we achieve utilising our volunteer membership.

Another important aspect of the partnership is the opportunity to utilise the marketing division at FSL Foods with the aim of increasing membership of the Society. Council has established a small grouping of mainly Nelson people to work with FSL Foods to develop projects and activities.

As announced at the official launch, the Red-billed Gull breeding census being undertaken this year will be the first project to utilise this sponsorship money. As a means of encouraging public involvement in the project Council has established an online form that can be utilised for sightings by the general public. This form is accessible from the website or by contacting your regional representative, who should have a list of designated count sites.

Another project that is being worked on as part of the partnership is the promotion of the series of bird lectures that have been prepared by Sarah Jamieson.

This is a resource that can be utilised within the regions, either to promote bird watching through the regional meetings or community classes or even schools. The marketing division of FSL Foods will be preparing co-branded bird posters for distribution to schools promoting these lectures.

While in Nelson I took the opportunity to attend the meeting of the Nelson Region of *Birds New Zealand*. This was an interesting meeting under Gail's leadership with many interesting sightings discussed.

Seaweed Harvesting in Australia:

I recently made a statement to the South Australian Government regarding a proposal to permit the harvesting of seaweed from beaches in that area. My statement was based around the use of that resource through the winter by Banded Dotterels from New Zealand, as that aspect of the birds biology appeared to have been understated.

This is a use to which our data can be put to promote conservation activities without becoming advocates.

Changes at eBird:

The Society has been promoting the use of eBird for bird observations and we believe that this is the best portal for entering bird sightings and the recording of data. Cornell University and Macaulay Library in the USA have now created the ability for everyone to upload photos and sound recordings directly into eBird checklists.

This not only enhances the data that can be uploaded it also

allows for a quicker validation of records if there is doubt about any of the sightings. This aspect of eBird is really important to ensure that all data is validated and accurate.

For further information on this advancement check the New Zealand eBird portal which can be accessed through the Birds New Zealand website.

I also draw your attention to the newsletters recently published by Otago and Southland Region where they have provided information on the usage of eBird in those regions.

I encourage all observers to utilise this resource.

Young Birders:

Recently I have been made aware of a grouping of young people under the banner "Young Birders" who are promoting bird watching as an activity for young people. I made contact with that group and discovered that the founders are four young people scattered throughout New Zealand. At the last Council meeting in Wellington I invited two of them to attend so that they could give Council some understanding of the barriers that they have faced and their thoughts on solutions. This short presentation was of value to Council as we look to encourage young people to be involved in our organisation.

I also gave the two that attended the meeting the opportunity to put a brief introduction into this report and I will get the other two to provide something for a future edition.



▲ George Curzon-Hobson

George Curzon-Hobson

Hi, my name is George Curzon-Hobson and I love birds.

How I got interested in birds... hmmm. Well it all started when our friends were going on army training (yes that's right). They have two cockatiels and asked whether we (me and my family) could look after them, so we said yes. I totally fell in love with them; they had such great personalities. I then started learning about New Zealand's wild

species with *The Reed Handbook of Common New Zealand Birds* which I got from the library. It's a great book for beginners.

I then got more interested in birds and heard about Peter Reese who bands passerines in the Wellington area from a friend of a friend. I went along to one of his banding sessions in February this year, got totally hooked on banding and now I try to go to all of them. Thanks Peter!

I'm also a ZEALANDIA youth ambassador and loving leading tours and helping out!

I then found Birds New Zealand. I went on my first field trip into the bird "storage room" for Te Papa with Colin Miskelly. It was really cool seeing all the birds they have, we then walked down to the actual Te Papa building to practise field sketching (I'm not that great at it) but it was still fun because Sarah Jamieson was doing that part of it. I then thought "I should probably join" so that's what I did that same evening. I was surprised at how affordable it was (only \$35 a year), although definitely not a bad surprise. I then came along to my first meeting. It was great.

I have a birding blog, birdingaroundwellington.blogspot.com.

I'm now a very keen birder, bander and bird photographer at age 12.



▲ Amber Calman

Amber Calman

Hi, my name is Amber Calman, age 13, also known as Young Birder. I've had an interest in birds since I was about seven when I found a bright yellow bird caught in the bird netting over some seeds, on our land in a coastal area in the Tasman region. I got out the terrible bird books I had at the time, and found it to be a male Yellowhammer. From then on

I fed, listed and studied the birds, though not very well. (OK, well feeding the birds was pretty easy!)

Now I live in alpine Nelson Lakes, a rather different habitat, colder at the least! I'm also much better at birding now! A pair of breeding Weka, Tomtits, South Island Robins, and the occasional Yellow-crowned Parakeets, are some of the birds we get here.

I don't really know what my favourite bird is, but from New Zealand birds I love Black-billed Gulls and any kind of duck (oh, but my favourite animal is no bird, it is a wolf). I love trying photography, seeing new birds (of course), visiting new hotspots and learning more about birds. I have banded once (at a Birds New Zealand Conference) and I really, really want to do it again! I love to bird in wetland areas, preferably with ducks as well.

I am also one of the two Young Birders New Zealand founders (the other being Michael Burton-Smith); a group for young New Zealanders with an interest in birds, aimed at ages 8-18.

If you want to read more about Nelson Lakes birds or my birding trips, I have a personal website and blog (blogs are great for recording your birding adventures and sharing them with others) at www.birdsinthemountains.weebly.com.

University Liaison Person:

Over recent years Dr Phil Battley at Massey University has acted as a liaison person between the Society and the universities in New Zealand. Phil has now retired from the position and John Cockrem, also from Massey, has now been appointed to replace him.

This role is to try to get the universities more closely involved in the affairs of the Society and to encourage students to write papers for *Notornis*.

This is a different role to that which was being organised by Stephanie Grosser, who was trying to organise a network of students. This is still an ongoing activity with two student representatives appointed to the present time. However, we are still looking for other young people to represent the other universities to try to organise activities amongst the students interested in birds to encourage them into the Society.

Wetland Symposium

The National Wetland Trust of New Zealand are organising a national wetland restoration symposium in Nelson from the 10th to 12th February 2016. The symposium is an opportunity to hear of the work that is being undertaken in restoring wetlands, which are a valuable but depleted ecosystem type.

The significance to birding people is that this habitat contains many cryptic and reasonably rare birds whose populations are enhanced through the wetland restoration that is taking place.

Another point of interest to Birds New Zealand members is that the conference dinner is being held at a location where Australian Wood Ducks are being seen, so you can add a New Zealand tick to your list while you are enjoying good company over dinner.

For further information check the website: www.wetlandtrust.org.nz and go to the wetland events section.

End of Year Greetings:

As 2015 draws to a close I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and relaxing time over the holiday period. If you have the opportunity to make bird recordings over that period do not forget to enter them into eBird to ensure that they are permanently recorded.

If you are travelling to a new area do not hesitate to contact the Birds New Zealand representative in the region to see if there are activities that you can join or to find new areas in which to bird.

My message still remains the same to make sure you enjoy your birding and the birds that you do see.

DAVID LAWRIE
President

Editorial

This is my final issue of editing *Birds New Zealand*. From March Michael Szabo will take over at the keyboard. I'm not sure what I thought I would be taking on when I agreed to take over editorship of *Southern Bird* from Tony Crocker in 2003. I had no experience of editing or publishing and it was a steep learning curve for me, so perhaps my ignorance of what to expect was fortuitous. Hopefully by the end of my tenure I was producing a magazine to something like the membership's expectations.

My life was very different in 2003; I was young (well fairly), free and single and marriage and a daughter didn't even show on the horizon. Life has become increasingly complicated for me, both personally and professionally, since then and spare time scarcer. I thank you, the readership, for putting up with occasional slight delays in the appearance of the magazine, especially during the months after the Christchurch earthquakes. I will no doubt miss editing the magazine, but am looking forward to using the time freed up for other bird-related projects and professional development.

It has always been satisfying for me to see the end product of the finished magazine. It has always overcome the occasional frustrations of articles not turning up, items not quite turning out as intended, or plans for subjects I wanted to cover not coming to fruition. I hope Michael gets as much, or even more, enjoyment from the role as I did.

Anyway, enough of me, for the contents of the magazine have always been the fruits of labour of a multitude of people: members, Council, Society convenors and organisers, ornithologists from New Zealand and all around the world, photographers and more. Many thanks for all your hard work and the assistance you have given me, and for being understanding when your work gets deferred to the next issue, or even the one(s) after that. It has been a pleasure working with you and meeting you, either through the internet ether or face-to-face. Thanks also to those who have proofread the magazine over the years and have worked on its layout and production. In particular I thank Council for being invariably supportive over the years and my wife and daughter for putting up with me having to tap away at a keyboard when they would much rather I do other things.

NICK ALLEN

The Perfect Christmas Gift: a 2016 Birds New Zealand Subscription!

Are you still looking for that perfect Christmas gift?

Buy someone a 2016 Birds New Zealand subscription and help foster the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds!

Just send an email to eo@osnz.org.nz and we send you the gift voucher, or check our website for details: <http://osnz.org.nz>



International Ornithological Congress 2018



The 27th International Ornithological Congress will be held in Vancouver, Canada from 19th to 26th August 2018. Check www.iocongress2018.com for more details and to sign up for newsletters and updates.

The Scientific Program Committee of the Congress is currently inviting symposium proposals and plenary speaker nominations. Such proposals and nominations must be with the Committee on or before 1st May 2016.

Call for Nominations for Council

The three-year Council term of Colin Miskelly and Sarah Jamieson (recently resigned to live overseas) will expire at the next AGM (2016). Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again for these positions.

Nominations will close with the Secretary on 28th February 2016. Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Nominators, please include brief curriculum vitae of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

DELIA SMALL, *Secretary*
P.O. Box 834, Nelson

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2016 Annual General Meeting will be held at Century Theatre, MTG (Museum Theatre Gallery), Marine Parade, Napier on Saturday 4th June 2016 from 3pm until 5pm.

DELIA SMALL, *Secretary*
P.O. Box 834, Nelson

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2016 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2016 and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

DELIA SMALL, *Secretary*
P.O. Box 834, Nelson

Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January. Please endeavour to pay close to the due date - the Society depends greatly on your subscription to continue the furtherance of its objectives in encouraging and supporting the study and enjoyment of birds in the New Zealand region.

If you have not already done so please also send your email address to the membership secretary if possible. Communication by this means is easier for membership renewals and reminders, and saves the Society money. If you have not yet received an emailed renewal (if you usually do so) please contact the membership secretary at membership@osnz.org.nz

New Magazine Editor Appointed

Wellington-based writer and editor Michael Szabo has been appointed as the new editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine. He has previously written about New Zealand birds and their conservation in *New Zealand Geographic*, *New Scientist*, *Forest & Bird* and *IUCN World Conservation* magazines, and has contributed 50 species accounts to New Zealand Birds Online, covering seabirds, waders, songbirds, and extinct species such as the nine recognised moa species. He is also the principal author of *Wild Encounters* (Penguin Books NZ), a site guide to discovering New Zealand's unique birds and marine wildlife.

He is a former editor of *Forest & Bird* magazine and a former Communications Manager at the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand and at BirdLife International in the UK. He was also the founding director of the Pew Charitable Trusts' Kermadec Initiative, a marine conservation project set up to promote a 620,000 square kilometre ocean sanctuary around the Kermadec Islands out to the 200 kilometre boundary of New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Prime Minister John Key announced the establishment of a 620,000 square kilometre Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary during his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 29th September 2015. The sanctuary, which will include 15% of New Zealand's EEZ, will protect over 6 million seabirds of 39 species in the area ranging from tiny storm-petrels to giant wandering albatrosses.

Birds New Zealand Sales Table

Items on sale from Birds New Zealand are a good way of keeping up with the society and identifying yourself as a Birds New Zealand member. Keep those lists ticking over with a Ticklist. Look up all those old *Notornis* articles with a fifty year index (1939-1989), and then check out the Chatham Islands and wander through the waders in the special editions of *Notornis*. Read up about our Society in *A Flying Start*, your essential introduction to the ins and outs of why we are here as birdwatchers!

Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ 1999-2004 - \$98 (within NZ only - overseas purchasers should enquire below for a quote)
Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ (1985) - \$14
Chatham Islands Ornithology - \$19
Fifty Years of Bird Study in New Zealand (Index to Notornis 1939-1989) - \$14
Wader Studies in New Zealand - \$24
Birds of Hawke's Bay - \$10
A Flying Start - \$14
Stickers - Pied Stilt (specify outside glass/bumper or inside glass only) - \$3, *Notornis* - \$3
Ticklist - \$1
Checklist (1990 edition) - \$9

Send orders to:
Paul Cuming, Birds New Zealand Sales, 2/7 Robins Road,
Judea, Tauranga
Tel. (07) 571 5125, fax (07) 571 5126, email birdo@post.com

New Zealand Bird Conference and AGM 2016

The Birds New Zealand AGM and Conference 2016 will be held in Hawkes Bay during Queen's Birthday weekend 2016. The events will take place at the MTG (Museum Theatre Gallery, Marine Parade, Napier) and the meals at the locations stated below.

Field trips will go to Boundary Stream, Clive Wetlands and the Ahuriri Estuary.

Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz for registration details, or contact your regional representative.

The timetable for the event is:

3rd June (Friday):

4pm-6pm Registration (Century Theatre, MTG)

4th June (Saturday):

8am-9am Registration (Century Theatre, MTG)
9am-3pm Scientific Day One (Century Theatre, MTG)
3pm-5pm Birds NZ AGM (Century Theatre, MTG)
5pm-6pm Happy Hour (location to be confirmed)

Followed by an Informal Dinner (Scenic Hotel Te Pania)

5th June (Sunday):

8am-9am Registration (Century Theatre, MTG)
9am-5pm Scientific Day Two (Century Theatre, MTG)
5pm-7pm Happy Hour (location to be confirmed)
7pm onwards Conference Dinner (Art Deco Masonic Hotel)

6th June (Monday):

Field trips (departing from MTG)



Birds New Zealand Research Fund

The 2015 funding round of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund has attracted a large number of very good quality applications! The selection panel has selected nine projects for this funding year. Details about these projects are available on www.osnz.org.nz/2015-BNZRF-Projects

Assessing Avian Parasite Infections from Faecal Samples: the Old Methods are Still the Best.

Unseen and ignored by most ornithologists, large numbers of parasites live inside birds, with pathological consequences ranging from negligible to severe. In order to explore the diversity of intestinal parasites in New Zealand birds using a non-destructive approach, three methods for the detection and counts of parasite eggs in faecal samples were assessed. We tested the efficacy of a novel egg flotation device and counting method compared with a classical faecal egg count method, the McMaster slide, and also with a “total float” approach that examines in detail all, or almost all, of the faecal sample.

We collected faeces from individual birds at four freshwater sites. Species sampled included Mallard, New Zealand Scaup, Pied Stilt, Feral Goose, Black Swan, Little Shag, Paradise Shelduck, South Island Pied Oystercatcher and Variable Oystercatcher. In addition, as a control, we dissected the intestines of two Mallard ducks and compared the known intestinal parasite load with the content of the faeces taken directly from the cloaca.

Using the commercial egg flotation and counting device we were unable to discern or identify a single parasite egg, even when parasites were known to be present. This was because: 1) the eggs most likely to be found in our bird species were considerably smaller than those for which the device was designed to detect (i.e. sheep and cattle nematodes), and 2) because they are in low numbers and therefore were not found in the minimal subsample used in the device. McMaster slides fared little better, only showing up a small fraction of the parasite eggs known to be present, and missing the rare specimens.

By far the best, and ultimately the only way to assess the faecal samples with any reliability, was to examine all, or almost all, of the sample by the “total float” method. This concentrates the parasite eggs from the entire faecal sample in the meniscus of water at the top of a test tube and enables visualisation of the eggs that float to the surface. Using this method we were able to enumerate several different types of eggs, some of which were identifiable to family level. Extracting each type of egg and sequencing DNA from them would be a logical step to further identify what intestinal parasites these birds are harbouring.

The results of this trial have contributed some preliminary knowledge on the worms found in some water birds, as well as finding that the old-fashioned, labour-intensive method of faecal egg examination remains the only reliable one. Further,



▲ A selection of parasite eggs from the faeces of a Pied Stilt: a) *Capillaria* sp. [nematode]; b) unknown round egg or cyst with thick 'shell'; c) ascarid egg [nematode]; d) unknown pigmented trematode egg; e) unknown egg(?) found in large aggregations; f) embryonated spirurid egg [nematode]. Scale bar = 10µm

parasites and diseases are largely ignored in traditional ornithological research, despite their obvious importance to the wellbeing of birds in the wild, so the research is an important complement to other past and present research projects on New Zealand birds. Our findings will ensure that, if faecal egg counts are used for assaying parasite load in the future, a thorough approach will be taken.

Collecting faecal samples and performing a “total float” assay is a simple procedure that could be utilised by any interested ornithologist who has access to a microscope. The work has produced new information on the parasites of a number of bird species from specific South Island populations that may prove valuable for conservation and management purposes, and for bird welfare. It shows that faecal egg assays would be useful for checking for parasite pathogens in cases of mass sickness.

BRONWEN PRESSWELL and CLEMENT LAGRUE
Evolutionary and Ecological Parasitology Research Group,
Department of Zoology, University of Otago

Ecology of the Southern Black-backed Gull in Auckland

This research represents the flow-on from a study of the changes in the colonies of the Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) on Rangitoto Island carried out in 2013-2015. The Rangitoto population exhibited rapid growth throughout the early 20th century, a pattern attributed to environmental changes associated with European settlement and development. Since the 1980s, the colony sizes have declined, a change that is consistent with other gull populations both nationally and globally. The principal driver of the population changes is considered to be the availability of food. Further research will consider the current and changing foods of the Black-backed Gull in the Auckland region using a number of approaches, one of which will be the investigation of foraging distribution from the Rangitoto Island colonies using GPS tracking technology.

In studies where seabirds are being handled, the monitoring of the health status of individuals is advocated to establish baselines against which future changes in aquatic ecosystems can be detected. Gull species globally are known to be carriers of a number of pathogenic organisms, and although a number of internal and external parasites have been recorded on



Black-backed Gulls, it is acknowledged that the knowledge is incomplete. In light of this, this research aims to contribute to this knowledge through the assessment of the health status of individual birds from the Rangitoto Island colonies. This assessment will include taking standard morphometric measurements, analysis of samples for the presence of endo- and ectoparasites, and a biochemical assay of blood.

MEL GALBRAITH

Australasian Bittern: Seasonal Movements

The Australasian Bittern (matuku, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*), a species only found in New Zealand, Australia and New Caledonia, is the rarest bittern species in the world. Populations are declining and the species is classified as endangered by the IUCN and nationally endangered in New Zealand due to drastic reductions in their range. In New Zealand, population guesses vary but it is thought that fewer than 1,000 birds remain. Little information is available regarding the causes of population decline for this species, although reductions in habitat area (~90%) since human settlement, invasive predators, lack of food and fluctuating water levels, water quality and/or turbidity are all considered potential threats to bittern populations.

The Australasian Bittern project is a collaboration between Massey University, the Department of Conservations and Lake Whatuma Wetland Care Group. As part of this project Massey University and the Department of Conservation have been developing methods that determine status, distribution and threats to bittern populations, as well as identifying key sites that are of importance to bittern populations. So far this work has involved the attachment of nine radio tags to Australasian Bitterns, although it is hoped that this number will increase by the end of the current breeding season.

Alongside this work, the Lake Whatuma Wetland Care Group is looking at ways to restore bittern breeding habitats in Central Hawkes Bay, and aims to provide information about how bittern populations are responding to certain management practices. To complement this work, funds from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF) will be used in 2015/2016 by the Australasian Bittern research project to cover the transport costs associated with following bitterns carrying radio-tags outside of the breeding season to see where they go. The idea behind these funds is to collect data on seasonal



bittern movements to identify habitats that are important for bittern conservation. However, at the same time we wish to create a platform that allows Birds Hawke's Bay members to share knowledge and skills with local non-members (especially the younger generation). Opportunities for young budding ornithologists and older experienced Birds Hawke's Bay members to work together are possible on this project because of the work the bittern research team is already doing with local communities and schools. The funding provided by BNZRF will be used to cover the costs of Birds New Zealand members, and younger non-members, allowing them to work together to locate bitterns across a 12-month period.

For more information about the project, or if you would like to get involved, please contact Emma Williams (bittern.wills@yahoo.com)

EMMA WILLIAMS

Reviving the Extinct New Zealand Quail

With the major developments in the field of ancient genomics, it is now possible to sequence entire genomes of extinct species. Several projects around the world are currently undertaking such research on species including the Neanderthal and mammoth. With the huge advances being made in reproductive biotechnology the revival of recently extinct species and ecosystems is becoming increasingly likely.

In a major step in this direction, several crowd-sourced “de-extinction” projects are now under way around the world. Under the umbrella of the Genetic Rescue Foundation, we are establishing a new project to revive the extinct Koreke or New Zealand Quail.

The Koreke is an excellent candidate as a trail blazer for the field as it has well-studied living relatives, relatively plentiful museum specimens and remaining habitat.

Initial work will involve the collection and sequencing of genetic material from Koreke and its close Australian cousin, the Stubble Quail. All our sample preparation and sequencing will be undertaken in one of the world’s leading ancient genomics labs in California under the supervision of Dr Beth Shapiro.

It is our hope that we will help to turn back the clock on extinction but also develop new technologies to assist the preservation of our existing biodiversity. Crowd fundraising for initial sequencing work will commence in February 2016.



Please visit <https://www.geneticrescue.science/projects/de-extinction/new-zealand-quail> for more information.

MATIU ANDREWS-COOKSON

Dispersal of Juvenile Kakariki from a Fenced Mainland Sanctuary

Red-crowned Parakeets, or kakariki, were once common on the mainland, but today are primarily confined to offshore islands due to habitat destruction, hunting, and predation by invasive mammals. In 2010, kakariki returned to the capital, after a more than one hundred-year absence, through their reintroduction to Zealandia, a fenced sanctuary nestled within suburban Wellington. Since then the birds have multiplied, and in 2015 Zealandia banded its 500th kakariki chick. However, while the birds are unquestionably thriving within the sanctuary, they can and do leave the valley, and little is known about their activities once over the fence line.

Thanks to the generous support of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund, along with Zealandia, the Wellington City Council, FH Muter Trust, EM Pharazyn Trust, and the Karori Sanctuary Trust, we will investigate kakariki movement and activity in an urban setting by attaching radio transmitters to juvenile kakariki and tracking their movements. We will include birds born both early and late in the breeding season to examine if dispersal and survival differs with hatch date, as it does in many other bird species. Given that kakariki are still only recently reintroduced to Wellington, their establishment on the mainland is not yet a guarantee. While the species may flourish in predator-free Zealandia, to ensure that kakariki successfully populate the greater Wellington region more information is needed on the areas they prefer and their survival outside the sanctuary, knowledge we hope to gain from this study.

ELLEN IRWIN
Victoria University of Wellington



▲ Red-crowned parakeet. Photo by Ellen Irwin.



▲ Ellen radio-tracking parakeets Photo by Katie Sheridan.

Studying the Marine Ecology of New Zealand's Enigmatic Tawaki/Fiordland Crested Penguin

The enigmatic Fiordland Crested Penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*) or tawaki is one of the rarest penguins worldwide. It is also one of the penguin species we know the least about. Only a handful of studies have been conducted so far, the majority of which focussed on aspects of the penguins' terrestrial biology such as breeding behaviour and population counts. To understand which factors are driving population developments it is vital to examine the penguins' behaviour at sea: where do the birds go to find food, how deep do they have to dive to catch their prey, and what prey species do the penguins rely on, especially when rearing chicks.

Over the course of five years the Tawaki Project will investigate the Fiordland Crested Penguin's foraging behaviour across the species entire breeding range. Using cutting-edge miniature data loggers which combine GPS, dive and temperature sensors, the penguins' at-sea movements will be tracked, while simultaneously recording physical properties of their marine environment in three dimensions. In 2016, the project will be carried out at three sites simultaneously, namely



Jackson Head (South Westland, West Coast), Harrison Cove (Milford Sound, Fiordland), and Codfish Island (Stewart Island). The Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF) contributes significantly to the cost of logistics required to study the penguins at the three sites.

THOMAS MATTERN

Tracking the Foraging Behaviour of Hutton's Shearwater (*Puffinus huttoni*) During the Breeding Season in New Zealand Waters

Previous research on the Hutton's Shearwater (*Puffinus huttoni*) has been limited to monitoring population declines relative to predation at their terrestrial breeding grounds and conservation efforts within the alpine and peninsula colonies. Little is known about their foraging behaviour or dietary preferences, and the impacts this may have on their breeding success.

Every August, Hutton's Shearwaters return from their Australian wintering grounds to breed in the Seaward Kaikoura Mountains and at a newly-constructed predator-proof enclosure on the Kaikoura Peninsula. Monitoring this species is challenging as they spend their life predominantly at sea, making it difficult to observe their migration patterns, and to quantify their foraging behaviour and diet. Although adults return to breeding colonies at night when parents swap incubation duties and feed chicks, Hutton's Shearwaters can spend numerous days at sea without returning to land. While at sea, large flocks of birds are observed rafting and flying, but foraging is rarely seen.

To investigate the foraging behaviour of Hutton's Shearwaters, the Birds New Zealand Research Fund enabled the purchase of miniature loggers, which can be attached to individual birds and be used to record data on the depth of dives, water temperatures and timing and duration of dives. We used the loggers to assess the daily foraging behaviour of Hutton's Shearwater adults from the Kaikoura Te Rae o Atiu Peninsula colony. Time-depth loggers were deployed on eight adult birds from 24th November 2014 to 25th January 2015.

During this period, we were able to monitor the behaviour of adults both when incubating eggs and after the eggs had hatched, during which time they are actively feeding their chicks. Individual birds were observed for 12 to 36 days, at which point they were recaptured to download data and to

retrieve loggers.

Preliminary analyses of the results suggest that birds incubating eggs have different diving profiles to the birds actively feeding chicks. We also recorded considerable variation in how often they dived, dive depths and in the number of foraging events between the incubation and post-hatch periods. Diving behaviour changed both over the time of day and with the length of each foraging episode.

Our results indicate that foraging behaviour by Hutton's Shearwaters in the breeding season is varied, indicating perhaps a high degree of flexibility and opportunity in their foraging strategy while at sea. One area yet to be investigated is whether this variation is the results of birds foraging within the coastal region compared to those foraging in more offshore regions.

We are very grateful to Birds New Zealand for the opportunity to track these birds.

DELLA BENNET, SHARYN GOLDSTEIN, TRAVIS HORTON and JIM BRISKIE



▣ Della Bennet during night-time retrieval of a time-depth logger from a Hutton's Shearwater adult, after the chick was fed.

Eye-on-Nature

Saturday March 28th 2015 was Eye-on-Nature Day, organised by the Manukau Beautification Trust at the Auckland Botanic Gardens in Manurewa. Birds New Zealand South Auckland had decided, at relatively short notice, to participate in this event which is held annually with the aim of highlighting the natural world to school-aged children. By participating we were hoping to raise the profile of Birds New Zealand and the South Auckland branch in particular, with the ultimate goal of attracting new members.

Several weeks of feverish activity creating posters and rounding up volunteers saw us nervously awaiting the opening of the gates and the influx of the crowds. Our posters were primarily created by South Auckland members based around their pet projects and/or interests. The finished results were both creative and informative.

Eye-on-Nature is a low-key family day with an emphasis on fun learning. Our fellow participants included The Butterfly Trust, Kiwi Conservation Club, Wai Care, Auckland Council Ecology, and the Forest Restoration Trust.

Unfortunately attendance on the day was down, affected both by threatening rain and an accident which closed part of the Southern Motorway. This was a positive for us newbies as it gave us a chance to assess the stalls of the other participants and to review our own. We had somewhat misjudged the target age group of the day, meaning our posters and activities were pitched above primary/intermediate age.

As a first effort in raising our profile in the local community we believe we did have some success (e.g. the event organisers had never heard of us!) and several business cards and membership forms were handed out, primarily to adults who showed interest.

Yes, we will do it again and now that we understand the target audience we will refocus our display and activities to achieve maximum impact. We are now on the lookout for other events that will give us the opportunity to get the name Birds New Zealand out there and would encourage other branches to



▲ Caspian Tern decoy used at the Waikato River Mouth



▲ Our stand at Eye-on-Nature

look for similar opportunities in their rohe. We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Miranda Naturalists' Trust and Weka Watch in providing gear, some posters, and handouts, and Birds New Zealand for providing the use of their "café flag". Thank you to all our volunteers both on the day and in poster creation.

WENDY GOAD



Bellbird on Daphne Flowers

In the native bush on my property in Takaka Bellbirds are present year round. They are versatile feeders and often visit the flowers of introduced plants such as foxglove, red hot pokers and banksias, but I have never seen one on a daphne before.

PHILIP SIMPSON

▲ Bellbird feeding on daphne flower by Philip Simpson

Truth in Packaging

he nearly fools us
MOREPORK MOREPORK
(but it's midday??)

until he slips up
tui tui MOREPORK tui
and all is revealed

like if you found
a Christmas prize in
bright gold foil

like if Parliament's walls
fell in and the movers
and shakers fell out

and you're happy
just to stand there
and laugh

MARY CRESSWELL



Photos by Peter Reese

Wellington Passerine Banding 2014/15

There has been a long history of banding passerines in the Wellington region. For the last 15 years Peter Reese has organised the programme as well as training a new generation of mist netters/banders. The major catching site is the grounds of the Wellington Zoo, and banding began there in July 2000. Other sites round Wellington city are also used for catching birds. The longevity of the programme coupled with the high number of birds banded (annual range 2,547-4,195) is resulting in a substantial body of new information on passerines in Wellington. Furthermore, Peter has provided training in mist netting and banding for a large number of people and has also fostered an enthusiasm for birding. An encouraging aspect of the banding sessions is the attendance of many young participants. Details of the banding and mist netting are recorded at the blog site, "Wellington NZ Bird Banders" (<http://wgtnnzbanders.blogspot.co.nz/>).

The following table is a summary of the banding carried out in 2014/15 (April 2014-March 2015). A total of 3,079 birds were banded coupled with 944 recaptures. This was a record year for House Sparrows (1,056) and saw them, for the first time, displace Silvereyes as the species with the highest number of captures. The higher number of sparrows most probably reflects a good breeding season, while a mild winter meant there were fewer Silvereyes at their usual winter feeding areas. Goldfinches were a big mover for the year, up from last year and more than double the five- and 10-year averages. Their ranking increased from sixth in 2013/14 to third for the current year. Large numbers of juvenile Goldfinches were caught over the summer at the stream sites. A major decrease was observed in Greenfinch numbers; as with Silvereyes this was probably due to the mild winter. An equal record number of Tui (71) was recorded in 2014/15 and this continues the trend of rising numbers caught over the last 10 years and their increasing presence around Wellington. No Redpolls or Bellbirds were captured during 2014/15.

The 2014/15 figures in Table 1 followed by a hash sign # are significantly greater than both the five- and 10-year averages. Those followed by an asterisk * are significantly lower than the five- and 10-year averages.

The number of birds recovered dead (Table 2) was down on the last few years, probably due to the mild winter. This table highlights the need to band substantial numbers of birds to get reasonable numbers of returns.

Table 1 Birds banded in 2014/15

Ranking	Species	2014/15	5 year Average	10 year average
1	House Sparrow	1056 #	820	624
2	Silvereye	1001 *	1287	1280
3	Goldfinch	206 #	101	70
4	Greenfinch	205 *	327	312
5	Blackbird	178	147	141
6	Chaffinch	152	165	140
7	Tui	71 #	62	61
8	Dunnock	55	51	46
9	Starling	47	47	32
10	Fantail	47	65	78
11	Grey Warbler	41	48	47
12	Song Thrush	12 #	6	6
13	Eastern Rosella	3	2	1
14	Yellowhammer	2 *	43	33
15	Kingfisher	1	1	2
16	Magpie	1		0
17	California quail	1		0

Table 2. Band recoveries from dead birds, 2014/15

Recoveries	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Blackbird	4	6	9	9	4
Chaffinch	2	1	1	4	3
Dunnock	2	0	1	1	1
Fantail	1	0	0	1	0
Goldfinch	2	1	0	1	0
Greenfinch	9	5	1	3	1
Grey Warbler	0	0	1	2	0
House Sparrow	11	20	7	8	9
Silvereye	14	5	11	11	5
Song Thrush	0	0	0	0	0
Starling	2	2	6	2	1
Tui	6	6	2	5	4
Total	53	47	39	47	28

Table 3. Oldest Birds Recorded in Wellington

	Band No	Species	Days	Est Age
D	71970	Blackbird	4021	12 yr 0 mth
A	135040	Silvereye	3817	10 yr 9 mth
D	181101	Tui	3797	10 yr 8 mth
D	99970	Starling	3270	10 yr 0 mth
A	10435	Chaffinch	3244	9 yr 11 mth
B	96619	House Sparrow	2773	8 yr 0 mth
A	168383	Greenfinch	1956	5 yr 3 mth
A	104139	Yellowhammer	1949	6 yr 0 mth
A	167973	Dunnock	1856	4 yr 0 mth
AA	4172	Grey Warbler	1519	4 yr 4 mth
A	153123	Goldfinch	1428	4 yr 5 mth
AX	1919	Fantail	1176	3 yr 3 mth
C	51678	Song Thrush	889	3 yr 2 mth

The oldest bird of each species banded by the Group and recaptured or recovered, is summarised in Table 3. New records set this year are in **Bold**. The Days column shows the number of days from banding to recapture and Est Age is an estimate of the minimum age of the bird.

PETER REESE and GEOFF DE LISLE

A Real Winter Wader Count

On this year's winter wader count (July 12th) we experienced the coldest weather we had ever encountered; it was minus 5 degrees Celsius with a very heavy frost.

Rose Collen and I had drawn the short straw and headed to the shellbanks on the Invercargill Estuary.

We made our way across a completely frozen landscape, the usually soft mud banks were frozen solid and it was an easy walk as we headed down the edge of the estuary. All was well until we went to cross some sandy areas which had a thin sheet of ice covering them and we were soon slipping and sliding our way to the channel which we needed to cross to access the shellbanks.

As we stood and debated whether to cross the channel that was now getting much deeper as the tide started to flow in at a great rate of knots, we noticed two Southern Black-backed Gulls that were about five metres apart and were just standing out in the channel but were slowly moving along with the tide. It looked amazing and we realised they were actually standing on ice floes and floating along quite happily but possibly a little confused. This was the first time I had seen birds in Southland actually floating along on ice. We decided this was too dangerous to attempt to cross and as we headed back to our vehicle we could hear the ice cracking as the tide moved into the frozen mud and reed banks. We now found we had to wade in knee high water to get across one more channel to get to higher ground.

The water was coming in so swiftly it was bringing in sheets of ice around our legs that were 2-3cm thick and absolutely chilling to the bone. It was all quite scary and we were relieved to haul ourselves up onto higher ground.

Just one of the many joys of birding in Southland in winter!

PHIL RHODES



Beach Patrol with KCC Members

After a couple of years of talking about it, the day finally arrived. On a cool July morning, with rain threatening, five Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) members, their mothers, KCC co-ordinator Rosemary, and Birds New Zealand South Auckland beach patrollers Wendy and Mike set off down Karioitahi Beach, near Waiuku, to see what the tide had washed up.

Everyone had been told to expect prions, and prions we found, with a couple of shearwaters and a well-rotted Mallard thrown in for a bit a variety.

The KCC members asked questions and appeared genuinely interested in the beach patrol process, one mother/daughter combo being keen enough to join us for the full walk of the beach at our next scheduled patrol.

Overall it was an enjoyable event (despite the rain) and the enthusiasm of both the KCC members, and their mothers, was really great to see. I would encourage other beach patrol teams to offer a similar experience to KCC and/or home-school groups in their regions.

WENDY GOAD

Beach Patrol Convenor, Birds New Zealand South Auckland

Projects Assistance Fund

National Black-billed Gull Census

This upcoming summer is a big season for gulls! All braided rivers in the country will be flown at least once over the next two years by plane to take aerial photographs, and ground truthing will be done at some colonies to develop an appropriate correction factor. Environment Canterbury is providing funding to fly the rivers in Canterbury as well as assisting with counting techniques, and the Department of Conservation, Wildlife Management International Ltd, Birds New Zealand, and Wildlands are teaming up to cover the rest of the country.

The Projects Assistance Fund has contributed to part of the cost of flying the West Coast region. Red-billed Gull counts will also be completed during these flights to assist Peter Frost and Graeme Taylor in the Red-billed Gull census also taking place this year.

These are exciting times for both Black-billed and Red-billed Gulls. Updating national counts will provide new information on the conservation status of both species.

If you have any questions, please contact me at claudia "at" wmil.co.nz

CLAUDIA MISCHLER

Unusual Bird Report Database

The Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) has received support from the Projects Assistance Fund to develop a searchable online database of Unusual Bird Reports. This will allow members to check whether a particular sighting has been reported to the RAC, and to check the status of each submission, with the website updated after each two-monthly batch of decisions. The database will also provide accessible information on accepted sightings of each reportable species, with hyperlinks to reports published in *Notornis* or the Society's newsletters and magazines. The database will also be searchable by locality, if you wish to know which reportable species have had sightings submitted or accepted from your favourite birding location. The RAC hopes that the database will encourage prompt reporting of those sightings requiring verification, as well as providing a service to members through prompt reporting of submissions and decisions.



- ▲ Distant view of black-billed gull colony from plane in Marlborough.
- Black-billed gulls roosting on a jetty. Note the colour-banded birds

Dorothy Alloo (nee Grantham)

Earlier this year the Southland branch learned of the passing of a former member and benefactor of the society, Dorothy Alloo. A phone call from her nephew, Glen Clarkson, informed us that Dorothy had remembered the Society in her will and bequeathed a considerable sum of money to Southland OSNZ to be used for a conservation project.

Dorothy was born in Edendale and attended North School and Southland Girls' High School in Invercargill. She later studied at Otago University where she graduated with a Home Science degree. During the Second World War Dorothy worked as a land girl and a nurse aide. After the war she was employed as a dietician at Kew Hospital, Invercargill. Dorothy joined the staff at Southland Girls' High School in 1949, becoming Head of Biology and, later, Deputy Principal, retiring in 1989. Following her

retirement she married Lawrence Alloo.

Dorothy had a great passion for the outdoors and especially Fiordland, and was one of the pioneers of outdoor education in Southland, starting with a field trip to Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound in 1958, which was featured as a double-page spread in the *Auckland Weekly*. During her years teaching biology she brought many groups of students into Fiordland and these visits became part of the biology curriculum at Southland Girls' High School. She was an active member of OSNZ up to the mid-1970s, and was heavily involved with the establishment of Borland Lodge and the Southland Youth Adventure Trust. Dorothy became an Honorary Ranger for Fiordland National Park prior to the establishment of DOC in 1987.

Dorothy passed away on 26th February 2014.

NEIL ROBERTSON



Ann Sherlock



Arriving in New Zealand in 1975 from England Ann Sherlock and husband Rob settled in The Waikato where Ann found a job as a secondary school English teacher. Ann's attention to detail, grammar and good writing were to prove just what the Canterbury Region of Birds New Zealand needed in a newsletter editor. But that was in the future.

Ann and Rob had always enjoyed hill-walking in Derbyshire and

the Lake District, transferring this love to the high country of both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. In 2000 they decided to retire to Christchurch so Rob could more easily partake of his love of gliding and they could both do lots of walks and tramps. They never did anything by halves, so they did amazingly difficult routes, carrying a tent, across the main divide and up and down the length of Canterbury and Nelson. Seeing native birds along the way and recording the sightings led to Ann's involvement with the Atlas project and she joined OSNZ in 2004 after giving then Canterbury RR Nick Allen data for lots of 10 km squares that no-one else had contributed to.

In 2007 Ann was kind enough to agree to be editor for Canterbury OSNZ's newsletter *The Wrybill* and did this in a very efficient and thorough way until 2014, producing lovely issues that many people wrote to say they enjoyed. Extremely fussy about spelling, grammar and getting facts right, Ann would pester me as RR for copy for *The Wrybill*, having to fit the newsletter in to a busy schedule including overseas trips to visit her family scattered all over the world. She could be exasperating, but she was a lovely genuine person, very funny and generous and enthusiastic about the natural world, the planet, people and Birds New Zealand. She is very much missed.

JAN WALKER

Ann also proof read numerous issues of *Southern Bird*, efficiently but gently putting the editor right regarding his sometimes wayward grammar. She also wrote the Canterbury regional roundup for a number of years. I would like to express my and the Canterbury region's deepest sympathies to Ann's family, and Rob in particular.

NICK ALLEN

The Fiery-nosed Grongle

The Fiery-nosed Grongle, or Brigadier Bird
Is infrequently seen, but quite often heard,
As it holds forth at length at the back of the mess
Of old whisky bottles it keeps for its nest.

It mutters strange oaths at the end of the bar
Of sand, where it searches for urchins and star-
Fish, which it relishes, curried of course,
And eats with raw oysters and Worcestershire sauce.

A diet so rich is surely the reason
For the frequent returns of its nuptial season,
When it sports a new plumage, its friends call the blues,
Complimenting its beak, all ablaze with the booze.

This sabre-like organ, it tosses and rattles
When greeting the ladies or entering battles,
And its lurid complexion, quite rightly or wrongle,
Explains the description of Fiery-nosed Grongle.

JOHN SQUIRE



▲ Hugh and Zoe Clifford

Zoe Clifford

It is with regret that we report the passing of Zoe Clifford, in her sleep, on the 31st of August 2015.

Zoe, alongside her husband Hugh, was much involved in supporting the activities of the Waikato region of OSNZ over the past 25 years. She was a joint recipient, with Hugh, of a Meritorious Service Award. This was in recognition of their joint contribution to the Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand, 1999-2004.

Again, in partnership with Hugh, she was an active participant in the Beach Patrol Scheme. Records show that she covered many hundreds of kilometres walking the Waikato beaches and this continued into the early months of 2015.

We extend our sympathy to Hugh and family. She is greatly missed.

RAY BUCKMASTER



Australasian Shorebird Conference Auckland New Zealand 1-2 October 2016

SAVE THE DATE

Pūkoro Miramira Naturalists' Trust

is hosting the

10th Australasian Shorebird Conference

to be held at

UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland
on 1 - 2 October 2016.

There will be two days of presentations covering a wide range of subjects relating to shorebird biology and ecology in New Zealand and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Anyone interested in presenting a paper or poster at the conference should contact Phil Battley
P.Battley@massey.ac.nz.

This will be followed by field trips to a variety of good shorebird sites around Auckland on Monday 3 October. More details regarding registration etc. will appear early in 2016.

If you are interested in sponsorship please contact us at the email below.

Adrian Riegen
ASC 2016 Committee Convenor
riegen@xtra.co.nz



Review

Pyramid Valley and Beyond: Discovering the Prehistoric Birdlife of North Canterbury, New Zealand

By Richard Holdaway. 2015. Turnagra Press, Christchurch. 42pp A4 colour throughout. Price \$25.99 plus \$6.50 p & p (within New Zealand). Order via the form on the Birds New Zealand website www.osnz.org.nz accessed on the 'latest news' bar.

Past President of the Ornithological Society, Professor Holdaway is a leading expert on extinction biology in New Zealand. His latest book is an introduction to the diverse birdlife of North Canterbury before humans, and the array of nasties they brought with them, wrought an almost complete destruction of the natural order.

A history of the discovery of bones and excavations at Pyramid Valley is followed by details of the 2008 excavation there, which was conducted in order to document the objects discovered in minute detail in comparison to hauling out moa bones as had occurred in the past. Recent developments in scientific techniques and computing, such as DNA sequencing, have allowed such careful work to enable the virtual reconstruction of the habitats present at and near the site and the fauna and flora present in them, and to follow them through time and changes in climate. The detail of items found was as small as insect chewings on fossilised leaf surfaces. The way the excavation was carried out, some of the people involved in it, and some of the discoveries are well illustrated using large colour photographs.

The exciting 2001 discovery of moa bones at Bell Hill Vineyard, only 6 km from Pyramid Valley, features in the next chapter, with fascinating photos of moa bones in situ. The text describes the important DNA work that enabled the previously unknown sexual dimorphism and differences in the sex ratio within the various species to be elucidated.

The remainder of the book is devoted to the species and species groups found in the excavations, in bird of prey nest sites and middens in North Canterbury and sometimes adjoining areas. These paint a picture of which birds were in the region, often some of their biology (for example what they ate, how they walked, the habitats they lived in), and what the current situation is. The text is accompanied by amazingly detailed photos of bones, especially skulls, taken by Rod Morris. A smaller number of photos of live birds are included, expertly taken by the same photographer. Some conjecture is made regarding species where evidence of past existence is lacking, for example only a single bone of the White Heron was found at Pyramid Valley, suggesting it merely passed through on migration, as the species does in inland Canterbury today, and there is a total lack of solid evidence for the past occurrence of shags.

Some species groups and species receive more coverage than others, generally based on the amount of fossil evidence recovered. Thus the section on moa is extensive and provides many fascinating insights to this group of birds. Equally fascinating is the section on Haast's Eagle and the way that a 9-15 kg bird could overpower a Giant Moa weighing 200 kg. The songbirds section, in contrast, is a little disappointing, amounting to a little less than four pages for 19 species. Their small bones mean that they are rare in fossil deposits, and vary according to species in bird of prey nest deposits. The descriptions of current species ranges are generally correct, with a very few exceptions such as the presence of Tui in the Hanmer Springs area just to the north, and local resurgences of Weka in the North Island around Opotiki/Whakatane and north of the Hunua Ranges.

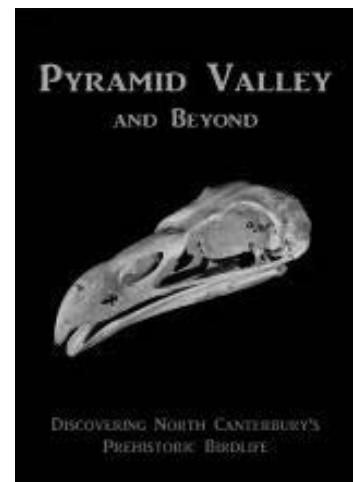
Though the title of the book suggests a solely North Canterbury focus the book often describes how the various birds fitted into prehistoric New Zealand as a whole, and the concentration on the North Canterbury area might be best taken as a case study that is applicable to much of the country.

There is no reason to suggest that Pyramid Valley, Bell Hill Vineyard and the area's bird of prey nest sites were anything out of the ordinary in prehistoric New Zealand, and what occurred there was almost certainly acted out over much of forested lowland New Zealand. Evidence from sites elsewhere in New Zealand bears this out and is often mentioned in the text.

The book is written in an easily digested and accessible style, lacking the more technical approach of scientific papers and books such as Richard Holdaway and Trevor Worthy's landmark *The lost world of the Moa*. It still packs in great detail despite its limited number of pages, however, and is bang up to date as regards recent scientific discoveries in avian palaeobiology.

This is a book that will teach anyone interested in New Zealand birds what the avifauna in the main two islands of the country should be like, and would have been like had humans not come along and so comprehensively messed things up. It should also be on the shelves of anyone interested in attempting to conserve or re-assemble bird communities in predator-free environments, providing ample evidence of what should be possible for species currently shut out of former habitats and distributions due to the presence of mammalian predators.

NICK ALLEN



Visit the Birds New Zealand/ OSNZ Website

www.osnz.org.nz

The Society's website is a great source of information and resources:

- Read the latest news about your Society
- Join or manage your subscription
- Learn about the Society's schemes and studies
- Download scheme reporting forms, and check out reports from scheme convenors
- Find contact details for all those involved in helping run the Society
- Keep up to date with conferences available both here and overseas
- Check out the publications the Society produces or has produced
- Download and read newsletters from the Society's regions



FAR NORTH

How quickly the weather went from three layers of clothing and wet weather gear to shorts and T-shirt. The flowering cherries have come and gone, the daffodils the same and the last of the apple blossoms are being eaten by a family of Eastern Rosellas. The California Quail pair is making dust baths in the carefully planted garden and pecking on the door for breakfast. The Tui that is nesting in the Kanuka has been busy acting as pest control officer and has cleaned the spiders off the crevices in the deck. Paradise Shelducks have nested again in the rata. Weka are reported in the Opuia Forest but haven't added their calls yet.

Speaking of calls, a mate sent me a recording of a bird call that I couldn't identify. Since the resident expert is in Peru, I scanned my bird call library (which is admittedly antique and of questionable quality) and couldn't find anything that helped. Then there was a strange set of coincidences. The Head Ranger at Bream Head emailed that he had hundreds of hours of DOC Acoustic Recording Device recordings that he needed analysing, and did OSNZ have the time? Following that, at the Project Island Song AGM, the speaker, Isabel Castro, who is a Senior Lecturer at Massey, mentioned that one of her student's Ph.D. project was on bird call identification, and requested the recordings. The end result of the student's efforts may be an application (app) that allows you to submit a recording and have the bird identified. Wouldn't that be useful!

The Project Island Song people in cooperation with DOC and local iwi have successfully translocated Saddleback and North Island Robin and Whitehead to some of the islands in the Bay of Islands, as part of a 20-year plan to reforest and repopulate the Islands. That plan is going along on schedule. Far North members have been helping with the follow-up surveys, which will take on more intensity over the summer.

Parengarenga and Ranganu are waiting for auspicious alignments and the dairy calving to finish so we can use Kevin's strong back and his boat to survey shorebirds. Three of us were at Kowhai Beach and surveyed the shore birds there, and counted the Black-backed Gulls waiting to eat the emerging New Zealand Dotterel chicks. The local DOC ranger informed us that the Black-backed Gull is not a protected species. On a recent beach wreck patrol we counted over 100 Black-backed gulls along a stretch of Ninety Mile Beach: some species are doing well.

Kokako are also doing well at Mataraua Forest. DOC has a vigorous pest control program in the area that is working. Observers were up there recently and heard/saw eight birds, part of a population that is rumoured to be over 100. More towards the centre of Northland, some of our members have devoted years of effort to re-establishing Kokako in Puketi Forest. Ian Wilson sometimes spends three to four days a week trapping, monitoring and surveying the Kokako at Puketi. His and John Dawn's efforts appear to be taking hold, and deserve recognition. Ian is a very knowledgeable birder and his talk on North Island Robin at Urupukapuka was enlightening. The birds for that last Puketi Forest translocation came from Mataraua Forest.

Far North plans for the summer include completing the Red-billed Gull survey, completing the shorebird wader counts, doing five-minute bird counts on the islands in the Bay of Islands, beach wreck patrols, and the upcoming Bellbird survey at Bream Head. The Regional Representative's blog site is complete and has been tested, and a Far North website is under construction and due for launch before Christmas.

eBird continues to improve and impress. In addition to the cell phone (iPhone and Android) app that is useful if you are within phone range, eBird has added the capability to post photos using drag and drop. Peter Frost mentioned this at the AGM.

One of the eBird reports is a Top 100 report. Click on "Top 100". Click on "Continue". Three observers are neck and neck going into the home straight for the year. No testosterone is involved, of course, but it is a bit of fun.

- LES FEASEY

AUCKLAND

In the last few months these have been a good number of interesting sightings in the Auckland region. These include a Red-necked Stint at Whatipu on the Manukau Harbour and two very photogenic, but increasingly rare Eastern Curlews on the Mangere foreshore and at Ambury Park in Auckland since mid-August.

Royal Spoonbills have been roosting at Western Springs Lake, with up to 40 in early October, although numbers were down to three or four by the end of the month. Whilst roosting many of the birds have shown breeding behaviour (as has occurred before). However, no nesting has been recorded and it seems that they are getting in the mood before moving south to their breeding colonies.

Breeding Banded Rails, Pied Stilts and Brown Teal have all been seen at Shakespear Park on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula. A recent survey held there on the 26th of September recorded the continued presence of Whiteheads, which had been released earlier in the year. Spotless Crakes continue to increase their presence in the region, with many seen or heard on Motutapu Island and Shakespear Park in addition to the birds always seen on Tiritiri Matangi Island (which is likely the source of these new populations); however, a very good record was the call of a Spotless Crake being heard at Waiaatarua Wetland Reserve in the city suburb of Remuera.

Also of interest have been sightings of birds with a probable escaped/released origin. These include three Red-legged Partridges photographed in Tawharanui Regional Park on the 15th of October and three Crested Pigeons seen in Drury. On the 30th of July, there was a report on the Birds Auckland Facebook page of a Eurasian Jay on Auckland's North Shore, but despite searching the bird was not seen again and the sighting was not confirmed with a photograph. The nearest Eurasian Jays to New Zealand are those in Japan and South East Asia, so any vagrancy here would likely have been a cage bird released from a ship that was entering the Port of Auckland.

Beach patrols on the west coast beach of Muriwai have recovered varying numbers of birds, but usually a good variety. In addition to the usual shearwaters and prions, recent birds have included a juvenile Northern Giant Petrel, a Kerguelan Petrel and, most unusually, a Fantail found attached to the tentacles of a beach-wrecked Bluebottle Jellyfish.

The Birds Auckland Facebook page has been a very useful and positive tool in getting people interested in birds and hopefully becoming members of Bird New Zealand. Currently we have 609 members and this continues to rise each week. It seems there are a great number of bird photographers out there and Facebook is also the source of some interesting bird sightings.

On Sunday the 4th of October, the Auckland Branch made a successful foray into promoting Birds New Zealand with a display stand at the Ambury Park Farm Day in Mangere. The members attending the display were Mel Galbraith, Oscar Thomas, Trina Smith and Ian McLean, and they were kept busy with a constant stream of visitors. A great attraction to the public were the mounted and skin specimens of birds many of which were kindly loaned to us by the Auckland Museum. The birds displayed were those typically found within Ambury Park and included New Zealand Dotterel, Spur-winged Plover, Kingfisher, Morepork, Eastern Rosella, Harrier and Fantail. We also found that having some bird colouring in sheets and crayons on hand was a great way attracting children and their parents to the display.

We would like to congratulate one of our youngest members, Oscar Thomas for his excellent work with three other young members of Birds New Zealand in creating the Young Birders New Zealand website. The future of birding in New Zealand looks very positive.

Finally it is with deep sadness to note the recent passing away of Dr Michael Taylor in October. Michael was a stalwart of the Ornithological Society and a very active member of our region. He was our birding "statesman" and his contribution to birding in our region will be sorely missed.

- IAN MCLEAN

BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

Two birds to keep an eye out for whilst on Mauao/Mount Maunganui: the first is a Tomtit seen on the Waikorere Track on Mauao near the summit late October; and also a Grey-tailed Tattler seen near the Red Light Rock a few days afterwards.

Maketu had a suite of unusual terns with an Arctic, Common and Black-fronted Tern during the same October period.

To top off the good October records, a Rifleman was seen on the Henderson Tramline Track, Kaimai Range, near the Old Kaimai Road.

An entirely white Tui has been haunting Te Puna Quarry and points near Katikati. A Dabchick has been seen on the Ohinemuri River, Waihi Gorge; an unusual spot, whilst an extremely urban White Heron has been eyeing up some neighbours' goldfish in Te Puna, just north of Tauranga.

A colony of Black-billed Gulls has been observed on Mount Azim on military land inside the Waiouru exclusion zone. Unfortunately we can't confirm, or deny, that this colony exists, as you would have more chance of finding the Fountain of Youth than gaining access to this area.

- PAUL CUMING

TARANAKI

Taranaki suffered through a long wet winter; August was the wettest since records began. The six New Zealand Dotterels at Waiongana headed off to somewhere drier. Although they were in full breeding plumage there were no attempts at breeding.

At September's indoor meeting everybody had Tui records from around their areas. Ian Dudding noted Tui everywhere along the Henui Walkway attracted by *Prunus campanulata* and Barry Hartley counted fourteen at Pukekura/Brooklands Park, also in the same species of tree. There were four around our area at Waiongana.

September's field trip started at the Inglewood Oxidation ponds where Little Shag, Black Shag and Grey Duck were just three of the sixteen species seen. Then it was off east to Lake Ratapiko, two small man-made hydro lakes, one of which almost always has a good population of New Zealand Scaup; fifty on this occasion. Then it was further east to the Tarata Saddle, with Bellbird and Kingfisher seen, along with six feral chooks; a regular inhabitant of most roadside rest areas around Taranaki.

Barry Hartley managed to dodge some of the wet weather to record 11 Royal Spoonbills at Mokau. At Lake Rotokare, where he never seems to get past the first seat, he still got good records of Spotless Crake and Fernbird in the wetlands and Saddlebacks in the trees. We wonder what he might observe if he went further on!

Migratory waders are now so rare along the Taranaki coast that members are heading north to Pukorokoro/Miranda to reacquaint themselves with the many species that arrive there. Julie Fryer easily won the "heard the first Shining Cuckoo" competition with a bird calling from our little patch of bush near the Waiongana Mouth at 9.45am on 17th September.

September's periods of rough windy weather were good for pelagic birding with albatrosses, giant petrels, Australasian Gannets and smaller unidentifiable species seen off shore. Inland, Falcons



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have been seen just south of New Plymouth, with reports further north of a pair around Waitaanga. A White Heron was again seen at Waiongana along with a couple of Cattle Egrets, now rarely seen in North Taranaki.

October's field trip to Egmont National Park was very quiet. We visited regular spots around East Egmont. The short track into Potaema Bog was quiet with only two Grey Warblers, but at the bog we all got good views of a Fernbird, and Tui and New Zealand Pigeon flew over. The area around the Mountain House held numerous Tui, two Bellbirds and one male Tomtit. Despite the lack of birds the weather was fine and the company excellent.

- PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

There was a good turnout for a visit to the Waitangi wetland. A number of Black-fronted Dotterels were found in one location at the river mouth area. At a brief meeting after the visit it was agreed to fund a tracking device for Emma Williams's Bittern monitoring project from branch funds, and to approach Birds New Zealand's Council for sponsorship of a more sophisticated and expensive tracker.

Prolonged rainfall in September stymied a planned visit to Lake Rununga for Bittern and Spotless Crane monitoring, both on the original date and a rescheduling a week later. Instead, a few of us had a look at a couple of sites in the Ahuriri Estuary. 86 Bar-tailed Godwits were present, indicating that some but not all of the normal summer population had returned.

Planned overnight trips have had to be postponed for one or other reason. A replacement visit to Mohi Bush was held on the morning of the All Blacks World Cup victory, no doubt accounting for the low attendance of only three members! Rifleman are present in this isolated patch of native forest, although only one male was seen.

A Whimbrel was found in the Ngaruroro River estuary on 8th November. While reasonably common elsewhere (including numbers at Mahia which is the northern limit of Hawke Bay) this species is rare in the Napier/Clive area, with the last record for Ahuriri in 2007 and no known records for the spot where it was found.

- IAN SMITH

WAIRARAPA

The Wairarapa region has enjoyed three contrasting but informative evening meetings this spring. For the first we settled down and shared our own observations of spring birds and their behaviours; who was there and perhaps who was noticeable for their absence. It was a good time to ask questions on our own behalf as well as of others. Our members dwell in a wider range of habitats than might seem apparent at first glance. None can equal the MacKenzies, however, with bush, wetland, waders and the seabirds of Onoke Spit all in their yard. Check out www.terakaubirding.co.nz.

In October James Griffiths came across from DOC in Wellington and gave us the real, statistical inside story on Project Kaka; the trapping/1080 onslaught in the Holdsworth area of the Tararua, aimed at restoring healthy, sustained biodiversity. The DOC figures sit beside a control area, and a Greater Wellington Regional Council area which has a similar aim, but is marching to a different band relative to the masting seasons. It takes an understanding of all three considered together, not just Project Kaka, to get a hopeful plan for the future.

November's evening meeting was up close and personal, nostalgic, yet had its humour too. We stepped back in time and explored some of the 35 mm slides of birds taken by the late Colin Sladden. His wife Shirley was there to help identify some of the locations. Of particular interest was a set of slides of the Caspian terns on Onoke Spit in 1988. Not only were there a few more, but their chosen ground was quite different from what we've been

seeing over the last few years. Being further away from the Black-backed gulls may have been a help.

Our dotterel support trip to Riversdale Beach saw New Zealand, Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels, but in single numbers. The human/canine assault on their breeding ground is unchecked. The Masterton District Council, despite various conservation groups' representations, don't want to get the message. Might it cost votes if Riversdale became a place where you had to care for wildlife, drive on the left and not let your dog run anywhere?

By contrast Onoke Spit and Lower Pounui were totally different in their challenges. Lake Onoke is currently unable to find an outflow, so waders are hard pressed to find wadeable areas. The weather has been fluctuating wildly, so many species have moved or have hunkered down in the grasses. There were fewer Banded Dotterels, though Skylarks were still plentiful. The Caspian Tern count was up six from last year (25 up to 31). Three broken eggs and one whole were seen. Will they stay? They are further away from the Black-backed Gulls (about 250 in number) this year, and if the terns stay we are hopeful of arranging some camera monitoring to assess the interaction, if any, of the two groups.

- ROBIN LIST

WELLINGTON

At our October meeting Helen Gummer and Shane Cotter summarised the progress in establishing new seabird colonies on Mana and Matiu/Somes Islands. These projects have been variously run by DOC, Friends of Mana Island and the Matiu Somes Charitable Trust. This talk was of particular interest because a number of Wellington members of Birds New Zealand have assisted in these projects. Chicks of Common Diving Petrels (1997-9), Fairy Prions (2002-4) and Fluttering Shearwaters (2006-8) were transferred to fledge in artificial burrows on Mana Island. In addition, a sound system playing bird calls has been established on the island to attract seabirds. More than 20 Diving Petrel Chicks have returned to the island. There has also been a significant recruitment of Diving Petrels to the island. Precise numbers of nesting birds are not known as they are in areas difficult to monitor, however, all indications are of a growing colony of Diving Petrels.

In contrast, while there have been returns of fledged Fairy Prions there has been little recruitment of immigrants and a slow or stalled growth of the colony. Last season there was a supplementary top up of Fairy Prion chicks and a further top up is planned for this season. Fluttering Shearwater chicks have returned to Mana Island and are now nesting in increasing numbers. In the 2013/14 season there were 24 active burrows and even more fluttering shearwaters were breeding on Mana in the last season.

Fluttering Shearwater chicks were transferred to Matiu/Somes Island from 2012-2014 and a sound system established. Interestingly, eight birds from Mana Island have been caught at the Matiu/Somes Island colony. In September of this year egg laying was recorded for the first time on Matiu/Somes Island. Initial indications are of a successful establishment of a nesting colony of Fluttering Shearwaters on Matiu/Somes Island. Birds New Zealand members will continue to assist in these projects which require not only regular monitoring but also ongoing maintenance of the artificial burrows.

- GEOFF DE LISLE

MARLBOROUGH

Our Grassmere lake monthly counts and our weekly Black-fronted tern counts on the Wairau River have continued over the past few months. The tern counts have been going for over a year so we are now collecting data from our second spring and summer period.

In August we held our annual mid-winter get-together dinner, again hosted by Sue and Brian Bell. Thank you for allowing us to invade again! As usual we had a pictures theme and this year one of our members had been on Heritage Expeditions' "In the Wake of Bering" trip in June/July 2014 up the east coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula from Petropavlovsk -Kamchatskiy to Anadyr, just shy of the Arctic Circle.

"Every day we had at least one jaunt in the Zodiacs with landings on the coast and islands off shore so we had opportunity to see both land, sea and shore birds and mammals, sometimes at quite close quarters! The ever changing scenery from the volcanoes in the south (though often obscured by cloud) to the beautiful flower-filled tundra in the north was magnificent.

My main reason for the cruise, the birding, exceeded all expectations and with the help of the Heritage and Nature Trek ornithologists (and not to mention many of the very knowledgeable fellow passengers) I learned to recognize the jizz of many northern hemisphere birds new to me. It was great to see some of the waders that I had previously known only in their non-breeding plumage in the southern hemisphere. Of course the Highlight was seeing the rare and increasingly endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. We were very lucky. We also saw walrus, sea-otters, sea-lions, different species of seals and whales, many bears, snow sheep, Arctic fox and some of the smaller mammals. The many beautiful flowers seen on our walks on the hills, marshes and tundra were identified by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff botanist. It was also very interesting to see and learn about some of the history and culture of this part of Russia."

At the end of September several members helped with transplanting Chatham Island Akeake seedlings into root-trainers. These will be grown up and sent back to Chatham Islands to be planted at the Taiko Trust site around the Chatham Island Albatross translocation colony. We had a fun day, working and socialising over cups of tea and coffee.

On the Sunday of Labour Weekend we attempted bird banding at the Bell's property but only caught a few birds in the mist nets. It was too sunny, then too windy; it is hard to get the conditions just right. However, it was good to refresh our memories on how to handle, band and measure birds.

We undertook the Red-billed Gull survey along the Kaikoura coast on 31st October. Seven members were involved and we chose a perfect day for a good day out. It was a new experience for most of us, marking nests and counting as we walked through the colonies. It is always good to learn new things while enjoying our birding. On 1st November another group went to Vernon Lagoons at the mouth of the Wairau River to check for Red-bills but Black-backed Gulls had taken over the island.

- DIANNE JOHN

NELSON

On Labour Day one of our Golden Bay members, Ken George, organised a "big day out" for local bird enthusiasts. The aim was to copy the format from such overseas events and see how many species they could observe in the space of 24 hours. Ken reports that their team of four worked from 6am to 7pm, covering 184 km to record 59 species. There were disappointments such as just missing a Reef Heron which is usually present at Pohara but on the upside a Falcon flew over as they waited. Ken has now put the challenge out to those on the Nelson side: can we better this score next year?

Project Janszoon released the first four Kaka into Abel Tasman National Park in early November. These birds were raised in captivity in the South Island and it is hoped that many more will follow over the next five years. Now that there are 15,000 ha of the park under intensive stoat and possum control there is a good chance that nests will be successful, the rata will bloom again and flocks of Kaka might become commonplace like in the old days. A video of the birds in their holding aviary



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at Wainui Hut, where they were held for a month before release to the wild, can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=np-A_zVYREE.

Four Australian Wood Ducks, comprising an adult male and female and what was believed to be two juvenile males, arrived on a private pond in the Mahana area in December 2014 and were seen by some Birds NZ members on 18th January. The juveniles soon disappeared, but the pair persisted until early August when only the male was present. Willie Cook kept a close 'eye' on the pond knowing there was no record of this bird breeding in New Zealand previously. On the 11th October, Willie photographed both adults with four ducklings on the water, only one of which remained by 25th October. This has been accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee as the first breeding record for maned duck in New Zealand. Sadly, Colin Miskelly informed us that on the 7th July a male Australian Wood duck (possibly one of the original two juveniles) was shot on the Waimea Estuary and sent to Te Papa.

Another unusual sighting was a Fiordland Crested Penguin sighted by Steve Franklin on 14th October in the cave at Te Pukatea Bay (Abel Tasman NP) and photographed by Tils Melis. A very similar individual was spotted on 7th October at The Glen near Nelson; possibly the same bird. Colin Miskelly commented that the species does occasionally wander as far north as Cook Strait, but has not done as often recently compared to past decades, which may reflect a suspected decline in their total population meaning there are fewer birds on the edge of their distribution range. So a good sighting by Steve and photo from Tils.

– ROBIN TOY



▲ Fiordland Crested Penguin by Tils Melis

CANTERBURY

The possible sighting of a Greater Sand Plover at the Ashley Estuary is one of the most interesting reports in Canterbury over the past few months. While the bird in question has only been seen once, hopefully it is still around and will reappear, allowing other birders to have a look and clarify the identification. Another interesting report is that of a Grey-headed Albatross seen by the Albatross Encounter in Kaikoura, their first sighting there in seventeen years. Two White-winged Black Terns have been spotted on the lower Waimakariri River, their residual breeding plumage, making them a bit easier to find amongst the other terns. Migratory waders such as the Curlew, Sharp-tailed and Pectoral Sandpipers, Turnstones and Red-necked Stints are seen regularly at Kaitorete Spit. A Turnstone has also been spotted a number of times at the Ashley Estuary.

August's field trip was a beach patrol along South New Brighton. Weather conditions meant there was not much to be found but we did turn up a couple of partial Red-billed Gull wings and the skull from a Caspian Tern. September's field trip was a small one, with three members exploring Lake Ellesmere and the mouth of the Kaituna River. It was a good chance to see some Crested Grebes and to get a look at the nest platforms that Anita Spencer had talked about at August's indoor meeting. In October, we stopped at McHugh's Forest (a remnant pine plantation) near Darfield, then drove further inland

to check out Kowai Bush and Lordes Bush, both patches of native bush. McHugh's held a variety of mainly introduced species. The highlight was a brief sighting of a Little Owl, which was harassing finches. Evidence of much bird life was limited at the other two patches of bush, possibly because it was later in the day. Several Bellbirds were heard and seen at Kowai Bush though.

Bev's mid-week ramble in August was at Lake Ellesmere, while September took us to Travis Wetlands, where the Glossy Ibis was spotted. In October, we went to the Ashley Estuary, where a Grey-tailed Tattler was seen, as well as a Black Stilt, which was observed mating with a Pied Stilt.

Finally, it is with sadness that we note the passing of Ann Sherlock. Despite being ill for many years Ann continued to enjoy tramping, camping and travelling. She was enthusiastic about birds and especially enjoyed photographing them. Ann was the editor of the region's newsletter, *The Wrybill*, for many years and also wrote this regional roundup column until last year. We will all miss her.

– ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Regional projects have been going well. Winter and spring seasonal counts of the Sinclair Wetlands found that the total number of waterfowl was much lower in spring than winter, but it is not known whether birds were hidden and busy nesting or gone elsewhere. The regenerating native bush at the reserve attracts the common forest birds but surprisingly in spring Bellbirds and Silvereyes were not picked up in the five-minute bird counts.

Otago Birds New Zealand volunteers are also involved in the Beyond Orokonui project, doing five-minute bird counts to survey forest birds in the various habitat types in east Otago. These surveys have been taking place every second weekend in the mornings throughout spring. Both this and the Sinclair Wetland project have highlighted the difficulty of getting robust data to follow trends and differences in bird abundance.

Automatic digital recorders have been set out at the Sinclair wetlands since August to get an idea of when the peak Australasian Bittern booming occurs down here. The first few booms were picked up by 9th September, but these were just occasional and not repeated. Trains of three to five booms, repeated consistently every two minutes, began on the 30th October. There are very few Bitterns in this wetland so we are getting an average of 11 calls per hour during evening and pre-dawn, which might represent two or three male birds.

A field trip to the Te Anau region was held over Labour Weekend. We explored a variety of habitats, recorded 49 species and submitted 15 eBird entries. One day was spent in the Eglinton Valley (Yellowheads and Robins) and we staked out the rock fall at the Homer Tunnel until eventually a pair of Rock Wren showed themselves beautifully on a sunny rock; a first for some. Kea were meanwhile active on the rubber seals on our cars! The next day we surveyed the waterfowl at the Rakatu Wetlands. The afternoon was spent at the weir at the junction of the Mararoa and Waiau Rivers watching a 2,400-strong colony of Black-billed Gulls on a shingle bank. Many birds were sitting on nests. Nearby were nesting Black-fronted Terns, Pied Stilts and several pairs of Banded Dotterels and South Island Pied Oystercatchers with well-grown chicks.

We have had our share of interesting sightings: several Pied Shags around the Otago estuaries; a White Heron present from time to time at Tomahawk Lagoon; and Kaka have been spotted on a number of occasions at unlikely places. The first Shining Cuckoo this spring was seen on 30th September.

The Australasian Crested Grebes at the Wanaka Marina are continuing to use the platforms devised by John Darby for nesting, and have fledged 16 chicks so far. However, the nesting birds are now



▲ At the weir overlooking the Black-billed Gull colony at the confluence of the Mararoa and Waiau Rivers.



▲ The Black-billed Colony at the confluence of the Mararoa and Waiau Rivers.

getting a battering from huge winds.

The Otago Region has agreed to provide a grant-in-aid for an Otago student to present a research paper at next year's annual conference.

– MARY THOMPSON

SOUTHLAND

Glenda Rees reported an Australasian Bittern on a deer farm at Gore on August 15th. Glenda managed to get a few shots of the bird as it wandered around in a bare paddock: not the usual habitat for these birds.

Lloyd Esler reported five Cattle Egrets near Gorge Road on August 21st and 21 were seen by Paul Jacques at Papatotara Road, Tuatapere. There were three Wrybills at the head of Awarua Bay on August 30th reported by Glenda Rees; one of these was banded.

Furhana Ahmad saw a pair of Royal Spoonbills on an island in Paterson Inlet, Stewart Island on August 31st. I imagine there will be a colony about to be established on the island, if they haven't already. Also on this date a White Heron was back in Pleasure Bay Lagoon and a day later another was reported from a chicken run in Lumsden.

There was much excitement in Otatara on September 2nd when a Kaka dropped in for a visit. Locals managed a few snapshots and it was reported in the Southland Times. Lloyd Esler was also advised there were two in the Tuatapere Domain on September 16th.

A Large Sand Dotterel was seen and photographed by Glenda Rees at Awarua Bay on September 12th and I saw two in the same location on September 26th.

During a Southland Field Club outing a Falcon was spotted in Slopdown Forest on September 13th and another was photographed on power lines at Curio Bay by Lloyd Esler on September 19th.

Lloyd and other Field Club members saw a pair of Black-fronted Dotterels at Yellow Bluff on the Aparima River on September 26th and we heard that a Marsh Sandpiper was back at Pleasure Bay Lagoon on September 28th.

The resident Eastern Curlew was at Haldane Estuary as usual, but this time around by the cribs opposite the sand dunes. Finally, Neil Robertson saw three Westland Petrels inside Doubtful Sound on October 7th, as well as a Grey-backed Storm Petrel which decided to roost in a boat tender also in Doubtful Sound on October 12th.

– PHIL RHODES



Birds New Zealand

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