



Southern *Bird*

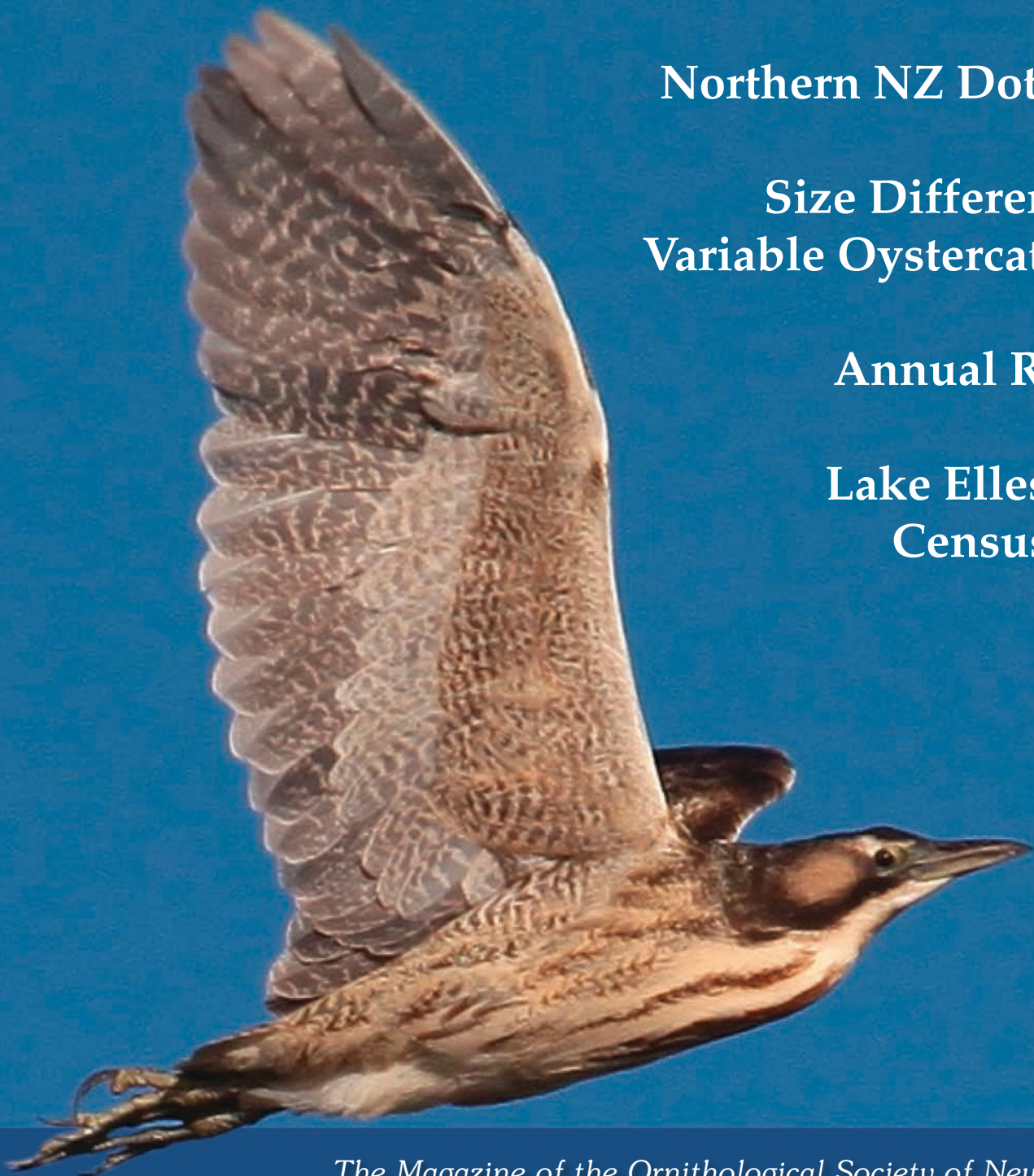
No. 42 June 2010 • ISSN 1175-1916

Northern NZ Dotterels

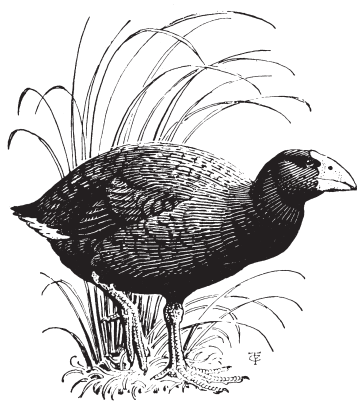
**Size Difference in
Variable Oystercatchers**

Annual Report

**Lake Ellesmere
Census 2006**



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



Southern Bird

No. 42 June 2010 • ISSN 1175-1916

QUOTATION

*I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley...*

The Brook by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

CONTENTS

Annual Report	3
Meritorious Service Awards	4
New Council Members	6
Northern New Zealand Dotterels	8
Size Difference in Variable Oystercatcher Siblings	9
Bird News	10

COVER PHOTOS

Cover Photos

Front cover: Australasian Bittern in flight.
Back cover: Soft-plumaged Petrel.
Both photos by Peter Langlands.

We welcome advertising enquiries. Free classified ads are available to members at the editor's discretion. Articles for inclusion in *Southern Bird* 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.

JOINING THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

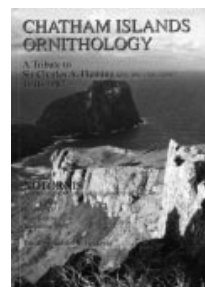
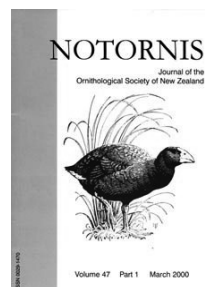
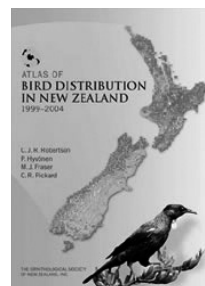
If you are reading this but are not a member of the Ornithological Society you would be very welcome to join us. Our membership consists of the whole spectrum of people interested in New Zealand/South Pacific birds from beginners with just an interest through keen birdwatchers and amateur ornithologists to professional ornithologists, so you should find others of a similar level to you, or find resources that are of interest to you.

For our very reasonable subscription fee of \$57.50 (students pay just \$30.00 and overseas/corporate rates etc are also available) you will receive a quarterly issue of this magazine *Southern Bird*, which is the Society's main mouthpiece to members, has articles of bird/ornithological interest and both national and local news; a quarterly issue of *Notornis*, the Society's scientific journal; an annual issue of *The State of New Zealand's Birds*, reporting on the status of a group of species or those species using a particular habitat type; and from time to time either free or discounted major Society publications – for example a copy of the latest *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* is currently provided free to new members while stocks last. This atlas gives a thorough overview of the distribution of every bird on mainland New Zealand and some offshore islands in its 533 pages.

In addition to reading material and, with time, a useful collection of reference books, members have access to meetings, both indoor and in the field, on a national and regional basis providing opportunities to gain knowledge on birds/ornithology and learning practical skills whilst networking with knowledgeable people. Our extensive library of books and journals is open for members to borrow and view items. Members are also encouraged to provide data to the Society's schemes, and supply sightings to the annual New Zealand Bird Report and the eBird online reporting tool. These data provide information on which research may be conducted, often with conclusions relevant to decision-making processes on the conservation of birds.

For further details and/or a membership form you should take one of three actions:

- Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz.
- Contact the Society's membership secretary, Yvonne Mackenzie, by writing to P.O. Box 29-532 Fendalton, Christchurch 8540, or phone 03 351 3660 or email yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com.
- Contact your nearest regional representative, contact details for which can be found on the back page of this magazine.



CORRECTION AND APOLOGY

The photograph of the Black Shag taking wing on the back cover of *Southern Bird* 41 was wrongly attributed to Peter Grant. The photographer was Peter Fryer, and the editor wishes to apologise to Peter for this mistake and to readers for any confusion caused.

Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.
Email: osnzeo@slingshot.co.nz Website: www.osnz.org.nz
Edited by Nick Allen, 11 Seagrave Place, Ilam, Christchurch 8041. Phone (03) 358 5994, fax (03) 358 5997, Email nick_allen@xtra.co.nz
ISSN 1175-1916 (Print) ISSN 1176-2802 (Online)

ANNUAL REPORT ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2009

This report was presented on behalf of the Council to the 71st Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand held in Nelson on 5th June 2010.

DECEASED MEMBERS

On the 12th May I was advised that Dr John Warham had died at the age of 90. Dr Warham was a member of the Society and his loss will be greatly felt as he has been a mentor to many of the current members over the years. Dr Warham was presented in 1992 with the DL Serventy Medal (RAOU) for outstanding contributions to Australasian Ornithology. In 1999 he was elected as a fellow of the Society and in 2001 was appointed as a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Ornithology; a truly distinguished member of our Society.

I have been advised that the following members also died during the year;

Mia Colberts (Canterbury), W. van Gorkom (Taranaki), J. B. Hood (Australia/Pacific), Jack Lawton (Bay of Plenty), G. Peterson (Auckland), Barbara Spurr (Canterbury), and Barry Stevens (Northland).

COUNCIL

Council met formally twice in the year under review, with the first meeting being in Orewa on the 29th May 2009 and secondly at Dovedale near Nelson on the 18th October 2009. A further meeting was held on the 4th June 2010 and I will give a verbal update of that meeting during the course of the AGM.

Contact is made on a weekly basis utilising email and this gives the opportunity to deal with minor issues as they arise. Much of the member contact with the Society is also through emails, as well as councillors meeting members in their regions.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Richard Holdaway's term as Immediate Past President expires at the Annual General Meeting and he will no longer be a member of Council. Richard was elected to Council in 2004 and then as President in 2006. His time on Council has been very intense as he also held the editor's role for much of that time. During Richard's term there were several major initiatives and it is a pity that health concerns limited his time. I am sure that he will still provide input into Society matters in the coming years.

Phil Battley will retire from the Council at the AGM as he did not allow his name to be put for a further term. Phil was co-opted to Council in 2007 and was elected at the 2008 Annual General Meeting. Phil's input into the Council was limited because of the production of a baby Battley and also getting a real job at Massey University. However Phil has made useful contributions through email discussions.

A third member of Council also chose not to be nominated for a further term and that is Paul Scofield. Paul was elected to Council in 2004 and was appointed as Chair of the Scientific Committee in 2006. He has also been Chairman of the Rare Birds Committee and a member of the Checklist Committee for many

years. Paul led the research and investigation which resulted in the Society adopting eBird as its electronic database and bird recording scheme. As can be seen from this brief resume he has been heavily involved in major Society activities. However he wishes to take a break from Council as he has also recently become a father and wishes to enjoy family life.

Nominations for replacements were called at the appropriate time but only three were received. These were for Colin Miskelly, Murray Williams and Peter Frost, and they now become Council members at the end of the AGM.

Murray worked with the Wildlife Service in the Department of Internal Affairs, as a waterfowl research biologist. He joined the Department of Conservation at the changeover but in recent years has been lecturing at Victoria University in Wellington.

Colin also comes from a Department of Conservation background but based in Wellington, and seemed to manage trips to most of the offshore islands around New Zealand during his employment. He has recently commenced work at Te Papa, Wellington as the Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrates.

Peter Frost was co-opted onto Council last year but is now an elected member.

Fuller CVs of the new Councillors will appear in *Southern Bird* in due course.

The nomination of these three Councillors means that your Council is now up to full strength and able to engage with issues of leadership and governance for the Society.

NOTORNIS

Due to the hard work of the editor, Jim Briskie, the publication of *Notornis* is now virtually on schedule. The final catch up edition will be posted in June along with the normal June copy.

While the catch up schedule has not been as quick as that promised at last year's Annual General Meeting it has not been for the want of trying by Jim who has continued the sterling work of producing issues at twice the normal rate. Recent issues have been delayed mainly through authors being tardy in undertaking proofing and correction work. This is clearly something that is frustrating for the editor, especially when he is working on reducing the backlog. The reality is that the production of *Notornis* is really a three-month task, with peer reviewing and proofing taking a lot of time for a part-time editor. It's easy to fall behind but very difficult to make up any lost time to get back on track.

Jim has also advised that there is now a shortage of copy and I would urge members to consider writing papers for publication. The Society can provide mentors if new authors are unsure of how to prepare the articles. I am aware that there are many members undertaking really interesting work which would be largely wasted unless there is some record produced.

SOUTHERN BIRD

The one constant on the publishing front has been the regular appearance of *Southern Bird* and that is due to the dedication of Nick Allen. Council would like to thank Nick for his work in preparing such an excellent publication. However, Nick can only publish what is provided and members should also consider providing copy to him for future issues.

STATE OF NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS REPORTS

The 2008 issue relating to the conservation of birds on the mainland was launched at the Annual General Meeting in 2009. That issue was subsequently sent to all members of Parliament and the Chairmen and Chief Executives of all Regional Councils throughout New Zealand.

This posting generated many favourable comments and helped raise the profile of the Society in the eyes of the political community.

The 2009 edition relating to waders has now been printed and will be distributed with the June post-out. It is intended that this will also be provided to the politicians, particularly as it appears that most wader populations are declining and that action needs to be taken on a global scale and the Government needs to be a key participant in this process.

This document has been arranged by Kerry-Jayne Wilson who has solicited papers from the key people on the topic. This is a major undertaking and we thank Kerry-Jayne for her efforts. The final document was edited by Jim Briskie and that added a further task to the editor's role. Council is investigating ways that the workload involved in preparing this document can be shared to ease the load on the key people.

NEW ZEALAND BIRD REPORT

Progress on the production of the *New Zealand Bird Report* is slower than expected because of the difficulties of obtaining the data in a form that is useful for publication. Derek Onley, who has worked as a volunteer editor, has been concerned about the quality and quantity of data that was available to him for the 2007 edition. However, he has continued working with the information that he has and it is hoped that this version will be available in the near future, at which time the gaps in the information will be obvious and we hope that members in the future can help provide the data to make this a worthwhile Society publication.

CHECKLIST

The checklist has now been completed and published. It will be launched at the 2010 AGM and I am sure that this will be a useful reference for many years to come.

Council wishes to thank Brian Gill and the checklist committee for the work that they have put into this project over a 10 year period. The project has been much bigger than originally envisaged but they have worked slowly and methodically through the data available to achieve the best possible outcome.

Council sincerely thanks the committee for their sustained efforts undertaking this marathon task.

E-BIRD

The opportunity exists through eBird for members to contribute data to a scheme that in the long term will provide meaningful outcomes and enable bird population trends to be established. While there have been many comments about difficulties of entering data, both Paul Scofield and Bruce McKinlay are available to provide advice in helping members with data entry.

Council is investigating ways that this system can be used for the recording of seabirds rather than establishing a separate database.

BEACH PATROL

Lloyd Esler has continued as convenor of this project. This is the most used of the Society's schemes and is a regular programme on many regions' calendars.

Ian Armitage undertakes the analysis of the records and these are now being published in *Notornis* as they are finalised.

The preliminary report for the year ending 2009 shows that Lloyd received 301 cards, covering 4,127 km returning 4,017 birds. This is a decrease in the number of cards returned although the kilometres covered are well up.

Lloyd reports that many people are now using the online beach patrol form on the website and this simplifies handling and record keeping.

NEST RECORDING SCHEME

Roger Sharp is the convenor of this scheme and he reported that there were only 24 nest record cards provided during this year. This is a disappointing result, particularly as it was hoped that members would make an effort to record nesting attempts.

Even for relatively common birds, very little is known about the location of nests and time of incubation. This is all information that even inexperienced members can gather and by pooling the information obtain valuable data.

LIBRARY REPORT

The Society's collection of books is integrated into the library at the Auckland Museum. Kathy Barrow is our librarian and can answer any queries and distributes the books on request. The library catalogue is available through our website <http://osnz.org.nz/publ.htm#borrow>

Kathy is trying to gather a collection of field guides to overseas countries that members can borrow if they are visiting, reducing the need for purchasing additional guides. If any members have surplus field guides Kathy would love to hear from you.

RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE

The work of the Rare Birds Committee has had a hiatus in 2009, mainly due to commitments of key personnel finishing the checklist and the web atlas. Council has resolved to revitalise the RBC and to this end has drawn up terms of reference for a new committee and attempted to recruit a new correspondence secretary. The Council intends to appoint a new committee in 2010 and it is hoped that much of the work of the new committee can be done electronically. It is hoped however that the backlog from 2009 will be cleared before the new committee takes over its duties.

WADER DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

The final report detailing the wader counts over the five year period from 2003 to 2009 was provided to the Department of Conservation earlier in the year. This final report is currently being prepared ready for publication and that is likely to occur before the end of this year.

Council is investigating options for continuing wader counts into the future as the populations of the main species appear to be declining. It is only by undertaking regular counts that trends can be identified to enable conservation measures to be put in place at an early time.

The key wader people will be meeting in the near future to map out a way forward for this project that involves many members throughout the country.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Peter Frost agreed following the Annual General Meeting last year to act as convenor of this committee. During the year he gathered Carol Davies, Eila Lawton and Mike Bell as members of a small committee to investigate options for developing programmes to involve members.

This has proved to be a difficult task as the regions have not provided the support that Peter and the committee were expecting. The aim of the committee is not to undertake the detailed planning of events around the country but merely to assist regions to facilitate activities that can stimulate members and provide an avenue for new people to join the Society.

Peter and his committee have laid the ground work but it now requires further support from regions and the membership.

MEMBERSHIP

Based on the membership figures in May there are 1,230 members which is a slight

RECIPIENTS OF MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS


The following were awarded Meritorious Service Awards at the OSNZ conference and AGM in Nelson in June this year:

Brian Bell, Geoff Chambers, David Medway, Ricardo Palma, Paul Scofield, Alan Tennyson and Trevor Worthy

The preparation of the fourth edition of the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand, Norfolk and Macquarie Islands, and The Ross Dependency, Antarctica* has been a work in progress over a number of years. Committee members have, in addition to their professional workloads, found time to collate a dynamic and challenging taxonomic environment for the birds of New Zealand and have produced an up-to-date statement of the relationships and history of the names of New Zealand birds.

Kathleen Harrison

Kathleen joined OSNZ in 1973, and in 1974 with the late Phil Howell saw the first Cattle Egret in Canterbury. Kathleen and Phil started running courses and fieldtrips on birds at the Workers Education Association in Christchurch and continued with these for a number of years, fostering an awareness and interest in many people which resulted in new members for the Ornithological Society. She has always been a very active member, rarely missing a fieldtrip or evening meeting. Kathleen and Phil rediscovered the area of Greenpark Sands at Lake Ellesmere which migratory waders frequent. This led indirectly to several first sightings for New Zealand. In past years she often took overseas birders out to see the birds and was keen to encourage prospective new members in many ways. Some of these people went on to be long-term active members of OSNZ and even took up careers in ornithology and ecology.



25TH
IOC
BRAZIL
2010

Campos do Jordão 2010

The 25th International Ornithological Congress (25th IOC) will take place in Campos do Jordão, Brazil from the 22nd to 28th of August 2010. This is the first time that the IOC is being held in a Latin American country. More than 1,500 participants are expected to come from all over the world and the congress will present an ideal opportunity to meet fellow ornithologists and visit a mega-diverse country. The deadline for submitting proposals for Plenary speakers and Symposia was June 1st. More details can be found at www.i-o-c.org. The Local Committee looks forward to seeing many of our New Zealand colleagues in Campos do Jordão!



increase on the same time in 2009. This is a reasonable result given the current uncertain financial times.

However, included in this figure are 202 members who had not yet paid their 2010 subscriptions. It is likely that a reasonable proportion of these will pay before the end of the year based on previous experience.

I would like to thank Yvonne Mackenzie for her work in maintaining the database and dealing with subscriptions.

All members should be actively looking for opportunities to promote the activities of bird study and enjoyment and the Society in particular. Birdwatching is an activity that is more easily developed by having experienced people taking newcomers under their wing to provide guidance and assistance, and this requires a commitment of time.

APPRECIATION

Council wishes to thank the Regional Representatives, who organise our regional activities and are often the first point of contact for new members. It would not be possible to run our organisation without the Regional Representatives.

I know that they would welcome any support and assistance, so if members are able to assist with organising field trips or guest speakers at regional meetings I am sure this would be gratefully received.

The Society's Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler, has been of real benefit to Regional Representatives, Council and members. Ingrid has also ensured that deadlines of convener's reports and other activities are not forgotten.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank members of the committees who spend long hours on Society business often with very little thanks. However the work does not go unnoticed by Council and we are appreciative of those efforts.

FINANCIAL

The financial statements are provided separately and will be more fully explained by the Treasurer. I would however wish to particularly thank Paul Garner-Richards for firstly taking over the role from Mark Nee and secondly for completing two years' accounts in his first year.

Mark was determined to finalise the 2008 accounts but finally had to acknowledge that his health would not enable him to complete that job. The paperwork was passed over to Paul in February and since then he has completed not only the 2008 financial statements but also those for 2009.

It will be seen from the financial statement that the Society's financial resources are declining. This was flagged by Mark Nee at the Annual General Meeting last year and is one of the reasons that the Council is introducing a resolution to increase subscriptions. This is not an action that we have taken lightly, particularly in these times of financial uncertainty but it is of necessity.

Even with the increased subscription, which will not apply until the 2011 year, there will be challenges managing our financial resources over the coming years.

CHALLENGES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past 12 month period there have been several achievements that are worthy of reinforcement to the meeting.

Firstly there is the publication of the checklist which has been a mammoth effort by our dedicated committee.

The Society has also made a contribution to ornithological knowledge by providing *The State of New Zealand's Birds reports* to central and local Government officials, which has helped to raise the profile of the Society and the plight of birds in particular. This will be repeated again with the latest edition due to be released soon.

The employment of the Executive Officer has improved administration and supply of services, particularly to regions and members as a whole.

However, there are still a number of challenges ahead and these will occupy the time of the Council over the coming year:

The Projects and Activities Committee needs support as this will be a valuable vehicle for stimulating members and providing an entry point for new members.

The Society is also considering the amount of effort that needs to be put into continuing wader counts as this is an activity that takes much organising. It is essential, however, that the numbers of waders are regularly monitored as it appears that the populations are declining and it is essential that factual information is provided to decision makers.

A further challenge is to develop a system for the preparation and publishing of members' sightings through the *New Zealand Bird Report*. The reporting of sightings needs to be better developed so that sightings can be published in a timely manner. Members need to commit to keeping good notes of field observations and storing them appropriately either through direct submission to their Regional Recorder or submitting them to eBird. Leaving good notes in a note book does not advance our collective knowledge of the birds of New Zealand.

So while there are challenges ahead I believe that the Society is in good heart with a solid core of membership even if we are all ageing, and it is necessary to ensure that there are young people entering the Society to continue the work into the future.

I would take this opportunity to thank the members of Council who have provided support to me during the year, and who have shared the workload.

DAVID LAWRIE
President

ROBERT FALLA MEMORIAL AWARD PRESENTED TO - BRIAN JAMES GILL

This award is to acknowledge the work of Brian James Gill in the field of ornithology and his contribution to the Ornithological Society of New Zealand over a sustained period. Brian earned a Bachelor of Science with first class honours in Zoology from Massey University (1976), and a PhD in Zoology (1980) from the University of Canterbury. The title of his thesis was 'Breeding of the Grey Warbler with special reference to brood parasitism by the Shining Cuckoo'. He then spent two years as a post-doctoral research fellow, studying the communal breeding of Grey-crowned Babblers through the University of Queensland in Australia.

From 1982 to the present he has been the Curator of Land Vertebrates at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. During this employment he has made himself freely available to Ornithological Society members, either as a guest speaker or answering queries in his quiet but efficient way.

Over the years he has supervised and examined a number of candidates for Masters' theses, including several current members of the Society.

He has been an active member of the Auckland branch of OSNZ and still participates in wader censuses and other field trips. He has also been very active at the senior levels of the Society and kindred organisations:

He has been an author or co-author of a number of books on birds and reptiles and the author of at least 115 research papers on bird ecology, herpetology or palaeontology.

He is also highly respected in the international museum curator circles, where he has been involved in the development of databases for museum collections and undertaken pioneering work with the establishment of feather boards for research and identification purposes.

Brian's leadership within the Checklist Committee has been focused

- 1983-1986 he was elected as a member of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust committee.
- 1983-1990 he was appointed to the OSNZ Checklist Committee producing the 3rd edition of the checklist which was published in 1990.
- 1984 he was invited as a visiting member of the Royal Australasian Ornithological Union Research Committee based in Melbourne.
- 1985-1991 he was elected to and was a member of OSNZ Council.
- 1991-2001 he was the OSNZ representative on the international committee compiling a list of English names of the birds of the world.
- 1992-1995 he was a member of the OSNZ Library Committee.
- 1998-2001 he was a member of the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee.
- 2001-2010 he was appointed to and served as Chair of the OSNZ Checklist Committee to produce a 4th edition of the checklist published in 2010.

and efficient. Members of the committee report that he was a quiet but effective force in helping the committee to digest a large amount of new complex material.

It is with a great deal of pride that, as President of the OSNZ, I can recognise such an influential and long-standing member of the Society with the presentation of the Robert Falla Memorial Award.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS



COLIN MISKELLY

Colin has been an active member of OSNZ since 1976, but had not sought an elected position before joining Council in 2010. After completing a PhD on the breeding ecology of *Coenocorypha* snipe at Canterbury University in 1989, Colin joined the Department of Conservation in 1991, and remained with the Department, mainly in the Wellington Conservancy, until he was appointed Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrates at Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand in 2010.

Colin has had extensive involvement with threatened bird recovery programmes, particularly on the Chatham Islands, which he first visited as a schoolboy in 1978. His ornithological research interests are diverse, as reflected in over 70 papers published in *Notornis* and other scientific journals. Recurring themes include historical ornithology, island biogeography and restoration, *Coenocorypha* snipe ecology, phylogeny and conservation, seabird translocations, and responses of forest bird communities to management changes. He has written or edited three books on the Chatham Islands, including *Birds of the Chatham Islands* (with Hilary Aikman, DoC 2004) and *Chatham Islands: heritage and conservation* (2nd edition, Canterbury University Press 2008). He is the chair of the New Zealand bird conservation status panel, and is a member of the Rare Birds Committee. Within the Wellington Region, Colin co-ordinates bird surveys on Kapiti Island and within Karori Sanctuary, and has a long-term research project (with Graeme Taylor) on restoring petrels to Mana Island.



MURRAY WILLIAMS

Murray is a recent retiree, having completed a 40-year career as a waterfowl and conservation biologist with the New Zealand Wildlife Service and Department of Conservation and another five years teaching restoration ecology at Victoria University. He thinks he first joined OSNZ as a schoolboy in the late 1950s and admits to being an inconsistent member ever since.

The ecology, management, exploitation and conservation of New Zealand's waterfowl and their wetland habitats are research areas of long-standing interest and he plans a slow extraction from his research habit. He was a member of the team that organised the 1990 International Ornithological Congress in Christchurch, is a past editor of *Notornis* and helped deliver the *Notornis* website and digital archive. He has served on several local and national bodies and advisory boards, including the New Zealand Ecological Society of which he was secretary, councillor, editor and president. From those experiences he hopes to contribute to the fostering of the aims of OSNZ.

PERSONNEL

David Crockett has taken over from Katrina Hansen as RR for Northland. Many thanks to Katrina for her hard work during her many years as RR. Although David is RR correspondence should be addressed to the Northland contact person Kevin Hayes at 31 Takahe Street, Whangarei 0112 (phone (09) 437 6470 or email khayes@vodafone.co.nz).

Wellington has a new regional recorder following the handing-over of the position by Stuart Nicholson. Delia Small is now the person collating Wellington sightings. Contact her at 56 Wilberforce Street, Miramar, Wellington 6022 (phone (04) 475 7526 or email delia@paradise.net.nz). Many thanks to Stuart for doing the rr's job as well as his other responsibilities for OSNZ for a number of years.

BLACK (AND YELLOW)-FRONTED TERNS

The Black-fronted Tern is surprisingly little-studied for a threatened endemic species. Among the big unknowns is what the birds do in the non-breeding season, and how non-breeding distributions relate to breeding areas. The Nelson and Marlborough Regions of OSNZ have started marking Black-fronted Terns in a bid to determine the practicality of investigating movements. This is a pilot project to assess trapping and marking methods.

Terns are being marked on the tarsus with a white Darvic leg flag with a 2- or 3-letter code, and a dab of dye on the breast. The dye is initially yellow, but turns more orange within a few days. To date catching has been in mist nets at night while playing tern calls, but we hope to also be able to catch some using a cannon net; we have come very close but...!

We would be very pleased to hear of any marked terns. Please send records of marked birds to:

Mike Bell: skua44@yahoo.co.nz and David Melville: david.melville@xtra.co.nz



Flagged and dyed Black-fronted Tern.
Photo by Julia Melville.

ISRAELI ORNITHOLOGIST TO VISIT WELLINGTON

Dr Yossi Leshem, an expert on the 500 million migrating birds passing through Israel each year, will be visiting New Zealand in July/August. Leshem, an ornithologist and professor of zoology at Tel Aviv University, is founder and director of the International Centre for the Study of Bird Migration at Latrun in Israel and is also well known for his 25 years at the Israel Society for the Preservation of Nature (SPNI).

Already home to 260 species of birds, Israel's bird species numbers double during the migration seasons making the country one of the top spots for bird watching in the world. One of those top spots is the Hulah Lake Park in Israel's north, a fact confirmed by *BBC Wildlife Magazine* which polled 300 experts from around the world to find the top 20 sites for tourists to photograph and observe nature. The Jewish National Fund's (JNF) Hulah Lake Park was ranked ninth.

Leshem, together with the JNF, promote eco-tourism, ecology and even Middle East peace. Leshem wants to encourage people to visit Israel believing that birding builds bridges. Together with JNF, Leshem is piloting a project using birding to connect Jewish youth in America and Israel, pairing schools and providing a curriculum encouraging co-operative study and shared experiences.

Dr Yossi Leshem will be talking on Sunday August 1st at the Myers Hall, 80 Webb Street, Wellington, starting at 7.30pm. Please contact Liz Gianoutsos if you are interested in attending, prior to the presentation, so that numbers attending can be worked out. Email Gianoutsos@xtra.co.nz or phone (04) 232 7465.

HEARTWOOD:

the contribution of totara to New Zealand's natural and cultural history

My previous books (one on cabbage trees, another on pohutukawa and rata) had a similar coverage to what is proposed for totara. This book will explore totara evolution and ecology, as well as Maori and Pakeha uses and values, leading to a conservation strategy. It will be well illustrated in colour. One of the ecology chapters will describe the fruit and their adaptation for bird seed dispersal. But, do I have photos of birds eating the fruit? No! The book needs them: Tui, Bellbird, New Zealand Pigeon, Kea, Kaka, Silvereye and so on, including exotics. Do any readers know of any publishable photos? I will acknowledge them fully and discuss appropriate captions. Please help make this book a good read. Many thanks, Philip Simpson.

PS. If you have any favourite observations on any aspect of totara and its products, please share them with me.

philipsimpson@xtra.co.nz Falconer Rd, Pohara, RD 1, Takaka. Phone (03) 525 6223

FREE ATLAS FOR NEW MEMBERS!!!

The Society is extending the presentation of a free copy of the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004* to each new member joining OSNZ while stocks last. In addition, all new members will receive a copy of the index to *Notornis, Fifty years of bird study in New Zealand 1939-1989*. Pass the word to people who maybe haven't got around to joining the Society yet that now is a very good time to do so. Not only do they obtain membership of the premier society for those with an interest in birds and ornithology in New Zealand and the South Pacific but they will also receive these two essential books on New Zealand ornithology. The atlas is an impressive and weighty book that which will be a delight for anyone with even a small interest in New Zealand's birds.



For details of how to join the OSNZ:

Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz and download a membership form.

Contact the Society's membership secretary, Yvonne Mackenzie at P.O. Box 29-532, Fendalton, Christchurch 8540, New Zealand. Email yvoonmackenzie@hotmail.com

Contact your local regional representative – contact details are on the inside back cover of this issue of *Southern Bird*.

ENTERPRISING AUSTRALASIAN HARRIER

It is well recorded that Stoats will pursue and harass potential food such as rabbits until they become so exhausted and petrified they can no longer put up a fight. I have come upon such victims in such a mesmerised state it has been possible to just pick them up, and have witnessed them even plunge into water in an attempt to escape.

On 30th January 2010 opposite the Ball's Clearing Scenic Reserve, Puketitiri in Hawke's Bay an Australasian Harrier was hovering and circling over a small area of grassed paddock, its talons hanging at the ready. It suddenly swooped in and grabbed an exhausted small Rabbit being pursued by a Stoat, and carried it further up the paddock before commencing to eat it. The Stoat, totally confused by the sudden disappearance of its lunch was so busy sniffing and circling the area that I was able to shoot it; a mature female, suckling young.

The weather was misty/humid with squally showers, as it had been for the previous two weeks. Puketitiri is a farming district some 80 km north-west of Napier, 700 m above sea level, rising to the Kaweka Ranges to the west at 1,900 m. The climate is harsh with snow and frosts during the long winters there.

PAM TURNER

BEACH PATROL SCHEME 2008 PRELIMINARY REPORT

LLOYD ESLER

This report is based on 381 cards received as at 22nd December 2009 (403 were received for 2007 and 379 for 2006). In 2008 2,524 km were covered (compared to 2,307 km in 2007 and 2,223 km in 2006). Dead seabirds found in 2008 totalled 3,906 (3,786 in 2007 and 3,117 in 2006). This shows a few more recoveries and a few more kilometres covered. Part of the increased mileage is due to a weekly drive of 70 km along Poutu Beach north of the Kaipara Harbour mouth as part of wind turbine monitoring. Similar monitoring on the Kawhia coast has raised the mileage there as well.

Three sections had no patrols done: the East Coast of the North Island, Fiordland and Wairarapa.

Canterbury South had the highest rate of recovery at 14 birds per kilometre, obtained by the expedient of visiting a gull colony at Washdyke. Southland was second with 5.55 birds per kilometre, largely the result of a single beach patrol on Mason Bay on 2nd November 2008 when 596 birds of 17 species were recovered by Ian Southey and Gillian Vaughan. Notable in this patrol were 68 Buller's Mollmawks, 121 Mottled Petrels and 81 Broad-billed Prions. The average recovery rate for the whole country is around 1.5 birds per kilometre.

Interesting recoveries included a Kerguelen Petrel, a Wedge-tailed shearwater, a White-tailed Tropicbird, a Red-tailed Tropicbird, a Pycroft's Petrel, a Pitt Island Shag, two Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, a Campbell Island Mollmawk, a 'large bird with a hooked bill' and a 'red-billed duck'. 46 dead Lesser Knots were recovered at Karaka in March, possibly the result of a botulism outbreak or some other form of poisoning. Mason Bay yielded 100 sheared Sooty Shearwater wings in May, the by-product of muttonbirding operations on the Southern Muttonbird Islands. A Black-

fronted Tern found at Kaikoura in January is possibly a first for the beach patrol scheme, as is a flamingo (albeit a plastic one). A significant die-off of Blue Penguins was noted in the northern North Island.

2008 banded birds noted on the Beach Patrol cards:

Racing Pigeon SIS/2007|2297. Found on Waikorea Beach (AW) on 9/11/08. It had gone missing while in a race from Hastings to Christchurch on 1/11/08.

Fluttering Shearwater X-16050. Found on Kawhia Beach (AW) on 23/10/08. It was banded as an adult on Long Island (NC) on 29/11/2005 (2 years, 10 months and 24 days prior to being found dead).

Australasian Gannet M-75564. Found on Taharoa Beach (AW) on 25/9/08. It was banded as a juvenile on White Island (BP) on 6/2/00 (8 years, 7 months and 19 days prior to being found dead).

Blue Penguin P-38051 found Petone (WS) on 30/10/08, banded on Somes Island (WS) on 30/8/07.

Australasian Gannet M-40061 found at Whiritoa (BP) 19/9/08, banded on White Island (BP) on 13/1/90.

Australasian Gannet M-60272 found on Ninety Mile Beach (NW) on 1/6/08, banded on White Island (BP) 18/2/95

The usual assortment of land birds was recorded. These were: Australian Magpie (13); Mallard (13); Black Swan (9); Feral Pigeon (7); Feral Goose (7); Royal Spoonbill (6); Blackbird (4); Paradise Shelduck (4); Pied Stilt (3); Australasian Harrier (3); Canada Goose (3); Pipit (3); New Zealand Pigeon (3); New Zealand Dotterel (2); Song Thrush (2); Pheasant (2); and individuals of Kaka, Yellowhammer, Pukeko, Greenfinch, Spur-winged Plover, Chicken, Banded Dotterel, Turnstone, Tui, New Zealand Kingfisher and Weka.

Section of Coast	No. of Cards	No. of Birds	km covered
Auckland East AE	20	115	50
Auckland West AW	75	988	584
Bay of Plenty BP	27	263	74
Canterbury North CN	17	237	148
Canterbury South CS	2	28	2
East Coast NI EC	-	-	-
Fiordland FD	-	-	-
North Coast SI NC	3	14	17
Northland East NE	25	345	229
Northland West NW	20	470	597
Outlying Islands OI (Chatham)	3	12	11
Otago OT	1	0	1
Southland SD	32	866	156
Taranaki TA	69	318	395
Wairarapa WA	-	-	-
Westland WD	1	1	3
Wellington South WS	23	106	59
Wellington West WW	63	143	198
Totals	381	3,906	2,524

NORTHERN NZ DOTTERELS: EAST COAST GOOD, WEST COAST BAD

For the first time on record three New Zealand Dotterel flocks in the North Island each contain more than 100 birds. The '100+' club is certainly an exclusive one. In February 1992, 110 New Zealand Dotterels were counted on Kokota Spit in the Far North, but that flock appears to have declined since then. In recent years, only two sites have regularly had flocks in three figures.

The flock at Matarangi Spit, on Coromandel's east coast, has increased steadily in numbers. It first contained 100 birds in 2001, and has exceeded that figure annually since 2004. In early April 2010, Susan and Ross Bryant counted 158 there.

At Mangawhai Wildlife Refuge, there are normally 30-35 pairs breeding, and the autumn flock has numbered over 100 for at least 15 years. Numbers continue to grow, and in March 2010, Gwen Pulham and her team counted a record total of 184 birds. This is the highest count of New Zealand Dotterels at any single location that I am aware of, and represents about 10% of the global population.

And now, after a number of years with flocks numbering in the eighties and nineties, Omaha Spit joined the club in March this year when Marie Ward and I counted a flock of 106 birds there.

The importance of Matarangi, Mangawhai, and Omaha to northern New Zealand Dotterels can hardly be overstated; between them, just these three sites hold about a quarter of the world population in autumn. However, all three sites are on the east coast, where pressure from development and recreational use is growing rapidly, and in the long term we must ensure that the habitat dotterels and other shorebirds depend on in these key areas is not lost or degraded.

Northern New Zealand Dotterel post-breeding flocks are formed in late summer by birds gathering from nearby breeding sites, typically from within a radius of about 20 km. The increasing counts at the three '100+' flocks certainly seem to reflect the benefits of management, not only at the three sites themselves, but also in the surrounding areas. On the Coromandel Peninsula, the *NZ Dotterel Watch* programme, sponsored by Newmont Waihi Gold, has been highly successful. Volunteer 'minders' around the peninsula, supported by DoC's Hauraki Area Office and co-ordinator Susan Bryant, managed no fewer than 150 pairs at 46 sites last season.

At Mangawhai, management of the New Zealand Fairy Tern by DoC, the New Zealand Fairy Tern Charitable Trust, and OSNZ volunteers benefits many pairs of dotterels. In addition, flock numbers are boosted by management at nearby Te Arai, undertaken by the Te Arai Beach Preservation Society, supported by DoC Warkworth.

At Omaha, east of Warkworth, the recent formation of the Omaha Shorebird Protection Trust has revitalised and formalised management by local volunteers that has been in place, with the support of DoC and local councils, since 1997. Dotterel numbers in the Omaha flock are also boosted by high productivity at two managed sites nearby; the Auckland Regional Council's Open Sanctuary at Tawharanui Regional Park, and Pakiri River mouth, where DoC Warkworth and the community manage New Zealand Dotterels and Fairy Terns.

It is worth noting that there is significant involvement of volunteers and local communities in all three areas. DoC does not have the resources to manage more than a few key sites, and the Department's dotterel recovery plan recognises the need for community involvement and a multi-agency approach. That system is obviously working well in these three areas.

However, where New Zealand Dotterels are not managed they continue to decline, and on the west coast of the North Island the story is very different. At South Kaipara Head, another DoC Fairy Tern programme has had major benefits for Dotterels locally, but elsewhere on the west coast there is little management compared to the east coast.

On the Waikato coast, the situation is particularly dire. A joint OSNZ/DoC survey in March 2010 located just 22 birds, including a flock of 17 at Aotea North Head. There are probably now only eight or nine pairs remaining south of Port Waikato, and without management in the near future this population appeared doomed.

The good news here is that Michelle Lewis and Chris Annandale from DoC's Waikato Area Office are spearheading a determined effort to get management up and running at Aotea North Head, which in addition to being a post-breeding flock site is the one important breeding site remaining on this stretch of coast. Colour-banding began last season and will allow us to study movement patterns of birds in the area, as well as assisting with monitoring of breeding success and survival. We are hopeful the management programme at Aotea can get under way later this year. Again, community involvement will be a vital ingredient. And, as elsewhere, effective predator control will be the key to success.



Michelle Lewis (DoC Waikato) releases a newly-banded New Zealand Dotterel at Waikorea Stream on the Waikato coast.



Fencing and signs like these at Whakanewha Regional Park, Waiheke Island, raise public awareness and help reduce disturbance.



The Coromandel co-ordinator's vehicle is a highly-effective advocacy tool.

LAKE ELLESMERE WATERBIRD CENSUS

FEBRUARY 2006

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY
ANDREW CROSSLAND

With an area of 20,000 ha, a shoreline length of 58 km and a deepest point of only 7 m, Lake Ellesmere is recognised as one of New Zealand's largest and most productive wetlands. It is particularly well-known for its abundant birdlife (over 165 species recorded) and an enormous waterbird population that at peak times may approach 100,000 birds. Lake Ellesmere also has an impressive list of New Zealand firsts including Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Little Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Red-necked Phalarope, Australian Painted Snipe, Little Stint, Stilt Sandpiper and Long-toed Stint.

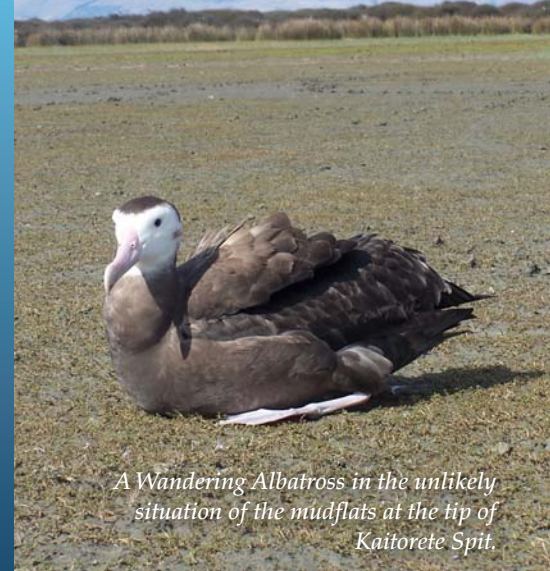
Back in the mid-late 1980s the former New Zealand Wildlife Service teamed up with the Canterbury region of OSNZ to carry out monthly waterbird counts on Lake Ellesmere. These counts revealed the

importance of the lake for waterfowl as well as for swamp birds, cormorants, herons and waders.

In 2006 the district of Banks Peninsula (including almost half of Lake Ellesmere), amalgamated with the city of Christchurch, resulting in a renewal of interest in the birdlife and habitat 'resources' of the lake. After a gap of about 15 years the need arose once again to carry out a systematic bird survey of the lake to get up-to-date information on waterbird abundance and distribution.

The first in, hopefully, a series of counts over the coming years, took place on 25th February 2006. Ten OSNZers together with Christchurch City Council park rangers divided up into five teams and covered the whole lake shoreline and adjacent paddocks.

A total of 38,668 waterbirds of 41 species



A Wandering Albatross in the unlikely situation of the mudflats at the tip of Kaitorete Spit.

Part of Lake Ellesmere's large wildfowl population, Greenpark Sands.



were counted – 24,961 within the Christchurch City portion of the lake (Halswell River Mouth to the 'tip' of Kaitorete Spit) and 13,765 within the Selwyn District portion (Greenpark Huts to Taumutu).

The most abundant species was Grey Teal (10,342 birds), followed by Black Swan (10,006), Canada Goose (3,569), Shoveler (3,405), Pied Stilt (2,937), Banded Dotterel (1,757) and Black-billed Gull (1,592).

Other species of note included five Australasian Crested Grebes, two White Herons, 104 Royal Spoonbills, two Cape Barren Geese, two Black Stilts, 230 Wrybills, 122 Pacific Golden Plovers, four White-winged Black Terns and 54 Black-fronted Terns. The strangest find of the day was a juvenile Wandering Albatross sitting on the mudflats at end of Kaitorete Spit. It was obviously taking a breather from life at sea and was gone once the wind came up the next day!

SIZE DIFFERENCE IN VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER SIBLINGS

INGRID HUTZLER

On 16th January 2010, Willie Cook, Don Cooper, Peter Pay and I were banding Variable Oystercatcher chicks on Rabbit Island (Waimea Estuary, Nelson) as part of a local OSNZ project. One of our catches that day included two siblings that were extremely different in size. The chicks were believed to have been from the same nest, but the hatching date and age of the chicks was unknown. While one chick looked healthy, the other one appeared tiny and scruffy. The difference in weight was nearly 200g (the larger chick, flagged HA, weighed 421 g and the smaller, EY, 235 g, a difference of 186 g)!

Such a variation in size and weight in Variable Oystercatcher siblings at the Waimea Estuary has not been observed by us before, but according to John Dowding size differences within Variable Oystercatcher chicks of the same brood are not uncommon. The variation may be related to food availability and behaviour. Oystercatcher chicks get fed by their parents, unlike most other waders which forage for themselves, so food competition and aggressive behaviour may play a role. For example, chicks that are more aggressive and compete better will grow faster and larger than the others. Also, a chick that hatches a day earlier than another may have an advantage, or one chick may not be as healthy.

In addition to the unusual difference in chick weights, the behaviour of the attendant adults was strange in that during the period the chicks were in captivity both adults remained passive and at a distance of 50-100 m. Aggressive behaviour (calling, flying overhead, broken wing display etc) was only shown after the chicks were released.

EY has been re-sighted since banding, and it appears healthy. On 11th May, Willie and Don spotted both EY and HA among a group of 140 Variable Oystercatchers on a shellbank some distance from their nest site. It is quite remarkable that EY has survived, despite its unpromising start to life!



Variable Oystercatcher chicks with varying sizes, appearances and weights, HA at the front and EY behind. Photo by Ingrid Hutzler.

BIRD NEWS

Rare in the South Island a **New Zealand Dabchick** was on the oxidation ponds adjacent to the Wairau Lagoons (Blenheim) on 24/1. An Oceanwings trip out of Kaikoura turned up the third record (if accepted) of a **Great Shearwater** on 14/2. Only viewable from a boat an **Erect-crested Penguin** was on Taiaroa Head (Otago Peninsula) in mid- to late November. Four **Masked Boobies** were reported sitting on the sea 2 nm north of Kohi Point (Whakatane) on 27/11.

An **Intermediate Egret** was at Milford Sound (Fiordland) on 30/11, with another or the same bird at Lake Moeraki (South Westland) on 22/2. An unidentified heron species (possibly a Striated Heron) was at Lake Kereta (Auckland) on 25/4. The lower pond in the urban parkland of Auckland Domain was the out-of-the-ordinary site of a rare bird report, that being of a **Darter** seen in mid-February. A drive-by **frigatebird** was spied at Pakawau (Golden Bay) on 7/1 by a Farewell Spit tour driver, but unfortunately the view was too brief to assign the bird to species. Another probable frigatebird was at the Whanganui River Mouth in early March scaring the gulls there. A **Glossy Ibis** continued to summer over in the Blenheim area, being reported from the town's sewage oxidation ponds on 7/12. A pair was at the same site on 9/5. The regular wintering individual returned to Travis Wetland (Christchurch) earlier than usual in mid-February. Five **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were at Lake Horowhenua, Levin on 25-26/1. **Chestnut Teal** made an autumn showing with one at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary (Christchurch) from 30/3 to at least 6/5 and one at the Watercare canal in Mangere (Auckland) from 8/5 to at least 16/5. Last year's release of **Brown Teal** into the Arthur River (Fiordland) has met with good survivorship and even the breeding of two pairs. The initial release was augmented with another 40 birds in March. Reports of birds away from known breeding areas came from Lake Kereta and the old sewage pond area at Mangere (both Auckland) and Sullivan Lake in Whakatane (Bay of Plenty).

The long-staying Renwick **Black Kite** was probably present throughout the period, but reports were few, one coming from early December and another late January. Another was reported at Upper Atiamuri (Waikato) on 8/1.

The largest release of juvenile **Takahe** from the Burwood Bush Rearing Unit to the Murchison Mountains took place in November, when 16 birds were released into a predator-trapped area. The total estimated population was 230 birds in November, with about 100 in the Murchison Mountains. Unfortunately around 70 individuals were lost to predation due to a stoat plague in the Murchison Mountains (outside an intensively trapped zone) in 2008. The area protected by traps in the mountain range has since been increased to nearly 60,000 ha.



The Little Stint at Lake Ellesmere.
Photo by Peter Langlands.

An **Oriental Pratincole** was reported from near Mossburn (Southland) by a DoC team doing a survey of the Oreti River on 16/12. A **Semipalmated Plover** was discovered on 5/12 at Kidd's Shellbanks (Manukau Harbour), staying until 21/12. It was then re-discovered at the more accessible Ambury Farm Park area of Mangere (still Manukau Harbour) on 12/1, staying until at least 7/3 before re-locating back to Kidd's, where it was observed on 28/5. Also found at Kidd's Shellbanks was a **Large Sand Dotterel** on 1 to 16/1, with another possibly this species on Big Sand Island (Kaipara Harbour) on 10/3. A possible **Mongolian Dotterel** was seen briefly on Kaitorete Spit (Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury) on 14/2 and a definite one was at the Whangapoua Wader Roost (Great Barrier Island) in late April. The wader hotspot of Kidd's Shellbanks hosted a **Grey Plover** on 1 and 4/1, with one (maybe the same one) in the same harbour at Mangere on 22/1-3/2 and a massive five on Farewell Spit (Golden Bay) in mid-March.

Great Knots were reported from Whitford (Auckland) in mid-December, Kidd's Shellbanks on 1 and 4/1, and Big Sand Island (Kaipara Harbour) on 16/2, with two in that latter area in early March. Greenpark Sands, Lake Ellesmere (Canterbury) was an unusual location for a **Sanderling**, reported on 20/12. A **Little Stint** was found amongst its Red-necked cousins at Greenpark Sands, Lake Ellesmere on 6/3, staying until 18/3 at least. A non-breeding-plumaged **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Miranda (Firth of Thames) on 23/5. It's American relation the long-staying **Hudsonian Godwit** stayed at Miranda throughout late spring and into autumn gaining stunning breeding colours along the way. Another was seen at Mataitai (Auckland) in late December and Kidd's Shellbanks from 1-16/1. Kidd's Shellbanks also had a fish-catching **Wandering Tattler** on 16/1. The long-staying **Siberian Tattler** seemingly stayed throughout the period at

the Ahuriri Estuary (Napier), being seen on several occasions. Washdyke Lagoon (Timaru, South Canterbury) provided a sighting of a **Common Sandpiper** on 4/3. **Marsh Sandpipers** were reported from Lake Grassmere (Marlborough) with two ('probables') on 20/11 and one on 6/2. Big Sand Island hosted a **Terek Sandpiper** on 5/12, seen again in early March.

In the Hauraki Gulf a **South Polar Skua** was spied from the Tiritiri Matangi Ferry on 2/12. A young **Pacific Gull** was reported from Glinks Gully (northern Kaipara Heads, Northland) on 17/1. If accepted this will be the first record for the species in New Zealand. The northern end of Big Sand Island (Kaipara Harbour) briefly hosted a **Whiskered Tern** on 19/12. In the Canterbury high country a **White-winged Black Tern** was associating with a colony of Black-fronted Terns on 9/12 near the confluence of the Harper River and Lillian Creek, almost the same location as one was seen in 2007. Continuing a run of sightings in the south of the South Island an **Arctic Tern** was in the New River Estuary (Invercargill) on 14/11, with one on rocks just off Wakapatu Beach (Southland) on 1/12 and another on the Manawatu Estuary on 25/3 and yet another at Miranda in late May. The Manawatu Estuary had a **Common Tern** present amongst the White-fronted Terns there on 20/2, 4/4 and 1/5, with another in another White-fronted Tern flock at Kawakawa Bay (South Auckland) on 17/4.

Orange-fronted Parakeets have been translocated to a third pest-free island, with 20 birds being released on Tuhua/Mayor Island (Bay of Plenty). Finally a **Fork-tailed Swift** was a little out of place, flying around the Yellow-eyed Penguin colony at Penguin Place and Pipikaretu Bay (Otago Peninsula) on 26/11.

Sources: *Birding-NZ email group, Birding NZ internet chat group, What's Up DoC? electronic newsletter, John Kearvell, @DoC Canterbury Conservancy electronic newsletter.*

NOTORNIS NEEDS YOUR PAPERS AND NOTES

Notornis is your journal and the Editor, Jim Briskie, welcomes papers and notes from both members of the society and non-members. Currently material submitted to *Notornis* is likely to appear within a few months of being submitted. Do you have a study that deserves to appear in the society's peer-reviewed journal, or have you noted interesting bird behaviour? If so, Jim would be happy to hear from you. Contact him at jim.briskie@canterbury.ac.nz or *Notornis* Managing Editor, Jim Briskie, School of Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch.



Regional Roundup



Far North

The rain has finally come to the Far North but it will be a while before lakes and rivers are back to capacity. The majority of the Arctic shorebirds have left our harbours, and we recently struggled to find many terns at our usual sites, although they may be concentrated in a few places.

Mike Bryan, a science teacher and member from Kaitaia, was hoping to run a school trip to Kokota Sandspit but the weather on the date chosen was unsuitable. We hope that this idea will go ahead another time so that the next generation of locals in this remote northern outpost will learn about shorebirds and other natural wonders to be found in the region.

Those few of us who would have joined the trip enjoyed some birding in the windy weather and the weekend (8-9 March) produced well over 400 Royal Spoonbills, about half of these at Awanui Wharf and similar numbers on the shore at Te Hapua where we also found about 10 Turnstones in breeding plumage. There have been a few Cattle Egrets in the area and New Zealand Pipits were in good numbers, especially at Spirits Bay. A large albatross, probably Wandering, flew eastwards off the northern end of Spirits Bay, along with a passage of Buller's Shearwaters.

The North Island Weka, which has been reintroduced to the Russell area, is expanding its range. A sprinkling of sightings and widespread records of calls of this usually very shy species (at least in this region) are encouraging. A Kaka was reported recently from near Kaikohe.

Following two successful pelagic trips to areas off our east coast I am pleased to report that both skippers were sufficiently impressed to welcome us on board again. Readers from outside our region are welcome to contact us any time to check availability, especially if there is a good weather forecast. We may be able to fill a boat.

We have had one indoor meeting, in April, when conservation biologist and Masters student, Jenny Rickett, came to give us a presentation on a bird special to our area, the Brown Teal. Her excellent talk entitled 'Dispersal and survivorship of reintroduced Pateke in response to experimental techniques, supplementary feeding and wing-clipping' was enjoyed by all who attended. Other pressures have prevented further meetings so far this year.

Although technically outside our region, we are interested in the recent breeding success of Kokako at the southern end of Waima Forest as it is in quite easy reach of many of us and the DoC officer in charge is keen to involve us in the monitoring. We hope to fix a weekend in June to assist with this. Likewise a return visit to Warawara Forest is overdue. When keen people, the right vehicles, possible access and good weather coincide then we can check to see how our Riflemen are getting on.

Further conservation news comes firstly from Project Island Song, which would like the Society to assist with bird monitoring on the islands from which predators were eradicated nearly a year ago; and secondly from Puketū Forest Trust, which hopes to turn its attention to Kokako and Rifleman over the next few years.

This roundup is full of hopes, wishes, intentions, plans and re-scheduling. Maybe the next report from up here will be able to describe more events which actually happened. All we can say about this is watch this space!

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

Lisa Forester from the Northland Regional Council was guest speaker at our April meeting. She spoke about wetlands and gave us an overview of the situation in Northland where 15% of the area was once wetland, but now 95% of this has been drained. Most wetlands have no formal protection so we continue to lose unique and irreplaceable areas. Lisa illustrated her talk with slides of marsh, swamp, seepage, fen, bog and gumland areas, also including the flora and fauna of these areas.

OSNZ Northland members have been involved in two recent community events. Posters and charts highlighting the Society and ornithological activities in the Northland Region were well-received at the 'Conservation in Action' day at the Whangarei Museum and also at the Onerahi Community Day.

Six weeks spent at the Taiko Camp on Chatham Island in summer on the maintenance and development programme there provided nine expedition members with a wide range of ornithological observations. Redpolls in large flocks, Skylarks and Parea (Chatham Island Pigeons) were feeding in the paddocks adjacent to the camp. Chatham Island Warblers, Silvereyes, Chaffinches and Red-crowned Parakeets shared the bush fringes. The Chatham Island Tui that were translocated to the Awatōtara Valley during the autumn of 2009 are now visiting the area around Taiko Camp and are dispersing widely.

The first Chatham Island Taiko has returned to the Sweetwater Covenant attracted by taped calls. Hopefully next breeding season more birds will return to the artificial burrows within this predator-proof area. Infrastructure is now in place ready for the translocation of Chatham Island Petrels and Taiko. These have now taken place with 13 Taiko and 39 petrels translocated.

At Rawene on 19th April a White Heron was in the mangroves at the edge of the harbour and 30 Royal Spoonbills were at the sewage ponds.

A Cirl Bunting was seen on the 4th May flying into a guava tree. Two had been seen in December in the same Kamo suburban garden.

Recent east coast beach patrols have yielded a Black Petrel, a juvenile Tui and a Black Swan, as well as the usual shearwaters and Blue Penguins. On the west coast patrols are continuing on a regular basis, with nothing of significance found over the last few months.

During a regular Survey of the Whangarei Harbour on 6th March 2010 Pauline Smith and Kevin Hayes noted a pair of Reef Herons with a chick. This is a rare sighting of a family group at the Albany Road, Marsden Bay, Northland, area. They were sheltering from blustery weather on a rocky man-made bund about 40 m off the beach.

CLAIRE BURTT

Auckland

Speakers at meetings so far this year have had an international flavour with Dick Veitch providing an update on the Red Knots of Delaware Bay, USA, and John Stewart giving an insight of the comings and goings of migratory passerines recorded at the Copeland Bird Observatory in Northern Ireland. Both speakers highlighted the dependence of migratory birds on a range of variables often impacted upon by local human communities. A local perspective was provided by Jennifer Rickett (Massey University) who shared the results of her research into management of captive-reared Brown Teal when released into the wild.

Three regions of OSNZ (Northland, Auckland and South Auckland) are contiguous with the Hauraki Gulf, so coastal and pelagic birds have a high profile in these regions. In April, a one-day symposium was held on 'Auckland seabirds: conservation, restoration and research' hosted by the University of Auckland. The symposium was spurred by concerns that the significance of seabirds in the Hauraki Gulf was largely undervalued and unrecognised outside of ornithological circles. A significant contingent of OSNZ members attended the symposium, along with representatives of government bodies, local authorities, academic institutions and community restoration groups.

The topics covered during the symposium fell under three main headings: the current state of Auckland seabird populations; seabird restoration techniques and initiatives; and seabird research outside the Auckland region. Dr Graeme Taylor (DoC) presented a case for the Hauraki Gulf to be considered as the richest seabird habitat in the world, with 99 recorded species! This number includes 25 breeding species (three breeding only within the Gulf), 22 regular visitors, 24 rare visitors and 26 vagrant species.

A focus of the symposium was whether a seabird plan was required for the management of seabirds within the Hauraki Gulf. While there was mixed reaction to the need for a formal management 'plan', there was general agreement that there was a need for increased research into the diversity, ecology and restoration of seabirds in the Auckland region. It is almost certain that OSNZ members will be involved in future initiatives that advance this need.

MEL GALBRAITH

Waikato

Jon Banks, from the University of Waikato, kicked off the year's monthly meetings in February with an excellent talk on his research into bird phylogeny. Jon has worked on a number of different birds from around New Zealand, Antarctica and other parts of the world too, so it was interesting to hear how the latest genetic techniques are being used to determine how different members of the same family or genus are related (or, as we heard, not connected!).

As usual, the March meeting was our regional AGM. At this we heard reports from all the convenors of the different projects that are run in the Region. These include monthly counts at Forest Lake, Cambridge Lake and Hamilton Lake that are co-ordinated by Brian Challinor, Hugh Clifford, and Barry Friend respectively; the Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan Harbour censuses that are co-ordinated by Laurie Hoverd and Bruce Postill; and the long running Grey-faced Petrel project and beach patrol, which are both run by Hugh Clifford (with help from Paul Cumming for the Grey-faced Petrels). We thank the coordinators, and the other members that helped out on these projects, for their excellent work throughout 2009. In other AGM news, there were no changes to any of the region's officers or committee members. As RR, I would like to thank the committee and officers for filling these sometimes onerous positions; their help is greatly appreciated.

Not surprisingly, we find it difficult to get out-of-town speakers to make the trip to Hamilton for a mid-week talk so we were thrilled to host South Auckland RR, Simon Fordham, at the monthly meeting in April. After a meal at the Cock and Bull pub and restaurant, Simon gave a very interesting talk on the Rifleman translocation projects that he has been involved with in the Auckland Region. The amount of time and effort people are willing to volunteer to make these conservation projects happen is truly amazing and great to see.

Finally, in May Phil Brown came and talked to the group about bird photography. If you are unaware of Phil's work, check out the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust's website, as most of the pictures you will see have been taken by him. However, it became apparent that



the photos on that website are a mere 'drop in the bucket' as he confessed to taking around 30,000 snaps a year! Along with snippets of information regarding the best times and ways to take wildlife photos, we also heard some of the interesting stories behind the pictures and also some of the natural history and behaviours that Phil has picked up from many hours of observing animals.

The Region has continued its policy of having a monthly fieldtrip and in February, around 12 people (a new record?) went out to conduct the census at the Kawhia and Aotea Harbours. On Kawhia Harbour a number of flagged Bar-tailed Godwits were sighted. On Te Motu Island in Kawhia an Eastern Curlew and Asiatic Whimbrel were spotted.

In March, several members took advantage of the extended Indian summer we have had in the Waikato and had a picnic lunch at Maungakawa Reserve, which is just outside Cambridge. Maungakawa reserve boasts one of the closest resident populations of Tui to Hamilton, and is positioned high on a hill that offers grand views of Pirongia, Kakepuku and Maungatautari. New Zealand Falcons have been sighted on occasion at this reserve, but not on the day we were there. A good number of Tui were seen and heard though, along with Grey Warblers, Fantails and a couple of New Zealand Pigeons. Even if we did not see a vast array of birds on this trip, it was very pleasant enjoying a picnic lunch in the sun with other members.

In April, we joined forces with the Waikato Botanical Society to visit Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve, which is close to Gordonton. Pukemokemoke is one of the most diverse botanical sites in the Waikato Region, which was why we thought it may be a good idea to have some of the BotSoc'ers along to point out the different plants. A great time was had by all, and we learnt many different plants; although, the pace that plant people move is considerably slower than a birder! Unfortunately, the number of birds that we saw and heard was not too impressive, which was probably due to the very windy conditions. However, we did see New Zealand Pigeon, Tui, Grey Warblers and Fantails. We also heard Whiteheads, which was the highlight of the day.

As an update on New Zealand Falcon release on Kakepuku Mountain, during the 2009/10 season six juvenile captive bred female Falcons were successfully released using the hack box method. These birds were all reared at Wingspan Trust, Rotorua. They have now dispersed into the greater Waikato area. One female, banded black, remains within the locality. Interestingly a male, released last year, has returned intermittently to socialise with the juvenile females. Numerous sightings are being reported.

DAI MORGAN and LAURIE HOVERD

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

A natural lull whilst members gallivanted about during the Indian summer in the Bay of Plenty was nicely topped off with our first field trip of the year in March to Maketu and Little Waihi. Tony Crocker led about 15 birdwatchers of varying levels of wader competency into the field where we all brushed up on the feathered friends we've occasionally observed during the summer. A highlight was a good number of Bar-tailed Godwits close enough to observe colour bands.

The Department of Conservation's John Heaphy delivered the first publicly-available information on one of the most important restoration projects in the Bay of Plenty region, the Tuhua/Mayor Island Restoration Project, at our first indoor meeting of the year. Project co-ordinator John detailed the history of the involvement of DoC in the long-running project, from the earliest days of the 1980's to the present day as a pest-free island.

The Grey-faced Petrel Project is enjoying its 20th year, and continues to provide interesting recoveries of birds well into their teens if not twenties. A minor worry is that we are seeing possums regularly now. These haven't been seen on Mount Maunganui/Mauao in at least 15 years. Rabbits are also a problem at the moment. Recent attempts to get youth involved in the project have been made, with the Tauranga Youth Forum students and faculties of local colleges and high schools being taken to the nearest colony on Mauao (after an evening of environmental activities and role-playing). In addition two escorted night trips of Kiwi Conservation Club members took place in May. Forest & Bird members are still providing volunteers to manage pest bait station lines away from the colonies. A bird banded in 1995 on the offshore island of Motuotau was killed when it flew into a central Tauranga building recently.

Bird sightings have been slim, but a White Heron at Waikaraka Estuary, Te Puna, in April is a bonus to this small estuary, which was the first in the Bay of Plenty to receive resource consent to remove mangroves. A recent marsh bird survey there also picked up Banded Rails breeding. Other bird sightings have included 170 Little Black Shags near Matua diligently counted by Kate Mulligan last week (early May); a Brown Teal videoed at Sullivan Lake, Whakatane, the same week; and an Arctic Skua

on the Tauranga Harbour by the Sulphur Point container terminal seen in February by Julian Fitter. Julian also observed 80 Royal Spoonbills at Maketu Harbour in April.

PAUL CUMING

Taranaki

Stratford Mountain House and surrounding tracks was the destination for our March expedition. This is the locality visited by OSNZ members when we hosted the AGM. A pleasing variety of species were identified, and due to a good set of ears belonging to my wife Julie, Riflemen were heard and nine were seen. Also around the Mountain House eight Eastern Rosellas and a number of New Zealand Pigeons were seen. An excellent day's outing in the fine warm weather, the area had recently been subjected to a 1080 poison drop in an effort to control introduced pests. There was no guest speaker at March's indoor meeting but members engaged in a wide ranging discussion on a variety of topics, not all concerning birds and birding. During the month five members, mainly botanists who shall remain un-named, set off in search of a white Tui reportedly seen in bush in northern Taranaki. The result was as to be expected. One member had a brief glimpse of a 'silvery grey' Tui with some black feathers, the others probably had their heads in a bush.

Other members reported concern at the lack of Fantails throughout the province, but Margaret Molloy had seen four in bush close to her central city home. David Medway had a pair of juvenile Moreporks around his house and told of a Pukeko raising three young in Brooklands/Pukekura Park. Carol Keight also had Fantail and Pukeko with well grown juveniles around her home. A Spotted Shag, a rare visitor to Taranaki, was seen at the Port, and a Black-browed Mollymawk was seen close by. A covey of 25 Californian Quail have been going over my lawn at Waiongana, and a large flock of White-fronted Tern on the rocks at the nearby beach lead me to the conclusion that there was no stone un-turned. A fine March morning at Waiongana and thousands of Fluttering Shearwaters were just off shore, with three main rafts and others coming and going. Kahawai were feeding and hundreds of White-fronted Terns and dozens of Australasian Gannets were working over them. At least five skuas were seen harassing the terns. It was a sight to gladden the eye, and only hunger forced me off the beach.

Callum Lilley from DoC, the guest speaker at our April meeting, gave us an enthralling account of his trip to the Auckland Islands to survey the Yellow-eyed Penguin population there. These islands 470 km south of Bluff are the remnants of two volcanoes. The trip south was under very trying conditions with 50 knot winds gusting to 75 knots, which lengthened the voyage by two days but once there beach searches were performed where accessible, and also dawn beach counts. Callum also showed pictures and some video clips of the weather and the aggressive New Zealand Sea Lions and pigs. The pigs and cats on the main island have ravaged the flora and avifauna doing immeasurable damage. By contrast the predator-free offshore islands are in pristine condition and the birds there are most confiding. Apart from Yellow-eyed Penguin he also saw Southern Royal Albatross, Auckland Island Shag, Auckland Island Teal, Auckland Island Pipit and Auckland Island Tomtit to name a few. Most of us were rather envious but for the hellish trip down.

Emily King, also from DoC, gave us a brief update regarding the Blue Duck nesting success, as reported from the December meeting. Five juveniles, four of these being male were raised and released back into Egmont National Park. David Medway gave us a report on the Little Shag colony in Pukekura Park. Usually there are two breeding periods but this year he noted three, with three nests producing youngsters after the normal breeding season. Another spot visited during the AGM was also the location for the April field trip, Lake Rotokare. A favourite site on a fine autumn day, five members recorded 21 bird species of which 14 were native, one of the highlights being a Robin landing on the pack of a passer-by when he took it off for a breather.

Members had really been out and about with four attendees having recently been in various parts of Australia with resultant exotic bird lists. Meanwhile those who stayed home were touring the countryside. Ron Lambert counted in excess of 280 Paradise Shelducks in a recently-harvested maize field and saw a flock of 20 Royal Spoonbills on a lake in Opunake, South Taranaki. David Medway counted around 200 House Sparrows on a reseeded patch of lawn in Pukekura Park. Trespassing on David's patch Ian Dudding saw in excess of 20 Tui in *Cornus capitata* in the park. As always Waiongana was the place to be with an Australasian Bittern seen on three occasions, and three Eastern Rosellas; new additions to the increasing species list.

PETER FRYER

Hawke's Bay

February's planned outing to Boundary Stream was disrupted by tsunami warnings that day. Three people went ahead and had a good day enjoying the bush birds.

In March three car loads travelled down to the Manawatu Estuary to see the waders in their breeding finery before their departure. We were also keen to check the terns in view of the number of unusual ones that turn up there. Sav Saville was on hand, and was able to tell us that he had seen a Common Tern there that morning. Unfortunately we were unable



to locate it, but were well pleased with great views of Wrybills, Bar-tailed Godwits, Lesser Knots, and especially the Pacific Golden Plovers in full breeding plumage.

In March two of our members, Ian and Norma Smith, shared their telescope and expertise with a group from Hastings Forest & Bird who were visiting the Ahuriri Estuary.

In April the autumn survey at Blowhard Bush was completed in good weather, and on 25th April our outing was a walk at the Ahuriri Estuary along the whole outflow channel. This was a rare opportunity for those who don't often get to visit the upper reaches and also a good chance for newer members to work on shag identification with Little, Little Black, and Black Shags all being seen, as well as various duck species. Around 95 Royal Spoonbills were seen on this trip. A few weeks earlier there had been at least 100 there, the highest number ever recorded in Hawke's Bay.

At the end of February a Little Egret was seen at the Tukituki River Mouth, and a White Heron has been seen several times around the Waitangi area. The Grey-tailed Tattler was still around the Ahuriri Estuary towards the end of March.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Wanganui

Autumn is accompanied by subtle shifts in the avifauna. Most of the northern migrants depart, and are replaced by increasing numbers of those species coming from the south. All but three of this summer's Bar-tailed Godwits departed over a three-day period at the end of March. This included the three white-flagged birds (AJB, AJC and AJD), which had spent all of summer here, just as they did last year. The Shining Cuckoos slipped away less obviously, the last birds being heard sporadically in late summer. Offshore, we had a couple of records of Arctic Skuas moving west in mid-April along with an apparent movement of Black-backed and Red-billed Gulls.

Most of the increases in southern migrants were transient, as many birds continued on rapidly to other areas. On 4th April, Ormond Torr recorded 43 Royal Spoonbills at the Whangaehu River estuary, two of which were colour-banded, one from Otago and one from Blenheim. When he checked the estuary the next day, he saw only 14 birds, suggesting that the others had moved on. On 8th April, Lynne Douglas found 36 birds loafing on a mud bank near the mouth of the Whanganui River, away from the area where the local Spoonbills normally roost and feed. An hour before sunset, Lynne saw the flock take off, circle to gain height, then set off WNW along the coast, in the direction of Mt Taranaki. This is the same heading that migrating Pied Oystercatchers appeared to take earlier in the year. Mt Taranaki is probably an ideal beacon to head towards before turning north along the western coastline.

Other notable occurrences in early April included a White Heron discovered and photographed by John Carson at Mowhanau Beach, and a large flock of 188 Pied Stilts counted by Ormond Torr on the Whanganui Estuary. This is almost four times more than the daily average number of Pied Stilts on the estuary at this time of year. The White Heron stayed around for a few days, allowing others to photograph it, before it too moved on. Earlier, in mid March, we received a report of a probable frigatebird on the Whanganui estuary: 'a large black bird with red under its beak and breast, long sharp bill...preferring to hover over the gulls...scaring the hell out of the Black-backed Gulls...' The bird was seen on two successive days but the report was only made a couple of days later on 12th March. Despite searches by a number of us, it was not seen again – one of life's little mysteries.

Waders and waterbirds are not the only species moving around at this time of year. As in previous years, there was an increase in sightings of New Zealand Falcon around Wanganui. Most of these seem to be young birds, probably dispersing after being ejected from their natal territories. Dawne Morton reported a Kaka in Turakina, the first one that she has seen in 15 years there. We've had sporadic reports of this species from the coastal plain in previous years, although it is resident in the forested areas inland in the region.

Peter Frost and Paul Gibson continue to monitor the Nankeen Night Heron roost at Kemp's Pole on the Whanganui River. Counts of birds leaving the roost after sunset suggest that there are up to 13 birds, but most of them leave when light conditions are so low that it is difficult to determine numbers accurately. All the birds that we've seen clearly have been adults, but one might expect any young birds to leave later and follow the adults. Some of the first birds departing the roost sit around nearby, before joining the mass of birds that leave later and fly straight off to the river. Is this an example of social transfer of information, with birds that may not have been so successful when foraging the previous night waiting around to follow those who might be returning directly to more productive feeding areas?

Two field trips were held, both to forest remnants. On the first of these we joined members of the Wanganui Museum Botanical Group (MBG) to explore a patch of covenanted forest near Fordell. A precipitous slope and wet, slippery conditions underfoot made conditions difficult for surveying birds, but we still managed to find a small isolated population of Tomtit, along with more common native forest species: New Zealand Pigeon, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Bellbird and Tui. What was even more exciting was a report by the landowner, who is an experienced and knowledgeable member of the MBG, of Brown Kiwi being heard calling in the valley

below the forest in previous months. The nearest known population of Brown Kiwi is about 25 km away, and that itself is relatively isolated. The second field trip was to Bushy Park, one of a growing number of 'mainland islands' nationally. Here, protected by a predator-proof fence and diligent predator control, North Island Robin and Saddleback are thriving, along with other native species. All of us got good views of these species.

Following the summer break, our programme of monthly talks continued. Topics included 'Wildlife of the Chatham Islands' (February: Paul Gibson, Colin and Robyn Ogle, and Peter Frost), 'Birding in Indonesia' (March: Peter Frost) and 'Social behaviour of Australian Magpies' (April: Lynne Douglas). Lynne has been observing and photographing Australian Magpies around Wanganui for the past 12 years, and in her well-illustrated talk she described her experiences with both wild and captive birds, including some aspects of co-operative breeding in which young birds from a previous brood help feed recently fledged chicks from the current one.

PETER FROST

Wellington

On the afternoon of the first Sunday of every month, OSNZ members carry out a survey of the seabirds on the 64 km coastline of Wellington Harbour. This is the fourth survey of the harbour with the first conducted from 1975 to 1977. The early counts were influenced by the discharge of raw sewage and freezing work effluent into the harbour. For example, in the 1970s giant petrels were commonly-recorded visitors, but are now absent from the harbour following the removal of untreated sewage and other wastes. Hugh Robertson summarised the findings of the harbour surveys at our March meeting. At the same meeting Ian Armitage reported on his recent trip to the Galapagos Islands, illustrating his talk with pictures of their famous avian fauna.

At our April meeting Isle Corkery, a PhD student at Victoria University, described her studies on the fascinating relationship between nesting Fairy Prions and Stephens Island Tuatara on Stephens Island. She showed that the relationship is far from equal, and is much in favour of the tuatara. Higher burrow temperatures influence sex ratios of tuatara and their breeding success, and Fairy Prion chicks provide a source of easily caught food. Isle showed pictures of adult tuatara gulping down young prion chicks.

Amelia Geary gave a presentation entitled, 'Long term viability of muttonbirds in the Marlborough Sounds' at our May meeting. Her masters study was in response to local Maori wanting to know whether birds could be sustainably harvested. The number of birds on Motungarara Island was too small for any sustainable harvest. In contrast, the Titi Islands contain larger numbers of birds (650 pairs), but this is a relatively small number compared with those around Stewart Island. Computer modelling identified the possible effects of different rates of harvesting on the Titi Islands. More data is required to provide more certainty on the effects of low-level harvesting.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

Messrs Rob Schuckard, David Melville and Peter Field were invited to speak to pupils at the Clifton Terrace School about the life of Bar-tailed Godwits in March. The school is situated alongside the Nelson Haven near the city and the godwits have been adopted for their schools vision poster entitled 'Expanding Horizons'. Following the talk pupils were taken out to the Haven where godwits were in the latter stages of preparation for their northward migration. Armed with telescopes and binoculars the children were able to get close-up views of the birds, some displaying breeding plumage. The children posted a very good account with photos on the school's blog site. In response Rob was able to post details to them on a Google map showing where some of the Waimea-banded birds had touched down in the Yellow Sea region.

The Black Swan population has been showing a marked increase this year in the Nelson Haven/Waimea Estuary to the extent that they are becoming a problem for the Nelson City Council wetlands and sewage scheme, and more importantly to the airport authority, as their flight path is in conflict with aircraft.

In April a team comprising of members from Marlborough and Nelson regions went to Lake Grassmere and was successful in mist-netting adult and juvenile Black-fronted Terns for the purpose of applying alpha-numeric flags. This may be the first time this species has been banded in this way.

Recent sightings from Motueka Sandspit include a White-winged Black Tern in non-breeding plumage, along with 61 Turnstones, 156 Banded Dotterels and 3 hybrid stilts. Pied Stilts have been seen in large numbers this year. A recent count of those roosting on the Bells Island shellbank recorded 217. A lone Cattle Egret was seen among White-faced Herons in the Pearl Creek area. This is the first time in over twelve months that Cattle Egrets have been seen in the area. A Reef Heron was noted at Kaiteriteri in early May.



Peter Gaze has received a report from a resident in Queen Charlotte Sound who witnessed a pair of Variable Oystercatchers attacking an Australasian Harrier in flight. Apparently the Harrier had been responsible for taking their two chicks. The aggressive aerial attack left the Harrier badly injured and it consequently died.

The Department of Conservation along with the Friends of Flora recently released some Great Spotted Kiwi near the Flora Track in Kahurangi National Park. The massive trapping operation there, which has been ongoing for several years with volunteers from Friends of the Flora, has made this possible. It is many years since Great Spotted Kiwi were seen or heard in the area. My last encounter was in November 1980 on the Mt Arthur Track when, with the aid of a recording, we attracted a large female at midnight to check us out.

At May's meeting Peter Gaze gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Electrocutation of New Zealand Falcons in Marlborough. He also described implications for birdlife elsewhere. Some remarkable photos of Falcons were shown, which Peter assured us were not 'doctored'.

DON COOPER

Otago

OSNZ Otago's regional projects are progressing very well. The first season of the New Zealand Falcon survey of exotic forests near Dunedin successfully located Falcon territories. The technique of broadcasting 'kekking' calls from a 4WD vehicle allowed large areas of forest to be surveyed relatively quickly. Steve Lawrence and Peter Schweigman were the mainstays of this project with six other members involved on occasions. Fortunately the survey was completed before the huge fire in the Wenita Forest at Mt Allan; the young birds would have been old enough to avoid the fire and hopefully access will be granted to continue to monitor nests next year.

About 15 people are involved in the Otago Harbour Survey. We are counting all the birds seen around the harbour at high tide once a month for a year and have completed nine months so far. OSNZ surveyed the harbour in 1977-78 and 1988-89. This new survey will both generate valuable comparative data and be a benchmark, as dredging and cockle harvesting are commencing.

April marked the end of a year long survey of the Ross Creek reserve with four members regularly involved recording birds seen and heard in sections of the reserve selected for different habitats, so that we now have a complete bird list for each month. Active nests of New Zealand Pigeon, Rifleman, Welcome Swallow, Grey Warbler and Silvereye have been seen, and also the young of Mallard, Tui and Bellbird. Thanks to Alan Baker for compiling the data. The information will be used by a community group who are encouraging the Council to include the birds and flora of this area in their management plan.

The Hawksbury Lagoon survey is in its third year and the data produced will be able to be compared with that from 20 and 40 years ago. This is a good place to see Grey Teal, Paradise Shelduck, Black Swan and the occasional Grey Duck. A local community group is enhancing the habitat for nesting birds.

The Summer Wader counts in November and February were plagued by atrocious weather, but despite this we probably got a good count of our Bar-tailed Godwits - 1,789. This small number compared to northern estuaries has its advantages as every bird can be checked for flags; Peter Schweigman and Derek Onley have had sixteen resightings of flagged birds that were banded at Otago and Awarua Bay, and eight orange-flagged birds from Victoria. One of 'our' birds banded at Warrington Beach on 28th February 2006 has been seen every year since (except 2009) and was last seen here on 9th March 2010, being observed nine days later at Yalu Jiang on the Yellow Sea coast of China! In total six of the birds banded in Otago have been sighted in Yalu Jiang.

Murray Efford is banding Tui and Bellbirds that come to his feeder in Dunedin. So far he has uniquely colour banded over 90 of each, which is a remarkable effort and has had about 20 sightings reported from all over the city so far. Many of us have Tui and Bellbirds at our sugar water feeders, but may have thought they are usually the same birds, so how has Murray had 90 different birds? Maybe all ours are different individuals too?

Jamie Wood started off our year of indoor meetings by telling those present of his experience helping as part of the Australasian Wader Study Group team at Broome and Roebuck Bay, illustrating this with beautiful slides. He explained the intricacies of cannon-netting and then the job of handling and banding catches of 200 or more birds. We were wide-eyed (and green-eyed) with stories of the 40 species of waders seen and the huge numbers of waders with flocks extending for kilometres along the beaches.

Derek Onley updated us on the results coming out of the five years of five-minute counts every two weeks in the Orokonui Ecosanctuary. This represents 400 hours of work, walking the length of New Zealand and recording 47,898 birds seen or heard. The area is mainly second-growth regenerating bush (after logging and fires) with small patches of

podocarps, Kanuka and Broadleaf, and some large gum and pine trees. Predator-proof fence completion and pest eradication occurred about two years ago. Native birds present in the reserve include Bellbird, Tomtit, Brown Creeper and Rifleman, with Saddleback, Kaka and Robin recently re-introduced.

At April's meeting we discovered that the Otago region was home to only 3% of the Australasian Bitterns remaining in New Zealand. Peter Langlands made a special trip from Christchurch to report to us on the database he was contracted to compile for DoC of all Bittern sightings in New Zealand with the aim of identifying key wetland areas to protect. The Bittern is nationally endangered with the population having declined dramatically. There are probably only a total of 2,500 in Australia and New Zealand with between 750 and 1,000 of them in New Zealand, so this is an important population. Bitterns are actually rarer than Kokako. The decline of Bitterns has mirrored the drainage of large areas of wetland with shallow beds of vegetation that the species needs for breeding. The booming calls of Bitterns have been reported recently in the Waiholo wetland area near Dunedin so this next spring we will make a special effort to listen for them.

A group of us enjoyed a weekend field trip in March exploring a far corner of Otago, when we stayed in a farm cottage at Routeburn Station, just beyond Glenorchy at the head of Lake Wakatipu. It was interesting to compare our bird list with the spring one from 2008. On the track to Lake Sylvan there were literally dozens of Fantails accompanying large flocks of Brown Creepers in the Red Beech canopy. We enjoyed many extremely friendly Robins and Tomtits, but little was seen or heard of Yellowheads or Yellow-crowned Parakeets. Other interesting sightings were a New Zealand Falcon spotted perched on a dead willow in farmland and over 200 Canada Geese seen moving as a flock between paddocks and to and from Diamond Lake. We experienced a dramatic thunderstorm for several hours on the Sunday night and saw the Dart River in full flood on our return journey.

MARY THOMPSON

Southland

A report (and a photo) of a Californian Quail at a rural property in Heddon Bush was received in February. This is well south of their usual distribution border of Garston. We are unsure whether this is an escapee from a breeder or just a bird well outside its usual zone. We did have a report of one at Bluff several years ago.

In conjunction with the Natural History Field Club we have had a number of interesting trips in the last few months, including a coastal walk from Waipapa Point to Slope Point, a day walk into the Aparima Hut at the head of the Aparima River and another coastal trek along the newly formed Barracouta Point Track near Omaui. Our last outing in April was the Catlins River Track. The weather was quite good until we came to the end of the tramp, when the heavens opened and so began a few days of torrential rain that caused widespread flooding in Southland. We managed to hear and get a glimpse of several Yellowheads along the track but no sign of any parakeets.

During the February wader count we counted a total of 3,165 godwits from the six areas surveyed and Lloyd Esler saw six Eastern Curlews at Jocks Roost on the New River Estuary. This is the largest flock seen in Southland for a number of years.

Once again the wader catchers, well one of them (David Melville), was thwarted twice in his attempts at mist netting on the New River Estuary. On the first occasion by driving wind and rain, and on the second by a high tide that barely reached the nets.

Despite these setbacks we received word from David and Rob Schuckard about ten Southland-banded Bar-tailed Godwits that had been seen at Yalu Jiang in China, this despite the fact that Southland has been the least successful South Island region for wader catching. Yes they may be hard to catch but it's the quality that counts.

Other interesting recent reports have included a possible Barn Owl at Otataru. John Hawkins reported approximately 60 very noisy Bar-tailed Godwits taking off from Awarua Bay in V formation at 5pm on March 17th heading north. Another report was received from Erik Forsyth of seven Bar-tailed Godwits heading north from Stewart Island on April 5th, again at 5pm.

PHIL RHODES

THE OSNZ OVERSEAS FIELD GUIDE COLLECTION



Kathy Barrow, the OSNZ librarian, is looking at building up a collection of field guides which members can borrow when travelling overseas. Already available for members to borrow are guides covering China, India, Australia and Britain. If members wish to donate their overseas field guides to our library, they will be made accessible for other members. Refer to the OSNZ website www.osnz.org.nz for details about borrowing books etc.

Regional Reps and What's On



Far North

Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 0470. Ph (09) 407 3874. Email detlefdavies@yahoo.com

Northland

David Crockett, 21 McMillan Avenue, Kamo, Whangarei 0112. Ph (09) 435 0954

Evening meetings, second Thursday of the month, phone David Crockett. West coast beach patrols Prue Cozens (09) 437 7760. East coast beach patrols Pauline Smith (09) 437 6470. Whangarei Harbour wader count Tony Beauchamp (09) 436 2661. North Kaipara wader count David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

Auckland

Mel Galbraith, 62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead, Auckland. Ph (09) 480 1958. Email melgar62@slingshot.co.nz
Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at 7.45pm at Natural Science Building 23, Unitec, Point Chevalier.

South Auckland

Simon Fordham, P.O. Box 64 042, Botany Town Centre, Manukau 1730. Ph (09) 274 1828. Email simonf@clear.net.nz

Evening meetings are held at the Papakura Croquet Clubrooms, 5 Chapel Street, Papakura, on the second Tuesday of each month (Feb-Nov) at 7.45 pm. Beach patrols ph. Wendy Goad (09) 292 7838. Manukau and Firth of Thames censuses ph. Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284

Waikato

Dai Morgan, 20a Walsh Street, Forest Lake, Hamilton 3200. Phone (07) 848 2522.

Email magpiemorgan@gmail.com

Evening meetings, every third Wednesday 7.30pm, DoC Area Office, 5 Northway Street (off Te Rapa Road), Hamilton.

Beach Patrols and Cambridge Lake census, Hugh Clifford ph (07) 855 3751. Hamilton Lake Census, Barry Friend ph (07) 843 6729. Forest Lake Census, Brian Challinor ph (07) 855 2561. Kakepuku Bird Counts and West Coast Harbour Censuses, Laurie Hoverph ph (07) 871 8071. Bird Sightings, Dai Morgan

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Eila Lawton, 449 Lund Road, RD2 Katikati 3178. Ph (07) 549 3646 Email elawton@actrix.co.nz

Evening meetings – second Wednesdays of Feb, April, June, Aug, Oct and Dec, 7pm.

Gisborne/Wairoa

Steve Sawyer, 369 Wharerata Road, RD1 Gisborne 4071. Ph (06) 867 2888, mobile 027 209 6049. Email ecoworksnz@xtra.co.nz

Hawke's Bay

Helen Andrews, 254 Mangatahi Rd, RD1, Hastings 4171. Ph (06) 874 9426. Email helenandrews@xtra.co.nz

Indoor meetings are held on an irregular basis, but field trips are organised regularly. Please contact Helen Andrews for details.

Taranaki

Barry Hartley, 12a Ronald Street, New Plymouth. Ph (06) 757 8644. Email Barry_Hartley@clear.net.nz

Evening meetings – first Thursday of each month (except January) at 7.30pm, Community House, Liardet Street, New Plymouth. Field trip following Sunday.

Wanganui

Peter Frost, 87 Ikitara Road, Wanganui East, Wanganui 4500. Ph: 06 343 1648. Email: birds.wanganui@xtra.co.nz. Evening meetings – last Monday of every month except December, 7.30pm (unless the day is a public holiday), St Joseph's Hall, 1 Campbell Street. For more details contact Peter Frost.

Manawatu

Ian Saville, 24 Puketiro Avenue, Feilding 4702. Ph (06) 323 1441. Email sav@wrybill-tours.com

Evening meetings – second Wednesday of Feb, May, Aug and Nov, Lido Centre, Park Street, Palmerston North, 8pm. Beach patrols – first Wednesday of each month and also at other irregular times.

Wairarapa

Barbara Lovatt, 4 Clara Anne Grove, Greytown. Ph (06) 304 9948. Email barbara.lovatt@slingshot.co.nz

Evening meetings held on the second Thursday of the month (exc Jan) 7.30 pm, venue alternating between Masterton and Greytown. Field trips are the following weekend. Contact Barbara Lovatt for further details.

Wellington

Ian Armitage, 50 Ranui Terrace, Tawa, Wellington 5028. Ph (04) 232 7470. Email ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz

Evening meetings - first Monday of the month, Head Office of DoC, 18-32 Manners Street, Wellington, meet 7.30 pm for a 7:45 pm start, ph. Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470.

East Harbour Regional Park bird survey, Reg Cotter (04) 568 6960. Beach patrols, Sharon Alderson (04) 298 3707. Mana Island Robins and Sooty Shearwaters, Geoff de Lisle (04) 527 0929. Mist-netting and passerine banding, Peter Reese (04) 387 7387.

Nelson

Stuart Wood, 24 Olympus Way, Richmond 7020. Ph (03) 544 3932. Email stuartwood38@yahoo.co.nz

Evening meetings – usually first Monday of the month, 7.15 pm Solander/Aurora Fisheries Board Room. The Solander/Aurora building is on the right hand side of Cross Street, just beyond Dickson's Boat Repair and more or less opposite the 'red shed' - the Tasman Bay Cruising Club, Nelson. Phone Stuart Wood (03) 544 3932 or Don Cooper (03) 544 8109.

Marlborough

Mike Bell, 42 Vickerman Street, Grovetown, Blenheim 7202. Phone (03) 577 9818 or 021 734 602. Email skua44@yahoo.co.nz. Lake Grassmere count – third Sunday of month. Ph Brian Bell (03) 570 2230. Passerine banding, each weekend during February and March, at Jack Taylor's farm, Ward, contact Mike Bell Ph (03) 577 9818.

Canterbury/West Coast

Jan Walker, 305 Kennedys Bush Road, Halswell, Christchurch 8205. Ph (03) 322 7187. Email shesagreen@gmail.com

Evening meetings last Monday of the month (Feb-Nov), Mahaanui Area DoC Office, 31 Nga Mahi Road (off Blenheim Road), Sockburn, Christchurch. Monthly field trips – dates vary, contact Jan Walker.

Otago

Mary Thompson, 197 Balmacewen Road, Balmacewen, Dunedin. Ph (03) 464 0787. Email mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Evening meetings monthly on the fourth Wednesday at 8.00pm in Benham Seminar Room, Zoology Department, 340 Great King Street. Contact Mary Thompson.

Southland

Lloyd Esler, 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD9 Invercargill 9879. Ph (03) 213 0404.

Email esler@southnet.co.nz

Evening meetings (in conjunction with Field Club) held second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm. Please phone Lloyd Esler for venue and further information, field trip usually on Saturday following. Beach Patrols on a casual basis, phone Phil Rhodes (03) 214 4936 or Lloyd Esler.

WANTED

PAPERS ON NEW ZEALAND BIRD SPECIES

All citations, reprint copies or photocopies of papers on, or relating to, any New Zealand bird species that have been published in a scientific journal or general magazine other than *Notornis*. These papers or citations will be made available to all members, and a list of these publications will be published annually in *Notornis*.

Please send to the Secretary, Peter Gaze, P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040 or gaze@slingshot.co.nz

