



Southern *Bird*

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The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



The Kakapo and I

Motueka Welcomes Back the Godwits

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QUOTATION

*In Wall Street once a potent power,
And now a multi-millionaire
Alone within a shady bower
In clothes his valet would not wear,
He watches bird wings bright the air.*

*The man who mighty mergers planned,
And oil and coal kinglike controlled,
With field-glasses in failing hand
Spies downy nestlings five days old,
With joy he could not buy for gold...*

Bird Watcher by Robert Service

CONTENTS

President's Report	3
OSNZ: Website Redevelopment	4
From the Project and Activities Committee	7
Motueka welcomes back the Godwits	9
The Kakapo and I	12
Bird News	13

COVER PHOTOS

Cover Photos

Front cover: Fiordland Crested Penguin

Back cover: Black Stilt

Both photos by David Hallett

Copyright held by the photographer.

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

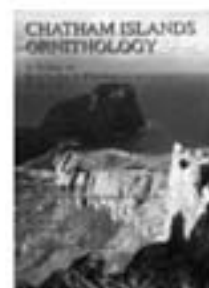
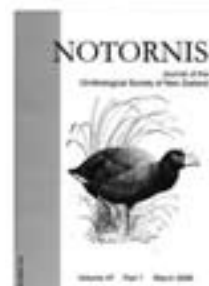
If you are reading this but are not a member of the Ornithological Society you would be very welcome to join us. Our membership consists of the whole spectrum of people interested in New Zealand/South Pacific birds from beginners with just an interest through keen birdwatchers and amateur ornithologists 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 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, P.O. Box 54, Sefton 7445, or contact Roger Sharp by email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz, or phone: 09 413 8580.
- Contact your nearest regional representative, contact details for which can be found on the back page of this magazine.



NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2011 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before **28th February 2011** and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

Publisher

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

COUNCIL MEETING

A meeting of Council was held in mid-November to consider a range of proposals that are currently before the Society. I report below on some of the issues that will be of interest to the membership. At this meeting Colin Miskelly and Murray Williams were welcomed to their first formal meeting, even though they have been active since they were elected at the Annual General Meeting.

RECORDS APPRAISAL COMMITTEE

As previously advised Colin Miskelly has assumed the chairmanship of the Records Appraisal Committee which replaced the previous Rare Birds Committee. The new committee has now completed their assessment of all the records that had been in the system. The Council is appreciative of the effort that this group has put into completing that phase of their task with such diligence. Colin will be providing a report in *Southern Bird* in due course.

If any member believes they have submitted applications that have not been processed they should contact the RAC secretary Biz Bell as soon as possible. It is possible that some submissions may have been missed and the committee is not aware of them. The main task now is for members who have observed unusual birds over recent years to complete the reporting process to have those records processed. There are numerous records that have been reported on Birding-NZ but these do not automatically get accepted until a formal application is made and the merits of the sighting can be assessed. A report on Birding-NZ or similar network is not sufficient to be included in future checklists or official literature.

WEBSITE UPDATE

In the very near future a major rebuild of the Society's website will be completed. Bruce McKinlay has led this process and the main website is now ready for operation.

The Society is also intending to incorporate onto the one website access to the back issues of *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* and will also have a facility for members to pay and upgrade their subscriptions and check their contact details.

The professional work on this website has been undertaken with sponsorship from the T-Gear Charitable Trust and we are very grateful for the support from that organisation. This grant was obtained through the efforts of Ingrid Hutzler and Peter Gaze.

The website will be easier to navigate and will contain much more information and will give the Society a much greater profile. It is intended that the new site will be online early in the New Year as soon as it has been fully tested. I would urge members to utilise this resource and its interactive facilities.

SENIOR MEMBERSHIP

The issue of introducing a new category for senior membership was the subject of a lively discussion at the Annual General Meeting in June. Murray Williams from Council and Ian Armitage on behalf of the Regional Representatives canvassed for views on this matter since the AGM and these were considered by the Council at their meeting.

At this stage the recommendation which was adopted by the Council is that there is not enough information available on the financial implications available and there was very little support amongst the Regional Representatives for any change at this time. Council adopted that recommendation and there will therefore be no Council-initiated changes to membership categories to be considered at the Annual General Meeting in 2011.

STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

In 2005 Council adopted a strategic plan to guide the Society for the period from 2005-2010. Council believes that it is now time to undertake a review of that document and the directions that the Society is taking to see if they are still relevant today.

Council, during its meeting, considered a report prepared by Stuart Nicholson making some suggestions. The outcome is that Council believes that the general direction of that plan is still relevant but wishes to gain some feedback from the wider membership. It is therefore intended to have a workshop relating to this issue at the annual meeting in 2011 to review the broad strategic approach of the Society. Copies of the present plan will be re-circulated in *Southern Bird* in the March edition so that members can come prepared.

The key question that will be asked at the workshop is, "where would members like the Society to be in five years' time?"

NEW ZEALAND BIRD REPORT AND RECORDS

Derek Onley is still working on producing the *New Zealand Bird Report* for 2007. This is proving to be a more difficult task than originally envisaged because of the scarcity of records and the need for those records to have some relevance to be included.

It is intended that the *NZBR* will be a document where the sightings will be in a useful context rather than being merely a bird record. It is that transition for members and regional recorders to make that is proving to be difficult.

While Council is conscious that the records in subsequent years from 2007 onwards are still languishing we wish to publish the 2007 version so that the type of publication intended can be more easily understood. It will also give members a better appreciation of the gaps in sightings submitted. It is important however for sightings to still be submitted to Regional Recorders, or better still direct into eBird.

LIAISON WITH BIRDS AUSTRALIA

Council is currently considering a proposal to form a seabird working group in conjunction with Birds Australia. This clearly has benefits in that the seabirds that utilise the Tasman Sea and West Pacific are of interest to members in both countries and that recording schemes need to be developed to cover the broader area.

At the same time it is intended to examine involvement in the Australasian Wader Study Group, which at the present is a subgroup of Birds Australia without any direct OSNZ input. OSNZ members are involved at the AWSG committee level but they are acting as individuals rather than Society representatives.

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Council accepted a proposal from Mel Galbraith on behalf of the Auckland Region to host the 2013 Australasian Ornithological Congress in Auckland. This bid will be placed before the AOC meeting in Cairns in 2011.

If successful this bid will be an opportunity for members to join the gathering of ornithologists from Australia and New Zealand. The only previous AOC meeting held in New Zealand was in Blenheim in 2005.

DAVID LAWRIE

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2011 Annual General Meeting will be held at TheNewDowse, Lower Hutt on Saturday 4th June 2010 at 8.30pm.

Peter Gaze
Secretary
P.O. Box 834, Nelson

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The three year Council terms of Stuart Nicholson, David Melville and the Secretary (Peter Gaze) expire at the next AGM. Nominations are called for these three positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again for these positions.

Nominations will close with the Secretary on **28th February 2011**. Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include brief *curriculum vitae* of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

OSNZ SALES TABLE

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

Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ 1999-2004 – \$98 (within NZ only – overseas purchasers should enquire below for a quote)

Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ (1985) – \$14

Chatham Islands Ornithology – \$19

Fifty Years of Bird Study in New Zealand (Index to Notornis 1939-1989) – \$14

Wader Studies in New Zealand – \$24

Birds of Hawke's Bay – \$10

A Flying Start – \$14

Stickers - Pied Stilt (specify outside glass/bumper or inside glass only) – \$3, *Notornis* – \$3

Ticklist – \$1

Checklist (1990 edition) – \$9

Send orders to:

Paul Cuming, OSNZ Sales, 2/7 Robins Road, Judea, Tauranga
Tel. (07) 571 5125, fax (07) 571 5126, email birdo@post.com

OSNZ AGM AND CONFERENCE 2011

This will be held in Lower Hutt during Queen's Birthday weekend 2011.

All events and meals will take place at the TheNewDowse, 45 Laings Road, Lower Hutt, unless stated otherwise.

3rd June (Friday)

4-6pm Registration (Angus Inn Hotel, Waterloo Road, Lower Hutt)

4th June (Saturday)

8-9am Registration

9am-5pm Scientific day

Followed by informal dinner

8.30pm AGM

5th June (Sunday)

8-9am Registration

9am-5pm Scientific day

Followed by conference dinner

6th June (Monday)

Field trips followed by informal dinner at Angus Inn Hotel

Please refer to the registration form enclosed with this issue of *Southern Bird* for more details, or download a copy from www.osnz.org.nz

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 at P.O. Box 54, Sefton 7445, or contact Roger Sharp by email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz, or phone: 09 413 8580.
- Contact your local regional representative – contact details are on the inside back cover of this issue of *Southern Bird*.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Subscriptions are due on 1st January. Those members with email should have received a membership renewal form via that medium. Those members who do not have email (or those where the Membership Secretary has not been informed of an email address) should have received a renewal form as an insert with the September issue of *Southern Bird*. Please endeavour to pay close to the due date – the Society depends greatly on your subscription to continue the furtherance of its objectives in encouraging and supporting the study and enjoyment of birds in the New Zealand region.

If you have misplaced your renewal form, a blank version is now available online at www.osnz.org.nz/join.htm, or otherwise please contact the Membership Secretary at P.O. Box 54, Sefton 7445, or contact Roger Sharp by email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz, or phone: 09 413 8580.

Ornithological Society of New Zealand: Website Redevelopment

On behalf of Council I have been leading the redevelopment of the Society's website over the last few months.

The project has three major components: firstly taking the web pages and bringing them up to date in terms of format and functionality; secondly integrating the membership database into the website so that membership data is available to members to keep updated and allow for payments of subscriptions etc on line; and thirdly to work on the *Notornis* website and make it more functional to ensure that web access for members is available on time and that the cost in time of uploading copies of *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* are reduced.

Along the way we will get a set of new email addresses such as president@osnz.org.nz or southernbird@osnz.org.nz. RRs will be able to pick a local readily-identifiable email address such as otago@osnz.org.nz to promote communication.

The most important change, however, is one that the membership will not see, and that is by using a modern content management system the pages in the website will be able to be modified without the knowledge or use of special computing knowledge. To see a current equivalent example go to www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz. The colour scheme can be altered easily and we will be having a banner of photos showing birds at their best. If you would like to submit photos for inclusion over time then drop me a line.

The work so far has been supported by our current webmaster, Brent Stephenson who has worked over the years to keep the current site working. The redevelopment of the site has been supported by T-Gear. The site should be launched early in the New Year.

Bruce McKinlay

GENERAL PURPOSE SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2009

	2009	2008
ASSETS		
Current Assets	21,127	1,117
Investment in subsidiary	1,117	1,117
Property, plant and equipment	1,117	1,117
Intangible assets	1,117	1,117
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	21,127	1,117
Long-term Liabilities	1,117	1,117
NET ASSETS	1,117	1,117

1. General Council

2. Goods Received

3. INCOME TO THE ACCOUNTS

4. EXPENSES

5. MEMBERSHIP

6. CONTRIBUTIONS

7. ACCUMULATED SURPLUS

8. ACCUMULATED DEFICIT

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. GENERAL ACCOUNTING POLICIES

2. Financial Instruments

3. Intangible Assets

4. Property, Plant and Equipment

5. Liabilities

6. Dividends

9. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

10. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

11. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

12. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

13. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

14. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

A PLEA TO SAVE YOUR OLD AUDIO RECORDINGS

With international ecotourism and associated activities rapidly growing in interest I wish to make a plea to readers of this magazine to archive sound recordings, videos, cine films, etc that many of you will have made over the years. Apart from the nostalgic value to those who made the original records there is always the scientific/research value of such information, particularly if properly documented with at least time, date, place, who made the recording, and, in the case of audio, behavioural notes (what the subject was doing at the time).

In my own lifetime species have disappeared from some areas where I once was able to make a number of sound recordings of them. Also a couple of recordings held by me in the archives are the voices of the first known examples in New Zealand, those being the White-winged Triller recorded at MacAndrew Bay, Otago in March 1969, and the Australian Reed Warbler discovered at St Anne's Lagoon near Cheviot a few years ago. While both of these species are common in their country of origin, they are of course exceptional sightings this side of the Tasman Sea.

Another reason to preserve all those old recordings, that you may have stored in boxes in the wardrobe or under the bed all those years ago, is that many early recordings are useful for comparison purposes to detect changes in song and/or calls from a given geographical location over a long time span, say half a century or more. Recordings held in the archive here of Chaffinch were used in an international study to try to determine if the songs uttered by the species in countries to which it had been introduced a century or more ago differed in any great degree to the songs of specimens recorded in the countries of origin in Europe, mostly the United Kingdom in the New Zealand case. More differences were found in recordings from different parts of New Zealand than were found for the rest of the world. It was discovered that birds, like humans, can quickly develop regional dialects and accents.

If you are considering archiving your recordings, no matter what format they may be in, don't hesitate to contact me for advice or assistance.

LES MCPHERSON
P.O. Box 33, Ashburton 7740
Canterbury, New Zealand
www.archivebirdsnz.com
email archivebirdsnz@hotmail.com

As a representative of the Ornithological Society I accepted an invitation extended by the Ambassador of Israel, His Excellency Mr Shemi Tzur, to a presentation by Dr Yossi Leshem at the Israeli Embassy in Wellington on Monday 2nd August 2010 entitled *Migrating Birds Know No Boundaries*. Dr Leshem was making a short lecture tour in New Zealand to speak on bird migration and its impacts on the movement of civilian and military aircraft in the crowded bird migration flyway over Israel.

In introducing Dr Leshem the Ambassador explained that this presentation was the first in the Embassy since diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Israel were recently restored. Dr Yossi Leshem is an Israeli ornithologist who lectures in the Department of Zoology of Tel Aviv University. He is the former director general of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and he is currently establishing the International Centre for the Study of Bird Migration at Latrun, a strategic hilltop site in the Ayalon Valley overlooking a road to Jerusalem. Dr Leshem established the Israel Ornithological Centre, has been involved in the study of bird habits in relation to aircraft safety for several years, and was

FROM THE PROJECT AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

When you go out, do you list the birds seen? ("Do you submit these observations to eBird New Zealand?" is a separate question.) Many of us do, for various reasons: to record what we've seen on a particular occasion; to build up a picture of which species occur at a site; to remind us later of what we saw where and when. Some of us include additional information, estimating numbers, commenting on habitat preferences and abundance, and describing behaviour. A surprising number of people do not keep such notes, however, believing perhaps that simple or even annotated lists have little scientific value.

A recent paper by Judit Szabo and colleagues at the universities of Queensland and Melbourne in Australia, published in the journal *Ecological Applications*, suggests otherwise (for a popular account, see the periodical Decision Point: www.aeda.edu.au/docs/Newsletters/DPoint_38.pdf). They set about asking whether useful information on trends in species' abundances could be obtained from simple lists. The problem is, such lists seldom contain measures or estimates of abundance, so how can they be used?

First, if you keep a running total of species seen against time spent in a habitat you will notice that the number keeps rising, steeply at first as you tick off all the common species, and then more slowly as you come across the less common and more cryptic species. This cumulative number eventually flattens off as all the species in an area are discovered, although that takes considerable and sustained effort to achieve. In brief,

the frequency with which we come across a species in the field is related to its abundance, modified somewhat by its behaviour and conspicuousness.

Second, if we searched an area regularly and systematically, devoting a similar amount of effort each time, we would end up with a series of lists of approximately the same number of species. The common and more conspicuous species would feature in almost every one, but other species would be represented more irregularly, depending on their abundance and ease of detection.

What Szabo and her colleagues have assumed, therefore, is that the number of species recorded on a list broadly reflects the amount of effort put into finding birds in a habitat on that occasion ('effort' here comprises both the amount of time spent in the area and the thoroughness with which it was searched). For a particular area and species, the researchers could then estimate relative abundance in relation to its occurrence in lists of different lengths. Common species would occur frequently in both short and long lists, whereas the rarer species would generally be found only in the longer lists, depending on their overall abundance.

The researchers have developed a procedure for analysing statistically the probabilities of occurrence of species in lists of different length from a site. This procedure, List Length Analysis, can then be used to determine if the populations of these species are stable or changing over time (assuming no parallel change in basic detectability). For example, if a species is declining, then it will occur progressively less frequently in lists

of the same length made in subsequent years. (The opposite would hold if its population was increasing.) Using this technique, they have shown significant declines in a number of woodland birds in an area of southern Queensland surveyed periodically by members of the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union (later Birds Australia) since 1970. Many of these species are reported anecdotally to have declined elsewhere in Australia, so this analysis provides statistically robust evidence for this general notion.

What does this mean for us? First, don't throw away your old notebooks and lists; they could provide valuable information once appropriately analysed. Second, if you aren't in the habit of making notes when you go out into the field to birdwatch, why not change? Even if you make a simple list of what you've seen, it can be used by someone. Of course, if you can supplement your list with information on how long you were in the field, what size of area you covered, and which species were abundant (say, >15 birds recorded per hour), common (5-15 birds), sparse (1-5 birds) and rare (<1 bird), so much the better. Third, the easiest way to make your data available to others is by recording it on eBird (go to the eBird New Zealand website (www.ebird.org/content/newzealand; see also the March 2008 issue of Southern Bird). In this way, you will contribute valuable information to helping us understand the changing nature of our bird populations.

PETER FROST
Convenor

Project and Activities Committee

MIGRATING BIRDS KNOW NO BOUNDARIES

awarded a prize, The Yithak Sade Prize for Military Literature, in 1994 for a book he wrote entitled 'Flying with the Birds'. It deals with the problems that migrating birds cause to aircraft movements in such a tiny airspace as Israel's where more than 900 million birds, representing at least 300 species, pass through the country twice annually and where there is so much aircraft movement, mostly military.

In his presentation Dr Lesham explained that Israel lies along the flyway of a major bird migration bottleneck for birds travelling northwards and southwards twice each year, between Africa, Europe and parts of Asia. 540 species of birds occur in Israel, many being migrants, and there are no endemics. Several migratory species are large and include pelicans, storks, herons, cranes and several raptors. Some spectacular migration sights were described, such as huge flocks of up to 250,000 birds of one species passing along the flyway in the space of a few hours. Not surprisingly, such large, dense migrating flocks, especially of large-bodied birds, pose major risks to aircraft, especially military aircraft and some migrating flocks have been the cause of major crashes of military planes. The risks are also very real for civilian aircraft, especially as aircraft size increases, due to the relatively

slow air speeds of planes when taking off and landing at busy commercial airports.

Dr Lesham described a network of ground-based observation stations throughout much of the country that enable accurate observations of species, flock size, flight direction and speed to be monitored and reported to aviation authorities. Established 35 years ago it has contributed greatly to reducing bird collision accidents. Ground-based observation stations operated by teams of local and international volunteers provide excellent opportunities for avid birdwatchers from many countries to monitor and report the movements of flocks of migrating birds under circumstances that would be difficult to see elsewhere. Other more recently introduced bird migration monitoring methods are radar, motorised gliders and pilotless drone aircraft. Radar is particularly effective. Information gained from each of these methods is routinely applied in Israeli air traffic control for re-routing military and commercial aircraft.

In addition to working to prevent accidents between birds and aircraft, Dr Lesham briefly described joint conservation projects between Israel and Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority, in which birds of prey, such as

hawks and owls are encouraged to live on farms to protect crops from rodent pests. Nesting boxes for these birds are placed on the farms to promote a natural form of pest control without the need for using pesticides, an approach described by Dr Lesham that is not only good for farmers but also encourages good relations between the people involved in these projects. Further information on Israeli ornithology is available on the 'Birding Israel' website, www.birds.org.il

Dr Lesham's presentation was both interesting and useful as it provided a valuable insight into the challenging and significant role of bird migration and its impact on aviation in a prominent and crowded flyway.

When thanking the Ambassador for the kind invitation to attend the presentation I took to opportunity to present the complements of the President of the Society, and Dr Lesham was handed a copy of *Southern Bird*, No. 42, and a Wellington Region Newsletter for August 2010.

IAN ARMITAGE

Regional Representative
Wellington

CENTRAL PASSERINE BANDING GROUP REPORT FOR YEAR 09/10

We had a reasonable year's banding with 2,547 new birds banded; this is lower than last year mainly due to lower Silvereye and House Sparrow numbers. Both these species were affected by reduced banding effort at three sites where they usually make up the bulk of the catch. I also believe that Silvereyes have had three poor breeding years in the Wellington area which is now affecting the numbers.

Below are the figures from the last five years' banding. In the first column for each year is the number banded and in the second the ranking for that year. Included in these totals are birds caught at the Zoo and sites at Island and Houghton Bays, Newtown, Melrose and Macalister Parks, Wadestown, Roseneath, Mornington, Karori Cemetery and several sites around Melrose.

	05/06		06/07		07/08		08/09		09/10		5-yr total	5-yr ave
Silvereye	1,190	1	853	1	1,759	1	1,403	1	1,156	1	6,361	1,272.2
House Sparrow	353	2	295	2	517	3	495	2	474	2	2,134	426.8
Greenfinch	163	3	280	3	518	2	266	3	261	3	1,488	297.6
Blackbird	108	4	119	4	124	6	185	4	133	4	669	133.8
Chaffinch	99	5	99	5	163	5	109	5	110	5	580	116
Starling	64	6	80	6	166	4	56	7	91	6	457	91.4
Tui	10	12	54	8	86	7	73	6	71	7	294	58.8
Goldfinch	16	10	26	10	62	8	36	9	61	8	201	40.2
Yellowhammer	23	9	7	12	13	11	14	12	56	9	113	22.6
Fantail	42	7	57	7	58	9	31	10	46	10	234	46.8
Dunnock	27	8	44	9	41	10	46	8	44	11	202	40.4
Grey Warbler	13	11	17	11	12	12	20	11	21	12	83	16.6
Redpoll	1	15	5	13	4	14	0	17	15	13	25	5
Song Thrush	7	13	3	14	6	13	2	14	7	14	25	5
Eastern Rosella									1	15	1	0.2
Kingfisher	4	14	3	15	3	15	3	13	0		13	2.6
Magpie	0	16	1	16	0	16	1	15	0		2	0.4
Bellbird							1	16	0		1	
	<u>2,120</u>		<u>1,943</u>		<u>3,532</u>		<u>2,741</u>		<u>2,547</u>		<u>12,883</u>	3,220.75

SPECIES CAUGHT IN RANKED ORDER WERE.

Silvereye – the usual No 1 species but the lowest number recorded since 2006/07 and below the five-year average.

House Sparrow – except for one year when beaten by Greenfinch by one bird, the usual No 2 species. Although down on last year still, numbers caught are above the five-year average.

Greenfinch – slightly down on last year and below the average. Most are caught at the Zoo.



Blackbird – although down on last year almost exactly an average year with most birds caught at Karori Cemetery and Melrose Park.

Chaffinch – close to an average year with most birds caught at stream sites.

Starling – a much higher number than last year but still just on the average.

Tui – very similar to last year. We have now colour banded about 340 Tui. Of these 24 have been recovered dead so there are over 300 out there somewhere. Please keep an eye out for any banded Tui, and if possible record the colour combination and let me or the Banding Office know.

We made 27 recaptures of birds over five years from being banded with 15 Silvereyes, six Blackbirds, five Starlings and one House Sparrow. With only the one Sparrow and no finches it would appear that they are shorter-lived than Silvereye, Blackbird or Starling, or are the older ones just harder to catch? We catch plenty in the year or two after they are banded.

We also had 57 recoveries of dead birds: 13 Silvereyes, 12 Sparrows, nine Blackbirds, six Starlings, six Tui, five Greenfinches and one Dunnock.

Approximately 60 people attended banding sessions with a wide range in age and banding experience.

PETER REESE

Banders with a colour-banded Tui.

MOTUEKA WELCOMES BACK THE GODWITS



Left: The OSNZ display
Below: Participants
were serenaded by
the Ulkes of Hazzard
ukulele band



The people of Motueka are so much more informed about the godwit migration story now after a celebration in September to welcome the birds return. The weekend celebration saw the Memorial Hall filled with displays from local conservation groups, including Nelson OSNZ who helped out by providing facts and information. There was an official opening with invited local and national politicians speaking, finishing with music from a ukulele group singing a specially-composed godwit song.

Information boards and slides shows explained the godwit migration story, and a very well attended talk by David Melville provided the latest godwit research. Nelson OSNZ displayed their newly-produced panels showing their current projects. We invited the public to a viewing of the godwits feeding in the estuary with six telescopes eagerly searching for the new arrivals.

Before the event I visited five schools to tell the children about the amazing birds that visit our area each year, and took one school on a trip to the estuary to see them. These visits motivated the children to produce wonderful art works that filled the hall with colour. Added to this was a photographic competition showing the estuary and its bird life, and a poetry and short story competition as well.

Feedback from the celebration has been very positive with so many people saying how they enjoyed it and learnt so much. There is now a

growing sense of ownership in the community of 'our godwits' and a desire to look out for them, learn more and protect them.

It is worth noting that David Melville had also spoken to groups in Nelson, Richmond and Mapua on the life history of the Bar-tailed Godwit just prior to the Motueka meeting. Attendances were in the 100-plus, which amazed David, especially as one meeting took place on a bright sunny afternoon!

Photos and text by PAULINE SAMWAYS

FRED LIVINGSTONE GODWIT THE BALLAD OF AN AVIAN ANTI-HERO (NOT ALL GODWITS FLY TO ALASKA)

An idle young godwit called Fred
was quite sick of flying and said,
"Migration's a chore,
an absolute bore:
I'll stay in New Zealand instead"

It came as a bit of a shock
when in March the rest of the flock,
with their eyes on
the distant horizon,
flew off, leaving Fred on a rock.

But it's peaceful in winter in Mot.
The sandspit and inlets have got
a steady supply
of littoral kai
and Fred is content with his lot.

Chris Greenwood

Above: A creative display put together by The Steiner School

MOTUEKA SANDSPIT, SUMMER HOME OF THE GODWITS

September:
Riding storm winds
Through sun bruised skies.
Driven by time and dreams
Of kai.
Tired and hungry
They come.
March:
Feasted, fattened and
Flushed with desire
Winging back through memories
Of home
To the breeding shores
They go.

Wendy Reeve



A SPRING DAY IN THE LIFE OF MAUAO'S BIRDS

At six in the morning warm, dappled light signifies another change to the seasons on Mauao, all of her green 232 metre flanks contrasting with the deep purples of an early morning visit. Birds abound at this time on a spring morning, from Tui visiting Pohutukawa for their morning insect feast, to the Blackbirds and Song Thrushes still employing centuries old songs in the hope of attracting the makers of the next generation of old European bird bloodlines. Other European species are waking up and preening themselves in the low morning light, and maybe bathing in one of Mauao's few permanent springs on her western flanks. Finches, Starlings, Sparrows, Dunnocks and Skylarks all make their way on to open areas around the seaward side of Mauao. From summit to shore they feed on pastures long present on the mountainside.

The penguins and petrels have left Mauao's flanks just before sunrise, heading past the diving Gannets, searching further and further out to sea for squid and small fish to feed their already burgeoning chicks, tucked away safe – for now – amongst the twisted roots and rocks.

Beyond the rocks on sandy beaches one finds the short and long haul operators of the feathered world – our shorebirds. Skulking around the original pier hoping to snare an


unwary bully or crab, the Reef Heron's steel grey plumage is ideally suited to the shades and shapes of the nearby rocks. The rare New Zealand Dotterel spends most of its time on the sand, so when the beaches become more and more overpopulated by humankind and their dogs and boats over the course of the day, it retreats to havens such as Matakana Island. Having just said farewell to the season to a majority of the black-and-white shorebirds, such as the Pied Stilt, and the South Island Pied Oystercatchers, who are off the breed inland and the South Island respectively, we bid a welcome to another shift of local and international shorebirds. Some, like the Variable Oystercatcher, which is predominantly all black in the Bay of Plenty, have just arrived from over the channel at the aforementioned Matakana Island, a sand island draped in pine forests. Others have just arrived after one continuous 10,000+ kilometre flight, a feat belonging to Kuaka - our Bar-tailed Godwit - fresh from Alaska, where there are no tall forests at all.

The forests of Mauao have been much modified over the centuries, whether it be from fire, rain, farming or rabbits. All have been unable to conquer the mighty Pohutukawa and the skirt of coastal green which clings to the mountains waist. It is these trees which are the secret to endemic bird species, which

without the Pohutukawa would more than likely be absent: the petrels and penguins which nest under their tenacious roots; the Kaka and New Zealand Falcons that take advantage of the trees amazing heights. Every nook and cranny in each tree harbours a story about a bird. Pohutukawa observe the intricate hanging nests of the incredibly talented, yet gullible Grey Warbler. Out of which comes a story of irresponsible parental piracy, woeful instinctive cruelty and an unbending urge to feed an insatiably hungry Shining Cuckoo chick, even though the giant-sized eating machine is not its own progeny.

The sea of Karaka seedlings around the bases of many Pohutukawa shows that the once Karaka-covered upper slopes were home to many New Zealand Pigeons. Today these seek out the few mature specimens left to do what pigeons do so well – indulge in a good feast.

The middle of the spring day finds the many shag nests filled with either eggs or chicks of Little Shags, Pied Shags, and no doubt sometimes one or two Black Shags. The chicks open their bills and vibrate their gullets to cool off, as the Pohutukawa only provides platforms on its canopy, not under it. The old Goat Track is an ideal spot for one to observe the frantic comings and goings of a working colony of these partially waterproof birds. One may have noticed these shags hanging their



wings out to dry after an underwater chase for a flounder or sprat. As the day heats up, the inevitable sign of many birds with less than sanitary habits living close together increases, hence the wafting stench, sometimes cloyingly persistent in the absence of a breeze.

Further up the hillside, Californian Quail trot out their little bumblebee shaped youngsters, oblivious to their past generations which were sent here to be shot for the sportsmen's bag. Also successfully avoiding the sportsmen's bag are the cock Pheasants. The resplendently-coloured males make a play for the hens by uttering their sharp, duel noted retort, followed by a wing-beat sometimes so loud you would swear some itinerant hooligan was attempting to kick-start a trail bike over the next brow of the hill. It must work; Pheasants are common on Mauao.

All the heat of the day has made Mauao's northern slopes a thermal playground. Slowly drifting over the hillsides on the thermals is the Australasian Harrier, Kahu, who diligently patrols the canopy nearby in case a young finch foolishly decides the hawk is no threat. However, the hawk is also quite interested in the rabbits grazing the pasture adjacent. Both quarries are no match, however, for the speed, talons and agility of the top predator of the mountain, the Karearea, or New Zealand Falcon. In the same family as the Peregrine Falcon, these small but efficient hunters are but visitors to Mauao, yet all birds – even the Harrier - live in fear of the Falcon. They are most likely to have come from Matakana Island, its pine forests being the surprising favourite habitat for them in the absence of healthy native stands of forest.

As the heat of the day gives way to the sun setting on the western flanks, other creatures start the late shift on the eastern side, with the penguins and petrels returning upon dusk to feed their chicks or partners who are incubating in the underground nests. Moreporks, Ruru, are warming up their vocal chords for a night of calling and defending of territory, using one of a series of four different calls, just to catch out the unwary birdwatcher

into thinking there are Kiwi on the hillside. Unfortunately there has not been Kiwi on Mauao for nearly a century or more, for at night Mauao is a dangerous place for all bird species: rats, stoats, possums and hedgehogs all take their toll on the local wildlife. Possums and hedgehogs are not perceived to be a large threat, and are not present in high numbers thanks to pest control programmes in the last 20 years. However, rats, stoats and rabbits are all present in either moderate or high numbers, and all are active at night. Native and endemic birds have no inherent skills to recognise deal with these introduced pests, so are vulnerable to the vagaries of killing machines so foreign to them they hardly react. Night time warfare is continuous on the hill. Pest control is carried out on Mauao so that the nights are less dangerous for the precious indigenous cargo that still live out their lives from one day to another on the slopes of Mauao.

Photos and text by PAUL CUMING

BIRDS OF MAUAO AT A GLANCE

STAR NEW ZEALAND BIRDS OF THE SEASONS

Summer - Shags

Autumn - New Zealand Dotterel, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt

Winter - Kingfisher, gulls

Spring - Kaka, terns

HABITATS

Seabirds - Petrels, terns, gulls, skuas, penguins, gannets

Shorebirds - Oystercatchers, godwits, dotterels

Land birds - Harrier, New Zealand Falcon, Morepork, Tui, New Zealand Pigeon, Kaka, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Shining Cuckoo

MIGRATION

Birds from the heartland - stilts, kingfishers, swallows

Birds from the South Island - South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Banded Dotterel

Birds from lands afar - Silvereye, Spur-winged Plover, White-faced Heron, all from Australia

ORIGINS OF THE INTRODUCED BIRDS

Europe - Feral Pigeons, finches, Blackbirds, Song Thrush, Starling, House Sparrow, Dunnock, Skylark

Asia - Myna, Pheasant, Spotted Dove

Africa - Barbary Dove

Australia - Magpie, Eastern Rosella

America - California Quail

EFFECTS OF THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKE

Most people living in the central part of Canterbury were both shaken and stirred at 4.35am on 4th September by an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale, centred 40km away from central Christchurch on the Canterbury Plains and only 10km deep. The effects on birds at the time were probably unknown as it was still dark and most land birds would not have been singing, but at roost. It was certainly quiet when I woke prior to the quake at about 4am. I have not heard of any direct effects on birds or changes in behaviour in respect to the thousands of aftershocks that have followed the main quake; indeed Blackbirds and Song Thrushes seem to sing through them.

Damage to infrastructure and also birding sites has been very patchy. The eastern side of Christchurch was notably severely affected in places. One such place was the Pacific Park subdivision adjacent to the Bexley Wetlands, where many houses were made uninhabitable by liquefaction. The wetlands themselves were also damaged, with springs ceasing to flow and some of the area uplifted so that what was pond and moat became dry land. A visit in early November, however, found birdlife carrying on much as in previous springs with many waterbirds present. The Avon-Heathcote Estuary had many areas of mudflat pock-marked with sand volcanoes, where water and silt had been forced up from below due to compaction of underground layers.



Part of the Bexley Wetlands where once there was a freshwater spring and shallow water it is now dry. Note the pale-coloured silt that has been ejected from underground in the foreground. Photo: Nick Allen



The damaged front part of The Caxton Press building. Photo: Nick Allen

Jan Walker, RR for Canterbury, reported these were not very stable when walked upon.

Victoria Lake in Hagley Park has seemingly received cracks to its clay bottom and is emptying as quickly as a spring fills it. Some of its banks have also collapsed due to lateral spreading – a phenomenon where an unconfined top layer of soil slides sideways due to lubrication from liquefaction and sideways shaking. The lower water levels have afforded the fairly unusual sight of Pied Stilts, White-faced Herons and Australasian Shovelers right next to the central city.

Another victim of the earthquake was the premises of The Caxton Press, where this magazine is put together by the design team there and then printed. Its front entrance building was a beautiful old brick building. Unfortunately the shaking of the earthquake damaged the masonry holding the roof making that part of the building unsafe, and as a result it has been condemned. Staff were back at work in the unaffected more modern part of the building on the Monday following the quake, at least until a strong aftershock came along. Production of *Southern Bird* and *Notornis* has not been affected by the quake at great credit to the staff at The Caxton Press.

The editor would like to express his sympathy to members affected by the earthquake, and hopes that life for them returns to some normality as soon as possible.

THE KAKAPO AND I

It was late February 2008 and I was squeezed inside a small hide on one of Whenua Hou's more exposed hilltops. Also known as Codfish Island, Whenua Hou is home to the world's only breeding population of Kakapo and I was positioned right on the edge of a male Kakapo's breeding arena. To the naked eye the moonless night was a black void, however my infrared camera, helped by a few carefully concealed infrared lights, displayed an eerie black and white image of a well-grubbed patch of scrub. In the middle of it, nestled at the base of a small bush, was a shallow depression about the size of a fruit bowl.

Bill, my lead character, was a creature of habit. 30 minutes after dark he would emerge from the scrub and, with surprising stealth, creep into the bowl. The 'bowl' is basically Bill's bar stool and from it he sings a ballad that would make Tom Jones's eyes water. It begins with a gigantic gulp of air, quickly followed by another and another, each gulp increasing his girth till he's so swollen he can barely move. What follows is without doubt one of the strangest sounds I've experienced; a low sub-sonic boom. Four metres distant, I didn't so much hear it as feel it vibrating in the pit of my stomach. Through the camera's viewfinder I could see the intense physical effort needed to create each call and carry it across the island.

I was making a film called *The Unnatural History of the Kakapo*, a feature length documentary about the Kakapo Recovery Program. I'd been given the opportunity to record the next chapter, a rather ambitious artificial insemination project. New Zealanders have an undeniable national pride in their beloved parrot and will stop at nothing to ensure its survival. I'm unaware of any other species of bird that's been poked, prodded, probed, pricked and pampered as much as the Kakapo, all I should add, in the name of conservation. But what was really amazing was that in all the years people had spent in the company of these remarkable parrots, no one had seen a Kakapo mating with another Kakapo. It was still an unobserved and un-filmed act of nature and very much a film-maker's Holy Grail.

And so it was that I spent an entire month sitting in a cold, cramped hide watching one of the world's rarest parrots perform his bizarre nightly ritual. Together we sat there in the dark, fingers crossed, hoping that tonight would be the night. But 200 metres away it was Ox, Bills next-door neighbour, that was getting all the action. I decided to move the hide and film him instead. Night 26, and for the first time my electronic receiver had picked up the signal from a female Kakapo's backpack transmitter. I could tell from the loud beeping in my earpiece that she was

nearby. I pressed record on the camera, and sat perfectly still watching Ox and listening to the beep, beep, beep, but after a few minutes the signal began to fade; she was leaving and my heart sank. An hour later she was back, but the same thing happened again. Five or six times she visited but by 5.30am, after another close pass, I decided she wasn't coming in. With the female's signal gone I switched the transmitter off and sat there in silence watching Ox's last few pre-dawn booms. All of a sudden he was off, a start that Hussein Bolt would have been proud of. I quickly switched the receiver back on and to my astonishment heard the female's signal louder than ever. I swung the camera round as far as possible but couldn't see them. Then I heard it, the unmistakable sound of flapping wings and heavy breathing. They were right outside the hide! I poked the camera through the side window and there they were. Luckily there was just enough light to film but Murphy's Law meant I was almost out of tape! Fortunately the pair were at it for over 40 minutes, more than enough time to change tapes and grab my Holy Grail.

The Unnatural History of the Kakapo was finished in September 2009 and has so far won over seven national and international awards. The DVD is available to purchase from www.elwin.co.nz, costing \$29.90 with 25% of profit going to the Kakapo Recovery Program.

SCOTT MOUAT

FRIENDS OF ONOKE SPIT

Onoke Spit lies at the foot of Lake Onoke where the Ruamahanga River enters the ocean at the head of Palliser Bay. It is managed by the Department of Conservation in conjunction with Greater Wellington Regional Council, Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and Rangitane o Wairarapa as part of the newly-formed Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Park.

The Spit forms a scarce coastal ecosystem of exposed sand and gravel beach and hosts a number of rare and threatened native species including Caspian Tern, Black-fronted Tern, Katipo spider, Notoreas moth, sand tussock, Pinatoro and Pingao. Other more common species found at the Spit include Black-backed and Red-billed Gulls, Variable Oystercatcher, Banded Dotterel and White-fronted Tern.

Threats are present in the form of introduced pest animals, pest plants and damage to plants and bird breeding colonies caused by vehicles and uncontrolled dogs.

Given its stark natural beauty, its many interesting features and considering its small size, relative ecological intactness, ease of access, existing protected status and motivated local community, Onoke Spit is worth preserving.

A group of local residents and others with a particular interest in the Spit have formed a group called the 'Friends of Onoke Spit'. They are very keen to preserve and enhance this unique place and invite anyone interested to join them. Work such as picking up rubbish, animal pest and weed control is ongoing and it is hoped that planting will begin in the autumn. One of the biggest challenges is educating the many summer visitors about the importance of keeping vehicles to the main track that runs along the middle of the Spit, and of course to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Putting up more signage is another project the Friends are considering.

Palliser Estate Winery from Martinborough has recently signalled their desire to help out with the restoration programme. Their partnership with the Friends will ensure that we will be able to really make a difference and Onoke Spit will become an even more attractive destination for birdwatchers and day tramps in years to come.

FRIENDS OF ONOKE SPIT CONTACT:

Denise & Dougal MacKenzie, Te Rakau
3626 Western Lake Road, R D 3 Featherston.
Phone 06 307 7749, email Denise.
MacKenzie@xtra.co.nz

I would like to acknowledge the help of DoC for the provision of information on the spit for this article.

DENISE MACKENZIE

BIRD NEWS

Three pairs of **Okarito Brown Kiwi** were transferred from the Okarito area to predator-free Blumine Island in the Marlborough Sounds in late June in the hope that a warmer and more fertile environment would induce the currently unproductive pairs to breed.

In the predator-proof-fenced translocated colony on the Kaikoura Peninsula (Canterbury) a **Hutton's Shearwater** has been found brooding an egg in an artificial burrow. The discovery was a surprise to the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust who were not expecting the first breeding attempt to occur for another two years. The breeding bird is only three and a half years old, thought too young to breed.

A pair of **North Island Kokako** translocated from the Pureora Forest (Waikato) to the Ark in the Park (Waitakere Ranges, Auckland) were found to have a nest in late November. The pair were part of a release of 22 birds last year and this.

Short Reports

Mowhanau Beach (Wanganui) hosted a probable escape **Cape Barren Goose** in early-mid August. The two regular birds of this species at the Hokitika Sewage Ponds were reported again on 16/11. The Whakapuaka Sewage Ponds and Nelson Haven were the site of a brief view of an **Australian Wood Duck** on 11/6. Four to six **Chestnut Teal** were reported from Wai-o-Tapu (Volcanic Plateau) on 2/7 and a further two were reported at Pauatahanui Inlet (Wellington) on 11-12/11.

The long-staying **Little Egret** was seen again at Haumoana (Hawke Bay) on 6/6. Another was reported from the Apanui Saltmarsh (eastern Bay of Plenty) in early-mid August. Two **Glossy Ibises** were at the Manawatu Estuary on 31/7, 7/8, 22/8

and 30/8, probably the same birds present there in summer. Others were at Miranda (Firth of Thames) on 22/10, Wairau Lagoons (Marlborough), two, probably throughout, Kaeo (Far North) in winter, and Lake Wainono (South Canterbury) on 3/11. The Manawatu pair had probably moved just a short distance north up the coast, being reported from the Moana Roa/Rangitikei River Mouth area (Wanganui) on 25/11.

The long-term **Black Kite** was seen again near Renwick (Marlborough) on 22/6, 13/7, 11/10 (being harassed by a New Zealand Falcon) and 8/11. River Road near Taumararua was the scene of a probable **Nankeen Kestrel** sighting in early August.

Probably the same bird present in the Manukau Harbour earlier in the year a **Semipalmated Plover** turned up at Miranda (Firth of Thames) in October, gaining a metal band during its extended stay. A **Large Sand Dotterel** was at Taporā/Big Sand Island (Kaipara Harbour) on 12/6, with two there on 7/11. Taporā/Big Sand Island held a **Mongolian Dotterel** on 12/6, with two there on 2/7. Scotts Ferry (Wanganui) had a male **Shore Plover** on 1/9, with another at Cape Palliser (Wairarapa) on 22/9. The Manawatu Estuary held a probable **American Golden Plover** on 11-16/9. Three **Grey Plovers** were counted on the June wader census on Farewell Spit (Golden Bay). Greenpark Sands (Canterbury) held a probable **Sanderling** on 26/11. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was seen off-and-on at Miranda through winter and spring. Southshore Spit (Christchurch) held a **Hudsonian Godwit** on 17/10. Waitarere Beach (Manawatu) had a **Wandering Tattler** present on 25 and 26/10. The regular site of the Ahuriri Estuary (Napier) held a **Grey-tailed Tattler** on 9/10, 6/11 and 8/11.

The most southerly report of a **Common Sandpiper** was made on 26/9 at Tomahawk Lagoon (Dunedin) by a visiting Australian birder. It was re-found on 30/10 and was then seen regularly but not inevitably through spring. A **Marsh Sandpiper** was seen at Lake Grassmere (Marlborough) on 30/7 and 26/9, probably a long-staying bird seen intermittently earlier in the year.

On the Motueka River (Nelson) a **White-winged Black Tern** was among the Black-fronted Terns on 5/9. The lower Waikato River held a possible **Gull-billed Tern** in mid-August. The regular unusual tern site known as the Manawatu estuary had a **Little Tern** on 7/11. **Arctic Tern** records comprised a singleton at Orere Point (Firth of Thames) on 14-15/6, and four at the Manawatu Estuary on 18/9, probably driven ashore by gales. A **White-throated Needletail** was watched soaring over a ridge on Kapiti Island for 35 minutes on 24/10. A possible **wattlebird** was near Shantytown (Greymouth) on 1/11.



Hutton's shearwater band number X-17115 sitting on a freshly laid egg at the newly established colony for the species on the Kaikoura Peninsula. Photo: Lindsay Rowe, courtesy Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust



Far North

The last Far North roundup was written at the end of July, shortly before Carol and I left for South America for nine weeks. We therefore have rather little news for the period between mid-October and now.

At a recent well-attended indoor meeting Simon Fordham told us 'How to catch a Rifleman', describing the translocation of Riflemen from Little Barrier Island to Tiritiri last year.

We attempted to start the spring/summer seasons with some outdoor activity, beginning with a proposed day up the coast intended for the many beginners in our region. We had no takers at all so we hope to offer some tuition on identification on the spring wader count weekend, which we hope is still to take place.

Having now run day trip pelagics three times over the past year, we have reserved two more dates for January, which are already stimulating interest, albeit mainly from outside the Far North region.

Recent sightings include some very visible Australasian Bitterns north of Kaitaia, two Wrybills lingering into November on Tokerau Beach, 140 Caspian Terns at their breeding site on Walker Island, still up to 70 Spoonbills at Awanui Wharf and another small flock near Whangaroa.

Some of our members have been assisting with a bird census on the seven islands in the Bay of Islands which had predator-eradication about 18 months ago. Although there are no re-introductions yet numbers of the commoner species are increasing.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

September's guest speakers were Graeme Smith and his wife Querida from Mangawhai, who told us of their recent trip to Ecuador, Brazil, Peru and Chile, with emphasis on the Galapagos Islands. Their photographs of some seventy-plus species of birds was well narrated, with Graeme explaining the difficulty of trying to get an accurate focus on some quite active birds in awkward lighting conditions. The photographs also gave us a good idea of the terrain which ranged from jagged mountains at high altitude, to volcanic rock at sea level with some dense jungle and river scenes as well.

The Galapagos Islands are generally remembered because of the observations of Charles Darwin and his party during the second voyage of the Beagle. Specimens collected by them on that voyage played an important part in the development of the theory of evolution by natural selection. Reputedly, the major study was on the mockingbirds, but many of the labels affixed to their collected specimens became detached during the long sea voyage home. Labels were, however, intact on the finch specimens, so the development of that family of species on the individual islands became the focus of the study.

On this cluster of volcanic outcrops, species have evolved over the centuries and the islands remain largely untouched because they have no commercial value for mankind. Graeme and Querida, (whose name means "I love you" in Spanish, causing several embarrassed moments!) flew from Quito in Ecuador to the Islands. Day one of their tour started on Isla Lobos off San Cristobal Island where they studied Blue-footed Boobies, the Lava Heron and the Magnificent Frigatebird. Also seen were Brown Noddies and the San Cristobal Mockingbird plus several of the finch species including both Cactus and Warbler Finches. Of concern to the island conservators are incidences of an avian disease among the ground finches that causes lumps to form around their beak and facial areas.

Day two included Espanola Island where the Nazca Booby, the Waved Albatross and the Galapagos Pelican were seen, as were Galapagos Hawk, Galapagos Gull, Elliot's Storm-petrel and Yellow warbler. Day three took them to Floreana Island where Striated Heron, Punta Cormorant, Pied Stilt, and the Galapagos Storm Petrel were added to the list. On Santa Cruz Island they saw the Santa Cruz Mockingbird, the Brown Pelican, and a tortoise that was over 100 years old! Isabela Island was home to Flamingo, Purple Gallinule and Galapagos Penguins, while Fernandina Island hosted the Flightless Cormorant and Lava Gulls. On South Plaza Swallow-tailed Gulls plus a Great Blue Heron added interest.

While catching up with Levin based relatives recently, Pauline Smith and Kevin Hayes visited the Manawatu Estuary at Foxton Beach on 16th August 2010. This expansive area is the bed of the Manawatu

River where it discharges into the Tasman Sea.

From the car-park a well maintained path leads to a hide tucked in beneath large pine trees, and from there out over the sand-flats at low tide. An information board was erected by DoC and OSNZ to tell visitors that the estuary hosts about 3,000 birds of some 38 species each year. Arctic waders start arriving during September and species seen there include Wrybills, South Island Pied Oystercatchers, Royal Spoonbills, Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot, Banded Dotterel, Pied Stilt and Australasian Shovelers.

Unfortunately, the tide was out, and so were the birds! It was early in the whitebait season and the local hopefuls were out in force waiting for the tide to turn. A walk out to the beach-front showed a similar lack of bird life on the ocean, but some spectacular breakers and a superb view of the snow-covered Mount Taranaki 'floating' on a band of sea mist. The sand hills had been severely criss-crossed over the weekend by quad bikes and motocross riders, which must have disturbed the bird life to some extent.

On the way home a detour was made via the Foxton to Shannon road to see the flood-gates that regulate water flow in times of flooding. Upstream of the floodgates is a huge 'sacrifice' area for ponding water until it can be released through the floodgates. This provides a great foraging space for waders and waterfowl and was being used by some 67 Spur-winged Plovers, 18 Pied Stilts and 40 or more Black-backed Gulls. On Newth Road they saw a mass of white birds across the valley in a compact flock, but did not have a telescope with them. Through binoculars, they estimated that they it comprised about 4,000 Black-billed Gulls.

PAULINE SMITH and KEVIN HAYES

Auckland

It has been a rather quiet time in the field for this time of the year, but just a lull leading up to the spring/summer censuses. One field activity carried out in October was a bird survey of Shakespear Regional Park. This has become an annual event, establishing a base-line species list and population indicators prior to comprehensive predator management in 2011. A predator-proof fence is in the process of being completed for this park, so we anticipate that before/after bird counts will contribute valuable data for assessing the success of predator management.

We have enjoyed an interesting range of topics at our recent monthly meetings. Our guest in September was Josie Galbraith who presented aspects of the nesting ecology of the Eastern Rosella in the Auckland region. Josie's study, part of post-graduate research at the University of Auckland, took a biosecurity perspective of the Rosella – perhaps an overdue study given that this year marks the centenary of the Rosella's first release in New Zealand near Dunedin. In October, one of our members, Sandra Morris, presented an account of a recent visit to the Subantarctic islands. Her remarkable experiences were shared through stunning photos and her own botanical illustrations.

For November's meeting, we were enthralled at the cinematography of a Sir David Attenborough documentary about birds of paradise in New Guinea. *Attenborough in Paradise* was somewhat of a personal journey for Sir David, inspired by the 19th century writings of Sir Alfred Wallace, to view birds of paradise in remote locations. The programme was a spectacle of courtship behaviour and interpreted in terms of selection pressures. An absolute ornithological treat!

MEL GALBRAITH

Waikato

During October's meeting, Abbie Mason, a BSc. Honours student at the University of Waikato, talked to us about her research into Little Penguin vocalisations. As many know, there are several subspecies of Little Penguin in New Zealand and (some) hot debate over whether some of these should be classed as full species; however, that is another discussion! What is known is that the Little Penguins from the Dunedin area appear to be more closely related to the Australian subspecies compared to the Banks Peninsula form. Abbie is investigating whether vocalisations from birds that live in different areas are more attractive to penguins if they are more closely related to that particular variety. This meant fieldwork in Australia and New Zealand; not bad. Unfortunately, Abbie was still too early in her analysis to give us a definitive conclusion, which means she will have to return and give us another talk in the future.

Over Labour weekend 13 members and family went on a fieldtrip to Blue Duck Lodge at Whakahoro on the Whanganui River. This lodge was featured on an episode of Country Calendar, which sparked interest in the group to visit. The lure of Blue Ducks was another catalyst, but



as it was discovered, the area is home to many special birds and no fewer than 40 species were seen or heard. Among these were Falcon, Bellbird, Rifleman, Long-tailed Cuckoo, North Island Brown Kiwi, and of course, Blue Duck. Not only a great birding spot, our members also participated in hunting, 4WD tours and kayaking on the Kaiwhakauka Stream. Dan Steele, the station owner, and his business partner told us about the conservation measures they were putting in place. There are hundreds of predator traps to save the Blue Duck and Kiwi and thus general biodiversity. They are retiring parts of the farm from grazing, fencing off waterways, planting trees, and although there will always be deer and goats for hunting, they are hoping to keep them to 'reasonable' levels.

Once again we thank all the speakers who gave up their time to talk to the Waikato region this year. We appreciate the time and effort this takes to do, and thoroughly enjoyed them all.

DAI MORGAN and STELLA ROWE

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Blue Ducks have been the feature of both the BoP and Volcanic Plateau areas since the last roundup. Kerry Oates saw a pair of Blue Ducks on the Mangatu Stream near its confluence with Waihaha River (Pureora) on Sunday 19th September. He watched them for a while and they flew down the Mangatu and up the Waihaha out of sight. Both rivers were in raging flood at the time. A slightly more sedate Mangorewa Stream hosted a pair again this spring. Marcus Richards has been patiently photographing them, and has been able to get wonderful study shots, and I hope that he will be able to write a short note up for Notornis so that his diligence will be able to be put to good use in a published article. The Tongariro River still has Blue Ducks as fly fisherman John Kleim spotted a male on consecutive days in late September. They were on the true right, at the Big Bend Pool. They are quite common in this area according to him.

Pureora doesn't just host Blue Ducks, as in early November Brent Stephenson heard two calls from a single Long-tailed Cuckoo and spotted a female Falcon with great flight views. He noted more Kaka than normal and only one Yellow-crowned Parakeet. Kerry Oates reported a female Falcon giving the 'whee-up' call and saw a Kaka at the Waihaha Hut in late September. Other Kaka records lately are six observed by Paul Copeland in early August in eucalyptus trees close to Athenree Wildlife Refuge Reserve. Tony Crocker, in between his gallivanting always has time to send in his local sightings, and he saw and heard a Kaka in flight near Bethlehem, mid-August, then three a few days later. Trina Watts in Omokoroa sees Kaka around, not all the time, but groups of about seven or eight, in Walnut Grove, the gums in the Crapp Reserve, and at other places around the Omokoroa Peninsula.

Tony Crocker is living in a 'Barbary Dove Zone', and has documented their explosion into the Bethlehem vicinity. The New Zealand Dotterel continues to nest in the Matata area under the watchful eyes of John Groom. He reported the first nest with three eggs being incubated in late August, and noted that the pair has claimed territory year after year within 50-60 metres of a set spot. Later the following month John found five nests being incubated and two or three more pairs 'expectant'.

Matakana Island New Zealand Dotterels had a terrible start to the season when strong winds and high tides washed away nests, and in some cases whole areas of nesting sand dunes. John Heaphy estimated around 20 pairs on the island with eight nests in mid-October.

In September a New Zealand Pigeon was reported at Omokoroa Golf Course, and a Royal Spoonbill was spotted by Keith Owen at the Waioeka River mouth, near Opotiki, in August.

Tim Barnard continues to get interesting records from the Rotorua area reported to him. In September, Kaka were reported from Ngongotaha, Lynmore and the central city. A New Zealand Falcon was around the Long Mile (Whakarewarewa Forest). Tim also notes changes in wader numbers over the course of the spring, with Little Waihi/Maketu Bar-tailed Godwit numbers rising from 72 in late September to 477 in October. Other interesting records from this area over the spring were the return of the Pacific Golden Plovers to Little Waihi in October, and a colony of White-fronted Terns nesting on the seaward side of the Maketu Spit. November saw five Red-necked Stints, oblivious to ten kite surfers within metres of them! Also in November Tim spotted 2,800 Bar-tailed Godwits at Matahui Point, Katikati.

An unusual behaviour I have not heard of but worth noting was Shining Cuckoos parasitising a Blackbird nest in Omokoroa in November. When our observer first saw it, he had a look when the parents were away feeding, and there were four eggs in it. He later saw the parents flying back and forth, feeding the young. When he had a

look subsequently, there was only one young, and it wasn't a Blackbird. Later the parents were taking food to the bird out on a branch, definitely not a Blackbird, but a Shining Cuckoo! Another observation of unusual behaviour occurred early one October morning at Hamurana Springs Reserve when Kerry Oates came across a Morepork on the ground with a freshly killed male Blackbird in its talons. The owl flew up into an adjacent tree with its prey and waited for him to depart before devouring it.

Tim reported great Kokako song from Kaharoa on Labour Weekend, and a Red-legged Partridge was reported from a farm in Taupo around the same time.

Two observational trips in October and November to Mauao found four Grey-faced Petrel chicks of various sizes in the artificial burrows. The programme will resume fully in December. Little Penguins are into nesting, with the most easily observed rock burrows containing either incubating adults or chicks digesting their last meals.

Our last evening meeting was Birds of Chile, by long-time member Paddy Latham, in October.

PAUL CUMING

Taranaki

A fine and sunny August morning had a good turn out of members gathered at Pukeiti for a stroll around the grounds. Sheltered from the prevailing southerly the day became quite warm. Native bird species seen were almost double the introduced, Bellbirds were vocal and numerous, feeding at a variety of native and introduced flowers with four seen together chasing each other. Also numerous and vocal were Tui, with Tomtit and Whitehead seen. From there a couple of us ventured down to the coast for a look around Waikirikiri dune lagoon, but a cold southerly blowing across the beach made conditions unpleasant and we didn't stay long.

Beach patrols had turned up very little in August, the only interesting find being a Little Shearwater, uncommon around this coast.

Emily King from DoC was guest speaker at September's meeting. Emily has taken over the project to reintroduce Blue Duck to Egmont National Park from Dean Casey. The last confirmed sighting of Blue Duck in Taranaki was around 1945-48 on the Waiwhakaho River and this is the first time that an attempt has been made to establish a new population; other projects were to assist established populations. Releases from 1987-91 were unsuccessful with most birds predated, but from 1999, in conjunction with increased predator control and intensive monitoring, the initial objectives have been achieved and the focus is now on the second phase to develop a stable self-sustaining population, and to have fifty breeding pairs within the protected area by 2019. The population and pair numbers seem to have been stable over the last two breeding seasons. The current number is estimated at 41 to 59 individuals, but there are only 14 to 19 females. Emily's talk was very comprehensive and interesting and deserved a larger audience.

In reports from members David Medway heard his first Kingfisher call for the season in early August and saw Tui chasing Eastern Rosellas in Brooklands Park. I reported an Australasian Bittern seen in a paddock at Waiongana. New Zealand Pigeons were back in Ian Dudding's *Magnolia* eating the buds, but stopped visiting when the flowers opened, and Barry Hartley saw three New Zealand Dotterels at Sandy Bay. He also noted Red-billed Gull numbers were building up around the Sugar Loaf Islands.

September's outing was a pleasant morning's walk along part of the Huatoki Stream walkway through urban back yards and rural paddocks. This time introduced species were far more common than the native, with Mynas being most numerous. Four New Zealand Pigeons were seen, along with a female Paradise Duck with six fledglings.

Barry Hartley and I, wearing our Grey-faced Petrel hats and several layers of warm clothing, hosted Peter Frost and his wife, visiting from Wanganui, for a look at the Rapanui colony. Although it was getting late in the season a few birds were seen including one which nearly hit me as it crash landed, and another on the ground that was rewarded by having it's photo taken. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening, even if I was a bit bleary eyed the next day. We need little prompting to go up and see these remarkable birds.

I was unable to attend the October meeting and have not found out as yet who heard the first Shining Cuckoo. The usual contenders



appear somewhat reluctant to commit to a positive time, although one was reported by a non-member earlier in the month, and one was heard at Waiongana by my wife, Julie, on September 27th.

Migratory waders have been few on Taranaki beaches with one Pacific Golden Plover on September 13th then two in early October at Waiongana. On October 5th there were three Bar-tailed Godwits at Waiongana, one sporting an orange flag; the first flagged Godwit I have seen here. Three days later the same or another flagged Godwit was with four others in the company of eight rather agitated Pied Stilts. David Medway also saw seven Bar-tailed Godwits on a stretch of beach close to New Plymouth. He also reports that the Little Shags have started nesting in Pukekura Park. Barry Hartley told of a report of fourteen Royal Spoonbills at Mokau, and eleven were seen at Cowley Lake on the outskirts of Waitara. There have been several sightings of Falcons throughout the province.

Beach patrols at Waiongana turned up an exciting wreck in early October, which required an early trip into Barry Hartley's and some poring over the field guide before we both agreed that I had picked up a Fiordland Crested Penguin.

PETER FRYER

Hawkes Bay

Wet weather caused planned outings in August and September to be cancelled, but eventually spring did arrive and the October field trip went ahead. We visited Pekapeka Swamp, a wetland just south of Hastings which is undergoing extensive restoration work, and were fortunate to be joined by Garth Eyles who gave an interesting account of the history of the area and the many difficulties encountered since the Regional Council embarked on its restoration project. Garth has now retired from the Council, but was the driving force behind this project and still keeps a watchful eye on progress. From our meeting place at the new observation area we were able to spot several New Zealand Dabchicks as well as Grey Teal, Australasian Shoveler and Mallards. Several Coots were seen, including a pair with young. We look forward to exploring this area further now that it is more accessible. Future plans include tracks and boardwalks. In the past Australasian Bittern, Spotless Crane and Banded Rail have been recorded.

In October we had a very well supported outing to Rangaiika Beach. This is within the Cape Kidnappers Wildlife Preserve and we were guided by Tamsin Ward-Smith who manages this area. Four wheel drive vehicles were needed to negotiate the road through the reserve and out to the coast, where the landscape is pretty spectacular. An absolute highlight for all was seeing several pairs of New Zealand Dotterels. With intensive predator control they are thriving and breeding successfully, as are several pairs of Variable Oystercatchers. On one of the large flat rocky platforms a colony of around 400 White-fronted Terns was present, along with 60 Red-billed Gulls. They appeared to be nesting – some courtship feeding was going on, and several were observed mating. Unfortunately it's not an area where we can easily monitor their progress. Also in this area volunteers have made and installed a large number of nest boxes for Little Penguin. Some were occupied.

Whilst undertaking some river survey work recently Brent Stephenson was delighted to find two pairs of South Island Pied Oystercatchers in the upper reaches of the Tutaeakuri River. One pair had a nest. The species had not previously been recorded on this river so it is great to have a new confirmed breeding site.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Wanganui

The miserable weather experienced by many during the last few months certainly put a damper on field activities. A trip to visit the Grey-faced Petrel colony at Tongaporutu in north Taranaki, planned for mid September, was postponed twice on account of the weather. Then a one-day break in the wind and rain opened up a narrow window of opportunity – on a weekday! In the end, only two of us went along. There we were joined by Barry Hartley and Peter Fryer from the Taranaki branch of the OSNZ, both of whom have invested considerable time developing this 2.4 ha conservation covenant run by the Rapanui Grey-faced Petrel Trust. By then, late September, most of the chicks in the colony were apparently quite well-grown, so that visits by the parent birds were intermittent and at long intervals, so seeing the birds was not guaranteed. None-the-less, we eventually

located two adults on the ground well after dark, while another two or three were seen briefly overhead in the moonlight. If seeing these birds on a calm, clear night was a pleasure, the weather the next day was not. It had started raining again.

Within Wanganui itself a group of up to perhaps four Kaka at Virginia Lake kept spirits up, with a number of people reporting their occurrence and antics. A pair of these birds was first seen nearby in late August with three, possibly four birds being recorded regularly in late September, then declining to just a single bird seen through October to early November. This pattern of birds being recorded in winter away from their known breeding areas is known from elsewhere, although this year the number of birds and frequency of sightings locally is up from those reported previously. Does this reflect increased breeding success and perhaps expanding populations in the interior, or progressively deteriorating conditions forcing the birds to extend their foraging range in the non-breeding season? Will the pattern of increase seen over the past few years be sustained? We wait to see.

Whereas we welcome the prospect of more Kaka, we are ambivalent about an apparent increase locally in both the numbers and range of another parrot, that Aussie import, the Eastern Rosella. The growing number of reports of these birds from around Wanganui strongly suggests an expanding population. Damage to one of the few local pip-fruit orchards has been reported; will others follow? What we now need are more systematic observations of which species and what numbers are present at a range of sites across the region, so that we can get a better idea of the changes that may be occurring in these populations.

Another species whose numbers have jumped recently is the Nankeen Night Heron. In 2008, we recorded an average of just over eight birds at the Kauarapaoa roost (range 2-13). In 2009, this was down slightly to under seven birds (range 5-8), but then only three counts were made. This year, the average is just over 11 birds (range 4-18). Is this increase real, or simply an artefact of a pre-breeding build-up of birds that are at other times more spread out? Again, the answer can only come from making more systematic observations over a longer period.

Among the rarer species to be recorded over the past few months was a Shore Plover, found by Sav Saville in early September at Moana Roa, a coastal saltmarsh just west of the Rangitikei River Mouth. From its colour bands, we now know that this bird was released on Mana Island in October 2009, when it was just over a year old. It did not stay at Moana Roa for long, however, and was back at Mana Island 11 days later. Whereas some of us who went to see the Shore Plover failed in that regard, we did find a number of Banded Dotterels breeding there; all nests with eggs. One of these nests was situated in a medium-sized patch of salt marsh, which may explain why other dotterels have taken to breeding on the airport at Wanganui. One or two pairs have nested there each year for the past three years, and presumably see similarities in structure between salt marsh and the mown grassland alongside the runway of this airport lying next to the coast. This year, to avoid aircraft running over the nest, the airport staff placed an orange marker cone near the nest. The birds promptly moved their eggs to a new nest, 65 cm away, presumably to take shelter behind the cone from the cold nocturnal breeze that blows on cold winter nights from the land to the ocean.

Regular monthly meetings have provided a warmer environment for thinking about birds. In August we held a 'Big Bird Quiz' (with apologies to Sesame Street), the questions ranging from "Which is the world's smallest flightless bird?" (Inaccessible Island Rail, *Atlantisia rogersii*) to "Which bird gave the pop group Fleetwood Mac a number one instrumental hit?" (Albatross). It was a light-hearted affair that, we hope, was also educational. In September, Peter Frost gave an update on the status of the Nankeen Night Herons that he and others have been monitoring intermittently. So far, the birds seem to be holding their own.

In October, Jim Campbell from the Department of Conservation talked about the current status and future management plans for Blue Duck in the Manganui o te Ao/Retaruke National Security Site. This is one of eight priority sites designated nationally to secure the future of the species. Whereas controlling stoats and other predators of nesting birds and ducklings is the priority, this can only be done effectively with the support of private landowners, tangata whenua, local communities and regional councils. The Department is therefore devoting substantial time and resources to involving and working with these groups. The accomplishments of this initiative to date hold much promise that the decline of this iconic species can be halted. We wish them every success.

PETER FROST



Wairarapa

The annual Big Bird Cup quiz evening was contested in August, with the Masterton team winning again, even though they were numerically outnumbered by the Greytown team. Aarlbert Rebergen compiled the quiz and acted as quizmaster. Aarlbert is an OSNZ member and also North Island field officer for Forest and Bird.

Jason Christensen gave a presentation on 'the Restoration of Mana Island' in September. A mouse population of five million was one of the problems faced before restoration could begin on Mana Island. Jason Christensen, who spent 11 years on the island, showed a PowerPoint presentation tracing the work of the Friends of Mana Island and DoC to convert the Island from a farm to a Scientific Reserve. The 535 acre island was one of the first farms in New Zealand, being farmed until 1986. The following year it was designated as a reserve.

Over the years 500,000 trees and shrubs have been established and these have provided homes for a number of creatures that have been re-introduced, such as skinks, geckos, Cook Strait Giant Weta, Flax Weevil, and birds such as Shore Plover, Common Diving Petrel, Fluttering Shearwater, Yellow-crowned Parakeet and Takahe. The Takahe have shown their appreciation for the Island by now numbering over 40 individuals. Early in the planting programme Pukeko self-introduced and their numbers increased dramatically, to such an extent that they had to be controlled as they attacked the newly planted trees.

Technology has played an important part in the relocation of petrels and shearwaters with tapes being played to encourage them to stay. A colony of stone Gannets was set up with tapes being played to encourage others to take up residence. Although two came in within two hours of the colony being set up none have attempted permanent residence, but efforts continue. Jason's was a very interesting presentation that showed just what can be done with the help of dedicated volunteers.

In October Jenny Whyte from DoC Masterton gave an illustrated presentation describing restoration work on Onoke Spit, its diversity of plants and animals and the impact of people. Onoke Spit is an area of 60 ha containing rare and endangered plants and animals. Caspian Terns nest there, finding the sandy terrain, and often the ruts from cars, to be an ideal spot to nest and rear their chicks. With the nearby ocean and lake there is food aplenty, but serious problems for them occur when people with cars run over them and their nests. There are no plans to exclude people, but some ideas to make a well defined roadway for cars. Some areas have been cordoned off to allow native plants to regenerate without disturbance. A special plant, the Sand Daphne, is a pimelia that is the sole food source of a threatened moth *Notoreas* (Well Moth). It is small, its wingspan being the size of our new 50 cent piece.

Palliser Estate Winery has offered to start a revegetation programme as a means of stabilising the dunes. Their work may include increasing areas of scab weed, i.e., (*Raoulia australis*) and Pingao and dealing with invasive poppy, Marram Grass and lupin species, which will be replaced by native species. Onoke Spit is home to a number of reptile species: the Common Gecko, a copper skink and a speckled skink with a pink belly. The Katipo spider may also be at home here. Because of the native animals that live on the spit, a program to trap Ferrets, Cats and stoats is in progress. In the past the spit was the site of a thriving eel fishery of considerable importance to Maori.

The October field trip was an extension of this interest in Onoke Spit. Members were joined by the family from Palliser Estate Winery and also Denise and Dougal MacKenzie. Although not OSNZ members, the MacKenzies are fulfilling a vital role as voluntary caretakers/kaitiaki at Onoke. Dougal monitors pest traps and removes corpses. They both remove bags of rubbish etc. Living near Onoke Spit they have always worked closely with members and welcomed us into their home and extensive bird-friendly gardens. Denise is in the process of forming the Friends of Onoke Spit, and a number of members have signed up.

The Caspian Tern breeding colony at Onoke Spit has long been of significant interest to OSNZ. Colin Scadden devoted years observing and recording the colony. He has since retired from this project, but newer and younger members will hopefully continue this work, especially since Caspian Tern observations have been selected for nation-wide survey by OSNZ.

BARBARA LOVATT

Wellington

At the September meeting Geoffrey Chambers from Victoria University gave a talk entitled 'Albatross Taxonomy – an adventure in species concepts'. Much of his career has been devoted to using DNA-based methods for defining the taxonomy of New Zealand birds including albatrosses. This group of birds has been classified

by different ornithologists into as few as 13 or as many as 24 different species. Importantly, conservation values can vary depending on which taxonomic scheme is adopted. Apart from one exception, Geoffrey's taxonomic classification of the albatrosses, which is based on his DNA studies, is identical to that presented in the latest checklist. The exception is that he believes that the White-capped Albatross and Shy Albatross should be separate species.

Lynn Adams from the Department of Conservation presented a talk entitled, 'Urban Diversity – bringing nature to peoples' doorstep' at the October meeting. Currently 86% of the New Zealand population lives in an urban environment and there is a need to ensure that this population has the opportunity to reconnect with nature as well as appreciate the importance of conservation initiatives. Lynn described how urban sections can be made more attractive to birds and lizards through predator control and the growing of appropriate native plants and 'safe' exotics.

In November I gave a talk on salmonella, 'Salmonella Typhimurium DT160 - more than just sparrows'. This talk summarised the epidemic of salmonella that erupted just over 10 years ago. While *S. Typhimurium* DT160 is widely known for being responsible for the death of large numbers of House Sparrows in 2000, this strain of salmonella has been the most common single cause of salmonellosis in humans in New Zealand during the last 10 years. Less well known is the outbreak of *S. Typhimurium* DT195, which in 2006 caused the death of approximately a quarter of the Stitchbird population on Tiritiri Matangi. Prior to the outbreak, *Salmonella Typhimurium* DT195 had only been recorded three times previously in New Zealand, and all cases were in humans. Subsequently, *S. Typhimurium* DT195 has been increasingly isolated from human cases of salmonellosis but very rarely from animals and birds.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

The regional newsletter initiated by Stuart Wood in June has since been produced by Gail Quayle, who has put out three editions containing a wealth of news. We are fortunate to have Gail back in Nelson after a stint in the deep south. She was previously regional recorder for Nelson and has a detailed knowledge of OSNZ activities in the district.

In September Ron Moorhouse gave a fascinating talk to a good-sized audience of members, illustrated with photos and graphs, on recent developments in the conservation of Kakapo, covering feeding issues to genetic diversity. Artificial insemination may play an important role in the future. Currently the Kakapo population stands at 122, from an all-time low of 51 in 1995.

In October Bill Gilbertson from the Nelson Cycle Trails Trust spoke about the Tasman Circuit of the National Cycleway Project. More specifically the coastal section from Richmond to Mapua and around the Pearl Creek area was discussed in detail. The proposed route has serious implications for the dwindling special habitat where Bittern, Banded Rail and Marsh Crane are seen. Bill showed maps of the planned route and Willie Cook followed this up with photos of the resident birds in situ.

November's meeting was a more impromptu affair, with two Golden Bay members airing their concerns to a packed room regarding reporting of rare bird sightings and the subsequent replies from the rare birds committee. From the evidence shown and the detailed discussion which followed it appeared more appropriate wording could be applied in the replies.

The Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust requested our assistance to carry out a survey on Adele Island to determine the state of the Robin population. Thirty Robins were released on the island last year in collaboration with DoC and hopefully had bred. Ingrid Hutzler led a party of two pairs of people along the island track doing a clockwise and anticlockwise route stopping at marked trap stations to record the presence or absence of Robins. This took place at the end of October and a total of eight birds was recorded. It was interesting to note that none of the birds were banded, which indicated they were young bred on the island as the released population were all banded.

David and Julia Melville have reported some interesting sightings and observations around the Waimea Estuary. In September a Bar-tailed Godwit with a green flag engraved HC was recorded. It was banded on 19th September 2009 as a 2+-year-old female at Wellington Point, Queensland with no sightings since its original banding. Large



numbers of Lion's Mane Jellyfish were washed up about this time and David was amazed to see a Variable Oystercatcher feeding on one of these wrecked organisms. Only one other oystercatcher species in the world has been recording doing the same. Two Whimbrels have been seen among the returning flocks of arctic migrants in the estuary. This was followed by a report and photo from a tour bus driver at the base of Farewell Spit of one.

Sightings from Golden Bay include an Australasian Bittern disturbed from a ditch by Helen Kingston followed by Chris Petyt being informed that a Shore Plover was on the beach at Ligar Bay. Chris in company with Helen followed this up and they were able to read the colour banding. Records showed that it had been sighted near Cape Palliser a fortnight earlier. A Harrier banded by Willie Cook in June 2005 was found as a road kill only a few kilometres north-west from the property where it was banded.

Willie continues to be associated with transfer of South Island Saddlebacks in Queen Charlotte Sound from Motuara Island to Blumine Island as part of a DoC relocation programme. On the 2nd October Willie recorded the first eggs laid this season by the Caspian Tern on the estuary shellbank colony. The number of pairs is similar to recent years when around 60 chicks fledged.

Peter Field reported that Black-fronted Dotterels have not been seen for many weeks, something also noted by others, so it is unlikely that breeding has taken place. The New Zealand Dabchick is being very elusive on the Atawhai sewage ponds. Despite frequent visits with no sightings it was confirmed as still there at the time of writing in early November.

The first of the five minute bird counts along the Flora Track took place in the first week of November with perfect spring weather. Most notable was a flock of five Kea flying over the car park on our arrival. Kea, Kaka and Weka were heard but not sighted on the survey. Bellbird was once again the dominant species followed by Rifleman and Robin.

Peter Gaze has a few projects that members may wish to assist in, including surveys in the Motueka and Buller River catchments for Black-fronted Tern colonies. Awaiting approval is the re-introduction of Fernbirds to Long Island. A site where these birds are plentiful has been located and translocation should be technically feasible. Just so we don't get bored Willie Cook in collaboration with Graeme Elliot has arranged a survey in the Waimea Estuary for the presence of Banded Rails on the 13th November.

DON COOPER

Otago

The first sighting of a Common Sandpiper in Otago has generated a lot of excitement since it was first reported on 26th September, by Robyn Pickering, a visitor from Australia. Richard Schofield was the first to report re-sighting it on Saturday 30th October at lunchtime and on the Sunday Hamish Spencer also saw it. It was seen on the grassy area by the outlet of the lagoon near the road. This was also the place to meet with many local birders and the gathering of birders lined up with large lens cameras and telescopes all peering at a corner of the lagoon piqued the interest of folks in neighbouring houses with many questions about what we were looking at. Craig McKenzie, Mary Thompson and Ian Southey were lucky enough to get good views in the sunshine on 2nd November. The Pied Stilts and Spur-winged Plovers were giving it a good telling off, so they saw it as a stranger too.

Often our Indoor Meetings feature exotic birds of other countries or research on our own rare and endangered species. However, at our September meeting a large number of members discovered that studying our common Bellbirds and Tui can also be really exciting. Murray Efford reported on the first findings from his study of individually colour-banded Tui and Bellbirds that he has captured using mist nets set up in his Helensburgh suburban garden. The first surprising fact was that he has captured 114 Tui and over 90 Bellbirds in this one place over two seasons (2009 and 2010) - a spectacular number of individual birds visiting one garden. So we now realise that the half dozen Tui and Bellbirds we see at our own sugar water feeders may be different ones each day. Those of us visited by Tui have been looking out for banded birds and indeed several OSNZ members have been pleased to have seen some. The study has generated a lot of interest as reports of banded Tui have come in from all over the city, some from Mosgiel, Brighton

and Saddle Hill, but interestingly, none from South Dunedin, the Otago Peninsula or Port Chalmers. Another really amazing fact is that a banded Tui was sighted at Papatowai, 110 km away and three different birds were seen in Oamaru, 95 km away. There are also now data supporting our anecdotal observations that the number of male Bellbirds present in gardens seems to be much greater than female: of the birds banded by Murray, for Bellbirds only 16% are female and for Tui, 26% were female. It is great to have this study right on our doorstep.

As a change from the usual Indoor Meeting, in October a large group of us went to the Otago Museum and were treated to an exciting and interesting glimpse into the bird vaults, which house the premier collection in Australasia. Cody Fraser, Collections Coordinator, Natural history, showed us around and explained how the collection is looked after. There are shelves and shelves of mounted bird specimens arranged by family, and also shelves and shelves of study skins and endless boxes of moa bones. Moa bones were used as swaps with museums around the world for exotic bird specimens in the early days. This is partially why the Otago Museum has such a wide-ranging bird collection. The job of looking after the collection and still adding to it is huge, and it was very good to hear first hand from Cody some of what happens. Peter Schweigman is an Honorary Curator and has his own room stocked with reference books, where he lays out a shelf of eggs and starts the painstaking process of measuring and identification and cross-checking and recording all the details and entering identifications into the database. We were only allowed to look at the shelves of boxes of mysterious eggs. A sense of history was evident all around us: one label read 'Dusky Plover [now renamed New Zealand Dotterel] donated by Hon. Capt. Fraser 1851'; 100-year-old Kakapo; moa bones; and the Kiwi shoe polish kiwi. It was also great to have the chance to see some very elusive birds up close: Australasian Bittern, Long-tailed Cuckoo and, perhaps more sadly, those now extinct: Huia, South Island Kokako and Piopio. We also saw the albatross collection and the very historic kiwi collection.

The New Zealand Falcon study under the guidance of Steve Lawrence has started its second season of locating breeding birds in the exotic forests around the greater Dunedin area by playing calls in likely areas. The Otago Harbour Survey, co-ordinated by Bruce McKinlay, is continuing for a second year with a goodly number of people willingly taking part. The colour-banding of Royal Spoonbill continues to yield sightings after 10 years, with birds banded in 1999 recently sighted in the lagoons around the Otago Harbour.

MARY THOMPSON

Southland

June's winter wader count included seven Red-necked Stints and a Grey-tailed Tattler at Cow Island, Awarua Bay. Wynston Cooper who completed the count also noted 82 New Zealand Dotterels, exactly the same number as the previous year's count. The Red-necked Stint count was a surprise as they have been absent in previous winter counts.

David Melville and Rob Schuckard arrived in October for an early season catch at Awarua Bay. We were so relieved that they had not come in September during the heavy snowfalls that covered parts of Southland, although it could have been an interesting cannon-netting session!

David and Rob managed a reasonable catch of Turnstones and several Bar-tailed Godwits in a new area for netting at Awarua Bay. We had some helpers of note including Ian Southey and Keith Woodley. A day before the cannon-netting Rob and I headed to Riverton for some band-spotting and found a Bar-tailed Godwit which had been banded at Catlins Lake. There was also a flock of Lesser Knots with the usual birds present, not a common sight at Riverton. We then headed for Awarua Bay and scanned the flocks as they retreated from the incoming tide. There was much excitement as an alpha-numeral-flagged male Bar-tailed Godwit, J9, was spotted. This bird had been banded at Nome, Alaska in one of the breeding areas, and was the first sighting on the non-breeding grounds of any of the Nome 2009 birds caught by Jesse Conklin, David Melville and co.

Other interesting sightings have included: a New Zealand Falcon reported from Mores Reserve at Riverton in June, as well as two from the Blue Mountains, one at Whisky Gully and the other at Black Gully; a Black-billed gull photographed at Kaikoura by Peter Langlands in June that had been banded on the Aparima River at Bayswater in Southland; and a Black Stilt reported by a farmer in a paddock at Knapdale, just outside Gore.

PHIL RHODES

Regional Reps and What's On



Far North

Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 0470. Ph (09) 407 3874. Email detlef@davies@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, Manukau 2163. 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 Hoverd 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 ecoworks@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, Lizardet 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 maryt@actrix.co.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.

