



Southern *Bird*

No. 46 June 2011 • ISSN 1175-1916

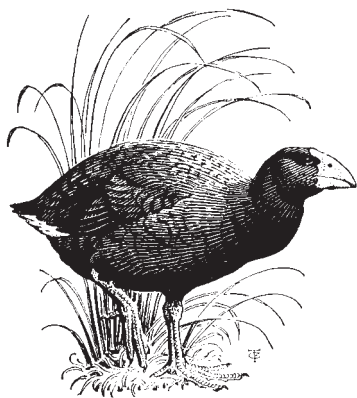
The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



Arid Zone Birding

Recording your Observations

Caspian Tern Census



Southern Bird

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QUOTATION

I think we consider too much the good luck of the early bird and not enough the bad luck of the early worm.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

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CORRECTIONS

In the March issue of *Southern Bird* two new members were assigned to the incorrect regions. Chris Bell was stated as being in the Wairarapa region rather than Wanganui and Shirley Scadden was stated as being in the Gisborne/Wairoa region rather than the Wairarapa. Apologies to those members and for any confusion caused.

COVER PHOTOS

Cover Photos

Front cover: Southern Royal Albatross

Back cover: Northern Royal Albatross

Both photos by Peter Langlands

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

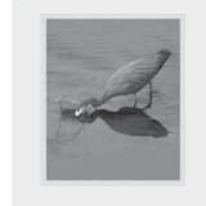
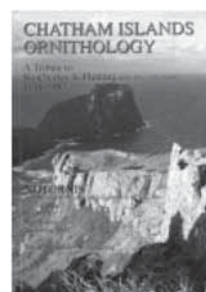
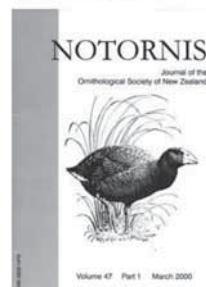
If you are reading this but are not a member of the Ornithological Society you would be very welcome to join us. Our membership consists of the whole spectrum of people interested in New Zealand/South Pacific birds from beginners with just an interest through keen birdwatchers and amateur ornithologists 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 \$70 (students pay just \$35.00 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, Yvonne McLaughlan, by writing to P.O. Box 54, Sefton, North Canterbury 7445 or email yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com
- Contact your nearest regional representative, contact details for which can be found on the back page of this magazine.



NEW REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Neil Robertson is the new RR for Southland and Peggy Duncan in the Wairarapa. Contact details for all RRs are on the last page of this magazine

Publisher

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THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND, INC.

ANNUAL REPORT

ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2010

This report was presented on behalf of the Council to the 72nd Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand held in Lower Hutt on 4th June 2011.

DECEASED MEMBERS

During the year a number of members have died and I list below those of whom I have been made aware.

One of those is Don Merton who had a high profile in conservation circles, not only in New Zealand, but around the world. During the year Council elected Don as a fellow of the Society and it gave me much pleasure to present him with his certificate accompanied by fellow Councillor Keith Owen and Regional Representative Eila Lawton at his home in Tauranga. At the time Don was unwell but still made us welcome and was clearly excited to receive the recognition from the Society. The death notice in the paper proudly acknowledged the award that the Society had given him.

Recently Mike Imber another well known Wildlife Service/Department of Conservation Seabird Ecologist died at his home. Mike had been active and freely gave of his time to Society activities.

These deaths are a sad loss with their wealth of experience, and bird study in New Zealand can ill afford to lose the accumulated knowledge of these two members.

In addition to Don Merton and Mike Imber, another member who died was Patrick Buxton from Taupo. Our thoughts go out to their families.

COUNCIL

As is the usual practice Council met formally twice in the year under review, with the first meeting being in Nelson on the 3rd June 2010 and secondly at Dovedale near Nelson on the 13th and 14th November 2010. A further meeting was held on the 3rd June 2011 as part of this current AGM.

There is however frequent contact between Council members, either working on specified projects or raising issues for discussion. Members can be assured that there is a hard working team of Councillors working in the best interests of the Society.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The only change to the Council at this Annual Meeting is that Stuart Nicholson has decided to retire. Stuart has been working in England for the past 18 months but has been still able to provide meaningful input into Council discussions via email. However, he has decided that the difficulties of working at such a distance are proving to be to the detriment of his input which is always to a high level. His analytical mind will be missed although I am sure that we will still be able to give him specific tasks.

Nominations were called for secretary as the present secretary retired by rotation. The only nomination was Peter Gaze and he is therefore duly re-elected for another three-year term.

David Melville's term also ended and his position was one of the two that were advertised in the March issue of *Southern Bird*. The nomination for David was the only one received and he is also therefore duly re-elected.

That leaves one vacancy and Council is considering options to co-opt for a one-year term.

CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKE

It is difficult for those of us remote from Christchurch to appreciate the ongoing effects of the Christchurch earthquakes. While we see the images on television the ongoing tremors and disruption to normal life must be devastating.

On behalf of the Society I extend my best wishes to the members in the Christchurch region and hope that your lives can return to normal in the near future.

Members should be aware that the printing of *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* is undertaken in Christchurch and that both editors live in the Christchurch area. The earthquake has had serious impacts on the publishing company, with a part of their building demolished and access restricted for a considerable time. Council is grateful, however, that they have made arrangements to continue the production of *Southern Bird* and *Notornis* as close to schedule as possible.

We are also grateful to Nick Allen and Jim Briskie for their continuing good work. Jim in particular was severely hampered as he was denied access to his office for a lengthy period and was operating from a tent on the lawn outside the building.

NOTORNIS

It is still disappointing to me, and Council, that the publishing of *Notornis* has not yet returned to the intended schedule. As mentioned above there have been some extraordinary circumstances that have added further delays outside the control of the editor and that has certainly not helped the situation.

The main delay at present, however, is a lack of submission of papers and hence I would encourage members to take this opportunity to complete those unfinished articles on the 'to do' list. Now is your opportunity to get them published quickly.

As will be seen from one of the remits at the annual meeting there are some concerns among members over the cost of publishing *Notornis*. Council has therefore been investigating alternatives including an option to reduce the number of issues each year. Another option that has been considered during the year is an offer from

Taylor and Francis, a publishing company, to publish and distribute *Notornis*. This matter was considered by the Council who decided that this was not a viable option at this time. These investigations have been lead by Murray Williams.

I thank Jim Briskie, the editor, for his work during this year. He has indicated that he is prepared to continue in the role in the future and is looking forward to the time when distribution is on schedule to ease the pressure on himself.

SOUTHERN BIRD

Nick Allen has continued to produce *Southern Bird* virtually on schedule throughout the year. There were minor delays following the earthquakes as Nick concentrated on family affairs at that time and Council fully appreciated the circumstances.

Some delays in the distribution of *Southern Bird* were caused by trying to co-ordinate posting it with *Notornis* to reduce distribution costs. Until the cycle of production of both publications can be synchronised those delays or additional costs will need to be tolerated.

Nick has requested that Council consider allowing him to publish extra pages, as he is consistently obtaining more copy than can be presently accommodated. I would urge members to continue to supply copy, even if there is a slight delay in publishing, it is frustrating for the editors if they need to chase additional papers at the last minute.

Nick has agreed to continue in this role and I thank him for his ongoing work.

STATE OF NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS

Following the successful distribution of the 2009 edition relating to waders the Council decided to review the rationale behind this publication. We are currently reviewing whether to continue it in its present form, and if so, whether to continue on an annual or biennial basis. These decisions are still to be made but I will report further in the coming year.

I thank Kerry-Jane Wilson who has initiated and collated all of the issues to date, and provided the proofs to the editor of the Society for final setting. Her contribution has been the key to enable the Society to produce these publications, and we are grateful for her efforts.

NEW ZEALAND BIRD REPORT

There has been little progress with producing the *New Zealand Bird Report*, mainly based on the lack of suitable records and incomplete coverage. Derek Onley, who is acting as the editor, does not believe that

there is sufficient information of a satisfactory quality to produce a worthwhile publication.

Council, however, believes that it is necessary to have some system of publishing members' sightings. This is a topic that was discussed between Council and Regional Representatives at their meeting. It could well be that the existing work completed by Derek becomes an example of the required standard for Regional Recorders as opposed to the finished product.

We are therefore continuing to investigate suitable options but in the meantime it is essential that members continue to make and record observations and submit them through regional recorders so that the data are retained for future publication.

I also encourage members to submit their records into eBird as well. This will become a valuable resource as long as sightings of all birds are submitted. Over a long period of time this will allow population trends to be determined, even of common birds that at present are not studied.

UPDATED WEBSITE

I confirm that the updated website is now live, although there are still more refinements to be completed. I take this opportunity to thank Bruce McKinlay and Pieter Demmers who have been the driving forces behind this project.

I also acknowledge the efforts of Ingrid Hutzler and T Gear Charitable Trust in arranging for the grant that made this work possible. T Gear Charitable Trust has also provided an additional donation above the original grant because of the quality of the output that Bruce has achieved.

The website, however, is only a tool. It needs to be used and constantly updated. If there are items of interest that members believe should be included please provide the details to Bruce who can make the necessary arrangements.

In replacing the original website, we should gratefully acknowledge the efforts of those involved in establishing it originally. The creator of the website was Brent Stephenson, who at the time was a university student, and he devoted many hours to not only its development, but over the years has kept the site updated and interesting, often in difficult circumstances.

We also acknowledge the contribution of Andrew Robertson who has hosted the site over all those years at no cost to the Society.

RECORDS APPRAISAL COMMITTEE

As noted in the annual report last year the rare birds committee had a considerable backlog of sightings waiting for consideration.

At the Council meeting in June 2010 it was decided to disband the rare birds committee and establish a new records appraisal committee under the convenorship of Colin Miskelly. The amended terms of reference and new working arrangements have been highly successful and the backlog of records was processed early in the year. The way is now clear for sightings that have not been reported to be formally submitted.

One reason we now have a streamlined process for dealing with submissions is due to the efforts of the secretary of the committee, Biz Bell. To ensure smooth and timely flow of the

paperwork among all involved. We extend our thanks to her for the support that she provides to Colin and the rest of the committee.

I would re-emphasise the point that sightings submitted to BirdingNZ or eBird are not formally recognised by the Society. Any of the birds on the appraisal list need to pass through a formal approval process to the committee before they can be accepted into the records. It should be noted that records can be submitted online through the new website. This will make the process easier.

Council is aware that the standards for acceptance are set relatively high, but this is necessary to ensure that records accepted by the Society are scientifically credible.

I thank Colin and his committee for their work in so quickly clearing the backlog and creating renewed confidence in the record appraisal system.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Peter Frost and his small committee have been active through the year but, as reported last year, the response from the regions has been disappointing. The intention of the committee is to provide support to regions in planning and organising activities, not necessarily to organise the activities alone.

A successful example of the type of activity that the committee is promoting was the joint venture with the Miranda Naturalists' Trust in organising a shorebird counting workshop. This was fully subscribed and provided the basis for the participants to assume a greater role in wader counts, and hence enable a greater coverage to be achieved.

A spin-off from this event was a one-day workshop, on the same topic, organised by the Bay of Plenty Regional Representative, Eila Lawton, which utilised Miranda Naturalists' Trust volunteers as tutors in her local region.

This is the type of opportunity that the committee wishes to promote. If regions have ideas for projects or activities they should contact Peter for guidance and any necessary assistance.

Surveys of membership over the years have indicated that members want workshops to stimulate and expand their interests. This committee exists to assist that process. However, members need to support these workshops and use the skills acquired to advance their fieldwork.

Eila Lawton, a founding member of the committee, has tendered her resignation due to the pressure of other commitments. As can be seen above, she has been an active member of the committee. We thank her for her inputs and enthusiasm.

BEACH PATROL SCHEME

The beach patrol scheme has again proved to be the most active of the Society's schemes and patrols are regularly undertaken in most regions. Lloyd Esler has acted as the co-ordinator and provides support where required from either regions or individual members.

Most of the records are now submitted to Lloyd using the online beach patrol form and this has simplified the process and allowed him to quickly assemble the data for the year. Lloyd has reported that the returns this

year are down on last year, with 203 cards, covering 2,750 km, with 2,743 birds recorded on cards submitted so far.

NEST RECORD SCHEME

The number of cards submitted to the nest record scheme in the past year has been disappointing, with only seven cards sent in from two observers. This is a poor return on a project that can be undertaken throughout the country, on an individual basis, with a minimum of skills.

With members looking for activities that they can undertake in their own back yard this is a relatively simple recording system that can provide long term datasets. The value of this type of scheme lies in the volume of records over a long period of time and that can only be accumulated if members make the sightings and report them.

Roger Sharp, the convenor of this scheme, has reported that one set of nesting cards were analysed this year as part of a research project. We thank Roger for his ongoing efforts with this scheme.

MOULT SCHEME

Ben Bell, who coordinates this scheme, has advised that 103 new records were added this year. Over the 30 years that this scheme has operated, a total of 3,270 records of 130 species have been obtained.

This is also a project that can be completed anywhere, with skills that can be easily learnt. These records can be obtained from birds picked up on beach patrols, or from road kills, or during banding projects. The collection of data of this nature is most useful when in large volumes. All records are welcome, but we need records of native species especially, as little is known about their moult sequences.

SOCIETY LIBRARY

The large collection of books that the Society has accumulated over the years is integrated into the Auckland Museum library. My thanks go to Kathy Barrow, our librarian, who not only catalogues the books but also distributes periodicals around a mailing list. I would urge members to utilise this resource that is available either in-house or through circulating copies by post.

Another aspect of the Auckland Museum library holdings is the Museum's agreement to allow the Society to store archive material there. This material has been accumulating over a number of years and passed from person to person, becoming a huge pile of boxes with no indication as to their contents.

Over the past few years, however, Michael Taylor, an Auckland member, has sorted through the 24 large boxes and prepared a box-by-box inventory; a monumental task. This inventory now comprises 30 A4 pages. Michael has reported to Council that the Society needs to develop a framework to deal with future incoming material and to set clear guidelines on what material should be retained in the archives.

We need someone experienced in archival record keeping, either to advise the Society or to continue Michael's work to ensure that



important material is retained. If there are any members that have expertise in this field I would be interested in discussing this matter further with them.

In the meantime, however, I acknowledge the work that Michael has done and thank him on behalf of membership.

MEMBERSHIP

Based on the current membership database the Society has 1,208 members which is virtually identical to the previous year. This is a reasonable situation bearing in mind the ongoing difficulties with our publishing schedule and the current economic state.

A number of members have expressed to me their displeasure at the delay in publication and have delayed payment of their subscription. While I accept that criticism, Council is making every endeavour to rectify that situation.

There is now a much greater awareness of the value of bird observations, not only from a personal point of view but also scientifically. The challenge for the Society is to harness this interest and provide activities that encourage and enhance this experience.

The membership database is currently being revised as part of the website update. Once this system is fully tested it will be possible for members to pay their subscriptions and change their personal details online. This will substantially reduce the work load on the volunteers who maintain that database.

This work is currently undertaken by Yvonne McLaughlan and Roger Sharp, and I express the gratitude of Council to these volunteers. Their work is made even more onerous in that the bulk of it occurs over the December/January period.

Yvonne also undertakes the task of co-ordinating postage, which is an extra task made more difficult if subscriptions are not paid on time and reminder notices are required.

SENIOR MEMBERSHIP

At the AGM in 2010 the issue of having a senior membership category was raised. It was agreed that Ian Armitage would investigate this matter and gauge its demand and relevance for the Society. Ian was assisted by Murray Williams in considering options, and the likely support for this type of membership class.

They reported back to Council during the year that there were unknown consequences financially and little apparent support from regions. Their investigations were hampered by the lack of information available on the age of members. Council considered the report and decided to not proceed with a new membership category at this time

AUSTRALASIAN

ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

This congress is held every second year and is jointly hosted by Birds Australia and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. This year's congress is being held in Cairns at the end of September and I encourage members to attend this event, which showcases bird research from both countries.

The Society has made a bid to host the 2013 event in Auckland, based on a proposal prepared by Mel Galbraith and his team, and while we are still awaiting the decision we are quietly confident that it will be accepted.

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY

WADER PROJECT

Researchers at the University of Queensland were successful with a bid for funding from the Australian Government to undertake detailed examination of the migratory wader populations that visit Australia and New Zealand each year. While some information has historically been available it has been known for some time that this is less than reliable, particularly when compared to the findings of the DoC-funded wader census project in New Zealand.

The Ornithological Society has agreed to make the relevant information available to this research project as the bird populations are common between New Zealand and Australia. It would be pointless to consider the data from only one of the countries in isolation.

This will be a mammoth research project but its outcomes will be essential to helping drive conservation efforts throughout the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Paul Sagar will be the OSNZ representative on the project steering committee.

AUSTRALASIAN SEABIRD GROUP

For a number of years there have been moves to establish a network between researchers in Australia and New Zealand in relation to seabirds. While there is already good co-operation on an individual basis it requires a formal structure to obtain the greatest value.

A joint committee was established following the recent world seabird conference. This informal group has been considering options and has made recommendations to Council, which have been accepted and Council is in discussion with the executive of Birds Australia on establishing a formal structure. This structure would be a committee of people from both countries, with a separate subscription fee, similar to the Australasian Wader Study Group, and reporting to the parent organisations.

EXTERNAL ADVOCACY

In December I attended the meeting of partners of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) as the sole representative from New Zealand. I attended the meeting as the representative of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust, which is the only New Zealand partner at present.

During the meeting, however, I held several discussions of relevance to the OSNZ. I had several discussions with one of the researchers who will be working on the Queensland University Wader Project reported above. This was useful in gaining background material that assisted the Society in making the decision to join this project.

I also undertook discussions with the convenor of the Pacific Seabird Working Group to gain information in relation to

developing cooperative programmes. The Society has subsequently decided to join the Australasian Seabird Group, although in the longer term I am sure that there is scope to also join the wider group.

At the meeting I also undertook discussions with the Chief Executive of the EAAFP regarding the possibility of the New Zealand Government joining as a partner. He subsequently visited New Zealand and we travelled together to Wellington to meet Kevin O'Connor, the Deputy Director-General of DoC, to discuss the possibility of the Government joining the partnership. This was a productive meeting and we are hopeful that the Government will now reconsider.

Bruce McKinlay was also present and we took the opportunity to raise several issues with Kevin in relation to the work of OSNZ and future co-operation with the Department. We discussed matters such as the Bird Banding office, *State of New Zealand Birds* reports, the Seabird Working Group, and the possibility of working co-operatively with Forest and Bird on the BirdLife Important Bird Area project.

It was agreed that we would meet on at least an annual basis to discuss issues of common concern between OSNZ and the Department.

FINANCIAL

As explained at the annual meeting in 2010 the audited financial accounts for 2008 and 2009 were not available for ratification at that time. I can confirm that these were audited during the year and following the resolution at the 2010 Annual General Meeting these were accepted by Council.

The 2010 accounts were prepared early in the year and went to the auditor for inspection and review. The audit report and financial reports are available and were approved at the annual meeting.

I thank Paul Garner-Richards for his work as treasurer.

APPRECIATION

On behalf of the Council I thank Regional Representatives for their work. It is at this level where the bulk of the contact is made with members. Without their efforts the Society would slowly stagnate.

The only two changes to the Regional Representatives through the year are that Lloyd Esler has been replaced by Neil Robertson in Southland, and in the Wairarapa, Barbara Lovatt was replaced by Peggy Duncan. We thank Lloyd and Barbara for their invaluable contributions to OSNZ activities in their regions. I have just been advised that Ian Saville has resigned as RR for Manawatu, and hence it will be necessary to find a replacement.

I have read the regional reports that have been submitted, and I am amazed at the diversity of activities that are undertaken throughout the regions. It is that great enthusiasm among members that spur us in Council to put in the effort to keep the organisation moving forward.

I also take this opportunity to thank Ingrid Hutzler, our Executive Officer, who is the direct link between Council and

the Regional Representatives. During the current year Ingrid's contract hours were reduced and this has meant that she has been less available but still provided the key linkages and assisted in various society matters tidying up loose ends.

Council would also like to record its appreciation to the members of the committees who generally undertake work in the

background without any members' recognition.

I would also like to thank the members of Council for their efforts during the year. Some individuals have been named within this report but all of them have been active. I am regularly asked if being President occupies a lot of my time and initially I used to reply that it did not. However, during the past year this has changed as we now have an active

Council, with each member active in their own areas and reporting back to the group, and that has generated a lot of work. It is also a sign that the Society is moving forward and I look forward with confidence.

DAVID LAWRIE
President



The Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held at the Cairns Campus of James Cook University in Tropical North Queensland from 28th September to 1st October 2011 and will comprise three days of oral presentations.

Abstracts for contributed papers should be prepared using a set template, and must be submitted by 1st July 2011.

Early bird full registration paid by 1st July costs A\$350 otherwise full registration paid by 9th September costs \$450. Discounted rates are available for students. James Cook University's preferred payment method is by Visa or MasterCard.

Visit www.birdsaustralia.com.au/whats-on/australasian-ornithological-conference.html for more details or contact Dr Brad Congdon, Organising Committee Chairman on +61 7 4042 1086 or email aoc@jcu.edu.au.

CHANGE OF VENUE AND DATES FOR

ICCB 2011

5th to 9th DECEMBER 2011
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Due to the temporary closure of the Christchurch Convention Centre following the February earthquake, the meeting venue for the 25th International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB 2011) has been moved to the Sky City Auckland Convention Centre with new dates: 5th to 9th December 2011.

Please visit our website for the most current information on the meeting (www.conbio.org/2011). We will be updating it regularly to bring you the latest information on the venue, accommodations, conference trips, social events, and more.

MEETING THEME

Engaging Society in Conservation (Te Whenua, Te Moana, Te Papa Atawhai Whakamaui ki Tina)

Biodiversity around the world continues to decline at an ever-increasing pace, yet much of society carries on business as usual. How can conservation professionals engage with society to achieve positive outcomes for conservation without compromising our scientific rigor or integrity?

We hope you will join us in Auckland for the 25th International Congress of the Society for Conservation Biology, as we explore both the science of conservation, and how we can engage all aspects of society in conservation.



MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

The following members were presented with the Meritorious Service Award at the OSNZ conference and AGM held in Lower Hutt in June of this year.

PADDY LATHAM has fostered the work of the society in the Bay of Plenty for many years and for most of this time also performing the duties of Regional Representative or regional recorder. He has also been instrumental behind wader counts, studies of shorebird distribution and beach patrolling.

HUGH CLIFFORD has contributed largely to the work of the society in the Waikato over many years. In particular, he has fostered the Grey-faced Petrel study on Mount Maunganui which has provided valuable scientific data as well as introducing many members to the joy of seabird study.

ANDREW ROBERTSON'S support for the society's website has been of long duration and hidden from the membership. Since the website was established around 1996 Andrew has been instrumental in allowing the site to be hosted on the servers of Chelmer Financial Services. This has resulted in a huge saving to the society and has allowed the website to grow on a secure basis. We could not be where we are today in re-developing the website without this support.

BRENT STEPHENSON has been the webmaster for the society's website since around 1996. During this time he has maintained the pages and content to a high standard even though he has often been absent overseas on business. The redevelopment of the website would not have been possible without Brent's sterling work over the years.

NOMINATIONS FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES 2012

Each RR serves for a one-year term, starting 1st January, though incumbents can be re-nominated for an unlimited number of terms.

Nominations for the RR of each region close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) on 31st July 2011.

The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must also be a member of the Society.

If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2012 year.

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*.



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Robert Adam (Nelson); Raewyn Adams (Bay of Plenty); Shelley Barbour (Volcanic Plateau); Elizabeth Bargh (Wellington); Julie Buunk (Marlborough); Robert Buckley (Wellington); Tony Charleston (Manawatu); Alice Cibois (Switzerland); Angela Denby (Hawkes Bay); Alan Doig (Wanganui); John Douglas (Otago); Rosemary Duff (Hawkes Bay); Bart Ellenbroek (Wellington); Ernst Mayr Library (USA); Cody Fraser (Otago); Susanne Govella (Wellington); Shawn Herron (Southland); Colin Hill (Canterbury); Mrs ME Hill (Auckland); Jenny Juengel (Otago); Susie Lindauer (Far North); Craig McKenzie (Otago); Matt Rayner (Auckland); Clare Ridler (Wanganui); Jay Ruffell (Auckland); Marc Slade (Wellington); Harrison Stringer (Canterbury); Joshua Stewart (Wellington); Unitec New Zealand Library (Auckland); Lotte van Ginkel (Nelson); Kerry Anne Weston (Canterbury); Tarryn Wyman (Canterbury); Deborah Young (Otago).

We also thank the following members for their generous donations to the Society:

William Abbott; Raynor Asher; Matu Booth; Phil Bradfield; Mr J Campbell; Bernard Card; Chris Foreman; Mel Galbraith; Henning Grossmann; Frances Eden Hall; Peter Harrison; Graham I Hunt; John Jenkins; Dianne John; Eliane Lagnaz; Nikki McArthur; Sharon McGavin; Bruce McKinlay; Jim McKinlay; Ian McLean; Les Moran; Lloyd Nielsen; Andrew Nikkel; Beverley and Nelson North; Ben Paris; Caroline Parker; Lorna Russell; David Seay; Gary Setterfield; Graeme Taylor; Kath Varcoe; Mr W. A. Watters; Donald White.

BIRD PEOPLE

OSNZ member Neil Hayes QSM has been honoured by the UK's Royal Chartered Society for the Environment with the award of Chartered Environmentalist. This is the UK's, and possibly the world's highest environmental qualification.

Late last year the Institution of Engineering Designers in the UK, in association with the Society of the Environment, invited Neil to be one of the IED's first members to apply to become a Chartered Environmentalist. Neil has been a member of the Institution of Engineering Designers since 1961 and his environmental work is well known in the UK.

The Hayes Family have owned part of the 10 ha Taumata Lagoon since 1990 and have been working hard to restore the lagoon environment to what it was a century or so ago by planting nearly 7,000 native trees (mainly Totara and Kahikatea), removing thousands of undesirable willows, eliminating nearly 4,000 predators (with help from the Greater Wellington Regional Council), creating more wetlands, enhancing the wetland environment and placing a protective covenant on the area. After close to forty years Neil is still involved in the efforts being made to save the endemic Brown Teal from extinction.

ROBERT FALLA MEMORIAL AWARD RALPH GRAHAM POWLESLAND

This award is to acknowledge the work of Ralph Graham Powlesland in the field of ornithology and his contribution to The Ornithological Society of New Zealand over a sustained period of time. Ralph earned a B.Sc from Massey University in 1974, an M.Sc at Massey University in 1976 and was awarded a PhD in Zoology in 1980 at the University of Canterbury. The title of his thesis was "A time-budget study of the South Island robin *Petroica australis australis* at Kowhai Bush, Kaikoura".

Ralph has been a member of the Ornithological Society since 1974 and a Life Member since 1999. He has until recently been an active member of the Wellington Region and now, living in the Marlborough, Ralph continues to pursue bird studies. He has also been very active at the senior levels of the Society for many years and has always been generous with his support to other members.

From 1982 until 2009 Ralph was a senior scientist in the Department of Conservation where he undertook a range of ecological studies on birds and the environment. During his professional career he made himself freely available to Ornithological Society members over a period of many years, either as a guest speaker, providing advice or through answering queries in his quiet and effective way.

From the mid-1980s Ralph has supervised and examined a number of candidates for PhD and M.Sc theses, including several current members of the Society.

SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

- As a Life Member Ralph has demonstrated long-term support for the Society and a consistent commitment to upholding its Aims and Objectives.
- Convenor of the Beach Patrol Scheme between 1981 and 1993.
- Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for several years in the mid-1980s.
- Member of Council 1991 to 1996.
- Ralph has been involved in three OSNZ national study schemes through providing:
 - Field observations for the 1985 Atlas of Bird Distribution of New Zealand.
 - Field observations for the 1999-2004 Atlas of Bird Distribution of New Zealand.
 - Convenor of the OSNZ Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern surveys.
- Ralph has been an enthusiastic member of the Wellington Region, has been a frequent speaker at local meetings and has provided administrative support to RRs for many years.

Ralph's involvement in various Wellington regional projects between 1981 and 2007 has included:

- Studies of birdlife of the Pencarrow Lakes and the adjacent shoreline
- The study of gull populations along the Otaki-Ohau coast
- A study of the nesting biology of Black Shags at Lake Kohangatera, near Pencarrow
- Studies of the nesting biology of Little Shags at Lindale, Kapiti Coast
- The study of the nesting biology of Pied Shags at Makara Beach
- A study of roosting shags at Karori Wildlife Sanctuary
- The study of birds (listening posts) at Karori Wildlife Centre prior to establishment of the Karori Sanctuary
- Co-operation with the publication of a Wairarapa Black Shag banding study
- The co-study of Black Shags roosting and nesting in Lower Hutt
- A study of nesting biology of Feral Pigeons in Wellington
- Contributing towards the Pauatahanui Inlet bird counts between 2002 and 2004
- Contributing towards Kapiti Island 5-minute forest bird count surveys and shorebird surveys on Kapiti Island
- Contributing towards the Wellington Harbour bird surveys
- Contributing towards Karori Wildlife Sanctuary 5-minute forest bird surveys.
- Co-convenor of Scientific Days at the society conferences in Wellington 2006 and in 2011.
- Arranged and led a Wellington Region field trip to Mayor Island in 2005.

Ralph has been an author or co-author of a number of technical reports on birds and the environment in the Department of Conservation, including on New Zealand Pigeons, Kaka, robins and several species of shags. He has studied or co-authored reports of the impacts of 1080 poison on birds, he reviewed the status of the Kakapo and contributed towards a Kakapo recovery plan, and more recently Ralph reviewed the impacts of wind farms on birds. During assignments with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme he studied the status of birds and rodents on Niue and contributed to the preparation of a guide to the birds of Niue. Ralph is either the author or co-author of at least 51 research papers on bird ecology and biology published in *Notornis*.

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



Ralph (right) receiving his award from the President

FROM THE PROJECT AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

This has been the first full year of operation of the Project and Activities Committee. It is an appropriate time to take stock. During the year a number of local and regional activities were initiated or supported, along with developing a national survey of Caspian Terns, and a national agreement to standardise techniques and share information on banding passerines. We see our primary task as supporting such initiatives with suggestions, information and assistance in organising training, where requested. We would also like to promote more integration of, and co-operation among the many independent activities being undertaken by individuals and groups across the regions.

COUNTING WADERS

As reported in the last issue of *Southern Bird*, a wader counting course was run in November 2010 at Miranda on the Firth of Thames. This was organised by Brigit Glass at the Miranda Shorebird Centre with the OSNZ underwriting a significant proportion of the costs, allowing the course to be offered to members at a greatly reduced rate. In the end 14 people with various levels of experience took part, 10 of them members of the OSNZ. The first day comprised a mix of fieldwork and talks covering the background to and purpose of censuses; how individual data collection efforts combine to give a global picture of shorebird numbers and trends; how this contributes to good decision making; and, not least, how to go about counting large flocks of birds. The course did not cover shorebird identification as this is dealt with separately by the Shorebird Centre. On the second day, the participants were teamed with more experienced counters to conduct the normal spring census of shorebirds at Miranda.

Following this course, a similar one was organised by Eila Lawton for the Bay of Plenty in March 2011. This course was more regional in character, both to meet local needs for such training and because its proximity to Miranda made it easy for two tutors from there to travel to the Bay of Plenty with the necessary materials and equipment. In all, 15 people from the Bay of Plenty and two from Waikato took part, some of whom were already experienced at counting shorebirds. The course was limited to one day and was free to participants. Costs were met by OSNZ Bay of Plenty out of its regional funds.

The participants considered the course a success. Most felt that keeping it to a single day was sufficient, provided it was timed so that people could get out in the afternoon to count birds around high tide. The need for follow-up was stressed, to allow people to put into practice what they had learnt during the course. Better still would be to link such courses to ongoing or planned projects in which the training relates to specific skills needed in those projects. This is how we would like to develop such courses in future.

Discussion between the organisers and participants on both courses raised some questions for the Project and Activities Committee to consider. Whereas the courses focused on counting birds in large flocks, how to go about counting in other situations requires more attention, including how to avoid double counting birds that are moving around, and what to do when faced with non-uniform habitats such as fields. A need for more structured exercises was also mentioned. A hand-out needs to be developed, not only so that those who attended the course have something to which they can refer later, to refresh their memories, but also for local leaders planning follow-up activities. Do we also need to develop a package of training materials so that the course can be transferred to and delivered by others elsewhere? Instruction manuals of differing length and detail exist internationally so various frameworks are already available. What is needed is some agreement nationally on methods and the requisite level of detail to be provided. What is the best approach to standardising census methods? Do we need to have a training session for census organisers at some stage? Such a meeting could provide an opportunity to discuss and agree on standardised methods, but to be most effective, some groundwork needs to be done beforehand: for example, preparing a draft manual for discussion. These and other points raise will be discussed and acted on in the coming months.

BIRD BANDING

A model for national agreement on standardised approaches comes from the bird banding community. In March 2011, Mike Bell organised a weekend workshop for those involved in training other banders. Experienced banders included Mike, David Melville, Peter Reese, Paul Sagar and John Stewart, together with seven OSNZ members from Marlborough and Nelson who are at the next tier down in banding skill. The primary aim of the meeting was to discuss forming a National Passerine Banding Study Group, in which individual banders, while continuing to pursue their own projects, agree to use standard methods and share their data for purposes of evaluating nation-wide trends and tackling national issues. This proposal was adopted and will be taken forward to Council. Ongoing discussions are being held by email on unifying methods; what biometrics and moult data to record; how to ensure that trainees are taught 'best practice' during banding courses; and the procedures for progressing trainees. The group plans to meet again next year at around the same time to review progress and move forward. A regular column in *Southern Bird* is envisaged, highlighting the work being done by the group.

Another activity that took place earlier this year was an opportunity for OSNZ members in Northland, Auckland and Waikato to assist Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game catch, process and band waterfowl at various sites in January and February 2011. In this way, we hoped, people could have a chance of gaining or consolidating experience in banding waterfowl. Twenty-five people registered to take part and were duly assigned locations and dates, but in the end only six people turned up as planned. Most of those who didn't make it had other commitments on the days in question. Because this work requires baiting and capturing large numbers of waterfowl in a short time at specific sites, and then processing and banding them as fast as possible, so as to minimise the stress of capture, these events are precisely timed and quickly completed. Rescheduling them is seldom possible. Moreover, the narrow seasonal timeframe is dictated by the biology of the birds: if banding is attempted earlier in the season, many of the birds are moulting and therefore unlikely to be caught in the baited cage traps that Fish and Game use; if done much later than mid-February, it becomes difficult to distinguish first year from more mature birds, a distinction that is important when estimating the impact of hunting on the dynamics of waterfowl populations. On reflection, therefore, these events may not be the ideal setting for novice banders to gain much experience.

Nevertheless, with a better understanding of what this work entails, some members may still be willing to take part. Answers to an e-mail questionnaire, sent both to those who participated and to those who could not, indicate that there is interest in being involved in future. They also provided some valuable ideas about how we might organise things differently. For example, when working with another organisation, the OSNZ should co-ordinate its members' participation, rather than leave this to the host organisation, where other priorities prevail. Having a single contact person, responsible for co-ordinating with Fish and Game the dates, localities and transport arrangements of the volunteers, would allow the OSNZ to provide a more satisfying and worthwhile experience for its members. Feedback was also received on the catching and banding itself, and we need to ensure that members who take part are fully briefed on what to expect and what they will be doing. Overall, the activity provided an opportunity to learn about the mass capture of waterfowl, and how to age and sex them. We also need to provide more feedback on the number of birds and species caught, and how this compares with previous years.

This year is the last in a 10-year programme of banding being carried out by Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game. It is not clear yet if the programme will be extended for a few more years, or cut back to one or two sites, or ended altogether. If it does go ahead, we will try to involve those who want the opportunity, implementing the changes outlined above. The Wellington branch of Fish and Game is apparently planning to start a similar banding programme to that just ending in Auckland/Waikato. We have contacted the Chief Executive of Wellington Fish and Game and expressed an interest in providing similar opportunities for OSNZ members in the Wellington, Wairarapa and Manawatu regions. This will be followed up once more information is available.



CASPIAN TERN CENSUS

Last year, Mike Bell outlined in *Southern Bird* a plan to conduct a three-year (2011-2014) national census of Caspian tern. He also circulated details of the upcoming survey to regional representatives, with a request that 2010/2011 be used as a pilot year for locating colonies and isolated breeding pairs, and testing methods of counting nesting birds from a distance. Feedback so far has been limited, but the plans will be discussed further at the OSNZ's upcoming annual conference. If you are interested in taking part, look at the article (*Southern Bird* 43: 9) to see what is being proposed, and contact your regional representative or Mike (skua44@yahoo.co.nz) to see what arrangements are being made in your region.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Carol and Detlef Davies (P and A committee member and Far North RR respectively), together with a school teacher in Kerikeri, have been engaging pupils at a local school with talks and activities on birds. We hope that lessons learnt from this process might be taken up and applied in other schools in the region and beyond. A call for information about similar initiatives elsewhere in the country has so far gone unanswered. If you are involved in, or know of, any similar initiatives please contact Carol (carolanndavies@yahoo.com). This is a project that needs inputs from and extension to other regions.

OTHER REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

We know that there are a range of projects being carried out in different regions. Many of these are summarised periodically in branch newsletters, all of which are available on the OSNZ website at <http://osnz.org.nz/regnews.htm>, but the challenge remains to find out more about them and what potential there is for linking them nationally. Some are specific to a given site, such as regular surveys of a certain forest, estuary or freshwater lake. Others involve monitoring a given species at particular sites. In theory, all of these present opportunities for members to get involved and gain enjoyment and experience. In practice, it is usually up to these members to approach those organising these activities and ask to be involved. If there is a need for training, and a sufficient number of people who would benefit from this, please contact the Project and Activities Committee so that we can see what can be arranged. Likewise, if you are keen to start a project or group activity, but need to discuss it with others, raise the issue with your regional representative and then, if warranted, approach us.

We are also keen to explore the opportunity of getting more synergy among similar activities being carried out independently in different regions. For example, although most people surveying forest bird communities will be using five-minute bird counts, is everyone doing this in precisely comparable ways? The same applies to shorebird and waterbird surveys. If there is variation in how such surveys are conducted, for example in using and estimating a cut-off distance when recording forest birds, or in defining what constitutes a 'site' and a 'count area' when surveying shorebirds, then comparability of the results could be compromised. (A 'site' is the whole area of contiguous habitat over which a local population of shorebirds ranges at a time, e.g. the Firth of Thames, while 'count areas' are specific localities within that site that are counted separately but simultaneously in each survey, e.g. the Shellbank or the Limeworks at Miranda; ideally, a site is split up into a series of adjacent count areas, each of which is counted separately at the same time.) We need more discussion and exchange of information among those doing similar work in different areas to ensure consistency and comparability. The emerging National Passerine Banding Study Group may be a useful model to follow: encouraging individual groups to pursue their own interests using a core set of standardised methods, while being willing to share data for the purpose of evaluating national trends.

Finally, Eila Lawton, a founding member of this committee, has resigned because of pressure from her many other commitments. Her enthusiasm and energy will be greatly missed. Thank you. I would also like to record my thanks to other members of the committee – Carol Davies, Mike Bell, Peter Gaze and David Lawrie (ex officio) – for their inputs and support during the year.

PETER FROST

Convenor: Project and Activities Committee

PHOTO: KEVIN COATE



Birding Tours

Australia and beyond!

- Informative naturalist/birding leaders
- Small groups (6 - 14 participants)
- Scheduled tours or private charters

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14 Day Camping Tour
Departs 12th August 2011

Lorna Glen - Canning Stock Route

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11 Day Camping Tour
Departs 14th August 2011

Christmas Island Bird Week

Discover the birds of this naturalist's paradise
8 Day Accommodated Tour
Departs 27th August 2011

Holland Track & Greater Western Woodland

Experience the world's largest temperate woodland
15 Day Camping Tour
Departs 31st August 2011

Anne Beadell Highway Outback Expedition

See Lake Eyre at its best & the magnificent Flinders Ranges
20 Day Camping Expedition
Departs 21st September 2011

Costa Rica Wildlife Safari

Explore the unique wildlife of this exotic country
15 Day Accommodated Safari
Departs 20th November 2011

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Arid Zone Birding

IN NORTH WEST NSW



A bird surveying party rest between dry creek bird counts at Mt Wood in Sturt National Park. (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Sturt National Park was one of many areas in the arid zone that experienced a boost from last year's torrential autumn rains in the north that steadily flooded and transformed central Australia.

Much of the stony red and brown gibber plains of this area of the northern Stretzlecki Desert were covered in golden Mitchell grass and the subtle colours of blue-bush, salt bush and copperburr vegetation.

The vast flat landscapes and arid hills had not looked so good for decades and the birds were increasing, with many species not seen in recent years present at Mt Wood. Some resident species such as Budgerigars, Little Corellas, and Black Kites responded to the good conditions with early breeding while other species seldom seen in the arid zone were attracted to the area by the new sources of food.

Last winter at Sturt National Park we saw more than 100 species of birds, including the elusive Cinnamon Quail-Thrush, small numbers of Flock Bronzewing, groups of both White-winged and Variegated Fairy Wrens, Red-backed and Sacred Kingfishers, and a lone Pink-eared Duck on one of the dams with a flock of Plumed Whistling Ducks. Brown Quail were also encountered at Mt Wood for the first time.

Our two week trip to the Sturt Desert in June/July was organised by Charles Sturt University's environmental sciences Associate Professor, Dave Watson. The trip has taken place every mid-year for the past eight years for a diverse range of students who help carry out bird and mistletoe research surveys at Mt Wood. Our group of 22 CSU students and three staff trekked north for 1,500 km from Albury to the area around Sturt National Park's Mt Wood ranger station.

Most students had not visited the arid zone before, nor seen mammals such as Red Kangaroo, Echidna, and native mouse species. Field techniques new to many were demonstrated, such as mist-netting, specimen preparation, field mapping, germination trials, pitfall trapping for reptiles and small mammals, creek-line bird surveys, and bat trapping. Research projects included bird ecology and distribution in this part of the arid zone, and mistletoe species and sandalwood distribution.

Mt Wood is one of four former stations, (the other three are Olive Downs, Whitta Brinna and Fort Grey), that make up Sturt National Park. Mt Wood has a ranger base beside the former station homestead (available for bookings), a shearers' quarters (for group stays), a former shearing shed and an Open Air Pastoral Museum.

Raptors were well represented at Sturt, including the infamously elusive Grey Falcon that was seen at several locations in the park. Sparrowhawks were plentiful hunting among the Red Gums and Coolabahs along the dry creek beds, and Nankeen Kestrels and Australian Hobbies were common right across the gibber plains. Wedge-tailed Eagles were often encountered too with one pair very close to an old nest site at Mt Wood, and another pair with one chick in a nest at Lake Pinaroo (in the north west of the park). Brown Falcons were one of the most common raptors seen, and were frequently encountered in their familiar perch and stoop roosts throughout the national park.

Another highlight for the raptor enthusiasts was watching a Spotted Harrier coursing a low stony ridge near Mt Wood and successfully swooping on prey. This raptor was seen in the park on several occasions during our stay.

Hérons and other water-birds were seen at dams and near pools of water in stream beds in the park, sometimes staying for a day or two. These included juvenile Nankeen Night Herons, juvenile and adult White-necked Herons, a Yellow-billed Spoonbill, and several White-faced



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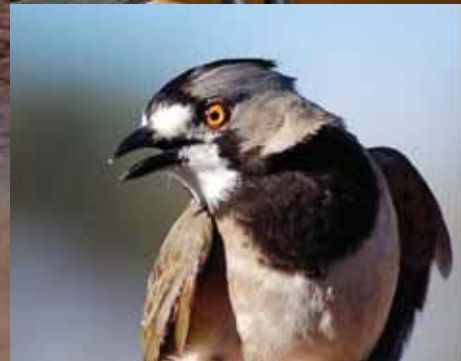
Bourke's Parrot by Tom Rambaut



Cinnamon Quail-thrush by Tom Rambaut



4



6

Hérons. Unusually, there were also large flocks of Straw-necked Ibis, both at the dams and feeding on insects around dry creek beds and associated floodplains.

Mist-netting was carried out throughout the two weeks, led by doctoral researcher, Ian Patterson from the School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences at CSU, who is studying the genetic markers of the Beak and Feather Disease Virus (BFDV). Although BFDV is known to infect mainly parrots, it has recently been found in other birds such as corvids, ducks, geese, and pigeons. Ian was interested in catching and testing birds from several different orders and testing for the presence of a BFDV strand.

Birds mist-netted for blood-sampling at Mt Wood included Diamond Doves, Zebra Finches, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Crested Bellbirds, Rufous Songlarks, Bluebonnets and Bourke's Parrots. One evening the mist-netting team returned late with a road-killed Spotted Nightjar in hand. Ian was able to get a blood sample and the next day Dave Watson demonstrated his taxidermy skills to the attentive student audience, deftly turning this bird into one of the most data-rich skin specimens of a Spotted Nightjar anywhere, and soon to be added to the Australian Museum collection.

The Crested Bellbirds seen at Mt Wood are an inland specialist with a distinct liquid call, and a male with a territory near the Shearers' Quarters was observed calling from his perch atop a dead eucalypt most mornings. Other birds in woodland and dry creek beds not far from the Shearers' Quarters included a large gang of Apostlebirds, several Red-capped Robin territories, small groups of Chestnut-crowned Babbler, an Owlet Nightjar, and scattered pairs of Bluebonnet parrots, as well as the ubiquitous Galahs, that were seen pairing off and starting nest preparations.

Sightings of the enigmatic Cinnamon Quail-thrush eluded the bird seekers for many days until eventually a group of five Cinnamon Quail-thrushes were found - both males and females, well camouflaged against the gibber stones. More of these Quail-thrushes were again observed by most of the students while conducting the last of the creek line bird surveys on nearby Stud Creek.

At one dam Flock Bronzewing were seen most evenings, but in small numbers compared to their previous abundance in central Australia. Pairs were common and a flock of about 16 was the most seen flying together late one afternoon as the low sun silhouetted them against the red earth surrounding the dam. Also at this dam a pair of Red-necked Avocets arrived one evening and were at ease feeding with the resident pair of Hoary-headed Grebe and a lone White-necked Heron.

An overnight stay at Fort Grey next to Lake Pinaroo revealed quite a different selection of birds to Mt Wood. Around the lake (full for the first time in over a decade), were many Pallid Cuckoo and Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, good numbers of Bluebonnets, Cockatiel, Little Corella, Bourke's and Mulga Parrots, and large flocks of wild Budgerigars, with many pairs seen mating, nesting and feeding chicks. At the lake there was also a pair of Australian Hobbies near a nest site that were seen plucking a budgie each, perched together on the bough of a tree over-hanging the lake.

Waterfowl numbers at Lake Pinaroo were low, but Dave Watson explained that it can take a year or so from the time of the lake filling for the full complement of waterfowl to find and inhabit the lake. Once they do locate it they tend to establish and breed quickly, so it will be interesting to compare populations in the next few years.

In contrast to Lake Pinaroo, on the drive east from Sturt National Park near Wanaaring extensive flooding on the plains yielded large numbers of waterbirds such as cormorants, Great Egrets, and all three species of ibis (Australian, Straw-necked and Glossy), at one river crossing. Highlights in that area also included a pair of Great Crested Grebes with chicks, several Whiskered Terns fishing, and a pair of roadside-foraging Brolgas. An exploration among the reeds at Frome Swamp yielded pairs of Orange Chat, several Red-kneed Dotterels and a large flock of about 200 Black-tailed Native Hens. We tried unsuccessfully to locate Grey Grasswren in suitable habitat there.

For everyone on the trip there were different birding highlights, and most gained a new appreciation of the ability of the birds seen there, to take advantage of a boom year in an area usually subject to harsh arid-zone conditions. Many species had hung on through nearly a decade of drought while others were exploiting a new area in good times.

SUZI PHILLIPS and TOM RAMBAUT

1. A juvenile White-necked (or Pacific) Heron fishes in a "ground tank" (dam) at Mt Wood in Sturt National Park.
2. A pair of Little Corellas above a dam at Mt Wood in Sturt National Park.
3. The iconic Sturt Desert Pea near the shearers' quarters at Mt Wood.
4. A juvenile Black Kite hit by a four-wheel drive, rests at the Mt Wood Ranger Station in Sturt National Park.
5. This Crested Bellbird sang from the very top of a particular dead tree every morning near our base in the shearers' quarters at Sturt National Park.
6. A gang of more than 30 Apostlebirds often used a corridor of woodland trees to access the dam at Mt Wood.

(Photos: Suzi Phillips).

RECORDING YOUR OBSERVATIONS

In the December 2010 issue of *Southern Bird* Peter Frost asked the question: "When you go out, do you list the birds seen?" and further: "Do you submit these observations to eBird?" This article is about making these tasks easier. Research has shown that when we leave the house we take, in order of priority, our wallet, keys, and the third most commonly taken article is our mobile phone. (For some readers binoculars or spotting scope may be the next most important item!). Over the last few years the simple mobile phone has evolved into a smartphone – examples being the iPhone, Blackberry and Android. These 3G phones provide internet connectivity and can run software applications just like a PC.

There are smartphone applications to help you Tweet, blog, SMS, email and interact on Facebook; but are there any to help you with birding? Currently there are a few. Audubon's American bird guide is available for the iPhone (<http://tinyurl.com/4a2z48e> US\$19.99), and there is the

National Geographic Handheld Birds for North America for the iPhone (<http://tinyurl.com/49c9cfv> US\$14.99). National Geographic also have a custom mobile device designed specifically for birders and linked to eBird, but this is expensive (US\$400) and again only for the US market (<http://www.handheldbirds.com/>). There is a freeware application for Windows Mobile users for European Birds (<http://www.aviasoft.org/pocketbirds.html>). For Android users the Bluebill project is free (<http://bluebill.tidalwave.it/mobile/>), however, there isn't a New Zealand checklist available yet, and as it is linked to the bird information on Wikipedia (which is comprehensive and optimised for the small screens on mobile phones) it is only useful whilst you have a 3G connection. That's fine at the Miranda Hide, but not so useful on the Chatham Islands!

The application I'll describe here has taken a slightly different approach. It is not intended to replace a field guide book. It contains some

basic identification information along with photos and bird calls, and a link to bird entries on Wikipedia that will provide more detailed information if you have 3G access. I have tried to strike a balance between autonomy (for when there is no network coverage) and minimising the amount of data stored on the phone. The objectives for this application are to:

- Manage your life list
- Record your daily bird sightings
- Help you upload your sightings to eBird

It is a complete checklist (following the recent OSNZ publication) of all NZ birds, including vagrants and sub-species. The screen shots below show how you would record a bird sighting using the application, and then upload it to eBird using the eBird import facility. The steps are:

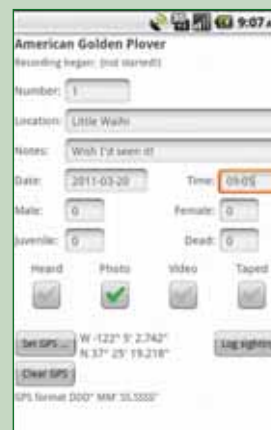
- a. Select the bird from the list
- b. Confirm it is the correct species
- c. Log the sighting



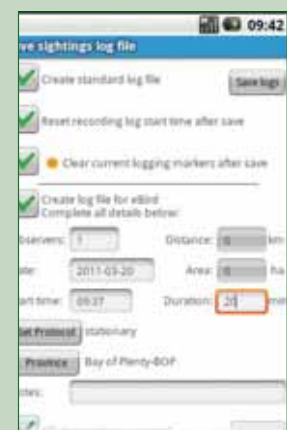
a. Select American Golden Plover from the list of birds



b. Confirm that you have the right species



c. Log the sighting – this can include GPS position if your phone is equipped with one



d. Save the days' sightings, writing out a log file in eBird format to the memory card on the phone.



e. Log in; Submit Observations; select "Import Data"; browse to the eBird file created in step (d) and select "eBird Record Format (Extended)". Then Import File.

- d. Save your daily log (all birds seen on that day or during the outing)
- e. Log in to eBird and upload the log file

Bird photos and bird calls are downloaded separately from the application and stored on the phone's memory card. This avoids using

up valuable phone memory, and lets you add your own photos. One excellent suggestion I received is to mark up photos for difficult species showing the specific details to look for in the field. Many photos and sounds are available for personal use under open source licensing (Wikipedia.org, Xeno-canto.org), and I have sample sets of my own photos for many species. My hope is that a full set can be

created by contributors donating photos and sounds to a shared pool. Credits are displayed on the screen of the phone application.

In creating this application I was surprised by how many inconsistencies exist between the OSNZ Checklist and eBird. I have aligned the Latin names to eBird in order to provide an error free upload, but there remain some anomalies between species and subspecies. The Wrybill Tours checklist is also used by many birders and is a great document for recording your Lifelist. Yet there remain small inconsistencies between all checklists. I will leave the resolution of these inconsistencies to the experts, but at least the mobile application provides a fast and simple way to distribute updates. The smartphone checks the Android Market daily, and alerts you if any of the applications on your phone have been updated. The download and installation process is largely automated and completes in a minute or two without erasing any of your

personal user data such as your life list and bird sighting logs. When Brent Stephenson recently reported a possible New Zealand record of a Collared Petrel off Northland, I added the bird and the new entry for the checklist was available on the Android Market within 24 hours (with status marked "possible NZ record" – verification is, of course, still required through the Records Appraisal Committee). Compared to the lifecycle of a printed checklist, which can take years to update and re-publish, the smartphone online world is hugely advantageous.

There are a handful of New Zealand users of the New Zealand Birding Checklist, and several hundred people overseas running the US, UK and Australian versions of the checklist. My application is only for

Android phones and Android tablets such as the Samsung Galaxy Tab. It won't work on iPhone/iPad, Blackberry, Symbian, Windows mobile or WebOS. You can expect to see a plethora of mobile devices over the next few years. Just as Microsoft Windows programs won't run on an Apple computer, smartphone applications will only run on the phone they are designed for – so Android applications won't run on an iPhone, and vice-versa. However, unlike PC applications that can cost hundreds of dollars, smartphone applications only set you back a couple of dollars so switching platforms isn't so painful. Tablet computers run the same smartphone applications but on a larger 7" or 10" screen, which is preferable for those with failing eye-sight and chunky fingers!

Expect to see Android tablets for under \$200 before the end of this year.

Now you can own a device on from which you can Tweet, blog, email, view photos, watch your Michael Jackson music videos, and also log the birds you see and upload the sightings to eBird. There are no more excuses for not logging those bird sightings! Over time the information recorded on eBird will provide invaluable bird distribution information for birders and researchers.

DUNCAN WATSON

To see more information or to buy Duncan's application (\$3.50) see <https://market.android.com/details?id=com.NZBirdingChecklist>

BEACH PATROL SCHEME 2009 **PRELIMINARY REPORT** LLOYD ESLER

This report is based on 385 cards received as at 31st December 2010 (compared with 381 in 2008 and 403 in 2007). In 2009 4,470 km were patrolled (2,524 km in 2008 and 2,307 in 2007). Dead seabirds found in 2009 totalled 4,763 (3,906 in 2008, 3,786 in 2007 and 3,117 in 2006). The reason for the large increase in the number of kilometres covered was the weekly count done from a vehicle travelling to and from a wind farm site on Poutu Beach north of the Kaipara Harbour entrance. The largest beach patrol was on 16th May 2009 when 1,000 dead Sooty Shearwater juveniles were counted on Mason Bay.

The region with the best birds per kilometre total was Southland with 8.8 birds per kilometre, largely the result of the annual mortality of juvenile Sooty Shearwaters.

The region with the greatest mileage was Northland West Coast with 2,896 km.

Four sections had no patrols done: Canterbury South, Wairarapa, Fiordland and Westland. The average recovery rate for the whole country is around 1.1 birds per kilometre.

BIRDS RECOVERED:

Southern Royal Albatross 1; Northern Royal Albatross 1; Wandering Albatross 5; White-capped Albatross 29; Salvin's Albatross 2; Black-browed Albatross 1; Grey-headed Albatross 8; Buller's Albatross 27; Light-mantled Sooty Albatross 3; mollymawk sp. 16; Northern Giant Petrel 7; Southern Giant Petrel 17; giant petrel sp. 7; Buller's Shearwater 107; Sooty Shearwater 1,983; Short-tailed Shearwater 157; Wedge-tailed Shearwater 1; Flesh-footed Shearwater 22; Fluttering Shearwater 250; Hutton's Shearwater 59; Little Shearwater 14; Common Diving Petrel 86; White-chinned Petrel 6; Black Petrel 1; Grey Petrel 1; Antarctic Fulmar 59; Cape Pigeon 41; Blue Petrel 9; Fairy Prion 192; Fulmar Prion 2; Broad-billed Prion 47; Thin-billed Prion 14; Salvin's Prion 3; Antarctic Prion 4; prion sp. 166; Cook's Petrel 19; White-naped Petrel 1; Mottled Petrel 27; Black-winged Petrel 2; White-headed Petrel 33; Grey-faced Petrel 17; White-faced Storm Petrel 6; storm petrel sp. 1; shearwater/petrel sp. 21; Yellow-eyed

Penguin 5; Little Penguin 420; White-flipped Penguin 5; Fiordland Crested Penguin 1; tropicbird sp. 1; Australasian Gannet 429; Black Shag 6; Pied Shag 32; Little Black Shag 1; Little Shag 3; Spotted Shag 47; Stewart Island Shag 9; Auckland Island Shag 1; White-faced Heron 1; Royal Spoonbill 2; Black Swan 12; Feral Goose 4; Paradise Shelduck 4; Mallard 8; domestic duck 1; Australasian Harrier 4; Feral Turkey 4; domestic chicken 1; Banded Rail 1; Pukeko 2; South Island Pied Oystercatcher 1; Variable Oystercatcher 5; Spur-winged Plover 1; Banded Dotterel 2; Southern Black-backed Gull 185; Red-billed Gull 33; Black-billed Gull 8; Caspian Tern 8; White-fronted Tern 34; Arctic Tern 1; Sooty Tern 1; New Zealand Pigeon 2; domestic/feral pigeon 5; Kaka 1; Shining Cuckoo 1; New Zealand Kingfisher 1; Eurasian Blackbird 4; Tui 1; Common Myna 1; unidentified bird sp. 3.

2009 BANDED BIRDS

Little Penguin P43718 found at Bluff 23/3/09

Little Penguin P33843 found Pilot Beach Dunedin 29/11/09

Little Penguin P36802 banded at Somes Island 20/9/07, found Petone 28/2/09

Little Penguin P21434 banded at Mokapuna 2/8/05, found Petone 30/4/09

Southern Black-backed Gull S78879 banded at Somes Island 10/1/08, found Petone 28/2/09

Southern Black-backed Gull S64560 banded at Palliser Spit 10/12/99, found Petone 31/1/09

White-fronted Tern D192958 banded at Kaikoura 31/12/08, found Kaikoura February 2009

Red-billed Gull two bands - E171970 and E144552 banded at Kaikoura 27/11/89, found Kaikoura March 2009

The continued success of the Beach Patrol Scheme is due to the dedication of those hardy souls who brave all manner of weather conditions to trudge the weary miles in search of decaying corpses. Please note any banded birds on the forms or cards and please note any obvious cause of death. Keep up the good work!

Section of Coast	No. of Cards	No. of Birds	km Covered
Auckland East AE	9	27	23
Auckland West AW	81	718	501
Bay of Plenty BP	6	22	9
Canterbury North CN	13	155	144
Canterbury South CS	-	-	-
East Coast NI EC	3	5	7
Fiordland FD	-	-	-
North Coast SI NC	10	32	29
Northland East NE	21	279	194
Northland West NW	62	1,044	2,896
Outlying Islands OI (Chatham)	2	5	2
Otago OT	3	15	3
Southland SD	58	2,030	232
Taranaki TA	40	175	234
Wairarapa WA	-	-	-
Westland WD	-	-	-
Wellington South WVS	38	109	94
Wellington West WVV	39	147	102
Totals	385	4,763	4,470



Far North

Three indoor lectures have taken place so far this year, beginning with one on 24th February when Carol and I spoke about the Peru part of our South America trip last year. The meeting scheduled for 28th April unfortunately coincided with heavy flooding on State Highway 10 preventing Kevin Matthews getting to us for his lecture on Dune Lakes. Rather than cancel the evening I looked for something suitable from my lectures and spoke on the West Pacific Odyssey, the one way trip from Auckland to Tokyo on which I was on board in March and April 2009. I had only put this together for the Northland region AGM a month or so earlier.

We finally got Kevin down for his well-researched and interesting presentation on Dune Lakes on May 20th. The main focus was the lakes on the west side of the highway on the Aupouri Peninsula and several on the Karikari Peninsula. Kevin explained the problems resulting from stock grazing close to the shores, the effects of green algae and some rampant introduced plants. The healthier lakes have interesting birds and dragonflies and many are difficult to access so I am sure there is more to discover.

Far North birding has been rich in the last three months. A few of us made an impromptu trip to Rangaunu Harbour in late March when Kevin took us across to Walker Island. We assumed this was after the main Bar-tailed Godwit departure but about 1,200 were still present. One Godwit failed to fly up with the rest when disturbed and we noticed that it had a broken wing and half its upper mandible was missing. It had no doubt been shot and whilst this was reported, there seems to be little that can be done to prevent this, due to the lack of available appropriate law enforcement. We counted just 12 Ruddy Turnstones but Kevin had seen over 200 a week earlier. There were about 100 Lesser Knots, just one Eastern Curlew and one Pacific Golden Plover. The focus then diverted to terns. Kevin had seen a Common Tern a week earlier showing features of non-breeding plumage. We found three birds, one in full breeding plumage, a rare sight in New Zealand. Similarly, of the nine Little Terns counted, one already had a bright yellow bill with black tip.

Wrybill Tours' late summer trip to the Three Kings Islands has become an annual Far North event. This year's expedition was considered the most productive to date with the warm seas resulting from the La Niña weather effect bringing many tropical seabirds south. It offered rarities galore, including what were considered to be New Zealand's first Collared Petrel. With numerous White-naped Petrels and Long-tailed Skuas, several Kermadec Petrels, 13 White Terns, a Sooty Tern, Tahiti Petrel, Gould's Petrel, Wilson's and New Zealand Storm Petrels and Grey Noddies among a host of commoner species, it was a trip to provide lasting memories.

A day trip out of Whangaroa a couple of weeks later in southerly winds couldn't compete with that, but those on board, including visitors to New Zealand and beginners found plenty to generate interest including Wandering Albatross, and Cook's and Black-winged Petrels.

The region continues to assist local schoolchildren in generating an interest in birds and we hope that they will again take part in the Garden Bird Survey. Publicity through Kerikeri 'Envirofest' and displays in the library seem to generate some interest too.

Finally, those involved in a translocation of Whiteheads from Tiritiri Matangi Island to Ark in the Park in early May made a sudden short-notice offer to predator-free Moturoa Island (in the Bay of Islands) to collect some birds too. At present these are the only Whiteheads in the region.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

At a well-attended April meeting Ron Bergin treated us to a few of his photographs of birds that frequented the Bundaberg area of Queensland, and others from Werrabee near Melbourne. Many of his shots were of 'birds in action', enabling us to see Fairy Martins nest building, a beautiful Brahminy Kite with wings and tail wide-spread, a Channel-billed Cuckoo feeding in a fig tree, a White-bellied Sea Eagle with a snake in its claw, Black Kites hunting for prey as the bush-fires started and cheeky Laughing Kookaburras intent on reading a sign that said 'Will close in one hour'.

A wide variety of birds were shown in mid-flight, alighting on vegetation, or taking off again. We were also treated to a selection of New Zealand birds, including some lovely shots of New Zealand Shovelers at the water treatment plant in Rewa Rewa Road (Whangarei), Fairy Tern at the Waipu Refuge, and oystercatchers with juveniles. We all enjoyed the presentation and Ron's informative and lively commentary.

Just offshore at Waipu Cove at about 5 pm on April 9th three rafts of Fluttering Shearwaters, plus some possible Flesh-footed Shearwaters, were observed following a bunch of White-fronted Terns that were feeding. The three rafts merged into one huge mass of roosting, feeding and low-flying birds. Knowledgeable experts put the numbers at about 15,000.

Small groups of juvenile giant petrels and Black Petrels were sighted during April offshore from Tutukaka, around the Poor Knights Islands.

DoC Whangarei have received some reports of low numbers of New Zealand Pigeons in the north this year, possibly as a result of the 'die-back' last season.

CLARE BURTT, JANET SNELL and the WAIPU FAIRY TERN GROUP

Waikato

In March, the Waikato region held its annual local AGM. This is a chance for the convenors to give summary reports for their given projects. This year we heard reports on the monthly counts at Hamilton Lake (from Barry Friend) and Cambridge Lake (from Hugh Clifford). Hugh also convenes the Beach Patrol for the Waikato and co-leads the Grey-Faced Petrel Project; detailed reports on these were also given. The Officers and Committee were largely unchanged for the 2011 year, with the exception of Ashley Reid stepping down from the Committee and Graham Saunders being voted on. We thank Ashley for his contribution while on the Committee and welcome Graham to this new role.

The March fieldtrip was an overnight camping trip to Rotoma Holiday Park, which is about 30 miles east of Rotorua. A good number of members gathered for a few days of bird spotting. On the shores of Lake Rotoma, New Zealand Dabchicks, Grey Teal, Grey Ducks and Pied Stilts were all recorded, and later on at Rotoehu, Black, Little and Little Black Shags, and a Spotless Crake were added to the list, but not before some of the party had a dip in the 'invigorating' lake! Other birds spotted during the day included Tui, Bellbird, New Zealand Pigeon, Tomtit, Robin, a host of exotics, and at night, a Morepork. The main objective of the weekend, however, was to find Kokako, so most had an early night so it would not be too tough to get up before dawn the next day. David Bradley and Sandra Valderama were leading this trip and have been studying Kokako for a few years, so were able to direct the group to the prime locations where the birds were heard and seen in the tree tops. Next stop was Maketu and Little Waihi where numerous waders were recorded, including 35 New Zealand Dotterels and a Sanderling. Good times were had by all.

To follow up the Kokako trip, Sandra was the April speaker and talked about her Kokako PhD research into dialect variation between different populations. The amount of work that has gone into collecting Kokako songs, and then the pain-staking amount of time required to analyse these vocalisations is mind-boggling, and Sandra's 30-minute talk represented hundreds of hours of work.

April's fieldtrip to the Taitua Arboretum for a picnic and stroll to enjoy the changing of the seasons was postponed until May due to very wet and cold weather. In May, however, the weather held and a small group of members ventured out. Unfortunately, the groups of members arrived at slightly different times and went in different directions to luncheon, only to meet up later when walking around the grounds! Despite this, it was a very pleasant way to spend a few hours, and double brownie points went to Andrew Styche for bringing enough raspberry finger buns for all! The bird list was less than impressive and dominated by exotics, but an interesting array of geese and waterfowl was present.

Also in May, Eva Fucikova talked about the PhD research that she conducted in the Netherlands. The largest crowd of the year turned out for Eva's talk, which may have been something to do with the title: "Personality of Great Tits"! Although some may have come under false pretences, all of us were treated to a very interesting talk on research looking the individual personalities of animals. Often we think only humans are capable of having differing personalities, but exciting research is being conducted that is investigating this in a wide variety of animals. Eva was specifically looking at Great Tits and found that individuals of this species respond quite differently to the same



stimuli. This concept has broader implications into understanding the evolutionary and adaptive functions of animal behaviour, and is an incredibly interesting area of study.

DAI MORGAN and GRAHAM SAUNDERS

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

The region was struck an awful blow in April when Don Merton died, with many members attending his funeral at Sulphur Point, Tauranga, in April. With attending Reef Herons flying past, and a lone dolphin breaching near the channel buoy, the setting provided a fitting good-bye to an incredible man.

An exception was made that night in the Grey-faced Petrel project regarding naming of individual birds, so now a petrel banded on the day of Don's funeral has a name of 'Merty'.

Other petrel developments in the region are a mixed bag. The April-May period saw petrels returning to their buried burrows, after the January avalanches. They were seen to be attempting to dig their way to the burrows. Their instincts must be such that taking over empty burrows was possibly seen as more of an issue than locating the old ones. The good news is that over 70 children, ranging in age from five to 16 years, have been introduced to the birds via demonstration nights. The children have mainly been Kiwi Conservation Club members (Junior Forest & Birders) from Te Puke, Tauranga and Rotorua. Over 70 petrels have been handled during the April-May period.

In April, ship-board seabird expert Tony Crocker gave an incredibly illustrated talk about two islands in the South Atlantic on each side of the Antarctic convergence, the Falkland Islands, and South Georgia. The differences between these two groups of islands because of the convergence is remarkable, and Tony structured his talk in such a way to make these differences plain to the most naïve South Atlantic birder.

Bird sightings have been fairly thin on the ground, although Tim Barnard provides Maketu and Little Waihi updates like clockwork. A good number, 112, of Banded Dotterels were reported from Maketu in early May by Julian Fitter, whilst Tim picked up a summer Sanderling at Maketu, which was still there in mid-May, along with a lone Cattle Egret. He also saw a Reef Heron at West End, Ohope, in a particularly heavily-used part of the coast for humans.

Julian Fitter also reported a White Heron at the Kaituna River. Presumably the same bird was also seen in the nearby Kaituna Wildlife Management Reserve. Also in the same area on riverside fields were 3 Red-necked Stints, which Tim saw in April. Tim provided an unusual record at Papamoa Beach in March of an inshore Buller's Shearwater, whilst I saw a Fluttering Shearwater at close range – 2 m away from the surfboard at Mount Maunganui last week (May) (Mum, I wasn't too far out!).

PAUL CUMING

Taranaki

Emily King from DoC returned to another small gathering at our April meeting to give us an update on the Blue Duck repopulation project in Egmont National Park. As the ducks have become established and breeding in the wild has occurred the focus is now shifting to the second phase "to develop a stable self-sustaining population whereby juvenile recruitment exceeds losses". Emily also told us about Operation Whione, which is similar to the Kiwi operation nest egg, with eggs being taken from the wild population and raised in captivity before being returned. Those who can get out of bed on time will be heading out for a look when monitoring resumes in November. The two pairs that fledged five ducklings on the upper reaches of the Waiongana have been claimed by me as a new species for the area as some of their DNA must have reached here eventually.

Some members had headed south during March with Helen Elder and Marie Mitchell touring the top of the South Island and seeing King and Spotted Shags, black Fantail, White Heron at Pupu Springs and thousands of Black Swans in Golden Bay. They also saw Hector's Dolphin and Orca. Meanwhile David and Carole Medway toured the whole South Island including what's left of Christchurch. Apparently this wasn't a birding trip but David compiled a good bird list anyway from Weka at Westport, 26 New Zealand Pigeons at Pelorous Bridge and thousands of Sooty Shearwaters at Bluff Harbour. A trip on Albatross Encounters just to see Sperm Whale was spoiled by many species of pelagic birds getting in the way including Northern and Southern Royal Albatross, giant petrel and Buller's Shearwater. While all this was going on Barry Hartley was touring Taranaki counting five New Zealand Dabchicks at Inglewood Oxidation Ponds, hundreds of Fluttering Shearwaters offshore at Awakino in the north and 54 Banded Dotterels at Sandy Bay in the south. I was sticking close to home at

Waiongana watching skuas harassing hundreds of White-Fronted Terns, with other unidentifiable pelagics passing through. The noisy Blackbirds and Silvereyes at home alerted us to the return of the Morepork somewhat early this year.

Members' reports for April noted an increase in the number of Fantails seen in the province, Barry Hartley somehow managing to count 25 at Lake Rotokare, of which fifteen were seen at one time. A field trip to the Meeting of the Waters a few minutes south west of New Plymouth on a fine day turned up ten Fantails, with more than 14 Tui seen some eating Totara fruit. A possible Kaka sighting was the highlight of the morning.

Before heading off to tour North West Australia Bill and Rosemary Messenger had three New Zealand Pigeons around their home, one or two of which flew into a window but recovered. They returned from visiting such exotic places as Darwin, Broome, Emerald Springs and the Fitzroy River to count 26 Variable Oystercatchers on the beach at Mokau. Carol Keight was watching Eastern Rosellas feeding on Flax seeds around her home, also noting an increase in Fantails. On a trip to Bushy Park she was rewarded with lots of birdsong and many Saddlebacks and Robins.

With Miro and *Cornus capitata* fruit ripening in Pukekura Park David Medway was busy watching New Zealand Pigeons and many active vocal Tui consuming a bountiful harvest. He also saw a flock of many hundreds of House Sparrows eating newly-sown grass seed. Barry Hartley has noted an increase in Pied Shag numbers at the Awakino River, from a regular two to four. His last count was eight and it will be interesting to see how it goes from here as Pied Shag are not often seen about Taranaki despite being both north and south of us. The regular Black Stilt was once again at Mokau.

Beach patrols have turned up little of interest other than two White-capped Albatrosses from South Taranaki beaches. At Waiongana an Australasian Bittern seen flying along the coast carrying a live eel in its bill gave me quite a surprise. Later in the month on a calm autumn afternoon hundreds of Fluttering Shearwaters were working over Kahawai in the bay and out at sea. This and albatrosses going past earlier in the month keep me returning to the beach.

PETER FRYER

Hawke's Bay

2011 got off to a start for the Hawke's Bay region with the AGM and a barbecue meal on 13th February. Outings for the year were planned and the organisation of our local group discussed. Helen Andrews agreed to remain as Regional Representative on the proviso that some of her workload was shared out. Christine McRae and Jim Hamilton undertook to organise the field outings. Ian Smith was happy to continue as Regional Recorder, and Margaret Twydale agreed to continue to organise the twice-yearly Wader Census, and provide the roundup for *Southern Bird*.

February's field trip was an afternoon at Ahuriri and was very well attended. Some new members and visitors were welcomed along, and we had some interesting wader viewing. Three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers along with two Pectoral Sandpipers were seen at the Southern Marsh area. The Bar-tailed Godwits were in the Westshore Lagoon along with the Grey-tailed Tattler and 37 Royal Spoonbills.

In March seven members spent an excellent weekend at Mahia where we were well looked after by local members Margaret and Dave Fraser. They promised us some good birds and they certainly delivered on that promise. At the first stop five Whimbrels were a highlight, and a little further on at Oraka Beach we had brilliant close views of up to 15 New Zealand Dotterels along with at least 50 Banded Dotterels. An afternoon walk along the beach and rocky shore turned up more New Zealand Dotterels as well as 35 Ruddy Turnstones. The next day, while having another look at the Whimbrel, several Fernbirds responded to a taped call allowing everyone good views. We ended our visit with a walk through a local reserve which preserves an interesting area of coastal bush. Thanks to Bernie Kelly for organising this trip.

While we were enjoying Mahia, Sav Saville was at Ahuriri discovering an American Golden Plover amongst the 17 Pacific Golden Plovers. Brent Stephenson was able to get some photos and it seems pretty certain that this identification will be confirmed. It stayed around for about a week so a number of locals were able to see it. The



Pacific Golden Plovers stayed until the end of March, with a number in stunning breeding plumage before they departed.

The long-staying Little Egret has been regularly spotted around the Haumoana – Tukituki Estuary area, and a White Heron was sometimes seen as well. A few Black-fronted Terns have begun appearing at Waitangi, with 12 being seen at the Clive River mouth on 10th May. Caspian Terns have also built up in numbers, with 26 at Waitangi on 26th April. The Grey-tailed Tattler was still at Ahuriri on 24th April. Royal Spoonbill numbers vary, with 56 present at Ahuriri on 8th May. No colour-banded birds have been spotted this year as yet.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Wanganui

Organised branch activities started again in February when monthly meetings resumed. Paul Gibson entertained us with a show of photographs of birds taken last year in southern Queensland. Paul had gone there in the hope of photographing some of the many waterbirds to be seen on Queensland's coastal wetlands. Unfortunately, his visit coincided with one of the wettest years on record in Australia, which resulted in most waterbirds moving inland to breed along the Darling and other rivers in the channel country. At one coastal wetland near Noosa, north of Brisbane, where more than a hundred egrets of various species had been recorded in the same month in 2009, Paul found none. Moral of the story: don't try photographing waterbirds during a 'big wet' unless you can get to their inland breeding areas. That said, Paul did manage to get some superb photographs, albeit just not those he had hoped for.

In March, Peter Frost discussed creating bird-friendly gardens, and in April Ian Armitage travelled up from Wellington to talk to us about how social and economic developments in China are affecting birds and their environments. Ian has been working as a forestry consultant in China for the past 20 years and has seen first-hand the massive economic, social and environmental changes occurring there. Some of these have adversely affected birds and their habitats, others such as the widespread reforestation of formerly denuded landscapes, have had more positive effects. In all, Ian gave us a fascinating glimpse into an important but, to outsiders, little-known part of the world.

Two field trips have also been held. The first was a joint field trip with the Wanganui Museum Botanical Group to a protected patch of Kahikatea-dominated swamp forest at Parikino, on an old floodplain of the Whanganui River. Both Kahikatea and Mahoe were laden with fruit, on which large numbers of Tui, New Zealand Pigeon, and Common Starlings were feeding. In turn, this noisy gathering may have been the attraction for a New Zealand Falcon which was flushed from inside the forest, causing squawks of alarm from the Tui and frantic flapping from the New Zealand Pigeons as they tried to get out of the way of it. Other than a small neighbouring forest patch, equally isolated, the nearest large block of indigenous forest and bush lies more almost 1.5 km away, across the Whanganui River. Tui and New Zealand Pigeon can obviously fly this distance easily, but it seems to be beyond the normal flight distance of Bellbird, as only a couple of these were recorded in the swamp forest.

Another field trip was undertaken to the Rapanui Grey-faced Petrel sanctuary on the North Taranaki coast near Tongaporutu, courtesy of Barry Hartley, regional representative in Taranaki. Unlike last year, when only two people managed the trip, this year three of us made it, a 50% increase! At least 11 different individual Grey-faced Petrels were seen on land but more were heard, both on land and in the air above the colony. To those of us unfamiliar with Grey-faced Petrels at their colonies, we were intrigued by the relatively high pitched calls of the birds flying around overhead. These calls were barely distinguishable at times from the background noise of the sea crashing against the base of the cliff. This led to some speculation about the nature of the forces selecting for these high-pitched calls.

Individual members have also been active, providing a miscellany of reports on sightings of both common and unusual birds, seasonal movements, and bird behaviour. Most Bar-tailed Godwits departed in late March, while the numbers of Red-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns gradually built up from mid-summer onwards. But whereas the gulls remain through the winter, the terns eventually move on. In early March, Ian Sutherland reported an immature Black-fronted Tern among a small flock of White-fronted Terns at the mouth of the

Whanganui River. In late March and early April Ian, Ormond Torr and Peter Frost separately recorded up to four Arctic Skuas harassing the terns offshore from the Whanganui River mouth. Ormond got some particularly good photographs of the action. The skuas stayed around for a couple of days before moving on, perhaps following some of the tern flocks.

Bevan Shaw, working at Wanganui Airport, has been systematically recording flocks of Banded Dotterels on the grassland adjacent to the runway. We are still not sure if these are birds moving locally among sites such as the airport, estuary and adjacent dune gravel slacks, or if they represent separate flocks moving through on migration from the South Island. That was the impression gained in previous years, but the number and frequency of sightings made by Bevan suggest that at least some of the birds may be part of a seasonally resident flock. Whereas the dotterels seem to get out of the way of the planes using the airport, two Pied Oystercatchers were not so adept. The plane was undamaged, at least not to an extent that prevented it continuing on its way. The birds were not so lucky.

Colin and Robyn Ogle reported the first Song Thrush singing on 2nd April, 34 days earlier than the mean date recorded over the previous 10 years (except 2009, when Colin and Robyn were away). This singing was not sustained, however, as the bird then fell silent until 29th April from when on it seems every Song Thrush in the district started singing. This is still a week earlier than average. Singing in autumn may be associated with the establishment of winter territories, as happens in Europe in places where Song Thrushes are resident throughout the year.

Alan Doig reported seeing 18 Cattle Egrets on 1st May, west of SH1 between Oroua Downs and the turnoff to Himatangi (Manawatu region), and four more on the same day between Bulls and Lake Alice. Unfortunately, despite a couple of us searching for the Cattle Egrets that normally over-winter on a farm on the Whangaehu Beach Road, none have been seen yet. Only four birds came back there last year, one alone and three together, but did not stay. Although not reported on every year, this site supported an average of 22 Cattle Egrets per year between 1988 and 2001 (range five to 40), dropping to 10 between 2007 and 2009. One wonders if the fidelity shown by the birds to a particular site reflects the aggregate memory of a group, so that as long as that group persists (even if the members gradually change), the birds will return year after year to that site. But if the group disintegrates for some reason, or the birds perish on the flight to or from Australia, that memory is lost and the link to a particular site broken. Observations in both Australia and New Zealand of birds colour-banded in Australia in the 1980s, reviewed by Max Maddock in *Notornis* in 1990, suggest that some birds do return to the same sites in successive years. That work needs to be extended, to establish the consistency of group membership over time and whether these birds keep together at both ends of their migration range.

PETER FROST

Wairarapa

Our final indoor meeting in 2010 was an informal discussion and sharing of historical memories of OSNZ in the region. The year was rounded off with the annual pot-luck dinner, held at the home of RR-elect Peggy Duncan. Twenty-seven members and friends enjoyed an excellent meal outdoors surrounded by garden and mountain views.

Following the summer break, 2011 started for the region with our AGM, chaired by new RR Peggy Duncan. Retiring committee member Brian Boeson was recorded as having given long years of devoted service. Following the AGM the indoor meeting featured Emil Schmieg and Beth Andrews who gave an overview of their attendance at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust's annual summer training course. Hopefully more of our members will be inspired to attend this course.

In March Vince Waanders (DoC), Mark Rundle (Eastbourne Forest Rangers) and Reg Cotter (OSNZ) detailed their ongoing studies of Little Penguins on Matiu/Somes Island in Wellington Harbour. They also presented a general history of the island and native fauna introduced to the island.

At April's meeting Ian Armitage gave an illustrated presentation of the recent Southern Heritage Expeditions' ornithologically-focussed cruise to the Chatham Islands. Ian's impressive photography and graphic descriptions brought back so many memories for those of us who had been to the Chathams and stirred those who had not to put it on their dream list.

A March field trip to the Manawatu Estuary at Foxton, to farewell the Bar-tailed Godwits, and then to the Pukepuke Lagoon was a highlight for members.

BARBARA LOVATT



Wellington

A number of OSNZ members are also members of Forest and Bird. While the two organisations have some major common interests they also have some important differences. These were discussed in the March meeting by Aalbert Rebergen, the Lower North Island Field Officer for Forest and Bird, who presented a talk entitled, "The Bird in Forest and Bird and challenges in bird conservation in New Zealand with a focus on our river birds". An important message from his talk was the need to have good information in order to establish management practices for sustainable development that is sympathetic with maintaining good habitat for birds. This has been particularly important in the management of the river systems in the Mackenzie Basin and the Wairarapa.

In April Susan Waugh presented her work on defining Important Bird Areas carried out as part of a contract to Forest and Bird and Bird Life International. BLI is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global diversity through working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. A major initiative of BLI has been to define important bird areas. The selection of Important Bird Areas has been a particularly effective way of identifying conservation priorities. Susan identified 76 seabird colony locations and eight marine areas in New Zealand as important bird areas. In contrast to many of the overseas Important Bird Areas those in New Zealand are often very extensive, a feature which has its own set of conservation challenges.

The Karori Wildlife Sanctuary (Zealandia) provides a wonderful resource for students interested in ornithology. Andrew Digby from Victoria University has taken advantage of the thriving population of Little Spotted Kiwi at Karori to study their vocalisations. His talk at the May meeting was complemented with recordings and spectrograms. Andrew has been able to identify vocal signatures for individual birds but has been unable to demonstrate any evidence of dialects in the geographically separate populations of Little Spotted Kiwi. One fascinating feature of Kiwi vocalisation is the male and female duet. Kiwi are able to modify their calls based on what they hear from their mate.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

Early in March Peter Field recorded a total of 205 Black Swans in Nelson Haven. The increase of these birds has concerned the Nelson Airport Authority, with the potential for aircraft strikes. To reduce numbers Nelson Fish and Game have recommended shooters target these birds this season.

Willie Cook with a team of helpers has been surveying Banded Rail habitat in the Tasman Bay area for the presence/absence of footprints of this bird. Six years ago only parts of the Waimea Estuary were covered and very little evidence was found. In contrast, this year footprints plus sightings were made at specific locations from Delaware Bay to Marahau. Marahau in particular appears to have a thriving population, and for those interested birds can be seen near the third walkway bridge at the start of the Abel Tasman Park especially after a high tide. Trapping carried out for mustelids etc. in the region is unquestionably a factor in the improved status of this bird.

The Golden Bay members of the Friends of Cobb in collaboration with Robin and Sandy Toy carried out a listening survey for Great Spotted Kiwi in early February with a repeat in early March. Listening points were established from the Cobb Dam to the head of the valley. Timing was synchronised from 45 minutes after sunset and continued for two hours. Calls were heard from some of the upper valley sites on both occasions, confirming a population exists.

In April Rob Schuckard spoke about a marine survey of Golden and Tasman Bays. This was in response to an application by an Australian company for exploratory drilling rights. No information was available for environmental threshold values and subsequently the applicant agreed to fund a baseline study of the biodiversity. NIWA were granted the contract for the study and some OSNZ members took part. It consisted of three systematic aerial surveys to identify baitfish shoals and associated feeding seabirds and marine mammals in the peak summer breeding season. Isotopes were used to establish food chains links with baitfish, and seabird chick feathers from local breeding colonies. Species selected were Spotted Shag, Little Penguin and Australasian Gannet. To complement the aerial work surface surveys were conducted, and Rob's illustrations showed some 'green' looking people after many hours at sea.

Sandy Toy presented a talk in May entitled 'The Tale of Two Kiwis' detailing the release of North Island Brown Kiwi in the Rimutaka Ranges

and the Great Spotted Kiwi into the Flora Track area of Kahurangi National Park. The North Island site is close to Wainuiomata and it was important to gain support from the local population. To this end they had considerable success with school children and adults involved in naming individual birds and following progress by asking Sandy when she was in the area how such and such bird was faring. Twelve Great Spotted Kiwi were fitted with transmitters and released near the Flora Track in late 2010. Subsequent tracking has shown some attempts at pairing and also some lengthy journeys. It is about 30 years since this species was last recorded in the area, and it is hoped that if this small population can flourish it may extend its range into the nearby Cobb Valley.

Long-tailed Cuckoos were reported seen and heard at French Pass, Para Para Peak and the Cobb Valley in late summer. Single Cattle Egrets have been seen near Appleby and Motupipi this autumn, and there has been a report of five Wrybills plus a New Zealand Dotterel on the Motueka Sandspit in the first week of May.

DON COOPER

Otago

So far this year indoor meetings have been very well attended with standing room only on one occasion. We have had exotic themes, with talks on research experiences on Gough Island, Galapagos and Paraguay.

Otago OSNZ members, Graham Parker and Kalinka Rexa-Huber spent 13 months as resident biologists on the extremely remote and inhospitable Gough Island in the South Atlantic Ocean, 3,000 km from the nearest land mass. The island is a World Heritage area with 21 species of birds. Gough is normally home to six people and 20 million breeding seabirds. Research on the island is extremely challenging and we in Dunedin were very impressed with the demanding physical work required to be a bird biologist in such a place; eroded gullies and cliffs, constant gales, chest high fernbush, tussock and bracken, bogs and bird burrows everywhere to overcome in search of birds. Their time was spent on several projects including monitoring the breeding success of several albatross (Tristan, Atlantic Yellow-nosed) and petrel (Atlantic, Southern Giant) species using burrowscopes, and Gough Buntings (37 nests high in the mountains, checked every three days). They also banded and attached geolocators to skuas, prions, petrels, etc to plot movements. The biggest conservation concerns are billions of House Mice, and an invasive weed, *Sagina*. Much of Graham and Kalinka's time was spent removing the weed and assessing the risk to land birds of a potential mice eradication program. The endemic Gough Moorhen and critically endangered Gough Bunting are potential non-target risks as they feed on the ground. This risk can be mitigated by taking a founder population into captivity before the poison drop, to replenish stocks afterwards. To test the feasibility of this they built mouse-proof aviaries and successfully captured and kept moorhens and buntings.

Derek Onley spent two months last winter in Paraguay at Laguna Blanca, a small, private research station located near remnant, poor, red earth Atlantic forest and white sand, dry Cerrado shrubland with the task of recording local birds for a field guide. Despite the sparseness of the area there is amazing biodiversity, and 238 different bird species have been listed. Most families are represented by many species: cuckoo (5), owls (5), parrots (10), toucans (5), jays (7), woodpeckers (7), raptors (15), and many pigeons, tanagers, warblers and hummingbirds. We enjoyed the splendid photos of these, to us, exotic birds and were given a unique insight into life in Paraguay and the difficulties of conservation in such a poor country. Human activity is the main ecological threat; the burning off of forest for crops and cattle ranching.

Graeme Loh and Sue Maturin, also Otago OSNZ members, spent time over summer in the Galapagos Islands helping Francesca Cunninghame, a past Otago OSNZ member, with her project on Mangrove Finches. There are only 100 birds left in an area of 30 ha and the plan is to try to re-introduce them to new mangrove areas. We heard of the first translocation attempts, but all the birds returned to their original site 25 km away. We were also treated to photos of all the usual birds – Magnificent Frigatebird, Waved Albatross, Flightless Cormorant, finches, and mockingbirds - that epitomise the Galapagos. Here too are massive conservation problems, with New Zealand methods for rat eradication starting to be employed.

On the local scene the Otago Harbour Survey has two months to go to complete two years of monthly surveys. Comparisons with



previous surveys are being analysed and some of the data presented at the Scientific Days of the AGM. 76 species have been recorded. The harbour appears to be a very important habitat, especially for a wide range of post-breeding birds. Our data is particularly timely as Port Otago has applied to the Council for permission to dredge the harbour and dump the spoil off Taiaroa Head. Several members have made boat excursions to the dump site and have recorded 34 species feeding in this area, with 16 species of albatross, petrels, shearwaters, gulls and terns seen regularly. There is no data to determine what effect the dredging operation will have. The outcome of the hearings is pending.

Over summer the Falcon Study Group was active, locating six nests in exotic pine forest near Dunedin and observing successfully-fledged juveniles. Summer and autumn surveys of Hawksbury Lagoon have also been done. A successful summer picnic was held at Aramoana with the bonus of great views of Bar-tailed Godwits in breeding plumage (and seven flagged and banded birds recorded), Banded Dotterels, Caspian terns, Black-fronted and White-fronted Terns, and across on Taiaroa Head the young Northern Royal Albatross chicks.

MARY THOMPSON

Southland

Stewart Island has been turning up some rare birds recently. In February Matt Jones photographed a White-naped Petrel during a pelagic trip to Wreck Reef on the east coast of Stewart Island, a rare bird for this part of New Zealand. Other rare birds to be spotted in this same area were a Great Shearwater and White-headed Petrel.

Our February wader count turned in to a March count as bad weather and unavailability of members forced a change of dates. Luckily Rob Schuckard was down in Southland doing some wader spotting and volunteered his services for the weekend. Highlights from the count included a Sanderling at Awarua Bay and 150 Ruddy Turnstones. Only three Red-necked Stints were counted, which is well down on previous years.

A lone New Zealand Scaup photographed at the Sutton Lagoon at the Invercargill Estuary was the first reported from the lagoon in recent times. The remains of a Marsh Crane were also found on the lagoon track, we think possibly predated by a stoat. It is nice to know they are at the lagoon, but sad in that it was found dead. Lloyd Esler heard parakeets calling at Omaui Reserve during a bird count; not a common occurrence. New OSNZ Southland member Glenda Rees from Gore has taken some very nice bird photos including a stunning Grey-tailed Tattler at Cow Island in Awarua Bay. It was in full breeding plumage and amongst the New Zealand Dotterel population there. Glenys took some other members to look for this bird and it was found once again at Cow Island where she took some more photos and Neil Robertson attempted to get some video footage. Glenys and Neil moved as near to the birds as they could as we with scopes stayed further back when a small swell moved towards the birds on the oncoming tide and the New Zealand Dotterels took fright and started running towards Neil and Glenys. It was a funny sight when one of the 65 dotterels in the flock was so close to the pair that it would have been almost too close to photograph. Glenys also obtained some nice photos of Bar-tailed Godwits and Ruddy Turnstones from previous visits to Catlins Lake and Riverton. Some of the birds had band combinations which have been passed on to Rob Schuckard. One Turnstone had been banded and had an orange Alpha flag CMN that showed it had originally had been fitted with a geolocator on 16th Apr 2010 at Barwon Heads, which is about 97 km from Melbourne close to Geelong. It was subsequently removed at Barwon Heads on 17th Jan 2011. Unfortunately the geolocator failed and did not provide any information. The Australians (and Rob) were delighted with the sighting and it adds more information on the movement of Turnstones between Australia and New Zealand.

PHIL RHODES

CASPIAN TERN CENSUS

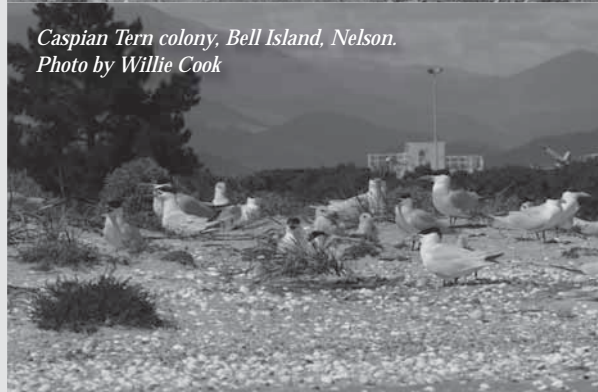
As reported in previous issues of *Southern Bird*, the OSNZ is planning to undertake a census of Caspian Terns during 2011-2013. This will repeat the surveys carried out by OSNZ members during 1971-75 and 1991-95. These surveys suggested that the number of breeding pairs was relatively stable at around 1,200 pairs. There was considerable movement of colonies, however, some disappearing and new ones forming.

This spring marks 20 years since the last survey, so it is time to do it again. Why? With the recent growth in coastal subdivisions, and more four-wheel drive ownership, there are now greater threats to coastal habitats and the birds within them. The data on Caspian Terns being collected by the OSNZ is an important case study of these effects, and could benefit a wide range of coastal birds. This is a great chance for you, during your birding outings, to contribute to an important research project and, we hope, to better conservation of these and other vulnerable coastal breeding species.

Caspian Tern chick and eggs in nest scrape.
Photo by Willie Cook



Caspian Tern colony, Bell Island, Nelson.
Photo by Willie Cook



Caspian terns lay from late September to early December (with late nests usually being replacement clutches). Eggs take 26-28 days to hatch. Chicks are brooded for 5-10 days and fledge when 33-38 days old, but the juveniles continue to be fed by adults for several months. Ideally, you want to locate colonies early in the breeding season (late September) and make initial counts of the nests and number of adults present. From these results, you should then plan the next visit to occur just before hatching starts. Incubation is 26-28 days so if in the first count only a few pairs had nests with eggs, the next visit should be three weeks later. Conversely, if most birds are incubating then plan to revisit the colony a week later. Don't try counting within a colony once there are chicks as this will disturb them, something we need to avoid. Instead, count the number of free-roaming chicks and incubating birds from a distance using binoculars or telescope.

The surveys will be co-ordinated in each region by your RR's, so if you know the location of a colony, or even a single pair of Caspian Terns, please contact your RR, who will provide you with full survey instructions and reporting forms. Send your records in to the RR's who will then forward them to me. Each season's results will be published in *Southern Bird*.

MIKE BELL

Caspian tern survey co-ordinator

Regional Reps and What's On



Far North

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

Northland

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

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

Auckland

Mel Galbraith, 62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead, Auckland. Ph (09) 480 1958. Email melgar62@slingshot.co.nz

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at 7.45pm at Natural Science Building 23, Unitec, Point Chevalier.

South Auckland

Simon Fordham, P.O. Box 64 042, Botany, 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 osnzbp@gmail.com

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 nz@xtra.co.nz

Hawke's Bay

Helen Andrews, 254 Mangatahi Rd, RD1, Hastings 4171. Ph (06) 874 9426.

Email helenandrews@xtra.co.nz

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

Taranaki

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

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

Wanganui

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

Manawatu

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

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

Wairarapa

Peggy Duncan, 228 Wood Street, RD1 Greytown 5794. Email peggyduncan@paradise.net.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 Peggy Duncan for further details.

Wellington

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

- Evening meetings - Contact Ian Armitage. Meetings are held at Turnbull House, 11 Bowen Street, Wellington on the first Monday of each month (January and June excepted). Meet at 7.45 pm.
- Kapiti Coast members meet periodically at the Paraparaumu Public Library (Meeting Room), 179 Rimu Road, Paraparaumu, 7.30 pm (see the Wellington Region Newsletter for dates).
- East Harbour Regional Park bird survey. Ian Armitage (04) 232-7470
- Matiu/Somes Island little penguin studies. Reg Cotter. (04) 568-6960
- Kapiti Island Bird Survey. Colin Miskelly, colin.miskelly@tepapa.govt.nz (04) 479 1662
- Beach patrols. Ian Armitage (04) 232-7470
- Mist-netting and passerine banding Peter Reese, ruth.peterr@actrix.co.nz (04) 387-7387

Other field activities are conducted on a casual basis.

Please report all Wellington Region bird sightings to the Regional Recorder, Delia Small, delia@paradise.net.nz (04) 475-7526

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

Neil Robertson, PO Box 65, Te Anau, Southland 9640. Ph (03) 249 9595/021 1526 275. Email neilrobertson@yahoo.co.uk

Evening meetings (in conjunction with Field Club) held second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm. Please phone Lloyd Esler on (03) 213 0404 for venue and further information, field trip usually on Saturday following. Beach Patrols on a casual basis, phone Phil Rhodes (03) 217 7699 or Lloyd Esler.

