



Southern *Bird*

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*The Magazine of the Ornithological
Society of New Zealand*



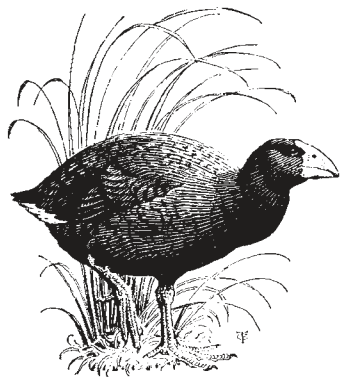
**NEW ZEALAND'S
LARGEST RECORDED
SEABIRD WRECK**

CELEBRITY PENGUIN

**THE MISSING
RARITIES**

Southern Bird

No. 47 June 2011 • ISSN 1175-1916



QUOTATION

*Why do you sit, so dreamily, dreamily,
Kingfisher over the stream
Silent your beak, and silent the water.
What is your dream?..*

The Kingfisher by Eileen Duggan 1894-1972

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COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover:

Kaka by night. Two of these brightly coloured parrots flew in to check out the hut I was staying in on Stewart Island. The camera flash really accentuates the colours in their plumage.

Back Cover:

A male Miromiro or Tomtit. This traditional charmer was a near constant companion while I was working as a volunteer on the Dancing Star's predator proof preserve on Stewart Island.

Both photos © Fraser Crichton

Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.

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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.

RARE AUSTRALIAN VISITOR TO STEWART ISLAND'S HORSESHOE BAY

The power lines of Sydney and Perth are quite a contrast to the windswept, rain lashed climate of Stewart Island for the Black-Faced Cuckoo Shrike, so spotting one on the island recently was a surprise for Brent Beaven, the Department of Conservation's Biodiversity Manager on Stewart Island/Rakiura. Brent spotted the rare Australian vagrant on 26th May 2011 at the Dancing Star Foundation's Ecological Preserve at Horseshoe Bay. Writer and photographer, Fraser Crichton, who was working as a conservation volunteer with the Foundation at the time, captured this image of the bird on a power line just outside the predator proof fence of the preserve.

Philip Rhodes Southland's Regional Recorder said, "Yes quite a rare bird to see, and yes definitely a juvenile Black-faced Cuckoo shrike. There was another of these spotted on Stewart Island in about 2001."

The immature Black-Faced Cuckoo Shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*) has an eye stripe rather than the full black mask of the mature bird. The omnivorous passerine is relatively common in Australia, but there have only been 20 recordings of the bird in New Zealand, the last one in 2007 on the North Island, according to Stewart Island wildlife photographer Matt Jones, who also captured some images of the bird. "I think there have only been about 20 records of this bird in NZ. The last one in 2007 in the North Island," said Matt.

The shrill call was heard for several days around Horseshoe Bay before the bird moved on.



Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike.
Photo by Fraser Crichton ©

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

AGM WEEKEND

Contained in this edition are the minutes of the Annual General Meeting and reports from the weekend. From my perspective it was a very successful weekend providing a wonderful opportunity for members to meet and discuss issues.

The organisation of the team lead by Ian Armitage was exceptional and it was particularly pleasing to have members from the Wairarapa Region involved which helped share the work load and give experience to a wider pool of people. The scientific talks over the two days were extremely interesting and once again show the wide range of topics being studied by both professional and amateur ornithologists within New Zealand.

The annual meeting provided an opportunity for several contentious issues to be discussed and whilst there was a vigorous debate it was conducted in good nature and provided the opportunity for those members present to have their input.

PAUL SCOFIELD

Just prior to the annual meeting weekend Paul Scofield tended his resignation from his remaining roles within the Society. These involved his membership of the records appraisal committee and also as chairman of the scientific committee. Paul brought his vast knowledge to these roles, which will be missed on the deliberation of those committees, but we hope that he will take an active role again at some time in the future.

Paul's position on the records appraisal committee has been filled by Andrew Crossland, a very active member of the Canterbury Region. Council is still considering options for Paul's replacement on the scientific committee, as that is a group that will lead the future direction of the scientific endeavours of the Society.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

I have also been recently advised that Yvonne McLaughlan (previously Mackenzie) has resigned from the position of membership secretary. Yvonne has held this role for a number of years and has quietly and efficiently gone about the role of maintaining the membership list and processing and banking subscriptions. This is a role which is out of the limelight but requires care and attention and she has brought those attributes to the task. We wish her well in her retirement and hope that she now has more time to put into her birdwatching activities.

Council has received a number of offers to fulfil this role and these are currently being considered. We are hopeful that an appointment can be made in the near future. The implementation of the new web-based membership database should help ease the work load, giving members the opportunity to complete most of the renewals and changes themselves.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Ian Saville, who has been the Regional Representative for the Manawatu Region for many years, resigned at the time of the Annual General Meeting weekend. Following discussions within the region Craig Steed has been elected as the new Regional Representative. We welcome Craig to the team and we hope that members within the region can provide him with the support that he needs to operate in this small but active area.

I also take this opportunity to thank Ian Saville for his work in firstly regenerating the Manawatu area and then being the representative for an extended period.

COMING ACTIVITIES

Over the coming summer period the Society will be involved with the Department of Conservation in undertaking a census of the New Zealand Dotterel on their northern breeding grounds. This activity mainly involves the regions at the top of the North Island. However, if members from other regions want to assist Detlef Davies in the Far North region he would certainly appreciate any extra support.

Mike Bell is also organising the breeding survey of Caspian Terns and members should participate to achieve as wide a coverage as possible. These terns often breed as isolated pairs as well as large colonies, so even secluded beaches could contain a pair or two. If breeding birds are found they should be reported to the regional representative for that area along with an accurate location.

PRION WRECK

In the middle of July there was a major wreck of mainly Broad-billed Prions in numbers not previously recorded. For members who patrolled west coast beaches recovering birds at the rate of approximately one per metre, it was a sad and yet exciting ornithological event. It is clear from the debates that have occurred since that the accurate identification of the various species of prions is a very difficult task, especially with the huge numbers of birds that were involved on many of the beaches.

It has also been an unusual winter for the number of sightings of unusual terns and some other seabirds, such as the sightings of Great Shearwater in New Zealand waters. All of these events may be related to unusual activities at sea. It does show however that there are plenty of opportunities for individuals to make meaningful observations and I would urge you to record any sightings no matter how trivial they may seem on an individual basis. Often they can provide useful information in the wider picture.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

JOINING THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

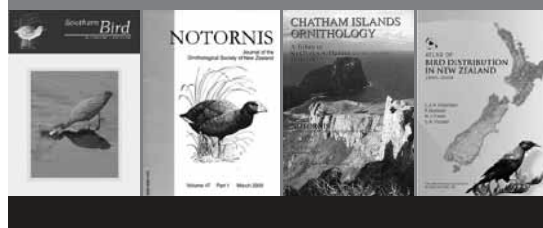
If you are reading this but are not a member of the Ornithological Society you would be very welcome to join us. Our membership consists of the whole spectrum of people interested in New Zealand/South Pacific birds from beginners with just an interest through keen birdwatchers and amateur ornithologists 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.
- Contact your nearest regional representative, contact details for which can be found on the back page of this magazine.



FALLA MEMORIAL AWARD, A.T. EDGAR JUNIOR AWARD AND MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the OSNZ Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) by 31st December 2011. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs, or the Secretary secretary@osnz.org.nz.

The Awards Committee will consider all nominations, and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting.

Further information on OSNZ award procedures is available from your RR or the OSNZ Secretary.

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.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

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

WANTED PAPERS ON NEW ZEALAND BIRD SPECIES

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

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

MINUTES OF THE 72ND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NZ (INC) HELD AT 8.30PM IN THE DOWSE ART GALLERY, LOWER HUTT ON 4TH JUNE 2011

ATTENDANCE

The President, David Lawrie, opened the meeting and welcomed 71 members and friends.

APOLOGIES

Eric Spurr, Christopher Robertson, Helen Andrews, Stuart Wood, Barry Hartley, Steve Sawyer, Sioux Plowman, Hugh and Zoe Clifford, Julia Melville, Enfys Graham, Gwenda Pulham, Katrina Hansen, Michael Taylor and Murray Williams.

Motion: That the apologies be accepted.
Biz Bell/Phil Battley (carried).

RECENT DEATHS

Members rose to remember Don Merton, Mike Imber and Patrick Buxton

MINUTES

Motion: That the minutes, as circulated, be taken as read and be approved. Mel Galbraith/Bruce McKinlay (carried).

There were no matters arising.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Paul Garner-Richards provided members with a copy of his report and statement of accounts as approved by the auditor. These will be published in *Southern Bird*. The meeting thanked Biz Bell and her team for the successful book auction which had contributed to the funds.

Motion: That the financial report be accepted and that John Khouri be re-appointed as

auditor. Paul Garner-Richards/David Melville (carried).

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President, David Lawrie, presented his annual report providing an update on society activities and thanking those who had managed these for the membership. The report will be published in full in *Southern Bird*.

Motion: that the President's report be accepted. David Lawrie/Brian Bell (carried)

MOTIONS NOTIFIED FOR THIS AGM

1 That Rule 16.1 of the constitution be amended from "The AGM of the society shall be held not later than 30th June each year" to "The AGM of the society shall be held not later than 31st October in each year". Lloyd Esler/Neil Robertson.

The proposer had written in support of the motion and the seconder spoke at the meeting. Whilst the rationale was to enable AGM weekends in the south when the weather was better for field activities others spoke of the emphasis on business and scientific presentations at this time. Others noted the financial reporting difficulties and other timetabling problems for society business that would ensue.

A show of hands recorded 10 in favour and 41 against. The motion was lost.

2 That membership renewal occur on the anniversary of the start date of the member. Roger Sharp/Yvonne Mackenzie.

The rationale, as previously provided in *Southern Bird*, was to provide a greater spread of income for the society and a

better spread of work for the membership secretaries. Council members had spoken of the financial and administrative difficulties in doing this and also that the forthcoming online renewal system should greatly alleviate the work of membership secretaries. The nominator had indicated a willingness to withdraw the motion but due process was followed.

The motion was lost with a voice vote.

3 That a binding referendum of members be held regarding the publishing of *Notornis*. The proposal being: That *Notornis*, the scientific journal of OSNZ, cease as a mandatory printed publication and that the annual subscription be reduced by the amount of savings realised, effective 1st January 2012. That *Notornis* continue to be published in an electronic (PDF) form and made available through the OSNZ website. That abstracts of *Notornis* papers be included as part of *Southern Bird*. That this referendum be included with the September 2011 edition of *Southern Bird*. Simon Fordham/Sarah Withers.

The rationale, about reducing subscriptions and enhancing membership had been published. Lengthy discussion at the meeting centred on how much the savings would be if a printed version still needed to be produced and the benefits that members gain apart from receiving the publication.

Motion: That the original motion lie on the table. Peter Frost/Brigid Glass (carried)



AWARDS

Don Merton had been awarded the Fellowship of the Society prior to his death. Keith Owen read his citation to the meeting. Ralph Powlesland was awarded the Robert Falla Memorial Award and his citation was read by Ian Armitage. The society's Meritorious Service Award was awarded to Paddy Latham, Hugh Clifford, Brent Stephenson and Andrew Robertson although none were present at the meeting to receive it.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Votes of thanks were proposed to Ian Armitage and his team for organising the conference and to David Lawrie for his work as president and in successfully chairing a long meeting.

The next meeting will be during Queens Birthday weekend 2012 in the Bay of Plenty.

The meeting closed at 11pm.



OSNZ Council.
Photo by Peter Langlands

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE 2010 FINANCIAL YEAR

The audited accounts for the 2010 financial year are attached. The Society's finances are still in good shape but we continue to show an overall decrease in assets. Council has been continuing to look into ways of increasing our revenue and decreasing expenditure.

The General Account was brought back into credit with a grant from the Projects Assistance Fund. The book auction of Kaj Westerkov's books raised just over \$6000, after expenses were paid. There was a drop-off in other donations for the year. Conference and meeting expenses dropped from the previous year, helped once again by David Melville hosting the November Council Meeting at Dovedale.

The Project Assistance Fund was given a boost from the profit made from the last AGM, which was just under \$3000. We are very

grateful for the sponsorship money received from T Gear Trust. This money is being used for the website update project. Two project grants were made, to the Wellington Zoo Banding Project and the Otago Falcon Project. The fund made two grants to the general fund to assist with operating costs and the Executive Officer contract costs.

The Meadows Atlas account remains in deficit. The main costs have been for postage and packing and storage. Storage costs have been reducing as the stock of Atlases decreases.

The journal expenditure in Library Auction Reserve was just under \$2000 for the year but this will decrease from now as Council has made the decision to cancel some of the Society's subscriptions. It was felt that we

can no longer justify the costs of some of the overseas journals.

The Contracts Account remained stable with just one wader survey contract for the year. At present there are no new contracts on the horizon but hopefully this will change in the future.

I have enjoyed my second year as treasurer. Only another 17 to go if I follow in Mark's footsteps! I would like to thank my fellow councillors, the Executive Officer, the membership secretary and the members for all the assistance and support that they have given me over the last year.

PAUL GARNER-RICHARDS

June 2011

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY 2010 ACCOUNTS

JOHN KHOURI

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**TO THE READERS OF THE SPECIAL PURPOSE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INC
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2010**

Scope

I have reviewed the financial statements that provide information regarding the financial performance of the Society and its financial position as at Balance date.

My engagement instructions are to perform a limited assurance review which provides a level of assurance that is less than an audit engagement.

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for the preparation of financial statements which fairly reflect the financial position of the Society as at 31 December 2010 and the results of its operations for the year ended 31 December 2010.

It is my responsibility to express an independent opinion on the financial statements and to report my opinion to you.

Basis of opinion

A limited assurance review includes examination on a test basis, evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes a review of accounting systems and procedures to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatements, whether caused by fraud or error. Other than in my capacity as reviewer, I have no relationship with or interests in the Society.

Qualified Opinion

Control over cash income, prior to it being banked is limited, and there are no practical audit procedures to determine the effect of this limited control.

As a result of my review, I have concluded that nothing has come to my attention that would cause me to believe that the financial statements do not present a true and fair view of the operating activities of the Society during the year ended 31 December 2010 and its financial position as at 31 December 2010.

My review was completed on 26 May 2011 and my qualified opinion is expressed as at that date.

(Signature) *JOHN KHOURI B.Com ACA*
(Name)

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2010			
	2010	2009	
GENERAL ACCOUNT			
INCOME			
Annual Subscriptions NZ	48,059	45,595	
Annual Subscriptions Overseas	9,910	13,519	
Donations	3,506	9,492	
Donations - Auction of Westerkov Books	6,268	0	
Expenses Repayment - Canterbury Region	6,200	0	
Sales General	229	169	
Sales Kakapo Issue	127	0	
Notornis & Southern Bird Refunds	4,080	3,900	
Interest	677	1,047	
SUB TOTAL	79,056	73,722	
Transfers from			
1. Life Membership Reserve Annual Contribution	1,962	1,961	
2. Projects Assistance Fund			
i. Royalties	3,845	3,054	
ii. Grant Executive Officers Costs	11,000	11,000	
iii. Grant Operating Costs	17,000	0	
SUB TOTAL	33,807	16,015	
TOTAL INCOME	112,863	89,737	
EXPENDITURE			
Audit	550	800	
Annual Return Fee	89	0	
Bank Fees	810	730	
Computers & Software	321	257	
Conference & Meetings Expenses	7,057	11,419	
Donations to BNZ Save The Kiwi eBird Hosting & Maintenance	4	4	
Executive Officer Contract Fees	2,967	0	
General Expenses	29,348	33,476	
Insurance	287	1,998	
Internet	1,197	1,197	
Postage	312	434	
Postage - International	873	901	
Postage - Notornis & Southern Bird	2,799	3,379	
Printing - Notornis	8,359	3,379	
Printing - Southern Bird	19,219	30,571	
Printing & Stationery - General	11,965	11,978	
Telephone	3,339	6,130	
Website Domains Renewals	80	140	
SUB TOTAL	89,750	106,933	
Transfer to:			
1. Library Auction Reserve - Grant for Journals	1,000	1,000	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	90,750	107,933	
Surplus/Deficit	22,113	-18,196	
Plus Balance as at 1st January	-16,326	1,870	
Balance as at 31st December	5,787	-16,326	

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY 2010 ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

	2010	2009
LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND		
INCOME		
Interest	1,273	1,969
New Life Members	0	0
TOTAL INCOME	1,273	1,969
EXPENDITURE		
Transfer to General Funds	1,962	1,961
Surplus/Deficit	-689	8
Plus Balance as at 1st January	19,616	19,608
Balance as at 31st December	18,928	19,616
LIBRARY ASSET ACCOUNT		
INCOME		
Library Exchanges	1,700	1,700
Surplus/Deficit	1,700	1,700
Plus Balance as at 1st January	38,463	36,763
Balance as at 31st December	40,163	38,463
PROJECT ASSISTANCE FUND		
INCOME		
Royalties Penguin Field Guide	3,845	3,054
Sponsorship - T Gear Trust (for new website)	14,540	0
AGM Profit	2,951	0
Interest	8,074	12,487
TOTAL INCOME	29,411	15,541
EXPENDITURE		
Regional Allowances	6,993	7,870
State of NZ Birds	3,430	3,273
Wind Farm Media Release	0	600
Taleroa Head Oral History Project	0	5,400
AOC Scholarships	0	2,000
Wellington Zoo Banding Project	300	0
Otago Falcon Project	618	0
SUB TOTAL	11,341	19,143
Transfers to General Account		
i. Royalties	3,845	3,054
ii. Executive Officer Costs	11,000	11,000
iii. Operating Costs	17,000	0
SUB TOTAL	31,845	14,054
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	43,186	33,197
Surplus/Deficit	-13,776	-17,656
Plus Balance as at 1st January	107,056	124,712
Balance as at 31st December	93,280	107,056

JLB

	2010	2009
MEADOWS ATLAS MEMORIAL FUND		
INCOME		
Sales - Atlas	85	576
Sales - Atlas Information	664	5,651
Donations	0	493
TOTAL INCOME	749	6,720
EXPENDITURE		
Atlas Inputs	0	2,915
Atlas Postage & Packaging	1,174	694
Atlas PDF Publishing	0	4,680
Atlas Storage	873	591
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,047	8,879
Surplus/Deficit	-1,297	-2,159
Plus Balance as at 1st January	-18,387	-16,227
Balance as at 31st December	-19,684	-18,387
LIBRARY AUCTION RESERVE		
INCOME		
Interest	81	125
Transfer from General Account	1,000	1,000
TOTAL INCOME	1,081	1,125
EXPENDITURE		
Journals	1,792	340
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,792	340
Surplus/Deficit	-711	785
Balance as at 1 January	2,057	1,272
Balance as at 31 December	1,346	2,057
CONTRACTS ACCOUNT		
INCOME		
Wader Surveys	700	15,000
TOTAL INCOME	700	15,000
EXPENDITURE		
Wader Equipment & Status Reports	0	24,800
Transfers to Administration Fees	0	6,978
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	0	31,778
Surplus/Deficit	700	-16,778
Balance as at 1 January	125,600	142,378
Balance as at 31 December	126,300	125,600

JLB

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER		
	2010	2009
MEMBERS FUNDS		
General Account	5,787	-16,326
Life Membership Fund	18,928	19,616
Library Auction Reserve	1,346	2,057
TOTAL	26,061	5,347
RESTRICTED FUNDS		
Project Assistance Funds	93,280	107,056
Meadows Memorial	-19,684	-18,387
Contracts Fund	126,300	125,600
TOTAL	199,896	214,269
TOTAL MEMBERS & RESTRICTED FUNDS	225,957	219,617
ASSETS		
Bank	31,219	23,462
Investments BNZ	164,032	170,215
Investments Auckland Mortgage Trust	11,400	13,000
Accounts Receivable	2,021	2,375
Library Account	40,163	38,463
GST	651	1,309
TOTAL ASSETS	249,486	248,823
LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	14,666	10,616
Subscriptions in Advance	8,864	18,590
TOTAL LIABILITIES	23,530	29,206
NET TOTAL OF ASSETS	225,957	219,617
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES		
General Accounting Principles		
The general accounting principles recognised as appropriate for the measurement and reporting of earnings under the historical cost method of accounting have been adopted by the Society		
Particular Accounting Policies		
a. Subscription Income		
Subscriptions in arrears have not been included in income.		
Subscriptions in advance have been included in income.		
b. Royalty Income		
Royalties from the Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand (Heather & Robertson) are credited to the Project Assistance Fund.		
c. Interest Earned		
Interest earned by investments of funds have been credited to respective funds by apportioning the total interest received over Restricted and General Funds		
d. Goods & Service Tax		
Income and expenditure are stated exclusive of goods and services tax		

JLB

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2010		
1. RESERVES		
The Life Membership Reserve consists of life membership subscriptions and interest less annual transfer of 10% of balance to General Funds		
2. ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE		
Royalties Penguin	1,470	2,375
Atlas Sales	230	0
Interest BNZ	321	321
TOTAL	2,021	2,696
3. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE		
Audit Fee Accrued	800	1,600
Annual Return Fees	43	0
Notornis & Southern Bird	13,234	8,334
Atlas Storage	93	114
Expenses	495	569
TOTAL	14,666	10,617
4. NOTORNIS & SOUTHERN BIRD REFUNDS		
Notornis/Library Exchanges	1,700	1,700
Papers in Notornis	2,200	2,200
Southern Bird Adverts	180	0
TOTAL	4,080	3,900
5. PROJECT ASSISTANCE FUND GRANTS MADE		
Regional Payments	6,993	7,870
State of NZ Birds	3,430	3,273
Rock Wren Publicity	0	0
Wind Farm Media Release	0	600
Taleroa Head Oral History Project	0	5,400
AOC Scholarships	0	2,000
Wellington Zoo Banding Project	300	0
Otago Falcon Project	618	0
TOTAL	11,341	19,143
6. CASHFLOW STATEMENT		
A cashflow statement has not been prepared. The provisions for differential reporting under Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, specifically Exposure Draft No. 62 "Framework for Differential Reporting" allows entities of the size of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc to be exempt from the completion of a Statement of Cashflow.		

JLB

DEVELOPING 'NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE' – HOW YOU CAN HELP (PART 2)

Over the next two years, Te Papa and the Ornithological Society will be working hard to construct the website www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz. This project was first mentioned in *Southern Bird* issue 43 (September 2010, p.13), with some suggestions on how OSNZ members could contribute. This included providing digital images of all life stages and all plumages of all bird species ever recorded from New Zealand, being involved in writing draft texts for each species' homepage, and checking species lists for your favourite birding locations.

Since I last wrote, Te Papa and OSNZ have been successful in securing a grant from the Department of Conservation administered Terrestrial and Freshwater Biodiversity Information System fund, with the aim of having the website up and running by mid 2013.

Details on how to contribute photographs and texts will be advertised in forthcoming issues of *Southern Bird*, on the OSNZ website, on the BirdingNZ.net website, and via the BIRDING-NZ Yahoo group.

The first task that I am seeking specific help with is constructing and checking species lists for over 130 locations. It is expected that the front-end of the website will include a 'Search by location' function that will include a map of New Zealand divided up into provinces and sea area, with significant bird islands and other bird sites shown. If you click on a province, sea area or named location, you will be asked whether you want a full list, breeding birds only, breeding plus regular species, vagrant species, extinct species etc. These lists could be downloaded as local species lists, or will provide links into all the relevant species pages in the website.

This search function will work only if we have accurate species lists for every site. There are 416 resident, vagrant or recently extinct bird species on the New Zealand list. For each of these we need to know (for each site to be included) whether the species is: Breeding, Regular, Vagrant, Formerly present, Extinct, or Absent.

There is no limit to how many sites could be included in this search function, but I am suggesting the list below as a starting point. If your favourite birding site is not in the list, and you would like to see it on the website, contact me and I will send you a copy of the species list to fill in.

I have prepared draft species lists for provinces, sea areas, and islands, and have made a start on species lists for some of the mainland sites listed. All these lists need completing and checking before the website goes live.

If you think that you know your local patch (or patches) well, contact me and I will send you the draft list to check and amend.

PROVINCES

North Auckland, South Auckland, Taranaki, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Nelson, Marlborough, Westland, Canterbury, Otago, Southland, Stewart Island.

SEA AREAS

Kermadec, Auckland west, Auckland east, Bay of Plenty, East Coast, Cook Strait, West Coast, Canterbury/Otago, Foveaux/Stewart, Chatham, Subantarctic, Ross Sea.

ISLANDS

Kermadec, Raoul, Macauley, Curtis and Cheeseman, Three Kings, Aroha, Poor Knights, Hen and Chickens, Mokohinau, Little Barrier, Great Barrier, Kawau, Tiritiri Matangi, Rangitoto and Motutapu, Waiheke, Cuvier, Mercury, Alderman, Tuhua/Mayor, Motuohora/Whale, White, Mokoia, Portland, Kapiti, Mana, Maiti/Somes, Stephens, D'Urville, Chetwode, Maud, Brothers, Motuara, Long, Motunau, Open Bay, Secretary, Breaksea, Resolution, Anchor, Chalky, Solander, Whenua Hou/Codfish, Ulva, Titi Islands (northeast), Titi Islands (southwest), Chatham Islands, Chatham (main), Pitt, Mangere, Rangatira, Bounty, Snares, Auckland Islands, Enderby, Antipodes, Campbell, Macquarie.

BIRDING LOCATIONS (OTHER THAN ISLANDS)

Parengarenga Harbour, Trounson Kauri Park, Whangarei Harbour, Waipu Estuary, Mangawhai, Tapora/Big Sand Island, Tawharanui, Hauraki Gulf pelagic, Wenderholm Regional Park, Strakas Pond, Shakespeare Regional Park, Papakanui Spit, Muriwai Beach, Cascade Kauri Park/Ark in the Park, Tahuna Torea, Mangere ponds, Te Hahi/Karaka, Miranda/Firth of Thames, Whangamarino wetlands, Maungatautari mainland island, Kawhia Harbour, Mapara, Pureora, Maketu and Waihi estuaries, Matata, Tokaanu, Lake Waikaremoana, Lake Tutira, Boundary Stream mainland island, Ahuriri Estuary, Manawatu Estuary, Waikanae Estuary, Mt Bruce/Pukaha, Lake Wairarapa, Zealandia/Karori Sanctuary, Farewell Spit, Heaphy Track, Motueka Spit and Estuary, Waimea Inlet, Lake Rotoiti mainland island, Wairau Lagoons, Lake Grassmere (Marlborough), Lake Elterwater, Kaikoura Peninsula, Kaikoura pelagic, St Annes Lagoon, Ashley River Mouth, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Lake Ellesmere, Arthur's Pass, Okarito, Washdyke Lagoon, Lake Wainono, Orokoni mainland island, Otago Peninsula, Catlins Forest Park, Nugget Point, Awarua Bay/Waituna Lagoon, Eglinton Valley, Milford Track, Milford Sound.

New Zealand Birds Online is only going to be as good as the effort that you, as members of the New Zealand birding community, make to get it right. I look forward to being inundated with requests to compile and check species lists for your home province and favourite birding sites!

COLIN MISKELLY

Curator Terrestrial Vertebrates

Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand

colin.miskelly@tepapa.govt.nz

CHANGES TO SOUTHERN BIRD

Following on from the Lower Hutt AGM, Council and the *Southern Bird* Editor have reviewed the balance between copy in *Southern Bird* and that which is available on the recently restructured website. In particular the list of regional contacts inside the back page is a direct rewrite of the contact page on the website. Council also received feedback that there should be more space for stories about birds and birders in *Southern Bird*. Currently approximately four pages of the magazine

are devoted to regional roundups. Whilst the regional roundups are well written and very interesting, for some regions they are repeating what is in regional newsletters, all of which are available on the Society's website. The suggestion by Council is that regional roundups will be restricted to two pages and that regions look to report on local activities in a newsletter format for posting on the website. Newsletters can be produced as Word documents, and although some regions

have very sophisticated newsletters this is not a prerequisite for being informative. The Editor of *Southern Bird* will be inserting in the magazine a clear set of directions for where to find both society contacts and regional newsletters and events on the website.

Council sees these changes bedding in over time to improve the balance in *Southern Bird* and to maximise the investment we have made as a Society on redeveloping the website.

SOUTH ISLAND KOKAKO RECORDS

Dear Sir,

At a recent OSNZ branch meeting (Nelson) I spoke of the frustration for those who seek the South Island Kokako (SIK) with the recent rejection by the RBC/RAC of an authentic SIK report and the consequences these decisions have for conservation management. It was suggested the issue be raised to the wider OSNZ membership via *Southern Bird*.

Below are outlined some of the reports where fleshy wattles at the base of the bill have been clearly identified and so the identity of the bird is beyond question, i.e. it must be SIK.

2008, Arthur Range, Kahurangi National Park, Dougal Satherly, a professional hunter for DOC. Was familiar with kokako having worked in North Island forests. Identified the bird as a Kokako when it landed on a branch 40 m from him. Confirmed the identification viewing through rifle scope (7 x magnification), wattles clearly seen.

2007, Reefton, Globe Hill Sanctuary. Len Turner, while doing a trapping round, observed a "steely grey-bluish" bird at 10-15m for ½ minute. Wattles clearly seen, the base a deep mat blue and the remainder a fleshy orange-brown.

1997, March and June, Waikawa. Kim and Vivien Coutts independently saw at very close range a large pale grey bird (at least twice the size of a Saddleback) with "electric blue wattles". "It moved somewhat like a Saddleback". (Kim is a guide to Motuara Island).

1997, Parapara Ridge, Golden Bay. Mike Southern and Paul Bowers observed a "gun-metal grey" bird at four metres for over a minute. Wattles clearly seen.

1996, South Westland. Barry Donovan viewed a bird through binoculars at 7 m with sky blue wattles.

1990, Lake Matiri. Gordon Appleton observed two "bluey-grey birds" at five metres for five minutes. "Orange/yellow wattles" were clearly seen.

For every report where wattles at the base of the bill have been clearly seen, there are a dozen where they have not - i.e. these are probable Kokako with the observations often accompanied by defining behaviour (one metre hops, 'bouncing' up a leaning tree, 'floppy' flight etc). In most cases the observers were unaware of the existence of SIK (hence the reports could not have been fabricated).

Under the current assessment criteria, it is unlikely that any of the historic SIK reports (Buller, Reischek, Guthrie-Smith, Falla, etc) would be accepted. This very high bar for acceptance has serious consequences for conservation management. Area managers put no weight on SIK reports in their area. North Island Kokako have been introduced to the South Island (will Secretary Island produce hybrid birds?)

Unless accompanied by DNA evidence, I would not encourage anyone to submit a rare birds report for SIK. This OSNZ process is counter-productive for this species. There needs to be a review of the assessment criteria used by the OSNZ Rare bird/records appraisal committee.

And yet the story of our Southern Mystery Bird continues, perhaps in a forest near you...

Yours, Alec Milne

Reply from the Records Appraisal Committee

Your correspondent is correct in observing that the Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) has a very high bar for accepting records of bird species otherwise considered extinct. As is also the case for bird species not previously recorded from the New Zealand region, the terms of reference for the RAC require unanimous support from all five members of the committee for a record to be accepted. If members consider this standard to be too high, then this is a matter for OSNZ Council to reconsider.

Each RAC member is also obligated to assess each submission on its merits, rather than being swayed by the consequences of the committee's collective decision.

The committee members would all be thrilled to receive proof that the South Island Kokako is not extinct. A photograph or a feather in support of a written account of observations would be great. Failing that, independent accounts by two or more experienced bird watchers, preferably observers known to OSNZ office holders, are likely to be favourably considered.

Even if a South Island Kokako sighting does not meet these standards, it is very important that records continue to be submitted to the RAC. Such records alert OSNZ members to the possibility that Kokako survive at a given site, thereby encouraging further search effort. And if or when a sighting of a South Island Kokako is accepted by the RAC, resulting in the species being declared 'not extinct', then the bar for accepting records will change from unanimity to a majority of RAC members. All sightings are an important part of the RAC archive, and previous records can be reviewed by the committee and their status changed at any time.

The South Island Kokako may well be the 'extinct' bird most likely to be rediscovered, but it is by no means the only one. The Rare Birds Committee, which preceded the RAC, after much deliberation eventually accepted the New Zealand Storm Petrel as rediscovered. Over the years RBC members have also considered reported sightings of moa, Bush Wren, Stout-legged Wren, Piopio and Laughing Owl, none of which met the criterion of unanimous acceptance.

Colin Miskelly
Convener, RAC

CHANGES TO THE OSNZ MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

As you will have seen in the June edition of *Southern Bird*, as part of the redevelopment of the website the Society is undertaking a redesign of the Society's membership database. This will affect members in several ways and hopefully the changes will be seen to be of benefit to the membership. The purpose of this article is to inform you of progress and to give advance notice of how the changes might affect you in the next subscription round.

Currently the membership database is a stand-alone database. Although the structure of the database is very thorough and is well curated, being a stand-alone database means that members cannot directly interact with their information. Any interaction that the members want to have with the Society in terms of updating information and making payments has to be done through a third party. In this case our very hard working Membership Secretary.

The redesign will mean that the membership database is a web-based application, which will enable members to log on to directly change their personal information where necessary as and when this occurs. As part of this redesign the Society has purchased a credit card payment facility through the well-known PayPal organisation so that subscriptions can now be paid directly on line by credit card. In the future conference registrations and the like will also be able to be paid directly.

Of course all this fancy new stuff means that you need to have a computer or internet access to be able to use it. We will continue to support manual payments, but the changes will mean a significant reduction in workload for the Membership Secretary in manually processing renewals and having to update personal information.

In considering these redevelopments it has become clear that we need to introduce adequate security to protect your information and to ensure that you can access your membership information, and that apart from the membership secretary no-one else can. The system that we are going to

be using is industry standard to ensure that your data will be protected. At the same time, however, you need to be assured that the Society will not be trading or forwarding any information held with any third party. Council is committed to the principle of collecting this information for the management of the Society, and will not be using it for any other purpose.

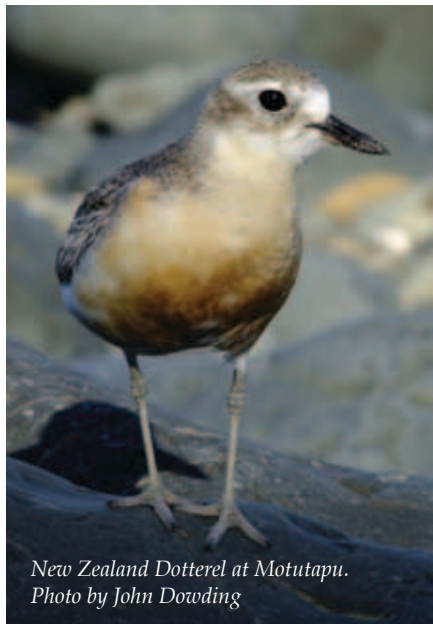
The first time that you will see any changes is at the end of this year when you receive your subscription renewal notice. Instead of being invited to check the paper form and attach a cheque you will be given a username and password and invited to log onto the Society's website, check your details and then complete your credit card details. For those of you who wish to renew manually the usual form will be available to allow you to do so.

BRUCE MCKINLAY
On behalf of Council



NORTHERN NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL CENSUS

OCTOBER 2011



New Zealand Dotterel at Motutapu.
Photo by John Dowding

The last census of the northern New Zealand Dotterel population was undertaken in October 2004. The Dotterel Recovery Plan specifies that a repeat census should be undertaken in October 2011, and planning is now well under way for it. These censuses are an ambitious undertaking, and are beyond

the resources of any one organisation. They have therefore always been a joint operation between OSNZ and DoC, with assistance from council staff, members of Forest & Bird, and others.

The core weekend for this year's census is 15-16th October. In some areas, it won't be possible to cover all sites in the one weekend, and counts that can't be done on 15th or 16th October can be done up to one week either side of that. Movement of birds is minimal at this time of year and spreading the counts over that time won't affect the results much. However, there can be local movement, so we do need to avoid counting sites that are geographically close together many days apart if at all possible.

As many counts as possible need to be undertaken within two hours of high water. This is particularly the case at sites near estuaries; when the tide is out, off-duty birds, or those without nests or chicks, will normally move into those estuaries to feed and can easily be missed.

Because these censuses are a big undertaking, we can only attempt them every seven or eight years. When we do undertake them, it is therefore important that we get the most from them, so coverage needs to be as thorough as possible. In some parts of the country, particularly Northland

and the Far North, there is a huge amount of coastline to survey, and we will need all the help we can get. If you can take part, please contact your local RR. Contact details are on the OSNZ website.

We know that without management, the New Zealand Dotterel population would be in decline. The results of the 2011 census will build on data from previous surveys in 1989, 1996, and 2004. Importantly, it will update our knowledge of numbers and distribution in each area, and tell us where to target management most efficiently. Hopefully the latest census will answer some specific questions, too. Is the west coast population still in decline? How many pairs are now breeding in and south of Hawke's Bay? Has the increase in the total population seen over the past 20 years continued, or is it slowing? Has the recent boom on Coromandel Peninsula peaked?

Following this year's census, I will be putting together a paper for *Notornis*, combining the results from all four censuses, and looking at population trends and changes in distribution over the past 20 years.

JOHN DOWDING (jdowning@xtra.co.nz)
New Zealand Dotterel census co-ordinator

MAINLAND SHORE PLOVERS

Shore Plovers from the population re-introduced to Mana Island off the Wellington Region's north west coast spent much of winter on the nearby mainland at the seaside suburb of Plimmerton. They were visited by a number of birdwatchers during their stay at this very accessible roadside spot.

A pair attempted to breed, unsuccessfully, over summer in 2010/1 on the beach at Plimmerton, and tiny numbers have visited the area, but the first report of the winter of a larger number was via a post to the Birding-NZ email group on 6th June by Michael Szabo about five birds on the rocks by Plimmerton Fire Station. Numbers quickly climbed until on 12th of June 37 birds were counted. Notes taken by locals of colour band combinations showed some turn-over of birds, with not always the same ones present.

John Dowding of the Shore Plover Recovery Group said in a message to Birding-NZ that the event was very unusual and there had not been a previous mass exodus of the species from Mana Island. There were no obvious reasons for the birds leaving the island.

The birds fed on the beach and rock platform, roosting in the same general area into the small dune and even on the sealed area at the fire station. Some, but not all, birds allowed very close approach to within a couple of metres, and seemed unconcerned when dogs and their owners passed by. Loud noises (e.g. fire alarms and passing trains) and sudden fast movements put the

birds to flight, but they would soon settle back on the shore.

DoC planned to capture the birds and take them back to Mana Island to protect them from possible predation whilst away from their predator-free refuge, but this wasn't reported to have occurred and the birds continued to presumably commute between the island and the mainland even into late August. Towards the end of winter a sign was erected, endorsed by the Plimmerton Residents Association, DoC, Porirua City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council informing the public of the significance of the flock of birds and roping off part of the foreshore used by it. Residents were asked to keep dogs away from the area and to keep their cats in at night. News of the birds made the *Dominion Post* newspaper and the Plimmerton community website.



Shore Plover at Plimmerton.
Photo by Fraser Crighton ©



Shore Plovers in flight.
Photo by Ian Armitage

NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST RECORDED SEABIRD WRECK



Cheryl Meier, and Hugh and Zoe Clifford sorting and identifying prions in a dump of the birds on 23rd July on Kawhia Beach. Photo by Ken Phillips.

MASSIVE SEABIRD MORTALITY EVENT

After many years of fairly mediocre beach patrolling, OSNZ members were taken by surprise in July by a huge and unprecedented prion wreck. The total numbers of birds lost in the wreck probably exceeded 100,000 birds and possibly up to half a million birds were affected.

The timing of the mortality event is controversial as some people saw large numbers of birds appearing on beaches in early July. Here I report simply on what I saw during a two-week trip to Bethells Beach (west Auckland) in July working with Grey-faced Petrels. I was walking the beaches most days from 10th-22nd July so the timing of the event at this site seemed clear cut to me at the time. I saw no birds washed up on the beach from 10th-12th July but huge swells may have cleared the beach each high tide. A small number of prions started washing ashore on the 13th July and much bigger numbers on 14th July. The bulk of the birds washed ashore from 15th-17th July. A few fresh prions kept coming up on tides until 22nd July.

I fully covered the 2.5 km stretch of Bethells and O'Neills beaches on several occasions, gathered up all dead seabirds and removed them from the beach. Even so I still ran out of time on 22nd July to do a few hundred metres of beach at the south end. I picked up 589 dead birds on these two beaches during my trip. All were prions except three diving petrels and a Little Penguin. Mark Bellingham found a further 38 birds (mostly prions) on this beach in late July.

The scale of the wreck was unimaginable. In places there were five or six birds within a metre of each other and I sometimes piled up 50 birds from a small area of beach to process them and move on. The prions at Bethells included all 6 species:

Broad-billed Prion 450
Salvin's Prion 21
Antarctic Prion 53
Fairy Prion 11
Fulmar Prion 35
Thin-billed Prion 6
Prion sp (not Broad-billed) 9

The number of broad-billed prions washed ashore is exceptional. Previous large wrecks included 1,385 in 1961 and 1,175 in 1974. This species was found at nearly 200 per km on Bethells. At this rate 20,000 broad-billed prions may have perished per 100 km of coastline. From reports elsewhere it suggests that well in excess of 100,000 broad-billed prions died in this event. Who knows how many got eaten at sea or ended up on land unnoticed.

The other major wreck was Fulmar Prions. The 35 I found on Bethells compares with the previous highest annual total of 63 found on all NZ beaches during 1985. Only 101 were found from 1960 to 1986 in total. The 2011 wreck of Fulmar Prions is at a rate of 14 per km. Identification of Fulmar Prions is not easy and many observers are not familiar with the subtle differences in bill appearance compared with Fairy Prions. Fulmar Prions have a large top hook. Comparing Fairy and Fulmars in the hand, the unguis hook of Fulmars is about almost twice the size of typical Fairy prions (but much closer to southern Fairy Prions). The hook of Fulmars is wider (3.8-5.0mm) and longer than Fairy Prions meaning there is only a 4-5 mm gap between the hook and the nostrils. With such large numbers of these smaller birds washing up it is just best to eyeball the differences (there are good illustrations in Scofield and Onley's *Field Guide to the Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World* showing the bill shapes). There were only a few Thin-billed Prions in the wreck but they were noticeable as they have longer and narrower bills.

The Salvin's and Antarctic prions, as per usual, are problematic. I don't think it is possible to get all identifications correct as they overlap in measurements and appearance. The lamellae near the bill base are useful in mint fresh birds but useless once the birds start to decay (both species are filter feeders and have lamellae). Drying corpses expose the lamellae in Antarctic Prions. The bowed shape is sometimes obvious in Salvin's but not always. The separation I used was to compare the bills directly. Salvin's bills are typically longer (c.29-31 mm vs c.26-29 mm in Antarctic Prions) and slightly wider (c.14-17 mm vs c.12-15 mm in Antarctic Prions).

SO WHAT TRIGGERED THIS MORTALITY EVENT?

The primary cause was a series of severe storms that passed south of New Zealand in early to mid-July. These low pressure systems created severe gale force onshore winds, thunderstorms and hail for up to 10 days. Massive westerly swells (over 10 m) were recorded as far north as Auckland. Birds were blown out of their normal feeding range and fought the storm for days before dropping exhausted into the waves where they were pounded ashore. Elsewhere many live seabirds were found on beaches but I saw no live prions at Bethells Beach. Prions feed on small plankton and krill in areas like convergence zones. The storm simply displaced birds so they could not feed on their preferred prey.

WILL THIS EVENT HAVE AN EFFECT AT A POPULATION LEVEL?

It is not easy to answer this question. Normally these types of storms weed out inexperienced juvenile birds, and the sick and the injured. Healthy breeding birds usually avoid the storm centres. But many of these birds appeared to be mature birds that simply starved to death. The main problem is that we know very little about these species. Being common seabirds they seldom get studied. We don't really know how many breeding colonies there are, let alone how many birds breed on them. Many Broad-billed Prions nest on the islands used by Rakiura Maori for muttonbirding Sooty Shearwater chicks and access to these sites is restricted for cultural reasons. The best known Broad-billed Prion population is found on Rangatira Island in the Chatham Islands with a population of 1-2 million birds. The Broad-billed Prion populations around Foveaux Strait and The Snares are generally thought to be quite small according to Colin Miskelly at Te Papa, see <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2011/07/18/riders-of-the-storm-%E2%80%93-93-thousands-of-seabirds-perish-on-new-zealand-shores/>. If the birds caught up in this storm event came mostly from southern New Zealand colonies, these smaller populations may have been severely impacted by the storm.



Photo by Paul Godolphin

Both birds Antarctic Prions

Left bird is the previously unidentified very small prion. Bill and plumage all correct for Antarctic, but NOT the overall tiny size alongside other specimens.

Monitoring of Broad-billed Prions occurs each autumn on Rangatira Island. Ironically this species is a threat to the endangered Chatham Petrel as they compete for the same burrows. Big changes in numbers ashore next autumn will indicate whether or not the impact of the storm reached as far as the Chatham breeding birds.

WHY WAS THE 2011 STORM SO SEVERE?

As far as storms go it was unusually big event. The NIWA July Climate Summary (<http://www.niwa.co.nz/node/102312>) stated the following:

“Low pressures were anchored south of New Zealand and the Chatham Islands during July, producing an extremely windy and stormy month overall. Mean sea level pressures over the southern half of the South Island were unusually low for the month as a whole, and the monthly ‘westerly wind’ index for Christchurch southwards was the second-strongest for July, since records began in 1941”

Storms of this intensity and duration occur only a few times each century in New Zealand. The La Nina phase of the Southern Oscillation of 2010/11 was also one of the largest in nearly a century. Warmer than average waters from tropics extended south into the Tasman Sea last spring/summer and may have decreased primary productivity. Warmer waters are nutrient deficient compared with colder currents coming from the south. La Nina conditions affected breeding success in many seabird species over the last summer including shearwaters and Australasian Gannets around the Auckland region.

All these factors may have contributed in some way to making this the largest seabird wreck recorded in New Zealand.

GRAEME TAYLOR

Background Photo:
Prions at Pukerua Bay, 16 July 2011.
Photo by Alan Tennyson.

AN UNPRECEDENTED PRION WRECK

On 11th July, members of the public first alerted us that live prions were being blown ashore around Wellington. Little did we know that this heralded the beginning of a seabird wreck of unprecedented proportions. During the following week we received reports from around the country of tens of thousands of dead or dying prions. We now suspect that the scale of this mortality event was about an order of magnitude larger than New Zealand’s previous largest ever seabird wreck.

Ten consecutive days of westerly gales drove the birds from the south Tasman Sea against New Zealand’s western shores. It appears that strong onshore winds sapped the birds of energy until they succumbed to exhaustion.

Although prions are the most common birds washed up on New Zealand’s coasts, with large wrecks occurring at least once a decade, two features distinguished this wreck from previous ones: the sheer number of birds coming ashore and the species composition.

During this event, dead prions were found the length, breadth and height of the country (e.g. in the Tararua Ranges) with the North Island’s west coast receiving the highest densities of birds; in excess of one bird per metre were found on some beaches. Thousands of birds were blown inland, with rescue centres, including Massey University, the Wellington SPCA and Zoo, DoC offices and local vets, inundated with well over 2,000 live prions. It is difficult to get an estimate of the total number of birds affected but the preliminary beach patrol total has reached 50,000 already, so hundreds of thousands must have died. The largest previous beach patrol total for a prion wreck was about 15,000 in 2002.

The other extraordinary feature of the 2011 wreck was that the Broad-billed Prion was by far the dominant species. An extrapolation, based on the preliminary average of more than 300 dead prions per kilometre for the North Island’s west coast, indicates that a quarter of a million prions washed up on beaches, of which about 80% (c.200,000) were Broad-billed Prions. Thousands of the other species of prions (Salvin’s, Antarctic, Thin-billed, Fulmar and Fairy) died as well. Other than prions, the only other species affected in any numbers was the Common Diving Petrel, with perhaps 1,000 birds killed.

Previous large prion wrecks predominantly affected Fairy, Salvin’s and/or Antarctic prions. The 2011 wreck inflicted the heaviest mortality ever recorded for both Broad-billed and Fulmar Prions. The largest previous wrecks of these two species on New Zealand coasts were (for Broad-billed Prion) 1,385 in 1961 and 1,175 in 1974, and (for Fulmar Prion) 63 in 1985, so the 2011 event far exceeded these numbers for both species.

What will be the impact of this enormous mortality event? Salvin’s, Antarctic, Thin-billed and Fairy Prions have populations numbering in the millions, so they should be able to withstand the thousands of birds killed. However, the impact on populations of Broad-billed and Fulmar Prions may be more serious.

Broad-billed Prions breed around the Chatham, Snares and Stewart Islands and Fiordland and also in the South Atlantic but the affected birds were most likely from local breeding populations. Apart from the 1-2 million birds estimated to occur on Rangatira (South East) Island in the Chatham Islands, none of these other New Zealand populations is thought to number more than a few thousand pairs, so the total New Zealand population is likely to be little more than 2 million birds. Therefore roughly 10% of the New Zealand population may have been killed.

Fulmar Prions are by far the rarest of the six prion species, with a total population of perhaps only 150,000 birds at Heard, Auckland, Snares, Bounty and Chatham Islands. Uncertainty over identifying beach-wrecked fulmar prions, along with the paucity of information on the population size of this species, makes estimating the impacts of the 2011 wreck doubly problematic. For at least some samples from Auckland and Wellington, Fulmar Prions out-numbered the similar-looking fairy prion by at least two to one. If this ratio is applied for the length of the North Island, it is possible that 5,000-10,000 Fulmar Prions died.

We thank the numerous OSNZ beach patrollers who diligently collected and counted dead prions and thereby provided much of the information reported here. A fuller account of the 2011 prion wreck will be prepared once more accurate numbers are compiled.

ALAN TENNYSON and COLIN MISKELLY
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



Photo by Paul Godolphin

Prion Bills, Kariotahi 22-24 July 11 (composite photo - scale approximate)

L-R: Fulmar Prion, Fairy Prion, Slender-Billed Prion

Note Fulmar conical, washed-out uniform colour, short ‘keel’ to upper mandible between nostril aperture and wider nail, blunt tip.



Jean Luke with just some of the hundreds of broad-billed prions that washed up at Pukerua Bay, Wellington, 16 July 2011. Photo by Alan Tennyson



Just some of the hundreds of Broad-billed Prions cared for at Wellington Zoo, 15 July 2011. Photo by Alan Tennyson

NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST RECORDED SEABIRD WRECK (CONTINUED)

DOING THE HARD YARDS

In OSNZ Waikato Region we have five main beaches that we aim to patrol each month. The prion wreck of July 2011 looked as though it would present us with a big challenge, but we soon found it was bigger than big.

I decided that we would be ambitious and try to patrol each of our five regular beaches in the usual manner, to count and identify each bird and dispose of it well away from high tide level so that it would not be seen and counted again. However, one glance at a beach littered with masses of birds showed that this procedure was going to take more than our usual meagre resources of OSNZ beach-patrolling members. Happily, Zoë and I are active members of two tramping clubs so we turned to them for help. Trampers are great for doing the hard yards in any sort of weather.

Between 10th July and 1st August we patrolled our five beaches, and recorded nearly 27,000 birds. To get the job done, we had to develop a production-line procedure. Birds were picked up without being identified and taken to dumps in the dunes. Meanwhile a competent person worked through each dump identifying, counting and recording. It was hard work, picking up or digging out birds that were often wet and heavy, and carrying bags of them to a dump. It was also hard work for the birder who was kneeling in the sand dunes, handling the hundreds of birds in each dump, identifying them and recording species totals.

The first beach we completed was Ruapuke (south of Raglan) which is 7.5 km long. The wreck was still in progress when we started, and patrol work was done on a number of days between 12th and 19th July. Of the seven people involved on one or more days, only two were OSNZ members. Our efforts occupied 48 person-hours on the beach. Rather a lot of effort for 7.5 km of beach you might think, but then we did handle 4,715 birds (629 birds/km).

With Ruapuke done, we could now turn to the remaining 22.5 km of our regular beaches! On these we tallied another 22,000 birds and on some beaches they were at the rate of >1000 birds/km. Towards the end we were forced to take shortcuts, to finish the job before the next round of high tides. The first shortcut was not identifying prions to species, but still collecting and disposing of all birds. Each participant could distinguish prions from other species well enough to keep a tally and dispose of them right away without forming big dumps. This saved a huge amount of walking, and the few non-prions could be taken to the nearest competent person for identification. The last shortcut, reluctantly taken, was on a couple of small parts of beach where we had time only to count, and leave the birds where they lay. At last it was finished, so now we could forget the hard work, and rejoice in completing a once-in-a-birding-lifetime experience!

HUGH CLIFFORD

CELEBRITY PENGUIN

Late on the afternoon of 20th June 2011, a young male Emperor Penguin stepped ashore on Peka Peka Beach north of Waikanae. Little did it know that it was about to become one of the most famous birds on the planet.

A few people walking on the beach that evening noticed it, and contacted the Department of Conservation. DoC staff member Peter Simpson phoned Colin the next morning to see if he knew how to identify large penguins. As a result, we visited Peka Peka with DoC staff just before midday on 21st June, and were privileged to see the bird just before the media storm hit.

The penguin was within a few metres of where it had been the night before, as evident from footprints, droppings, and a dry patch of sand (the rest of the beach was damp with dew). Typical of Emperor (and King) Penguins, it was not at all concerned by people approaching closely; indeed its only evident alarm was when a horse and rider trotted past on the edge of the surf, causing it to stand up. We might look like oversized penguins, but there is nothing remotely horsey in Antarctica!

This was the second known Emperor Penguin to reach New Zealand shores. The first was a bird in adult plumage that came ashore on Oreti Beach, Southland on 5th April 1967, and was released near Dog Island in Foveaux Strait the next day (*Notornis* 15: 34-35).

Two reporters and a Dominion Post photographer, following up alerts from members of the public, arrived as we were about to leave. Both Peter Simpson and Colin were interviewed about the bird, where it had come from, and what was likely to happen to it.

One of the reporters was from Stuff; we asked him how soon the information would be online, and were told within an hour. We realised with rising dread that this would be before we could get back to our desks in Wellington. Unless we got the word out before Stuff, we would be accused of withholding information, and our names would be mud with the twitching community!

As we drove away, we started searching our cell phones to see if either of us had other birders' numbers, and as a result managed to phone Wellington RR Ian Armitage. After a short conversation we discovered that Ian was on roaming mobile in Tajikistan, but he still managed to put out an alert that was picked up by Phil Battley, who made a posting on BirdingNZ.net exactly 32 minutes before someone else reported that the story was up on the Stuff website. Our reputations were saved, but it was an interesting lesson in the potential pitfalls of digital media if you don't make at least some effort to keep up with the play!

Over the next three days, thousands of people visited Peka Peka to see the penguin, and millions worldwide followed his progress via the media. Over 300 media outlets are known to have run the story; Colin had live interviews from five countries, and Peter Simpson many more. Without a doubt, this was the most watched vagrant bird ever to reach New Zealand, and in four days only he must have challenged Greg the Takahe's (Tiritiri) record for the most viewed wild bird – and Greg's views were accumulated over 18 years.

On that first day, we saw the penguin eating beaks full of wet sand, and assumed that it was confusing sand for snow, which Emperor Penguins consume to hydrate and cool down. We speculated that if dogs didn't get the bird,

its sand consumption would. The latter was the case; by the morning of 24th June, the penguin's condition had deteriorated to the point where it was necessary to take it into care at Wellington Zoo.

Several operations were performed to remove an estimated 3 kg of sand from the bird, along with bits of driftwood and grass. The penguin thrived on a diet of donated salmon smolt, and by early August it had gained about 5 kg (to 26 kg) and plans were underway for a release south of Stewart Island later in the month. Sirtrack had donated a satellite transmitter, and Gareth Morgan KiwiSaver offered to sponsor the Argos satellite data downloads; the bird's progress after release will be accessible to all via the Sirtrack and OurFarSouth websites.

For more information on the Peka Peka Emperor Penguin, search for "global penguin" on the Te Papa blog site <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/>

COLIN MISKELLY and ALAN TENNYSON



Emperor Penguin Peka Peka Beach by Alan Tennyson

BIRD NEWS

This feature contains news of sightings that have not received official acceptance by the Records Appraisal Committee of the OSNZ

Fluttering Shearwaters translocated to Mana Island (off the Kapiti Coast north of Wellington) have produced their first chick, with one found in an artificial burrow in November. One parent was a translocated bird and the other was attracted by broadcast calls.

Eleven **Kakapo** chicks hatched this summer and autumn on Codfish Island/Whenua Hou off Stewart Island. Six of these were moved to a hand-rearing facility in Invercargill due to the failure of the Rimu crop on the island. Sadly the last remaining Kakapo from the Fiordland population, Richard Henry, died in December.

The **Orange-fronted Parakeets** translocated to Tuhua/Mayor Island off the Bay of Plenty coast are breeding as witnessed by a newly-fledged bird there in early autumn. It constitutes the first breeding of the species north of Cook Strait in about 130 years.

Kokako have been recorded breeding at the Ark in the Park in the Waitakere Ranges west of Auckland, with chicks from the recently re-introduced population being found in early December.

New Zealand Robins have been re-introduced to Milford Sound (Fiordland) with the release of birds in early April from the Eglinton Valley into the Cleddau Delta, which has had predator control for three years.

Evidence of breeding was recorded in the population of **North Island Kokako** introduced to Secretary Island (Fiordland) when researchers visited in March. The birds were released in 2008-9.

Short Reports

Greenpark Sands, Lake Ellesmere (Canterbury) had a **Cape Barren Goose** on 18/6 and 5/7. A small flock of **Grass Whistling Ducks** were on private farmland on the West Coast of the South Island between March and May. Bromley Oxidation Ponds (Christchurch) had an **Australian Wood Duck** on 16/1. Probably the same individual was found at nearby Horseshoe Lake on 5/5 staying until at least 14/5. A probable **Brown Teal** was seen associating with New Zealand Scaup in the Wairoa River near Tauranga in mid-December. One was also on South Kaipara Harbour on 2/1.

Two British visitors reportedly photographed a **Chinstrap Penguin** in late 2010 on a beach near Punakaiki (West Coast). A moulting juvenile **Erect-crested Penguin** was at Magnet Bay, Banks Peninsula (Canterbury) in mid- to late January.

A **White-naped Petrel** was reported from a pelagic trip off Stewart Island on 15/2. Subject to approval by the RAC the first **Collared Petrel** for New Zealand was seen on a Three Kings Pelagic (Far North) in early March. This trip also recorded **Tahiti Petrel**, **White and Sooty Terns** and **Gould's Petrels** plus good numbers of **Long-tailed Skuas**. The seas off Kaikoura hosted a **Great Shearwater** on 1/4 and 3/4. Another was off Stewart Island on 4 and 7/4, and yet another in the Hauraki Gulf (Auckland) on 20/4. The **Emperor Penguin** later named 'Happy Feet' turned up at Pekapeka (Wellington) on 21/6. It was taken into care at Wellington Zoo on 24/6, and released from the RV *Tangaroa* near Campbell Island on 4/9.

A **Brown Booby** was among the recently-established Gannet colony on Young Nicks Head (Eastland) in January. Another was found in the Muriwai Gannet colony (Auckland) on 30/1, but had died by the next morning. Kaikoura (North

Canterbury) produced what was almost certainly a dark-phase **Stewart Island Shag** on 28/1. A frigatebird, probably a **Lesser Frigatebird**, was at Little Shoal Bay, Auckland on 20/1.

The long-staying **Little Egret** at Muddy Creek/Tukituki River/Haumoana (Hawkes Bay) was present throughout, sometimes being seen with a White Heron, providing a good contrast of size. Another was at Huia on the Manukau Harbour (Auckland) on 29/5 and 30/5, possibly moving to Mangere on 31/5. Another probable was on the same harbour on 3/7. Father north in the Auckland region another was on the Mangawhai Estuary. Four **Plumed Egrets** were together at Greenpark Sands, Lake Ellesmere on 18/6. Two **Glossy Ibises** were at the Wairau Lagoons (Blenheim) and surrounding area probably throughout summer, autumn and winter. A further two were in two separate eastern Christchurch wetlands (Bexley and Travis) on 10-14/3, with a possible third a few kilometres up the coast at Seafield Lagoon on 15/3, and separate sightings on 15/3 and 24/4 at Bexley and 26/6 at Travis. Another was at Miranda (South Auckland) on 5/2, with a further two (both young birds) at the Stilt Ponds there on 9/5. Two were also found at the Manawatu River Mouth on 26/6-27/6 and 3/7.

A **Black Kite** was reported from the Coromandel Peninsula between Te Rerenga and Coromandel on 29/12.

A long-staying **Sanderling** was at the Maketu Harbour (Bay of Plenty) from 4/1-22/8 (at least), with another at the regular spot of Awarua Bay on the February wader count and two at Taporā/Big Sand Island on 31/8. Godwit sightings comprised mostly long-staying birds at Miranda, which held both **Black-tailed** and **Hudsonian Godwits** in January. Another Hudsonian, or maybe the same, was on South Kaipara Harbour. At the mouth of the Kowai River (North Canterbury) a probable **Wandering Tattler** was seen on 18/12. The nearby Ashley Estuary had a **Grey-tailed Tattler** on 27/12. Another was at Miranda on 6/3. The long-staying individual at the Ahuriri Estuary (Napier) was seen on and off until late April at least. Another was at the Awarua Estuary (Southland) 16-30/4. A **Greenshank** was on the South Kaipara Harbour on 2/1. This latter area also held a **Marsh Sandpiper** on 19/12 and 2/1. Another was at Miranda from 9/4 all the way through winter. A **Terek Sandpiper** was on the Manakau Harbour on 3/7.

The regular sole **New Zealand Dotterel** was seen on the Farewell Spit (Golden Bay) winter wader count on 3/7. Little Waihi (Bay of Plenty) held a long-staying American **Golden Plover** from 5/1-28/2. Another probable was discovered at the Ahuriri Estuary (Napier) on 19/3-26/3. The Farewell Spit winter wader count turned up a **Grey Plover** on 3/7. The long-staying **Semipalmated Plover** was seen again in the Mangere area of the Manakau Harbour from at least 4/1-8/5. It was last reported from Miranda on 12/12. A **Greater Sand Plover** was in the same roost as the Semipalmated Plover on 4/1. Two were at Big Sand Island (Kaipara Harbour) on 20/1. An immature **Shore Plover** was at Otaki Beach (Wellington) on 13/3. Down the coast at Plimmerton a huge gathering of this species took place over winter, with five birds first being noted on 6/6 increasing to 33 (over 20% of the entire population) on 8/6 and 37 on 12/6.

Long-tailed Skuas have been seen in good numbers this year with one seen off Kaikoura on an extended pelagic trip on 16/4 and another was off Algies Bay (Auckland) on 26/4, as well as those mentioned on the Three Kings pelagic above. A

dark-headed gull was reported from McCormacks Bay (Christchurch) 19/1 but could not be relocated and identified to species. Otago Harbour held a breeding-plumaged **White-winged Black Tern** off Port Chalmers on 1/2, and more were in the north of the South Island in April with one at Motueka (Nelson) on 11/4, and two at the Wairau Lagoons oxidation ponds in the middle of that month. An amazing influx of **Gull-billed Terns** was discovered on 1/6 with four at the Manawatu River Mouth, then one at Greenpark Sands, Lake Ellesmere on 6/6, 18/6 and 5/7. Across the same lake at Kaitorete Spit two were present on 19/6 and four on 10/8. Four more were found at Paerata (Manukau Harbour, South Auckland) on 23/6 and nine on the Manakau Harbour (two locations) on 3/7, and one or two at Miranda on 22/8. The Paerata/Kirks roosting flock had increased to an astounding 16 on 13/8, with 13 seen the following day and 16 again on 28/8. A further two were at Brooklands Lagoon (Christchurch) on 26/6. The Waikanae River Mouth (Wellington) held one on 16/7. All in all this was a large and widespread influx, with who knows how many more of the species missed at less visited locations. Two **Little Terns** were south of their usual range at Lake Ellesmere on 5/7. Thornton Beach (Bay of Plenty) turned up an **Arctic Tern** on 2/7 and another was off Birdlings Flat (Canterbury) on 14/7. **Common Terns** were reported from the Manawatu Estuary 25/12-8/1 with a different individual there on 5/2. Another was at Shelly Beach (south Kaipara Harbour) in late March and three more at Walker Island, Ranganu Harbour (Far North) on 27/3. Another immature was off the seal colony at Kaikoura on 15/6. A 'mystery bird' which may have been a **South American Tern** was found at the Waitangi River Mouth (Hawke's Bay) on 9/7, but disturbed by a dog and an inconsiderate fisherman, leaving the observers very little time to study and photograph it. This species has not been recorded previously in New Zealand.

A Czech visitor reported a **Crested Pigeon** from north of Auckland in mid-March. Seddonville (Buller District, West Coast) hosted an immature **Dollarbird** on 10/4. A wandering **Saddleback** was reported from Plimmerton (Wellington) in mid-January, no doubt either from Karori or Kapiti Island. Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island produced a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** on 26-27/5. A possible female **Satin Flycatcher** was reported from the Port Levy area of Banks Peninsula (Canterbury) in mid-January. Another possible bird was a **Tree Swallow** with Welcome Swallows on the top of Kapiti Island (Wellington) on 23/2. A probable **Yellow Wagtail** was seen briefly on Kaitorete Spit on 10/8. If accepted this will constitute the first record for New Zealand.

Sources:

Birding-NZ email group. Birding NZ internet chat group. What's Up DoC? electronic newsletter, Forest and Bird eNews electronic newsletter, Kakapo Recovery website www.kakaporecovery.org.nz.

TSUNAMI DISASTER AT MIDWAY ATOLL

The Japanese Tohoku earthquake of 11th March, as well as damaging north-eastern Japan to an unimaginable extent and causing terrible death and injury to the population there, also had a devastating effect on the islands of Midway Atoll 3,800 km away. Tsunamis of up to 1.5 m washed over large parts of the three islands in the archipelago starting just after midnight.

Four species of seabird were breeding on the island at the time, with about 480,000 pairs of Laysan Albatross, 28,500 pairs of Black-footed Albatross, a pair of Short-tailed Albatross, and an unknown number of ground-nesting Bonin Petrels. They had already had to contend with two severe winter storms in January and February, which killed many birds. The tsunami and storms meant that this breeding season 2,000 adult and 110,000 chick albatrosses were killed. After the tsunami albatross adults and chicks were found caught in debris washed onto the islands and waterlogged offshore in lagoons. Some were able to be rescued. Many Bonin Petrels are likely to have been buried alive in their burrows.

Thankfully the small number of people living on, and researching the wildlife of the islands, were unharmed by the waves.

In New Zealand waves of up to 70 cm were recorded on the mainland coast, with 90 cm recorded on the Chatham Islands. No major damage was reported.

NEW ZEALAND ROBIN CAUGHT BY HOOK GRASS

On 12th February 2011 the extended Guest family were camped at the Ngaherenga camping site at Pureora. The site abuts the Pikiariki podocarp forest and around the campsite were numbers of Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeets, Whiteheads and New Zealand Robins. In the late afternoon we became aware of a flapping noise on the bush edge by our camp site and were amazed to see a Robin apparently tangled in Hook Grass (*Uncinia uncinata*). We studied the bird for some time and we were agreed it was unable to free itself, before stepping up to help it. As we closed in on the bird it flapped violently in fright and thus became free. We were agreed that without our intervention, the bird would have remained entrapped. There are a number of old records of birds caught by Hook Grass including Silvereye, Dunnock and Redpoll, whilst on Kapiti Island there were also records of Morepork, Tomtit, Fantail, Whitehead, parakeet and Long-tailed Cuckoo (Daniel 1970, *Notornis* 17(2):101) but this was our first experience of such an event.

ROB GUEST

SHORE PLOVER PAYS A FLYING VISIT TO GOLDEN BAY

On the evening of 6th October 2010 I received a call from a friend, Patrick Riddett, who is interested in birds and was once ranger at Farewell Spit. He had gone for a swim at Ligar Bay, on the southern shore of Golden Bay, and had been surprised to see a small wader on the beach. Expecting it to be a Banded Dotterel, he was even more surprised when it came closer and he could see it was actually a Shore Plover. Luckily he gave me a ring (most people wait a couple of weeks before telling one about the strange bird they'd seen) and I got over there the next afternoon.

It didn't take long to find this very tame and distinctive wader, with its black face with a white stripe above the eye topped with a grey crown, reddish bill with a dark tip, and orange legs. I watched it for a while, then went and picked up OSNZ member Helen Kingston, who lived nearby. We watched it together, trying to work out the combinations of the colour bands on its legs, with some difficulty because of my poor eye-sight and its constant movement. We visited another local, Garth Bray, who lived right by the beach and found both he and his partner Lesley had seen the bird the previous day but not realised its identity. Garth got some photos after we left, one of it bathing in a small stream that emptied onto the beach. As far as we know, it was not seen again.

From the photos and email correspondence with DoC, the band combination became clear as red/green on the right leg and orange/yellow on the left. Sue Caldwell of DoC's Mana Island Field Centre sent us information on the bird's history. It was a female, captive reared

in Christchurch, had a short stay at Mt Bruce before being transferred to Mana Island and soft released on 6th November 2009. It was last seen there on 23rd May 2010. The next sighting was by Tim Park and Aalbert Rebergen at Te Kawakawa Point, just west of Cape Palliser, on 22nd September, two weeks before it turned up in Golden Bay. What route did it take? What beaches did it visit on the way? Where will it turn up next?

Captain Cook's expedition in 1773 found Shore Plovers at Dusky and Queen Charlotte Sounds, and they were obviously widespread, but the introduction of rats and cats caused a rapid decline and by 1880 the species was restricted to the Chatham Islands, and soon only to South-east Island. Attempts to transfer birds to Pitt and Mangere Islands failed when the birds just flew home, but more recent captive breeding programmes have established populations on a number of islands, with some birds flying off to check out nearby mainland coasts.

CHRIS PETYT



The Golden Bay Shore Plover.
Photo by Garth Bray

AGGRESSIVE OYSTERCATCHERS

There is a great deal of literature on oystercatchers and the impact of predators at their nests. It is therefore interesting to recount two occasions when the tables have been turned.

In late November 2009 Knox Dowson visited his property at Kotoitoy Bay in Tory Channel, Marlborough Sounds and saw a pair of Variable Oystercatchers with two small chicks. The next observation was two weeks later when there was only one chick. Over the following days it was observed feeding with its parents but retreated under a jetty on the stony beach whenever there was disturbance. One morning Knox heard a commotion on the foreshore and saw the adult oystercatchers flying noisily after an Australasian Harrier which was swooping low over the bay. The harrier eventually avoided the oystercatchers by perching on an adjacent hillside.

The harrier continued to visit during the following days. On one occasion there was a massive commotion coming from the beach where the harrier was found with injuries to its head and wings. Its wings appeared broken and the bird died a short time after. The oystercatchers were agitated, but otherwise appeared unharmed.

It was several days before a harrier returned to the bay. On this occasion the oystercatchers were seen to attack it noisily in the air. The harrier didn't last long, possibly five minutes, before it was struck down with apparent wing damage. The bird died overnight. One of the oystercatchers appeared very subdued after this event, taking several days before returning to normal.

At the end of Knox's summer holiday the oystercatcher chick had fully fledged.

During the same summer Kate Steffens was studying the breeding success of Black-fronted Terns on the Wairau riverbed. At one colony a video camera she installed showed a South Island Pied Oystercatcher taking and consuming eggs from a tern nest. Later in the season oystercatcher DNA was detected on a dead tern chick from the same colony. It is not known whether any attempt had been made to eat it. However, in contrast to the aggressive and effective defence behaviour witnessed by Knox Dowson, this was pure opportunistic predation. I am not aware of any other instances where oystercatchers have killed birds or taken eggs.

PETER GAZE

THE MISSING RARITIES

Many readers will have noticed that the new *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* (4th edition, published 2010) does not mention many sightings of vagrant birds that are otherwise well known to the birding community. This is because the sightings were never submitted to the Rare Birds Committee (since replaced by the Records Appraisal Committee) for assessment.

One of the major functions of the RAC is to determine the veracity of claimed sightings. This is a necessary step before records can be included in any of the official publications of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, including the *Checklist*, and our journal *Notornis*.

Ideally, the person who first identified a rarity should be the one who submits an Unusual Bird Report, and thereby gains the credit for their discovery. But, for many reasons, the discoverer often does not submit a UBR. Whether anyone else does then becomes a lottery, leading to gaps in the New Zealand bird literature.

The process for completing and submitting UBRs is straightforward, and is explained on the Rare Birds page of the OSNZ website (www.osnz.org.nz under 'Studies and Schemes'). For species known to occur in New Zealand, it is not difficult to get a well documented record accepted by the RAC. Over the last two years, acceptance rates have averaged 85%, and for some batches of records, all have been accepted. The bar is set higher for new records for the country (or species otherwise considered extinct), where the five members of the RAC must be unanimous in their support for a record to be accepted. For these 'new' records, it helps greatly if there are photographs, a specimen (e.g. beach-wrecked birds), or multiple observers.

The following list is of some of the notable claimed sightings of rarities in New Zealand that have never been submitted to, or assessed by, the Rare Birds Committee or the Records Appraisal Committee. If you saw (or even better, photographed) any of the birds on this list, and would like to see them included in publications of the OSNZ, please fill in a UBR, attach your photographs, and send them to the RAC secretary. Even if you did not see the bird (or birds) yourself, but know where a photograph is, you can submit a UBR on behalf of the photographer.

Plumed Whistling Duck: Tiritiri Matangi Apr 2007; Tawharanui Apr-May 2007.

Australian Wood Duck: Nelson Haven Jan 1999; Lake Elterwater Mar 1999; Mt Cook Feb 2005; Hokitika Jan 2007.

Northern Shoveler: Lake Horowhenua May 1980; Southland May 1991; Matata June 1994 and 1995; Kaituna May-July 1995.

Australian White-eyed Duck: Otago 1990; Day's Homestead, Southland May 1991; West Coast (2) 1992 and Feb 1995.

King Penguin: Barrytown Jan-Feb 2005.

Royal Penguin: (died) Chatham Is. Mar 2009.

Sooty Albatross: Antipodes I. Nov 2004; Chatham I. Dec 2006.

Kermadec Petrel: off Northland Mar 2005.

White-naped Petrel: off Northland Jan 2005.

Stejneger's Petrel: off Milford Sound Feb 2006.

South Georgian Diving Petrel: Kakanui, Otago 1995.

Pink-footed shearwater: off Kaikoura (2) Feb 2000; Dec 2001; Feb 2005.

Australian Pelican: Lake Forsyth (2) May 2001.

Great Frigatebird: North Cape (2) Mar 1990; Maui Platform, Taranaki 2004; Meyer I., Kermadecs (3) Mar 2006.

Pacific Heron: Patarau, Nelson Sep 2002; Auckland Oct-Nov 2005; Pakaraka, Northland Oct 2007.

Plumed Egret: Karamea May 1990-1991; Greymouth Feb 1995; Omarama Oct 2005.

Brolga: Marlborough Sounds 4 Jun 2006.

Japanese Snipe: Whangamarino Jan 2007.

Dunlin: Miranda Oct-Nov 1994.

Broad-billed Sandpiper: Miranda 1995; Lake Ellesmere Nov 2002-Jan 2003 and Jan 2004.

Ruff: Lake Wainono 1991; Mangere Nov 2001; Miranda Nov 2005; Karaka Dec 2006 - Jan 2007.

Common Sandpiper: Waipara River Mouth Sep 1993; Waioeka Estuary Nov 1995; Matata Apr 1998; Stewart I. Nov 2005; Ashburton River Mouth Feb 2006.

Red-necked Phalarope: Wanaka Apr 1997; Lake Grassmere Feb-Mar 2004.

Grey Phalarope: Tolaga Bay May 2004.

Red-necked Avocet: Port Waikato Nov 2002.

New Zealand Dotterel: Wairau Lagoon, Marlborough Mar 1999; Ashley River Mouth 26 Jan 2000.

Oriental Pratincole: Lake Ellesmere Dec 2002.

Franklin's Gull: Raoul I., Kermadecs Jul 1988.

Black Noddy: Nelson Oct 1998.

White Tern: off Northland Jan 2005; Ohiwa Harbour Nov 2006.

Gull-billed Tern: Manukau Harbour (8) 1975-76, (6) 1976-77; Kaipara Harbour (6) 17 Nov 2001.

Whiskered Tern: Blenheim oxidation ponds Jan 2006; Lake Grassmere Feb 2006.

Oriental Cuckoo: Whataroa, South Westland Dec 2006.

Channel-billed Cuckoo: Motiti I. Jan 2007.

Barn Owl: Matangi, Waikato early 2001; Lyttelton Aug 2001.

Fork-tailed Swift: Stephens I. Nov 1994.

Dollarbird: Pukinui, Far North Oct 1996; Kaikohe (2) Oct 1999.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike: Tahunanui, Nelson (2) May 2003.

Masked Woodswallow: Otatara (dead) 16 Oct 2006.

White-browed Woodswallow: Rukuhia, Hamilton Feb 2002.

Satin Flycatcher: Okarito, Westland Mar 1992.

Tree Martin: Clarendon, Otago (3) Dec 1996 - Jan 1997; Raglan Dec 1997.

The above list has been gleaned mainly from *Southern Bird* and 'unverified' records in the *Checklist*. I haven't attempted collating all the reportable sightings from Birding-NZ and BirdingNZ.net websites. Any volunteers?

COLIN MISKELLY

Convenor, Records Appraisal Committee

WOODPECKER STARLING

On 6th August 2011 my six-year-old daughter Alice called me over to come and look at the 'woodpecker' in the back garden. I was intrigued to know what she was looking at as I did not think New Zealand had any resident woodpeckers.

You can imagine my surprise when I saw what she was so excited about. At first I was wondering if it was an off-course wader of some description but it had all the other usual characteristics of a Starling, apart from the beak of course. The bird made numerous visits to our back garden over the course of that weekend, and subsequently, and I took some video footage in addition. The bird made solo visits and also visits with other groups of Starlings.

BARRY WAINWRIGHT



Long-beaked Starling.

Photo by Barry Wainwright

CHANGE OF VENUE AND DATES FOR ICCB 2011

5TH TO 9TH
DECEMBER 2011
AUCKLAND



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, accommodation, conference trips, social events, and more.

MEETING THEME

Engaging Society in Conservation (Te Whenua, Te Moana, Te Papa Atarohai 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.

PHOTO: KEVIN COATE



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Regional Roundup



Far North

The winterless north has not lived up to its reputation this year. We have had our fair share of very cold nights and frost. No particular effect on birds has been noticed other than above-average activity at our bird tables.

The region held its AGM on Friday 22nd July, at which new venues for indoor meetings were agreed. These will include some in Mangonui, enabling some members living a long way from Kerikeri to take a greater part in our activities. The meeting was followed by a talk by member Gary Little, who with his partner Asta, had spent a week volunteering on Tiritiri Matangi Island recently.

The region has had its fair share of beach-wrecked prions on its west coast beaches. After hearing the news from the beaches south of Dargaville several members made some effort in covering long distances on 90 Mile Beach and the remote settlement at Mitimiti. We found some Fulmar Prions, and the tally consisted of six species and well over 1,000 birds. Full details appear in the August issue of *Apteryx*, our regional newsletter.

Following on from the introduction of Whiteheads to Moturoa Island, attempts are now being made, with the assistance of decoys and sounds, to establish a colony of Australasian Gannets onto the rock known as Alcatraz, linked to the northern side of Moturoa at low tide only.

News from DoC on our west coast indicated that Grey-faced Petrels were coming in to burrows on the south side of the Hokianga Harbour so a couple of us went to check. An exciting night provided some good sightings and a lot of sounds from the dense bush. This is a good species to search for in winter and there are bound to be more on remote headlands in the region.

Looking ahead to October, plans are going ahead for a nationwide census of New Zealand Dotterels. This will affect several regions but the Far North has a multitude of beaches with very difficult access and holds a high proportion of the breeding pairs. At the same time we will be recording Caspian Terns and Red-billed Gulls for similar surveys in the near future. On a recent visit to Parengarenga a huge flock of what we estimated to be over 5,000 Red-billed Gulls were spread over a number of roadside paddocks near Te Kao.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

Pete Mitchell, Ranger for the Bream Head Trust, presented a well designed PowerPoint talk to our June meeting. For four years Pete had been the ranger on Matakoho (Limestone) Island, opposite Onerahi in the Whangarei Harbour, and he explained that at Bream Head there are two significant areas of forest: the Bream Head Ridge, and the Manaia Ridge, which are under the joint care of the Bream Head Trust, DoC and the Whangarei Landcare Forum.

These two areas are fine examples of Northland coastal broadleaf forest, of which a core area of 180 ha in two valleys with large remnant trees is intensively managed. Pest trapping is done over a large area and 40 North Island Brown Kiwi have been released there. The nearby offshore Hen and Chickens Islands have a high diversity of bird life, and parakeets, Kaka and Bellbirds visit all year round. There are resident Tui, New Zealand Pigeons and Tomtits. Reef Herons, Cook's Petrels, Pycroft's Petrels and Grey-faced Petrels have been noted along the shoreline.

The local community takes an active part in this project with over 4,000 young trees planted each year. Field days have been held where local archaeologists, botanists and educators have guided groups of about 60 visitors around the features of the site. Evening talks have been given on lizards and invertebrates, and six local school groups have visited during the past summer. A major school curriculum programme is being evaluated and should be released shortly. It was exciting to hear of the substantial progress made by the Trust in such a short time, in an ecologically and visually important area.

Our July speaker was Wade Doak, the well known diver, author and conservationist who has written 18 books about the marine environment, including introductory books for children. Since the age of 14 in Christchurch, Wade has been passionate about diving and he even moved to live in Northland to be close to the Poor Knights Islands, which he regards as having international significance.

Wade films underwater among sharks, Bottle-nosed Dolphins and many other species including the Coral Fish (with its long white feelers) that picks 'nits' off other fish. These nits even get into the gills and at times there are queues of fish waiting for their treatment. Some

time ago, when looking at plants growing on the cliff face at the Poor Knights, he saw a native orchid for the first time. This sighting led to an enthusiastic interest in the birds and plants of the above-water environment.

Wade and his wife Jan live on a 44 acre block near Ngunguru, a great part of which is covered in regenerating native bush, home to Kiwi, Grey Warblers, Shining Cuckoo and Long-tailed Cuckoo among others. Predator control is paramount, but rats are a continuing problem. Wade says "It is necessary for the whole community to become involved with the problem of the silent bush". "We must take time to closely observe what is around us."

RECENT SIGHTINGS:

Pauline Smith and Kevin Hayes counted 24 New Zealand Dotterels and 80 Variable Oystercatchers at Ngunguru on 22nd May and when visiting the area again on 9th July, saw 27 New Zealand Dotterels and 38 Variable Oystercatchers. The Whangarei Harbour survey on 19th June produced 142 Royal Spoonbills and a Glossy Ibis.

Janet Snell and Claire Burttt disturbed two Australasian Bitterns on a pond beside the track to the hide at Portland where there were 20 Wrybills on the roost on 19th June. A big wreck of Little Penguins was reported on the East Coast where 247 were counted between Ruakaka and Uretiti on 24th July. At Onerahi, Katrina Hansen and Gerard Pilon observed 20 Tui feeding in a Taiwanese cherry tree on 28th July.

Recent media attention has been on the prion wreck on our northern coasts. While most of the birds were on the west coast, a lesser number were counted on the east coast beaches. On July 17th between Omamari and Kai Iwi stream, 2,142 prions were counted in a distance of 4.75 km. In a random sample of 100 birds, 73% were Broad-billed Prions, 13% Fairy Prions, 7% were Salvin's Prions and 7% were Antarctic Prions. On 23rd July at Ocean Beach, Whangarei Heads, Janet Snell and Claire Burttt found 48 Fairy Prions, a Broad-billed Prion, three Salvin's Prions, 16 Common Diving Petrels, a Giant Petrel and a Buller's Albatross. On the same day at Pataua North, Karen Miller and Dale Calvert walked the beach and numbers were 39 Fairy Prions, four Broad-billed Prions, five Salvin's Prions, an Antarctic Prion, 19 Common Diving Petrels and a White-headed Petrel.

CLAIRE BURTT

Auckland

Along with other regions having a west coast boundary, our recent actions have been dominated by the response to the July prion wreck. Following the July storm, members answered the 'call-to-action' to patrol west coast stretches not normally covered, and we carried out extra patrols on the region's longest beach, Muriwai. The collection of birds on Muriwai was achieved through a co-operative effort involving teams from Auckland Council, Department of Conservation, Unitec Institute of Technology Natural Sciences staff and students, and South Kaipara Landcare.

The results of the beach patrols from across the regions, when collated, will make for very sobering reading. However, it is very evident from anecdotal reports that the beach patrols, at least in our region, significantly under-represent the magnitude of the wreck. Large numbers of prions were reported from forests and farms inland from the coast, and even retrieved from Hauraki Gulf locations. It was interesting to note the attention that the event generated from both national and local media, placing the Society in the spotlight, albeit briefly!

Jules Robson outlined the ongoing issue of kea and lead in March. This was the result of Jules's research during 2010 as a RSNZ Teacher Fellow and supported by the Kea Conservation Trust. Our April speaker was Dr Matt Rayner, examining outcomes of his research on our endemic Cook's petrel. This bird is now observed frequently in the outer Hauraki Gulf following its rebound after rat eradication on Little Barrier Island, and Matt was able to demonstrate some of the new knowledge gained about the oceanic wanderings of the population. Seabirds continued as a theme in May, with Dr Robin Gardner-Gee outlining the process and tribulations of translocation as a means to restore seabird populations.

Maria Galbraith presented an account of a visit to Campbell and Auckland Islands to our June gathering. Maria was sponsored by the Royal Society of New Zealand to join a voyage which included delivering a team of scientists to the Subantarctic as part of the Campbell Island Bicentennial Expedition. Again, seabirds were the dominant theme. We had a huge shift in focus for our July meeting when we were introduced to the microscopic world of avian blood parasites by Rosemary Barraclough. Rosemary's talk helped explain

the need for disease screening as part of the many translocations that are experienced in our region.

The presentation at our August meeting was an explanation by Peter Robinson, environmental manager at Auckland Airport, of the management of birds in the vicinity of the busy Auckland airport. The management approach favours using an understanding of the natural behaviours of birds to minimise risk to aircraft including the construction of artificial roosts sites, and grass-mowing regimes that discourage birds from using the grass swards alongside the tarmac. The airport's harbour-side location means that it will always have thousands of waders on its doorstep, so the risk minimisation approach certainly found favour with our members.

MEL GALBRAITH



Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Our evening meeting in June found Pieter Fransen detailing the inner workings of the rehabilitation of the Newmont Waihi tailings dams. His work as Environmental Management System (EMS) Coordinator has been varied and his tasks hard, particularly as many folk at the meeting were keen on finding Pieter's armour chinks! The following field trip on the 3rd of July netted fourteen keen members to view the tailings dams, which are usually off limits to the public. Seventeen species were spotted on the day, including Australasian Pipit and New Zealand Dabchick. Thanks to Pieter for his efforts.

Dabchicks were also to the fore the day before when members conducted the Winter Wader Census in glorious conditions. Paddy Latham and Graham Hunt were assigned aviation duty and duly picked up 310 Banded Dotterels, and six New Zealand Dotterels at the airfield, and 23 New Zealand Dabchicks at Te Maunga settling ponds.

Interesting terns have been frequenting the Bay this winter with three Black-fronted Terns in full breeding plumage being seen by Tim Barnard at Thornton Beach in June. A month later he spotted an Arctic Tern on the same beach. A little further up the coast at Maketu, he also honed in on the long-staying Sanderling and 56 New Zealand Dotterels.

On the last day in June Rosemary Tully spotted a Spotted Shag on the Southern end of Whale Island (the tail...?) A dead Grey-faced Petrel was handed to me by Karen Cant of the Forest and Bird pest control team on Mount Maunganui. It had been banded 16 years ago as an adult, so was most likely in its 20s age-wise. In all that time, it had only been recaptured once. We really have no idea what such birds do or where they go between captures. It might have been here all along and evaded our trusty fieldwork! A group of five OSNZ Waikato members came over to see the project in action and get to experience a night on Bird Mountain! It was great to see such enthusiasm from the youngsters on the night, and I was glad the two youngsters had their fathers to reel them in when they were heading off in random directions!

July brought carnage to the West Coast beaches, but our East Coast escaped unscathed in comparison. However, Waihi Beach was patrolled on 21st July, and 28 seabirds including prions and Common Diving Petrels were picked up by Sue Cockrem and Eila Lawton. Tim Barnard reported two Fairy Prions from Rotorua city. These would most likely to have come from the west coast rather than going inland from the east, due to the persistent westerly winds that week.

Finally some good news: our newest member Raewyn Adams excitedly forwarded a photo of Fernbirds on the boardwalk around the Waikareau Estuary, a city boardwalk around a branch of the Tauranga Harbour. Yes, they are still there, and it was great to confirm this record.

PAUL CUMING



Taranaki

Field trips for the last few months attracted hardly any members with only two people turning up for the trips to Barretts Lagoon and Lake Rotokare although a good variety and number of birds were seen. The Lake Rotokare trip was repeated in July on a lovely mild winter day with five people turning up to meander around the lake. With more eyes and ears 28 species were recorded, six better than the previous month. Fernbirds were numerous all around the lake margins and Fantails were plentiful out in the winter sun. It was good to see so many, as numbers have been low around the province in recent years. An added highlight was a sighting of a Spotless Crane, with others heard. We look forward to more re-introductions to further enhance this wonderful place.

Those who had managed to dodge the worst of Taranaki's rather wet winter to get out and about were rewarded for their efforts with 11 Cattle Egrets seen in a paddock west of New Plymouth, five seen at Mokau to the north and one in a paddock at Waiongana. Visitors to the Grey-faced Petrel colony at Rapanui in late May saw ten birds on the ground and many more flying around.

David Medway meandering around Pukekura Park admiring the Kohekohe, which were flowering well, observed many Tui feeding at them. A few small flocks of Pied Oystercatchers have been seen flying down the coast, but nothing to match the numbers seen flying up the coast earlier in the year. Carol Keight, who lives close to Barretts Lagoon, saw a male Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, a rarity in Taranaki. Older members were unable to remember when the previous one occurred.

The August meeting was dominated by two discussions; the first was plans by the city council to move the city netball courts and build a velodrome on land to the east of New Plymouth in Bell Block. They would be close to a small wetland and ponds already compromised by allowing houses to be built nearby, with all the usual problems that causes (dogs, cats etc.) We resolved to write to the council expressing our concern at further pressure being put on the area and loss of wetland habitat.

The other main topic was of course the prion wreck and how this differed from the 2002 event. The main distinction was the species involved. David Medway did 14 patrols totalling 33.7 km and picked up 1,464 birds, 1,305 of which were Broad-billed Prions, Bill Messenger picked up 175 birds in 200 m. Birds were found many kilometres inland and many were still being washed up at the beginning of August.

From members' reports, Barry Hartley saw a Brown Skua close in at Rapanui whilst Donna Worthy saw a Bellbird even closer there in the coastal Banksias within the predator proof fence.

The Messengers turned up with the mystery of the year; a pair of wings that Bill found whilst feeding out to the cows on his property just out of Inglewood to the south east. There was much head scratching, humming and aahing, and despite us being a small but erudite group, no identification was reached. Several ideas were shot down in flames. They returned to the area later in the week and recovered more body parts resulting in a flurry of emails and more wild guesses, and the victim is...to be continued.

PETER FRYER

Hawke's Bay

Coastal Hawke's Bay was battered by a severe storm in May which unfortunately coincided with our planned field trip to Horseshoe Lake. It is hoped we can visit this area later in the year.

The winter wader census was successfully completed in early June. Both the Napier/Hastings area and Porangahau were able to be covered thanks to good support from members.

In July a meeting was planned, but that has been rescheduled for August at the request of the speaker. Instead an afternoon field trip was held at Waitangi. Nine members braved the rather chilly wind where we scanned the estuary and the adjoining wetland area. A few Black-fronted Terns provided the main interest. The tern flock was carefully scrutinised, as the previous weekend an unusual tern had been seen and photographed there. Those of you who follow the BirdingNZ.net website will have seen photos of the bird by Tim Rumble and Adam Clarke, and the speculation about its identification, which ranged from Arctic to Antarctic and South American Tern. I don't think any definite conclusion has been reached.

During winter white birds provide the main interest. A single White Heron is regularly seen from Waitangi to Te Awanga, and is sometimes with a Little Egret. Royal Spoonbills are reliably found at Ahuriri, and in the last couple of months also at Te Awanga. Three Cattle Egrets were around the Clive area during June and early July. There were also two at Ahuriri on 4th July but they haven't been seen there again. On 17th July, after a several-day period of heavy rain, 33 Banded Dotterels were seen in a field at Meeanee. Six Black-fronted Terns were hawking over the same field. At the sewer outfall at East Clive Spotted Shag numbers built up with 26 there on 31st July, many in full breeding plumage.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Manawatu

This is my first report as Regional Representative for Manawatu and I'm looking forward to putting time and energy into my new role. Members of the region have been surveyed to get an indication of the activities we might undertake, and these will be co-ordinated further at forthcoming meetings. I wish to thank Sav for the work he has done for the region over the years and I am pleased he is staying on as Regional Recorder; his knowledge and expertise are invaluable.

A number of members made it to OSNZ Conference in Lower Hutt and this was followed soon after by a regional meeting where Kyle Morrison from Massey University gave an engaging talk entitled 'Seabirds of British Columbia and Alaska's Aleutian Islands'. Kyle is a Canadian seabird biologist currently doing a PhD on Rockhopper Penguins on Campbell Island. At the meeting he spoke about his experiences and research on the seabirds that occupied his time before he crossed to the Southern Hemisphere.

In June there was also plenty of excitement over the presence of Gull-billed Terns at the Manawatu Estuary. Reports of their presence circulated for six weeks or so and many birders took the opportunity to see them. Two Glossy Ibises also turned up at the Manawatu Estuary in early July, adding a bonus sighting for some looking out for the terns. Sadly the other major happening in the region was the prion wreck. Birds were reported dropping out the sky in Palmerston North, and Massey Wildlife Ward took in a large number of stranded birds. Over the following days a number of volunteers did beach patrols and completed the very sobering exercise of counting hundreds upon hundreds of washed-up prions. Collations of counts indicate that approximately 400 birds per kilometre were washed up on beaches in our region. Let's hope we don't see an event of that magnitude again.

CRAIG STEED

Wairarapa

The region has had a few ups and downs over the past few months with changes to our plans that were beyond our control. The speaker arranged for May did not turn up, but this gave the members present a great opportunity to air opinions, findings, ask questions and to talk about a myriad of issues that are normally not discussed because of time pressures. As the members present found it to be a worthwhile meeting it was suggested that we schedule one such meeting a year that is devoted to talking about some of the issues that need more time for exploration than just the one or two minutes that are usually allotted.

A field trip to Boggy Pond to visit the new hide was aborted because of bad weather. This has been rescheduled. The proposed trip to Mount Holdsworth was also aborted because of bad weather. However, on the up side we enjoyed two indoor meetings in June. One of our members had been on an ornithological trip to Brazil with her husband John, where they were part of a small group enthusiastic about observing the behaviours and habitats of birds. John had prepared a slide show for the Californian branch of Audubon which he then showed to us.

In May, a group of us walked around Henley Lake in Masterton doing a bird count of the freshwater birds and noting other birds that were in the vicinity. The most common bird sighted was New Zealand Scaup, closely followed by Mallard. Others seen, in descending numbers were Coot, Canada Goose, Black Swan, Muscovy Duck, Feral Goose, Mute Swan, and Black and Little shags.

During July Robin List talked about bird recovery, very timely as it was just after a storm that caused the wreck of many sea birds. In the Wairarapa 29 Broad-billed and one Fairy Prion were found. Robin provided many amusing and sombre anecdotes about his work.

July's trip was to the site of the Tauherenikau Racecourse, which hosts a large patch of native forest including large Kahikatea which are reputed to be 5-600 years old. This was a wonderful sunny day where old-timers were able to share their experiences of many years of travelling throughout New Zealand to observe birds.

August is the traditional time for the communities of Greytown and Masterton to vie with each other in the challenge for the 'Big Bird

Cup', actually a little miniature that has a status much higher than its size. Tennick Dennison set a very comprehensive quiz including identification of nests and eggs, questions on seabirds, well-known ornithologists in New Zealand and general questions. For the first time in many years, Greytown wrested the cup from Masterton, who, no doubt, will be seeking revenge next year.

PEGGY DUNCAN

Wellington

July was notable for what appears to be the largest seabird wreck ever recorded in New Zealand. A number of OSNZ members recorded very large numbers of birds after covering just short distances of our west coast beaches. Interestingly, small numbers of birds were also found inland. This seabird wreck received considerable publicity in the local and national news media, especially attempts to rescue and rehabilitate exhausted birds found on beaches. Much can be learned from such a large seabird wreck and this knowledge can be used to enhance investigations of new events.

In the July meeting Colin Miskelly presented a summary of the fascinating life of Edgar Stead who is well known in ornithological circles for his book *The Life History of New Zealand Birds*. Colin, through his persistence, managed to track down the diaries of Stead. These contain many astute observations of New Zealand birds. Part of Colin's investigations of Stead includes revisiting some of the places he recorded in his writings. Colin described some of the changes he observed on Cundy Island, Hen and Nukuwaiata compared to when Stead had visited them some 70 years earlier.

Nikki McArthur, Biodiversity Monitoring Advisor for the Greater Wellington Regional Council, presented a talk in August on the Council's activities. He described three projects. The Wainuiomata Mainland Island project has the aim of maintaining and restoring the ecosystem in the 7,400 ha used for water catchment. A major part of this project is the pest control programme that covers not only possums but also mustelids and rodents. Regular bird counts are being conducted as a measure of the benefits of the pest control programme. In 2012 it is planned to introduce Robins into this mainland island. A notable self-introduction has been North Island Brown Kiwi from the neighbouring Rimutaka Forest Park.

The second project Nikki described was Project Kaka, which is being run in conjunction with the Department of Conservation, to determine the optimal frequency of pest control to ensure the recovery of native birds in selected areas of the Tararua. An important aspect of this project is the monitoring of the effects of pest control by regular bird counts. The third project Nikki described is a study of the abundance and distribution of birds of the eastern shoreline of Lake Wairarapa. A similar investigation was carried out previously by Barry Heather and Hugh Robertson. These studies provide essential information on the relationship between lake levels and the number and location of birds.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

July's meeting was well attended for David Melville's presentation on a recent visit to the Jalu Jiang Nature Reserve, China. David and his daughter Julia spent three months around the Yellow Sea at different sites noting the migratory waders that were stopping off on their northward journey. Land reclamation and the harvesting of bivalves/crustaceans are an ongoing threat to the important migratory bird feeding sites that the Yellow Sea offers. Interaction with the area's population did have some positive spin off; local school children were bussed to the area where David described the birds in view (of which they were unaware), plus a Chinese TV crew filmed David and his team doing benthic surveys.

Our August meeting centred on discussions dealing with local issues involving OSNZ activities in and around the Waimea Estuary. Paul Fisher drew our attention to the Nelson City Councils environmental health reports, across a wide spectrum in which reporting of bird populations could feature, with input from our members.

Birds seen over winter in the region included increased numbers of Cattle Egrets with a regular flock of 12 birds in the Appleby area. Scaup numbers on the oxidation ponds at Nelson Haven and Bells Island shellbank prior to the duck shooting season were probably the highest recorded; 50 and 72 respectively. Recent sightings include a Black-fronted Dotterel in the Appleby area, three Antarctic Fulmars off Rabbit Island and one off Tahuna Beach, and Little Black Shags in Golden Bay and off Rough Island. Wrybill numbers on the Bells Island shellbank roost increased from the 30-40 usual winter number to 60 in the first week of August; signs of the southern migration in progress. A banded

bird was recorded in this group and details forwarded to John Dowling who stated the bird was a female banded in the upper Rangitata River in October 2010.

The June Winter Wader Census was disrupted by stormy conditions. The Farewell Spit crew had to abort their count and returned two weeks later in ideal conditions. Rarer species seen were Curlew Sandpiper, Eastern Curlew, Grey Plover and New Zealand Dotterel, all in the Mullet Creek area. A banded Pied Oystercatcher was noted in this count and details forwarded to Paul Sagar who identified the bird as one banded as an adult male at Valetta, mid-Canterbury on 19th September 1992. It had been recorded three times previously, all on Farewell Spit with the last sighting being in July 1996.

The heavy rain coinciding with this count resulted in oystercatcher and Bar-tailed Godwit numbers greater in paddocks, especially in the Waimea, than were found on the tidal roosts! In one instance 168 Variable Oystercatchers were recorded on Neale Park, Nelson City. Golden Bay counts of oystercatchers showed high percentages on pastures also.

A team of eight members made a successful catch of oystercatchers on 5th July in the Nelson Haven close to Neale Park. 20 Variable and 10 Pied Oystercatchers were netted, and of great interest was one smudgy Pied with the characteristics of hybridisation. This bird now carries a yellow flag marked CA2.

DON COOPER

Otago

The Otago Harbour Survey, with monthly counts of all birds using the harbour, and our major regional project for the past two years, was completed with the August count. About 15 people were involved in this undertaking. Bruce McKinlay is analysing the findings for comparison with previous counts in 1988 and 1978.

The winter has seen the return of a few Cattle Egrets to the Balclutha area, but not in the numbers seen a decade ago. One or two juvenile Great Crested Grebes are in the Otago Harbour and Kaikorai estuary again this year. A Yellow-crowned Parakeet was seen in the native forest on Mount Cargill. This species is rarely seen in the Dunedin area.

The Indoor Meetings have been well attended and have featured current PhD students. Edward Waite talked about how birds use isolated specimen trees in urban areas. Surprisingly, 80% of the time they appeared to be doing nothing, just passing through and staying for only 30 seconds or so. Georgina Pickerell described her study of predators on the islands of the braided rivers in Canterbury; these islands are the preferred nesting

sites for four endemic threatened bird species. Dunnocks were introduced 140 years

ago to Dunedin and are being used as a model natural experiment for studying evolutionary theories. Edward Santos is studying whether, in this time, New Zealand Dunnocks have diverged from British Dunnocks. He found and studied 108 nests in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens. The use of camera, handling of nestlings, etc. did not cause nests to be abandoned.

MARY THOMPSON

Regional Reps and What's On



This information can now be found on the OSNZ website, www.osnz.org.nz

For regional reps click 'contact us' then 'regional reps'. For what's on click 'events' then 'regional'. Regional newsletters with more information on what is happening around the country are available for download by clicking 'publications' then 'regional newsletters'.

