

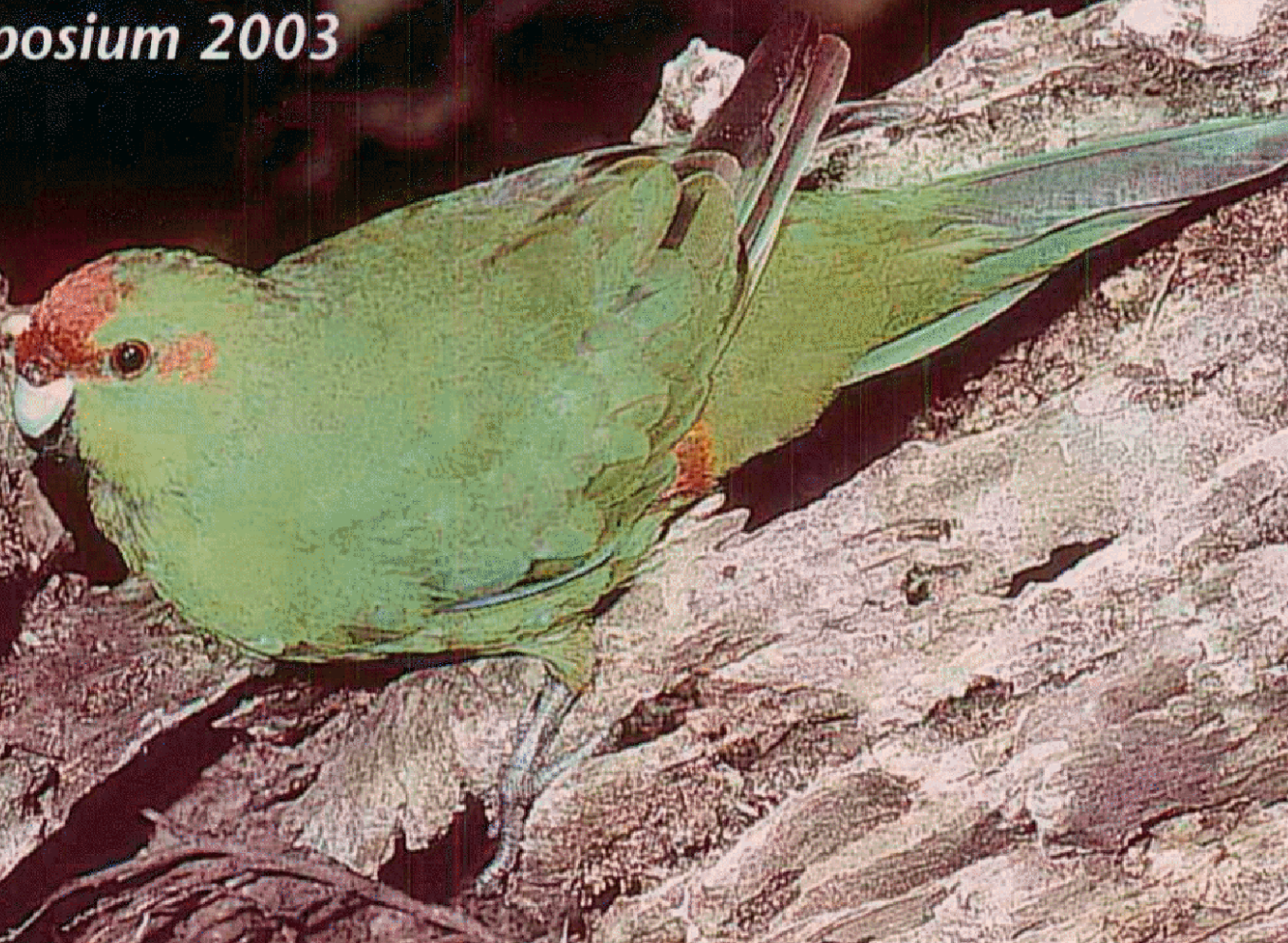


# Southern Bird

No. 16 December 2003. • ISSN 1175-1916

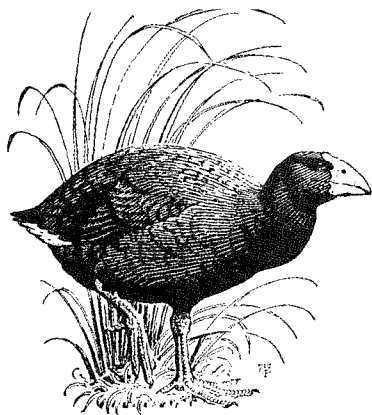
*Ark in the Park*

*Oamaru Penguin  
Symposium 2003*



***How to see almost  
100 species in 24 hours***





# Southern Bird

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## Quotation

*A bird a'flight  
Her wings spread wide  
The soul of a man  
With his bonds untied  
Beyond the plough  
The spade, the hod,  
The bird flies,  
In the face of God.  
Yet we with reason  
Bright as day  
For ever tread  
An earthbound clay*

*On observing a lone eagle in the sky from a  
trench in Tunisia by Spike Milligan, 1943*

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## Cover Photos

Front cover: Red-crowned Parakeet  
hole-nesting  
Back cover: Morepork and chicks  
Both photos by Geoff Moon

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, identification. Illustrations are especially welcome, though they must be sharp.

## Publisher

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

## AGM, Oamaru, Queens Birthday Weekend 2004

A registration form should be included with this edition of *Southern Bird*. Everything is in place for the weekend and you will not be disappointed with the venue, though expect it to be cold.

We think the accommodation will be suitable for everyone, and will try and sort out any requests, somehow. Don't expect any miracles in the last month, however.

To see both penguin species you will need to be at the Yellow-eyed Penguin parking area at 4pm. This is free. A five minute drive from there gets you to Blue Penguin colony. The latter species should start coming ashore at about 5.30pm. Remember dinner is at 6.45pm. There is a website nest camera in one of the penguin burrows, updated every 30 seconds viewable at [www.penguins.co.nz](http://www.penguins.co.nz).

If you don't want the hassle of finding whatever airline to travel on, Janice Morton at Holiday Shoppe (Auckland) will be able to help you. She has been in this business for a very long time.

There will be more information on rental cars on the 'Welcome to Oamaru' letter that we will send with your registration receipt, or you can email us.

Expect to see you there.

**TOM and HAZEL HARTY**  
Organisers

## Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2004 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before **28 February 2004** and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

The notices of motion set out in *Southern Bird* 13 (March 2003), which were to have been considered at the 2003 Annual General Meeting, will now be considered at the 2004 Annual General Meeting.

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2004 Annual General Meeting will be held in Oamaru on **Saturday 5 June 2004**.

ELIZABETH BELL  
Hon. Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington

## OSNZ Contact Details and Personnel Changes

Laurie Howell, the Beach Patrol Scheme convenor has changed address, and now abides at 4 Kotuku St, Whangarei. Alison Howell in moving out of the Far North region has stepped down as RR for that region.

Jim Wilson has resigned from the position of regional recorder for the Otago region. Taking up the reins is Frank Austin. His address is 18 Dunblane Street, Maori Hill, Dunedin, phone (03) 467 5214.



# Oamaru Penguin Symposium 2003

The fourth Oamaru Penguin Symposium was held at the Quality Hotel Brydone, Oamaru, on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2003. It was attended by nearly seventy penguin workers from New Zealand, Australia, Germany and Japan. Twenty-two papers were presented by speakers from New Zealand and Australian Universities, Phillip Island and the New Zealand Department of Conservation as well as independent biologists. Broadly speaking, the first day focussed upon Blue Penguin biology and the second upon various aspects of Yellow-eyed Penguin biology and management.

After being formally opened by local business man, Mr A.J. Alden, General Manager of Totara Hotels, the meeting was led by the key-note address of Dr J.R. Waas of Waikato University whose department has led much work upon vocal and physical communication in Blue Penguins, which he expanded upon here.

Interesting comparisons of foraging techniques were made between different populations of Blue Penguins living off Otago and Motuara Island in New Zealand and the Victorian coast, Australia. They were presented by workers from Otago University and the Philip Island Nature Park, respectively. The University of Otago's Marine Sciences Department and Philip Island workers also provided trans-Tasman comparisons on prey species in Blue Penguins in work which documented very clearly that bird's adaptability to changing circumstances of prey-species availability – there was a remarkable concurrence between the trans-Tasman studies.

The remaining papers of the first day considered Blue Penguin management in a hostile (urban) environment in Australia and the remarkable degree of mate fidelity of New Zealand Blue Penguins at Taiaroa Head. Discussion from the floor revealed this to be in marked contrast to the Victorian birds, where the 'divorce rate' is considerably higher. Dr Chris Challies described the distribution of the white-flipped variety of the Blue Penguin as it related to terrain around Banks Peninsula.

After a field trip on the first night to see Oamaru's Yellow-eyed Penguins and then a visit to the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony, the sec-

ond day was mainly devoted to aspects of the Yellow-eyed Penguin. The exceptions were two papers, both from Melbourne, on management of marine oil damage to birds.

Dr P.J. Seddon of the University of Otago presented the effects of tourism on Yellow-eyed Penguin biological well being. A case is to be made for focussing the attention of 'casual visiting' tourists upon one site in a region, thereby limiting distraction and disturbance by unregulated visitation at other sites. The impact of unregulated tourist visitation upon the Humboldt Penguin of Chile is demonstrably extreme in its adverse effects, a general lesson to be borne in mind when considering the management of penguin populations. A gratifying success story was that of the new autonomous Yellow-eyed Penguin colony which has become established at Moeraki Lighthouse Reserve, where a rehabilitation centre was first established about 20 years ago, and consequent to environmental development and predator control there.

The University of Otago presented evidence suggestive of a negative impact on penguin wellbeing caused by cats on Stewart Island. With implications for general penguin care, the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust of Dunedin described anti-mustelid strategies. Department of Conservation staff presented two papers on the biology of crested penguins. One study was of the Snares subantarctic island group and the other from Westland, of the Fiordland Crested Penguin. Unfortunately, the expedition was dogged by technical specification failure but some good leads on prey species were collected.

The success of the symposium was due in no small part to the organisation, hospitality and facilities provided by the staff of the Quality Hotel Brydone. The support of the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony and the businesses of the Oamaru community is gratefully acknowledged. We look forward to reconvening in 2005.

A G HOCKEN,  
Convenor

## What's up at Miranda?

By the second week in September arctic waders had begun returning to Miranda. A call from Alaska on September 4<sup>th</sup> alerted us to significant departures of Bar-tailed Godwits from sites in south-west Alaska since September 1<sup>st</sup>. A count of the roost on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> turned up the 340 non-breeding godwit that had remained over winter. The next day 440 birds were on the stilt ponds followed by another 100 on Tuesday and 50 more the next day.

Whilst it is impossible to determine whether some of the birds seen leaving Alaska from the beginning of the month were the same ones now at Miranda, it remains an extremely tantalising probability. Over the next two weeks godwit numbers increased to over 3000, while over 3500 Lesser Knots had also returned.

### Interesting birds that have shown up this year so far are:

- A Bar-tailed Godwit with green and orange flags, one of 75 flagged in China in May 2002. This is the second year it has spent on the Firth, assuming it is the same individual.
- A Lesser Knot wearing a yellow colour band instead of a flag. This bird was banded in Broome, Australia last year as a juvenile, must have spent its first year there, and then crossed the ditch. It is likely it will base itself in New Zealand for the rest of its southern summers.
- A Lesser Knot with orange and white flags, showing it passed through South Korea at some point.
- A juvenile Turnstone appeared on the Miranda roost sites on September 7<sup>th</sup>. It was the first juvenile to appear at Miranda this year, almost exactly a month earlier than the first juvenile godwits and knots, seen on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October.
- A Great Knot was seen in October, but was not seen again. It may have moved on to other sites around the country, or it could still be hiding in the midst of the Lesser Knot flock.
- A Marsh Sandpiper has been a regular sight on the stilt pools since early October. Hopefully it will stay the entire summer.

### Around the Centre

With the arrival of the birds the number of people arriving also goes up. Significant events at the Shorebird Centre of late have included:

- Spring Migration Day, which brought about a hundred people out to hear a talk on birds in the fossil record (with a focus on shorebirds of course!) by Jack Grant-Mackie.
- The arrival of two students from Germany who will be based at the Centre for two to three months. Their presence will allow an increased level of interpretation down on the shellbanks.
- A workshop on New Zealand Dotterel management and protection which was well attended by people from DoC, the Auckland Regional Council and voluntary organisations and will hopefully be run again in future years.
- The continuation of the Chinese connection with the coordinator of the East Asian Australasian Shorebird Site Network from Australia showing a presentation on Miranda at Dafeng, Yancheng Nature Reserve in China in November.

GILLIAN VAUGHAN

## Subscriptions reminder

Subscriptions for the Ornithological Society of New Zealand are due the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. You should have received a subscription notice either with the previous issue of *Southern Bird*, or by email. The Society depends on your subscription to continue its work and to meet its objectives of the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds. Please endeavour to pay promptly. For inquiries or problems regarding membership contact the membership secretary Roger Sharp, P.O. Box 12-1039, Henderson, Auckland, phone/fax (09) 836 9931, email [Roger\\_Sharpxtra.co.nz](mailto:Roger_Sharpxtra.co.nz)

The following sightings have been accepted by the Committee since preparation of the report in *Southern Bird* 14: 14-15.

**UBR 64/02** - Report and photographs from Vic Hensley of **Dollarbirds** (*Eurystomus orientalis*) seen by himself at Far North Road, north of Pukenui on 17/10/00 (1), and by himself and Pauline Hensley at Waiharara Straights, north of Kaitaia on 8/1/01 (2).

**UBR 27/03** - Report from Steve Wood of a **Pink-footed Shearwater** (*Puffinus creatopus*) seen by himself & Gary Melville off Kaikoura on 4/1/03.

**UBR 45/03** - Report from Tony Crocker of a **Pomarine Skua** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) seen by himself, David Clarkson & Jan Walker at Waimakariri River mouth on 12/4/03.

**UBR 46/03** - Report from Ian Hogarth of a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** (*Phaethon rubricauda*) seen at Whangarei Harbour on 19/10/02.

**UBR 47/03** - Report and photographs from Brent Stephenson & Paddy Latham of a **Long-tailed Skua** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) seen by themselves & Sav Saville, Steve Wood, Tim Barnard, John Brierley, Steve Wratten & Bert Lee off Tolaga Bay on 23/2/03.

**UBR 48/03** - Report from Mike Imber of a **Wandering Tattler** (*Tringa incana*) seen at Red Mercury Island on 28/10/1998.

**UBR 51/03** - Report from Richard Parrish of estimated 24-30 **Grey Ternlets** (*Procelsterna cerulea*) seen at Sugarloaf Rock, Poor Knights Islands on 20/4/03.

**UBR 52/03** - Report from Katrina Hansen of a **Mongolian Dotterel** of the *Charadrius mongolus* "mongolus group" seen by herself & Audrey Williams at Tapora Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour on 25/3/03.

**UBR 53/03** - Report from Alan Collins of a **Glossy Ibis** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) seen by himself, Nick Allen, Sheila Petch & Jan Walker at Lake Wainono on 16 & 27/2/03.

**UBR 54/03** - Report from Alan Collins of up to two **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks** (*Tadorna tadornoides*) seen at Normanby Lake (south of Timaru) between 5/3 & 29/4/03.

**UBR 55/03** - Report from Alan Collins of two **Pomarine Skuas** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) seen off Lake Wainono on 31/1/03.

**UBR 56/03** - Report from Alan Collins of two **Brown Skuas** (*Catharacta skua lombergi*) seen off Timaru on 7/4/03.

**UBR 57/03** - Report from Alan Collins of a **Pomarine Skua** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) seen off Timaru on 7/4/03.

**UBR 58/03** - Report and photograph from Barry Hartley of a **White-necked Heron** (*Ardea pacifica*) seen by himself & Dean Caskey at Toko, near Stratford on 4/6/03, and by himself & David Medway on 6/6/03. This appears to be the 6th New Zealand record of the species.

**UBR 59/03** - Report from Nick Allen of a **Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*) seen at Rakaia River mouth on 21/6/03.

**UBR 60/03** - Report from Chris Petyt of a **Siberian Tattler** (*Tringa brevipes*) seen near Puponga, Golden Bay on 6/1/03, 22/3/03 & 18/5/03.

**UBR 61/03** - Report from Phil Battley of an **Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisea*) seen by himself, Jack Marks & Pauline Samways at Farewell Spit on 14/6/03.

**UBR 63/03** - Report from Colin Miskelly of a **Cirl Bunting** (*Emberiza cirlus*) seen by himself & Kieran Miskelly at Ranui Crescent, Khandallah, Wellington on 15/7/03.

**UBR 64/03** - Report from Graham Don of an **Australasian Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) seen at Mt. Wellington Quarry, Auckland on 14 & 22/10/02.

**UBR 65/03** - Report from Graham Don of an **Australasian Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) seen at Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant, North Shore City on 20/11 & 2/12/02 & 17/2/03.



**White-necked Heron at Toko**  
Photo by Barry Hartley

## BANDING NOTES

### Colour-flagged Waders

Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots are arriving on our shores and it's time once again to look for colour flags.

This year there is a chance of finding TWO colour combinations from China.

Last summer we had a very good series of records of GREEN over ORANGE Bar-tailed Godwits - birds marked at the Yalu

Jiang Nature Reserve in north-east China in April 2002. None of these birds appears to have remained in New Zealand over the winter, so hopefully they successfully migrated to Alaska. At least some of these birds should still be alive and be back again this year.

In April 2003 a total of 816 waders was flagged by Yuan Xiao and his team at

### Banded Tui in Wellington

Members of OSNZ Wellington have colour-banded a number of Tui about the city over the winter.

If you are visiting any of the areas around Wellington where Tui breed please would you keep an eye out for colour-banded birds. Likely places are the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, Wilton Bush, the Botanical Gardens, and no doubt a number of others.

The birds all have a metal band plus either a red or blue band on one leg (most likely on the right). The other leg will have two colour bands. Please report any sightings to either Rod Cossee at the DOC



**UBR 66/03** - Report from Allan Munro of a **Cape Barren Goose** (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*) seen by himself & Janice Woon at Otaihangā on 29/6/03.

**UBR 67A/03, 67B/03, 67C/03** - Reports from Allan Munro of **Brown Teal** (*Anas aucklandica chlorotis*) seen by himself & Janice Woon at Waikanae River mouth on 6/2/03 (three birds), 20/4/03 (six birds) & 25/5/03 (three birds).

**UBR 68/03** - Report and photographs from Alan Collins of a **Cape Barren Goose** (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*) seen at Washdyke Lagoon on 8/8/03.

**UBR 72/03** - Report from David Lawrie of a **Sanderling** (*Calidris alba*) seen by himself, Tim Barnard, Gwenda Pulham & Gordon Gorby at Kidd's shellbanks, Manukau Harbour on 22 & 23/3/03.

**UBR 73/03** - Report from David Lawrie of two **Black-tailed Godwits** (*Limosa limosa*) seen by himself & Nola Dyson at Miranda on 8/6/03.

**UBR 74/03** - Report from David Lawrie of a **Marsh Sandpiper** (*Tringa stagnatilis*) seen at Miranda on 13/4/03.

**UBR 75/03** - Report from David Lawrie of up to two **Mongolian Dotterels** (*Charadrius mongolus*) seen by himself & many others at Kidd's shellbanks, Manukau Harbour on several occasions between 4/1/03 & 13/9/03.

**UBR 76/03** - Report from David Lawrie of a **Little Whimbrel** (*Numenius minutus*) seen by himself, Gillian Vaughan & Adrian Riegen at Kidd's shellbanks, Manukau Harbour on 4 & 5/1/03.

**UBR 77/03** - Report from David Lawrie of a **Large Sand Dotterel** (*Charadrius leschenaultii*) seen by himself & several others at Kidd's shellbanks, Manukau Harbour on several occasions between 4/1/03 & 18/5/03.

**UBR 78/03** - Report from David Lawrie of a **Siberian Tattler** (*Tringa brevipes*) seen by himself, Gwenda Pulham & Gordon Gorby at Kidd's shellbanks, Manukau Harbour on 23/3/03.

**UBR 79/03** - Report from Geoff Foreman of a **Red-crowned Parakeet** (*Cyanoramphus novaehollandiae*) seen by himself & Raewynn Foreman, Jim & Bev O'Brien, and Bill & Christine Winstanley at Otari Native Plant Reserve, Wilton's Bush, Wellington on 13/4/03.

**UBR 80/03** - Report from Jim Moore of a **Chestnut Teal** (*Anas castanea*) seen at the Manawatu estuary on 14, 18 & 19/8/03.

The following sightings have also been determined by the Committee since the last report was prepared.

**UBR 74/02** - Report from Tony Wilson of suspected **White-bellied Storm Petrel** (*Fregetta grallaria*) seen off Kaikoura on 8/11/01. The Committee did not accept that the given description confirmed this bird was a White-bellied Storm Petrel as claimed.

**UBR 75/02** - Report and photographs from Tony Wilson of suspected **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** (*Puffinus pacificus*) seen off Kaikoura on 11/2/02. The Committee did not accept that the given description and photographs confirmed this bird was a Wedge-tailed Shearwater as claimed.

**UBR 80/02** - Report from Rob Schuckard of suspected **Black Falcon** (*Falco subniger*) seen near French Pass on 17/11/02. The Committee did not accept that the given description confirmed this bird was a Black Falcon as claimed.

**UBR 30/03** - Reports and photographs from Colin Scadden, Miles King, Colin Clunie & Tenick Dennison of a problematic 'grebe' seen at Queen Elizabeth Park, Masterton in June and July 2002. A majority of the Committee considered that the bird described and depicted was a **New Zealand Dabchick** (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*).

DAVID MEDWAY  
Convenor, Rare Birds Committee  
27 October 2003

# New Members and Donations

*A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:*

Barry Donovan (Canterbury), John Geale (Wellington), David Hayman (Wellington), Rosemary Jorgensen (Nelson), Antje Leseberg (Canterbury), Leigh Marshall (Waikato), Hayley Meehan (Wellington), Kim Morrison (United Kingdom), Rev and Mrs PB Paltridge

(Canterbury), Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Wellington), Lorna Russell (Auckland), Smithsonian Institute Libraries (America), David Stewart (Australia), Barry Thompson (Far North), Bronwen Wall (Wellington), Kerry Walshe (Far North).

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

Sharon Alderson, Dorothy Alloo, Elizabeth Bell, David Booth, Peter Bull, Helen. A. Cook, William A. Cook, John Davenport, Claudia Duncan, Audrey Eagle, Michael Fitzgerald, Barry Friend, John Geale, John Gibb, Anthea Goodwin, Peter Grant, Rob Guest, Michael E. Hermansson, Peter Howden, Charles C Huffleft, Ted Kirk, Marion A. MacBeth, W. Mary McEwen, Rosemary Messenger, Philip Moors, Kim

Morrison, Marie Neverman, Stuart Nicholson, Mrs G. Norman, Mr T. C. O'Callaghan, Mr C C Ogle, Suzi Phillips, David Pye, Elizabeth Revell, Mr L. S. Rickard, Paul Sagar, Rob Schuckard, Martin Snowball, Ian Southey, Joy M. Soper, Mr D M Stracy, Andrew Styche, Ian Sutherland, Kevin Taylor, Kenneth D.B. Thomson, Mr E. G. Turbott, Kerry Walshe, George Watola.

# Report on the New Zealand Moulting Scheme 2003

Up to 1 May 2003 the OSNZ Moulting Scheme had accumulated 2255 records for 126 bird species. About half of these (1154) are of birds in active moulting, the rest (1099) of non-moulting birds. Just over half (52%) of records are from live birds, the rest from dead birds.

Over 250 records have come in since my last report on the Moulting Scheme in 2001. House Sparrow (379) and Silvereye (222) continue to lead the record totals, followed by Fairy Prion and Kaka (87), Bar-tailed Godwit (85), Pacific Golden Plover (67), and Banded Dotterel (65). Individual species totals are given in the table. Additional records, less individually quantifiable, have been received on bird plumages and general patterns of moulting.

## Summary of moulting records received to date

Species	In moulting	Not in moulting	Alive	Dead	Total	Species	In moulting	Not in moulting	Alive	Dead	Total
Black-browed Mollmawk	2	35	0	37	37	Bristle-thighed Curlew	0	3	0	3	3
White-capped Mollmawk	5	26	0	31	31	Bar-tailed Godwit	13	72	3	82	85
Grey-headed Mollmawk	1	0	0	1	1	Black-tailed Godwit	0	1	0	1	1
Flesh-footed Shearwater	0	2	0	2	2	Hudsonian Godwit	0	3	0	3	3
Short-tailed Shearwater	0	1	0	1	1	Wandering Tattler	2	8	0	10	10
Fluttering Shearwater	8	0	0	8	8	Siberian Tattler	1	0	1	0	1
Hutton's Shearwater	2	1	1	2	3	Grey Phalarope	0	1	0	1	1
Common Diving Petrel	2	1	1	2	3	Arctic Skua	2	0	0	2	2
Black Petrel	0	2	0	2	2	Long-tailed Skua	3	0	0	3	3
Westland Petrel	0	1	0	1	1	Southern Black-backed Gull	14	3	2	15	17
Kerguelen Petrel	1	3	1	3	4	Red-billed Gull	45	1	41	5	46
Cape Pigeon	0	2	0	2	2	Black-billed Gull	4	1	2	3	5
Fairy Prion	0	87	0	87	87	White-winged Black Tern	2	0	0	2	2
Antarctic Prion	1	0	1	0	1	Black-fronted Tern	3	1	0	4	4
Salvin's Prion	2	0	2	1	3	Caspian Tern	2	0	0	2	2
Broad-billed Prion	1	1	2	0	2	White-fronted Tern	6	0	0	6	6
Blue Petrel	0	3	0	3	3	Sooty Tern	1	0	0	1	1
Cook's Petrel	0	2	0	2	2	Fairy Tern	1	0	0	1	1
Grey-faced Petrel	0	1	0	1	1	Little Tern	2	0	0	2	2
Chatham Island Taiko	0	3	3	0	3	White-capped Noddy	1	0	0	1	1
White-headed Petrel	5	0	1	4	5	White Tern	2	0	0	2	2
Grey-backed Storm Petrel	0	10	10	0	10	New Zealand Pigeon	11	1	0	12	12
White-faced Storm Petrel	3	2	5	0	5	Spotted Dove	4	0	2	2	4
Blue Penguin	1	2	1	2	3	Kaka	12	75	75	12	87
Australasian Gannet	35	0	5	30	35	Kea	1	0	0	1	1
Little Shag	1	0	0	1	1	Eastern Rosella	1	1	0	2	2
Pied Shag	0	1	0	1	1	Red-crowned Parakeet	1	0	0	1	1
Spotted Shag	6	1	5	2	7	Yellow-crowned Parakeet	1	1	0	2	2
White-faced Heron	4	0	1	3	4	Oriental Cuckoo	1	1	0	2	2
White Heron	1	0	1	0	1	Pallid Cuckoo	0	1	0	1	1
Australasian Bittern	0	1	0	1	1	Shining Cuckoo	0	8	0	8	8
Royal Spoonbill	2	0	0	2	2	Long-tailed Cuckoo	0	7	2	5	7
Mallard	9	0	8	1	9	Morepork	1	11	3	9	12
Grey Duck	2	0	2	0	2	Little Owl	1	0	0	1	1
Grey Teal	1	1	0	0	1	New Zealand Kingfisher	10	8	8	10	18
Brown Teal	10	39	13	36	49	Welcome Swallow	1	1	0	2	2
Australasian Harrier	37	10	1	46	47	New Zealand Pipit	0	1	0	1	1
New Zealand Falcon	8	8	0	16	16	Duncock	17	7	23	1	24
Brown Quail	1	0	0	1	1	Blackbird	21	17	29	9	38
Pheasant	4	3	5	2	7	Song Thrush	11	11	15	7	22
Banded Rail	0	5	4	1	5	Fernbird	1	0	0	1	1
Weka	1	1	1	1	2	Whitehead	2	0	2	0	2
Pukeko	0	1	1	2	3	Brown Creeper	1	0	1	0	1
Pied Oystercatcher	4	0	3	1	4	Grey Warbler	23	3	25	1	26
Variable Oystercatcher	2	0	2	0	2	Fantail	12	8	19	1	20
Pied Stilt	7	27	0	34	34	Tomtit	14	3	17	0	17
Black Stilt	5	4	0	9	9	Robin	10	19	29	0	29
Oriental Pratincole	0	2	0	2	2	Silvereye	148	74	210	12	222
New Zealand Dotterel	4	13	1	16	17	Stitchbird	5	7	12	0	12
Banded Dotterel	23	42	0	65	65	Bellbird	10	6	15	1	16
Shore Plover	8	23	0	31	31	Tui	2	10	7	5	12
Wrybill	9	34	1	42	43	Yellowhammer	2	1	2	1	3
Pacific Golden Plover	20	47	0	67	67	Cirl Bunting	3	2	5	0	5
Spur-winged Plover	1	14	0	15	15	Chaffinch	23	6	27	2	29
Turnstone	11	18	0	29	29	Greenfinch	22	6	26	2	28
Lesser Knot	9	49	0	58	58	Goldfinch	11	10	11	10	21
Sanderling	2	0	0	2	2	Redpoll	16	41	57	0	57
Curlew Sandpiper	2	4	0	6	6	House Sparrow	299	80	375	4	379
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	5	5	0	10	10	Starling	6	3	3	6	9
Pectoral Sandpiper	4	12	0	16	16	Common Myna	17	0	2	15	17
Red-necked Stint	2	12	0	14	14	Saddleback	2	1	1	2	3
Eastern Curlew	2	1	0	3	3	Australian Magpie	47	6	44	9	53
Whimbrel	1	3	0	4	4						
Little Whimbrel	3	2	0	5	5						
						TOTALS	1154	1099	1178	1076	2255



I once again thank all those who have sent in records on moult. In particular, I thank Phil Battley for many records of Brown Teal and Clinton Care for providing documentation of observations on plumage and moult of a range of species.

Please write to me if you need supplies of moult cards and non-moult summary forms, or contact your Regional Representative. Remember that you can record useful moult information on birds at any time of year - and potentially from every bird you handle (live or dead). Where possible, please record the information on to the cards and forms issued for the Moult Recording Scheme. This standardises data storage and facilitates later data analysis.

The moult card is used for recording data on birds in *active moult*, while for birds *not* in moult the non-moult summary form is used. Non-moulting birds include both those in old plumage (worn and faded) and those in new plumage (fresh without wear) and the state of plumage ('old' or 'new') needs to be stated on the card or record form.

I look forward to receiving further moult records from you over the forthcoming year.

BEN BELL

# BIRD DISTRIBUTION ATLAS 1999–2004

Eleven months to go!

## AT LAST, YOU CAN SEE THE END OF THE TUNNEL!

No doubt as I was writing this you were all out in the sunshine on Labour day getting close to the end of the spring atlasing season.

Starting the 1st of December 2003 will be the last opportunities to fulfil the requirements of the *four seasonal reporting periods* one more time before the close of the field data collection of this project. A major milestone earlier in October was the receipt of data sheet number 21000. With general returns per season reaching about 2000, we are well on target for an overall total of some 30000 sheets.

At the end of October, the maps for seasonal coverage after 19600 sheets were delivered to the Webmaster so that you are able to continue to plan your travelling activities for the remainder of the atlas programme. There are still plenty of squares that need to be looked at seasonally, if not for the first time. Don't forget to check the website ([www.bird.org.nz](http://www.bird.org.nz)) for the latest maps, and instructions if you have found someone new who is keen to contribute separately.

I don't propose to name those areas and regions that need to have a busy year or season(s) as they are clearly identified on the maps. I hope the gaps mean that those areas have been saving up their resources and efforts for the final year. If you see gaps and can assist in neighbouring areas, PLEASE contact the RRs concerned to co-ordinate your efforts. I will again be making available route maps in the South Island for those travelling about the time of the next AGM in Oamaru. Plan now and let me know early.

Meanwhile Nicky Sinclair continues to wrestle with your observational annotations having advanced the data entry of all habitat and species records up to the 12000 sheets now completed. We have also been able to modify those records where errors or omissions have been rectified by the work of Stuart Nicholson. Andrew Grant in Christchurch has made considerable progress in replacing most of the mapping systems that we lost with the departure of Pasi Hyvonen. We are now starting to think about how the final atlas will be put together and the types of questions that must be asked when data has to be extracted from the files. Already simple progress maps of species are showing some interesting patterns. We will be recommencing showing some of these on the website in the early part of 2004, now that some of the mapping processes are being resolved.

Now for a few statistics to consider at the 21000-sheet progress point: some 3040 squares now have at least one record from any season which is 96.44% of the total landmass of the three main islands and associated inshore islands. The seasonal coverage continues to improve, though it is clear that the five years of the programme will not be enough to provide a level of seasonal national coverage that matches the total coverage. At this time the seasonal coverage for **Summer** = 70%, **Autumn** = 67%, **Winter** = 60% and **Spring** = 63%. At the overall rate of past seasonal increases in coverage, we should be able to achieve between 75-80% coverage for each season. Combined with filling in the squares that have not been visited at all, this provides a very significant challenge for the final year of the project. It is to be hoped that the

efforts of the Department of Conservation Conservancies will be able to make a significant contribution to filling the gaps during their one-year designated support for the contribution of field records by their staff.

The month of June now has the most records for any month. This is clearly the impact of the AGM atlasing days and the significant efforts made by people travelling to and from those events. At the other end of the contribution scale is August which is obviously when NZ ornithologists have a serious hibernation problem, or they are all travelling to warmer places offshore. Perhaps a project for the future - to study the migratory behaviour of bird observers rather than birds!

Though more than 750 people have been recorded on the various data sheets as having contributed to the observation, some 200 of them have never contributed a sheet other than as a member of a team. Hopefully, this means that in this final year, some of them may now feel qualified to go out on their own.

The average number of species recorded per sheet has remained steady for some time at 19-20 species per sheet with the biggest sheet containing 72. The best observing team is still averaging about 32 birds per sheet returned (see last *Southern Bird*). Some 42 teams or individuals have returned 100+ sheets with the top 4 recording in excess of 1000 sheets each.

We are still receiving records from as far back as the start of the project in 1999. These records are a welcome addition to the completeness of the project and you should all be looking to see that you return material as soon as possible after the end of the season.

*When we come to start the analysis of the data there will have to be a final cut off point for the receipt of survey sheets so that we can deal with a finite dataset when the analysis starts in earnest. So that you have plenty of warning, we have set this date at 30 March 2005. Material received after that date will be added to the data held in the archive, BUT will NOT be included in the final atlas.*

I note that I have only had one request for assistance funding to venture into remote areas which have yet to be surveyed. Please see the September 2003 issue of *Southern Bird* if you need the details.

**The efforts and achievements so far are excellent, but many members have not yet contributed. Remember to check the Atlas website. If there are fewer than 5 sheets for any square, it has probably not yet received enough coverage. In addition, if the maximum number of species per sheet for a square is fewer than 15, then the area usually needs to have some extra work. THIS IS THE TIME FOR MAINTAINING MAXIMUM EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF COMPREHENSIVE AND COMPLETE COVERAGE.**

Any questions, requests for instructions, or extra observation forms, should be addressed to the ATLAS CONVENOR, P O BOX 12397, WELLINGTON.

C J R ROBERTSON





# Ark in the Park

Only thirty kilometres from downtown Auckland is one of New Zealand's best known conservation success stories, where many of our indigenous bird species can readily be seen. This is, of course, Tiritiri Matangi Island ('Tiri'). Yet more accessible, 22km or a mere 25-minute car journey from Queen Street, a project is developing which may one day complement the Tiri experience.

The Ark in the Park is a 'mainland island' project along the lines of the DoC managed Trounson Park in Northland, Otamatuna in the Urewera, Nelson Lakes, and many other private and joint-venture predator control areas throughout both the North and South Islands. Four years of planning included a study of 14 different potential sites in the Waitakere Ranges where issues of significant fauna, vegetation (including regeneration processes), accessibility, existing infrastructure, etc. were considered.

The chosen site, the Cascades Kauri Park and the catchment of the Waitakere Reservoir, is just over 2000ha in area and comprises dissected hill country with some 350m of altitudinal range. Modified podocarp / broadleaf forest forms a major component, with ponga/broadleaf forest, kanuka forest, and young kauri forest types represented. Additionally, the mature kauri forest at the Cascades is the largest within the greater Auckland area with scores of great columnar trunks arrayed up spurs and slopes, their leaf mass emerging above the canopy. The north west corner of the planned project is a farm park which follows the Waitakere River, but more of this later.

Here, in this very diverse environment, the Waitakere branch of Forest and Bird has taken the first steps toward creating an open sanctuary where the existing flora and fauna will thrive and locally extinct species can be returned. That diversity is greater for flora, with the Waitakere Ecological District containing 542 species of higher plants, almost 20% of New Zealand's flowering species, and 60% of its ferns.

Although the district faunal list includes several thousand invertebrate species, 20% of known native land-snail species, Hochstetter's frog, five lizard species, 13 native freshwater fish species, and long-tailed bats, it is the birds which are conspicuously absent. Gone from the forest are the North Island Brown Kiwi, Kokako, Whitehead, Bellbird, Robin, parakeets, and Rifleman. Only occasionally seen are Kaka, Long-tailed Cuckoo, and, rarely, Falcon. Attempts were made from the 1930s to reintroduce at various times Bellbird, North Island Brown Kiwi, and Red-crowned Parakeet, but all attempts failed, no doubt because of the lack of appreciation of the reasons for their original demise.

Since late 2002, a grid of bait stations 50m by 100m, and a perimeter ring of mustelid traps have been installed by a steadily growing band of volunteers in an initial pilot area. These efforts are superimposed on the ranges-wide Operation Forestsave project in which the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) successfully reduced possum numbers over some 30,000ha of public and private land on the ranges and foothills.



Mike Cleland and Mike Alford bait filling



John Sumich soat trapping



Karen Colgan at bait station

This ongoing project has had many observable benefits. Rata and kohekohe have been flowering to an extent that has not been seen for decades, and Tomtit, Fantail, Tui, and New Zealand Pigeon numbers have increased. Figures from the ARC showed 160-250% increases for these bush birds and anecdotal comments from local residents reveal pigeons in flocks up to 40 in number.

Tomtits are currently under the eye of Barbara Hughes in her Royal Society Fellowship year. In addition to finding them in all the sites recorded by Michael Taylor and John Staniland in 1985-7, she is finding them in many areas not previously recorded. They are a success story showing the benefits of possum control. Undoubtedly, when the additional efforts directed against rats, mustelids and cats are realised, these handsome birds will surprise more of the many visitors to the Waitakeres.

Controlling predators is a vital task, but also of importance is monitoring the results. Rodent numbers are being assessed with a series of monitoring tunnels into which peanut butter lures attract them overnight. Passing over an inkpad on their entry and exit, the rodents leave their footprints on recording papers, with frighteningly some 85-95% of tunnels visited in a single night. Before translocations can be contemplated, this pest index has to be reduced to less than 3-5%. Already, after the first three monthly cycles of bait laying, bait is untouched in a significant number of stations implying the extermination of the local population. The first post-baiting monitoring verified this, with no rat presence detected in all tunnels within the baited area.

A different technique is used for invertebrate monitoring. Here containers are sunk to ground level and the unlucky invertebrates that fall in are quietly pickled in the glycol solution below. Analysis of the weekly collection to determine species range and population size is being undertaken and is expected to show similar results to a study undertaken by a previous Royal Society Fellowship holder. In the previous study,

Forest and Birds Matuku reserve, where three years of intensive predator control had been undertaken, showed more species in greater numbers and larger-sized individuals than the control area. In particular, ground weta *Hemidrus* sp. were found to be virtually indicator species. That is, at least for this northern mixedbroadleaf / kauri / podocarp forest, rat numbers are inversely related to ground weta numbers.

Transects have been established now for bird counts. The technique used is the slow walk transect, to gain an idea of the bird population density. A small core of birders with the required skill set has been doing quarterly counts. It is anticipated that only slight changes in bird population size will show up in this first year of control measures. In contrast the invertebrate surveys should show great changes within the year.

Assessing phenology is yet another study being undertaken. Here, students from Unitec have been traversing some of the bait station grid lines recording fruiting and flowering species and tree densities. It is intended to record the fruiting and flowering pattern throughout the

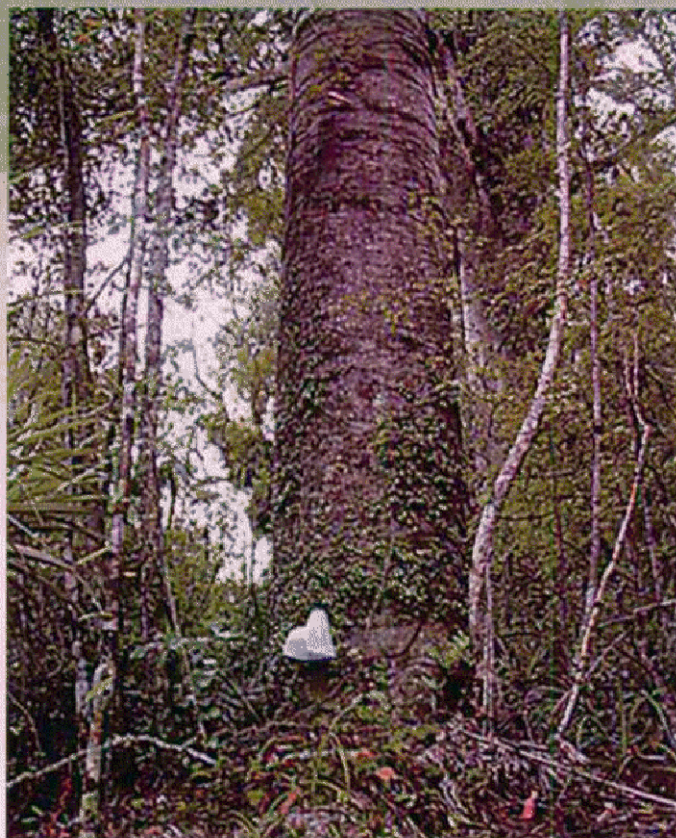


years as this and invertebrate abundance will be necessary in considerations of bird transfers. Unitee have previously recorded northern rata distribution and will continue assessing rata health. Decades of possum damage have taken a toll and the absence of previously significant pollinators such as Stitchbird and Bellbird must have altered the age distribution of rata, the second of the emergent species.

Predator and weed species control, although intrinsically valuable for forest health, also allows us to consider filling the gaps. Reintroduction of locally extinct bird species can help previous patterns of pollination and seed dispersal, thereby more closely approximating the original ecosystem. The first species to be applied for reintroduction will be Whitehead. These birds are sufficiently robust and adaptable to spread from native to adjacent exotic pine forests in the central North Island so they should thrive in the Waitakeres. Presumably they would have returned there were it not for the small matter of few hundred kilometres of farm and urban land to the nearest source population!

North Island Robin is next on the list. From the ARC experience in the Hunua Ranges, where a release occurred in 2001, the dispersal from the release site has been significant, so therefore a large area needs to be predator-controlled. The Ark site is on a DoC shortlist for mainland Stitchbird release. Its diverse understorey, a result of deer being absent, makes it ideal Stitchbird habitat.

Auckland Zoo's Native Fauna section is supportive, with some staff volunteering with predator control, and the potential for breeding for release of Kaka, parakeet, and giant weta. Additionally, the farm park corner mentioned earlier is part of the Waitakere Valley, and here landowners, local stream care groups, and Forest and Bird with their Matuku reserve are going through a wetland management process. Brown Teal recovery group leaders have assessed the valley, with its regionally-significant swamp, as suitable for Brown Teal if predator control measures can be established and maintained. Other species that may be reintroduced in the medium term are Bellbird and Kokako. The latter species was present until the early 1950s, and the bush has improved greatly since then, being 'choice' habitat according to Jeff Hudson, past team leader of the Kokako recovery group.



Mature Kauri

Rob McCallum, Chief Conservator for DoC, Auckland, has said that a lot of restoration projects are high in community involvement but low in biodiversity value. The Ark in the Park however, is high in both. We need support though, and Forest and Bird have started a Help-a-Hectare appeal to raise funds for the expansion from the initial pilot area.

To Help-a-Hectare, see details on the Forest and Bird website [www.forest-bird.org.nz](http://www.forest-bird.org.nz), or send a sae for a copy to J.Sumich, 80 Carter Road, Oratia, Auckland 8.

JOHN SUMICH

## New Zealand Pigeon feeding habits

During the early afternoon of March 16th I observed a New Zealand Pigeon feeding on Kahikatea fruits. The weather was calm and overcast, and the bird was observed from a distance of nine metres.

The bird fed for periods of six to nine minutes, then rested in the tree for periods of eight to 12 minutes.

I timed one spell of feeding, which lasted for eight minutes and 45 seconds. In this time the bird ate 426 fruits before resting.

The pigeon may have been feeding for some time before I first saw it, and it would be interesting to speculate how many fruits the bird consumed during the day. It may, of course, have switched to or from other food.

GEOFF MOON



Photograph by Geoff Moon



# National Twitchathon 2003

The fifth annual National Twitchathon was held during the month of October. Teams were allowed any chosen 24-hour period to record as many different species as they could, anywhere in New Zealand.

After last year's paltry effort it was pleasing to see an increase in participation, with 10 teams submitting scores. The theme was once again one of enjoying a day out – trying to outwit the birds, and several teams put in quite a deal of effort. Once again, as last year, the winning team was led by Ralph Powlesland, involved a major bit of logistical planning (see the full account on pg11), and included a pelagic trip with Oceanwings. Ralph's team managed to smash their own record, which stood at 89, to finish with 98 species. Considering what they *did not* record – notably Fluttering Shearwater, Australasian Gannet, Grey Duck, Royal Spoonbill, neither of the crakes and Lesser Knot – one can see that 100 species in a day is wholly possible.

Prior to this year, only teams that had done pelagic trips had ever scored more than 72, but this year there were four teams at 74 or more without the use of Oceanwings. The total number of species recorded was a new high of 138 – thanks to visits by various teams to Tiritiri Matangi and Kapiti, Pureora and Boundary Stream, Miranda and the Kaipara, and two pelagic trips off Kaikoura.

The totals displayed below vary slightly from those submitted in some cases, due entirely to the rejection of species deemed to be unacceptable – the normal sticking point is the distinction between 'wild', 'feral' and 'free-flying' (and Gwenda trying to squeeze domestic duck in alongside hybrid stilt!). Luckily the changes have not made any difference to the winning of the competition.

The lack of support for the 2002 Twitchathon meant that I felt unable to approach anyone for real prizes this year, but maybe next year we can go back to having something more than the dubious pleasure of the "Mantelpiece Monstrosity" for participants to strive for.

My thanks to all those involved in the competition. It is well worth noting that this is certainly one event where taking part is much more important than winning – doubtless the winning team had a good time, but the comments received from those who scored only half as many as the Sharptales are all full of remarks about how much FUN it was. I guess those who tried it this year are already planning for next time, and so should the rest of you.

It has been suggested that October might not be the very best time to conduct the Twitchathon, with January as the suggested alternative – what do you all think?

## CONSOLIDATED RESULTS

<u>Team name</u>	<u>Recorder</u>	<u>Score</u>
Plains Wanderers	Nick Allen	83
Top of the Hill	Gwenda Pulham	84
The Flying Feathered Fiat	Paul Cuming	56
The Mutton birders	Tim Barnard	74
Sharptales	Ralph Powlesland	98
Touring Wrybills	Sav Saville	86
Barbara's Birders	Kathleen Todd	42
Geriatric Go-getters	Gill Eller	80
Track 18 NI Brown Kiwi	Jane Hart	68
South Auckland Un-named	Wendy Goad	45

SAV SAVILLE

# Five minute bird counts

I am collating information about New Zealand five minute bird counts. If you know of any studies using five minute bird counts I would like to hear from you. I have a questionnaire asking where and why counts were undertaken, the dates and other summary information. I do not want the data, just information about it.

The summary information will be put into a database (called a metadata) that will be made publicly available by June 2004.

## What is a five minute bird count?

In 1975, David Dawson and Peter Bull wrote a paper in *Notornis* investigating ways of counting birds in forest, and recommended a standard way of doing five minute bird counts. Since then many New Zealand researchers have followed their method. Observers go to predetermined stations where they stand still for five minutes and count every bird they see and hear.

Much of the information contained in these datasets is untapped because of difficulties in finding out who did what and where and it is hoped this project will solve that problem. Some of the older material is also at risk of being lost as the original researchers retire or move on and as computer or hard copy data files become impossible to access. It is this older material that is particularly valuable and at least two studies, one in Northland and one in Pureora have compared old (1979 and 1980) counts with counts fifteen to twenty years later to learn about changes in bird populations.

If you have any information, or can suggest people who might, please contact

**Lynette Hartley** - Ph (03) 353 7414, Email [lhartley@doc.govt.nz](mailto:lhartley@doc.govt.nz)  
Southern Regional Science Centre, Department of Conservation  
P. O. Box 13049, Christchurch

# Bird Slide Library

The Library still lives! Yes, it is still only \$5 for members in New Zealand to use this library for talks. I've used it constantly in my quest for new members, and the slides are always a delight for groups such as gardening groups, Lions, Junior Naturalists. You have over 1000 slides to choose from, illustrating many different aspects of bird life.

Recently, we have received some slides from well-known bird artist Noel Cusa – the slides are magnificent. We also have some of Sir Charles Fleming's slides, and have images from Geoff Moon, Don Hadden, Brian Chudleigh and many other members.

The Library is lending only, not for reproducing slides.  
Please contact me if you wish to use the library.

**PAUL CUMING**  
Slides, Ornithological Society of New Zealand  
Private Bag MBE 381, Hamilton, New Zealand  
Tel: 00 64 7 8298215. Fax: 00 64 7 8298615

## OSNZ Sales Items

Remember those OSNZ stickers you put on your cars? The ones that had a stylised Takahe or Pied Stilt on them? They still are in stock! For the small sum of \$3 each, you can purchase them for the inside or outside of your vehicles – these come in handy when landowners request some form of evidence OSNZ exists!

**PAUL CUMING – OSNZ Sales**  
Ornithological Society of New Zealand  
Private Bag MBE 381, Hamilton, New Zealand  
Tel: 00 64 7 8298215 Fax: 00 64 7 8298615

### Other sales items – some low in stock, hurry!

*Bird watching in Hawke's Bay* - Wayne Twydale \$6  
*The Black Robin Story* – Butler & Merton - \$18 – last 2 copies  
*Chatham Islands Ornithology* - \$15  
*Wader Studies in New Zealand* - \$20  
*A Flying Start – a potted history of the OSNZ* - \$10  
*Checklist of New Zealand Birds, 1990 ed.* - \$5 – limited numbers  
*50 Year Index to Notornis 1939-1989* - \$10  
*Pocket checklists or tick lists – fantastic for visitors and twitchers* - \$1  
*OSNZ Badges – short supply* - \$5.50

Postage calculated at point of sending.





The Sharptales (Stephen Sharp, Ralph & Mary Powlesland, Hugh Robertson) started their 24-hour twitchathon on Kapiti Island in the early afternoon of 29th October when Kokako were heard whilst we were near one of the busy Stitchbird feeders. We soon ticked off all the common forest birds of the island, and a bonus was a Long-tailed Cuckoo that flew overhead calling. We had 28 species by the time Ross Leger (Kapiti Marine Charters) had returned us to the mainland, having missed out on Pipit, Fluttering Shearwater and Gannet, all quite possible.

The crippler of the day was a Rook that flew northwards high above Paraparaumu Beach. A search of the Waikanae Estuary and associated ponds added another 22 species, including Dabchick and Brown Teal, but Royal Spoonbills were away from their usual roost, due to the presence of numerous whitebaiters enjoying a balmy sunny afternoon. Short stops at Otaki Oxidation Ponds and Lake Papaitonga picked up Black-fronted Dotterel, Eastern Rosella and Shining Cuckoo, but nothing new was found at Lake Horowhenua, except that we finally got a Chaffinch as our 61st species.

The tide was well out at the Manawatu Estuary, and again Royal Spoonbill eluded us, as did Lesser Knot, both of which we had regarded as certainties. There were no Gannets or flutterers off the beach, so we headed to Wanganui having run out of time to detour to see Sulphur-crested Cockatoo in the Turakina Valley. Myna and Coot were obligingly obvious, and so we headed up the river to Kemp's Pole to try for Nankeen Night Heron that Ralph and Mary had seen emerging from their roost at 7.35pm three evenings earlier – we got there at 7.30pm to find they had all gone, but saw California Quail and numerous Peafowl on the way, and heard Fernbird in scrub by the road. A single Morepork ended day one on 74 species.

We returned to Wellington and boarded the 1.30 am ferry, but gave away the chance to spotlight Fluttering Shearwater and Gannets in the Sounds for an attempt to get some sleep. Our rental car was waiting, and we headed south to catch an Oceanwings cruise at Kaikoura at 6.30

am. Most spectacular were the vast flocks of Hutton's Shearwaters (50,000+?) close to shore that swirled around like a swarm of angry bees. We picked up 15 new species, including Grey-backed Storm Petrel, a couple of recently-arrived Short-tailed Shearwaters, and a Reef Heron skulking on a rock stack made 91 species, breaking last years' record tally, but we dipped out on White-chinned Petrel (seen the previous day) and Antarctic Fulmars (common until a week before).

Thanks to Ralph and Mary's intimate knowledge of Kowai Bush we soon found Rifleman, Brown Creeper and South Island Robin, to take the tally to 96, with three hours to go. Despite a constant watch as we headed north, no Gannets were seen, but at the Ure River bridge, Hugh saw a probable Falcon flash past in the opposite direction, but by the time Ralph woke up, and the car was turned around (Ralph wasn't driving!), it had gone.

Cool, overcast conditions at Jack Taylor's farm meant that the various singing male Cirl Buntings he had lined up for us were quiet, but just as we were about to give up we spotted a handsome male Cirl Bunting flying, and then later perched on a log on the ground – 97.

With time running out, the inlet of Lake Grassmere had to provide the last 3 species to make 100, but only 4 Red-necked Stints obliged to make 98. A probable Curlew Sandpiper (seen a fortnight earlier by Brian Bell) flew off before we could make a definite identification, so we were happy to end our tally at 98 species, rather than the cricketer's nightmare of 99. If we had got to 99, we would have tried to invoke a Feral Rooster seen and heard crowing at Lake Papaitonga as our 100th species – if so we were going to call ourselves "100 By Rook and By Chook"!

The magical 100 is certainly possible in New Zealand, with a modicum of good luck, better tide times, and with some good crane spots lined up in advance – perhaps next year!

HUGH ROBERTSON

## Valedictory Correspondence from Maida Barlow

As I reflect on what OSNZ has meant to me over the years, I make a plea to you to value each other.

For me, *Notornis* and all its satellite publications have been essential reading, but it's the ornithological friendships that bolstered my interest, and spurred me on to wider reading and to developing my field skills.

My contact with the Society began at its inception, first through my mother, Olga Sansom, also Lance Richdale and Professor Marples, although I did not become a member until 1954. I'm fortunate in having Ross McKenzie, Dick Sibson, Archie Blackburn and Bob Falla among early mentors, and Barrie Heather as a contemporary estuary-bird nut for all those years until his too early death.

From 1957, when I returned to Southland after some years in the North Island, these friendships were maintained through letter writing. Others grew among a younger generation – Paul Sagar, Ray Pierce, John Dowding – some through first meeting at the occasional OSNZ annual meeting or field study course, others through links with specific studies. On rare occasions these northern friends visited the south: a pleasure-packed week when Ross and Hetty MacKenzie stayed with us while looking at sites and access routes for Ross's 'In Search of Birds' book; Bob Falla's more frequent visits during his years with the National Film Unit. But these highlights, like my own bird study, had to be slotted in between family and work responsibilities – an experience familiar, I'm sure, to most amateur ornithologists.

All these people had – and have, in the case of those few still alive and kicking – developed the art of letter writing to a high level. Email undoubtedly has benefits of immediacy and easy legibility, but the very personal contact of the hand-written letter or postcard, however brief, is lost. Another advantage of 'real' letter writing is that its slower rate of composition encourages one to think, not only about what is to be said, but how to say it, qualify it, debate one's own statements if you

like. 'Burlbling on' – possibly what I'm doing now – should be avoided.

Yet much that impinges on bird study is not clear-cut, not understood, nor easily explained. It's these indeterminate areas that feed the urge to find out, to satisfy one's hunting instinct, and to fill some gap in knowledge, however small. The act of putting them to paper is in itself an aid to clarifying one's thoughts. Discussion with like-minded friends and colleagues can further the process, and help one to determine one's best course of action.

Geographical isolation has its downside, but also its advantages. For me, some of these were my ornithological friendships, maintained largely through letter writing. Just try it!

I've given up my membership of OSNZ because of age and absence from New Zealand. But disillusion with the Society and bird study? Never!

With good wishes to all, and wishing power to your pens.

MAIDA BARLOW

## 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 Biz Bell, PO Box 14-492, Wellington, or  
wmil@clear.net.nz



## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

### Northland

In August, David Wright talked about his landscaping plan for the settling ponds at North Port and there was some discussion about creating wader and waterbird habitat with native plantings around the ponds.

In September, Tony Beauchamp gave a very informative talk about his four-year study of New Zealand Pipits around the Whangarei Area. He described them as the most 'uncommon common' species and detailed their decline in the North Island since early last century, probably due to changes in farming/forestry practices and vegetation coverage. The aims of his study were to determine whether pipits are consistently present at the same locations throughout the year despite changes in conspicuousness, and what impact changes in bare ground was having on location use. Tony recorded presence at the sites and count routes monthly, and calls and activity during the breeding season. The chicks are very mobile and move from their natal site with their parents. Flocks occur where there is bare ground. Productivity was low for a passerine at less than one chick per pair per annum.

At the October meeting we were treated to two speakers. Richard Parrish gave a presentation that he prepared for an international Wildlife Management Conference in Christchurch in December. The talk was on the *Placostylus* snail research he has been involved with in Northland over the last few years. There was a link made from snails to the OSNZ in that the snails are a prey item of birds, and Richard managed to mention birds in his talk three times! The research looked at recruitment, site fidelity and movement following translocation. We learnt that some snails will travel 80 metres to return home.

Richard's talk was followed by a wonderful slide show by Jean Hawken from her recent trip to Africa. We saw some lovely shots taken of Marabou Storks, Goliath Herons, Violet-breasted Rollers, starlings, crocodiles, antelopes and baboons in many poses looking almost human.

David Crockett returned from a recent trip to the Tuku Valley on the Chathams and gave us an update on what is happening with the Taiko programme this season. They started running the lights earlier this year and by the end of September had caught several birds including one bird banded in 1982 and another banded in 1987. They tracked two birds returning to the existing burrow area and discovered a new burrow area – an extremely exciting find.

We also heard a report from a small group of members who assisted the Department of Conservation with seabird surveys on Lady Alice Island. They were surveying particularly for Common Diving Petrels and Fluttering Shearwaters, and heard a few diving petrels calling around the southwestern side of the island and many Fluttering Shearwaters calling along the southern coast of the island. Further surveys are needed to determine if the Fluttering Shearwaters are breeding on the island.

KATRINA HANSEN

### Auckland

Shorebirds and waders are thriving in the Auckland region with regular reports of sightings from our members. At Taporā in August, a Banded Dotterel with a three-egg nest was found at Big Sand Island, and in September two Black-fronted Dotterels were seen at Whatipu. A captive-reared NZ dotterel released at Stillwater in 1998 is finally breeding there, with a two-egg nest found in September.

Fairy Terns have been seen 'prospecting' at Pakiri on the east coast, and a flock with mostly immature and only a few breeding birds – 12 in all – was recorded at the Mangawhai colony in early October. Fairy Terns are also nesting at the protected area at South Head on the west coast, where DoC has set up a predator trap line, fencing and signs around nest sites. Two rangers will take it in turns to monitor the birds there every day during the breeding season.

The Australasian Little Grebe seen on the eastern side of Kaipara Harbour hasn't been seen there so far this spring.

Wildlife photographer Robin Bush treated our September meeting to an excellent showing of more than 200 of his slides from around New Zealand. His 'Photographer's Tour' began with insights from his visits as a DoC volunteer to Pitt and South East Island in the Chathams where he helped with a Shore Plover survey and the Chatham Island Petrel programme. There were some excellent photographs of these birds, as well as Pitt Island Shags, storm petrels, Sooty Shearwaters and Broad-billed Prions. He also showed us stunning images of the islands' wave platforms, stormy weather, and sunsets.

Robin's southern tour included images of the harlequin gecko from Stewart Island; sealions, skinks and weevils from Fiordland; Black Stilts and Black-fronted Terns at Tekapo; and a variety of pelagic birds at Kaikoura. In the north, he showed us Pycroft's Petrels from Cuvier Island, Fairy Terns nesting at South Head, and images from Whatipu, near the Manukau Harbour. His tour finished with a diversion to the Farne Islands off the north-east coast of England with some great photos of Atlantic Puffins and Guillemots.

The restoration work at Motuora Island in the Hauraki Gulf (just east of the Mahurangi Peninsula) was the subject of a talk by Helen Lindsay in October. Since 1994 volunteers have already planted about a third of the island with 250,000 native trees, and have established a thriving native tree nursery. The island was covered in kikuyu grass and pine trees, and these are being replaced and removed as the planting programme continues.

The island is now used as a nursery area for the Kiwi Recovery Programme. Young Brown Kiwi from Northland are incubated and reared at Auckland Zoo and transferred to the island for protection until they are about 18 months old. Once they reach a mature size and weight, they are returned to their mainland habitats. Volunteers are always welcome to join restoration trips to Motuora Island on the last Sunday of each month.

The Muriwai Beach patrols, led by John Simmons, found a variety of pelagic birds in September and October, including Buller's Shearwater, Fairy Prion, Antarctic Prion, a Shy Mollymawk and an immature Grey-headed Mollymawk, the latter identified by Dr Brian Gill from Auckland Museum.

SUZI PHILLIPS

### South Auckland

While there was no report from South Auckland in the last issue there has been much happening in this region. At the May meeting we had a hands-on session of moult scoring on a collection of smelly birds. We had each been collecting either road kills or beach wrecks gathered over several months so that there were a range of birds in different stages of moult. These ranged from tiny Goldfinches up to a Bittern that had been found dead on the side of the road. Handling a Bittern was in itself an experience and it is easy to see how the bill can be used to capture frogs and fish. It is certainly an imposing weapon.

Tony Habraken demonstrated the moult scoring system for the different stage of feather growth and we all had turns at providing our assessment to gain some confidence. It would appear that this hands-on session has been successful as the beach patrol team are now completing moult cards and contributing extra data to the Society's scheme.

In June Ian Southey gave us a well-illustrated talk and slide show on his work with Brown Teal in the South Island and his investigations from overseas museums. The size and plumage differences between the North Island and South Island birds are something that certainly gives reason to ponder.

It transpired that our speaker for August did not actually get the message that he was the speaker and that explained his absence on the evening. However we managed to improvise and filled in an evening on general bird discussion and also managed to identify a pathetic bundle of feathers and bones that the beach patrollers had brought to the meeting. With the combined expertise in the meeting everybody identified this, except the RR, much to the pleasure of the other members.

Barbara Hughes was our speaker in September, demonstrating why she is such a good biology teacher by holding our attention as she described the process that she had gone through to seek approval for the transfer of Tomtits to Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. She also demonstrated the benefits of her Royal Society Scholarship by showing off her newfound power point presentation skills. I am sure her students will benefit when she returns to real life next year.

At our October meeting Gabriele Schmidt-Adam gave us an interesting insight into the sex life of pohutukawa trees. While it might be argued that this has very little to do with ornithology, it is always good to have a better understanding of the natural processes around us as we go about our observations. It did have some relevance to ornithology, as there was a section on the differences between trees that used birds as pollinators.

Meanwhile in the field the beach patrollers have continued on their monthly patrols, and while the pickings have been relatively slim they are still getting sufficient returns to make it worth their efforts.

The winter censuses were held in the Firth of Thames and the Manukau Harbours during June and while the census in the Firth was on a relatively fine day, Tony Habraken was back to his best efforts for the Manukau census with a cold miserable day.

During September we held our annual weekend trip to Tiri Tiri Matangi to give some reality check to what the forest in New Zealand was like in the really good old days.

Now that the waders have returned it is time to comb through the large flocks checking for the rarities but also checking for the bands and flags that are now more apparent. One of David Melville's 2002 Chinese birds was observed at Miranda recently along with a Lesser Knot that had been banded in Korea. Each of those sightings adds an extra piece to the puzzle and it also provides an interesting extra challenge while working through a large flock to try to see flags.

DAVID LAWRIE





## Waikato/BOP/Volcanic Plateau

The elusive Cattle Egrets finally poked their gleaming white heads above the lush Waikato paddocks at Hora Hora, with 64 seen on a brusque yet fine day in August.

However, the Ngaroto flock remains paltry at six. The birds seen after the Cattle Egret count were more interesting – a White Heron and two Bitterns at the Whangamarino Swamp!

John Gumbley, an observer on a subantarctic cruise ship, provided us with unique angles on this part of the globe at our evening meeting in August. Slides of penguins and people looking at them were fantastic. He has also spent a fair amount of time on the ice continent, and provided an insight into scientific research down the dry valleys during the early years – toughing it out alright!

The September speaker was Leigh Marshall, Fauna Conservation Officer for DoC Waikato. We were introduced to the delights of PowerPoint, with Leigh updating us on the swath of incredible talent studying the various animals in peril and their saviours in the department throughout the Waikato.

October's speaker was Alison Campbell, who took us into the highly ritualised and occasionally aggressive world of the Black Swan. Her Masters, undertaken in 1983, was a trip back to a time where students had no computers, so undertook, at great cost of time, to manual statistics-crunching. No mean feat, and while this talk could have been as dry as a D category prion on a beach patrol, this was not the case! The talk almost had shades of Konrad Lorenz, with Alison 'training' her family of cygnets in her back yard in Massey, garnering vital stats as she went.

Our annual attempt to knock the socks off the rival teams at the Twitchathon only succeeded in pulling them down a few millimetres. We equalled our last year's score of 56 species. The Feathered Flying Fiat covered over 500 kilometres of real estate, though, and the highlights were all in Pureora Forest – Kokako, Yellow-crowned Parakeet and Fernbirds were seen, plus great congregations of carolling Kaka. Liz, our Chinese team member, learnt not to take a step off the track in the forest – we found her - eventually. Ask her about her thoughts on bush survival in New Zealand.

Dabchicks seem to be continuing their increase, Tony Roxborough reporting them from his farm pond in early October, while we saw 14 on Lake Moananui, Tokoroa, during the 24-hour Bird Race, 18th October. Hunters also regularly see them on the Kōpuatai Peat Dome. Tim Barnard also observed a nest at Lake Rotomahana the same month.

Marsh Crakes in the Waikato continue to be heard, David Lawrie tracking one down at Whangamarino in October. He was on a Bittern survey at the time, estimating that about nine were present from his particular post.

Tim Barnard saw a Black-fronted Dotterel at Lake Rotomahana the same day as the Dabchick nest, and they are reported to be breeding there according to the staff at Waimangu Thermal Reserve.

Up to 13 Kaka were still in Morrinsville until recently. Their dialect was discussed, because we wondered where they were coming from. One opinion was that the birds around Tauranga to Waihi and the offshore islands are highly mobile and functionally one population. No stable population is known anywhere in the Kaimai Ranges. Another 'feeling' on the birds was that they were mixed in age and sex and had probably come from a population (potentially highly mobile birds from Whangamata to Waihi Beach and offshore islands) to feed up for a bit, where winter/spring forage is preferable, before returning to their usual range. (Thanks to Alan Jones for this thought).

Other bird sightings around our vast region include a White Heron at Kaituna Cut in September. Also three Cattle Egrets (two still there at time of writing) and a Reef Heron at Maketu Estuary. Little Waihi on 14th September revealed an Arctic Tern in breeding plumage. The Volkner Rocks were checked for Grey Ternlets in November, but they were absent. A pair of Banded Dotterels was seen at Sulphur Point in October.

Many members have been enjoying the movie, *Travelling Birds*, and we recommend all birdwatchers see it.

**PAUL CUMING**

Sixteen OSNZ members attended a BoP/VP regional meeting in Rotorua in August. The purpose of the meeting was to explore ways of developing the Society and its activities locally. The region has been under the able administrative wing of Waikato for some time now but this is not seen as an ideal option in the longer term. Therefore, to get things moving, four sub-regional organisers were recruited to organise meetings within their areas over the next year.

The sub-regional coordinators are Patrick Buxton (Taupo), Keith Owen (Rotorua), Marilyn Young (Tauranga and Mt Maunganui) and Lyle Millar (Whakatane/Opotiki). Tim Barnard (Rotorua) was appointed as a Regional Coordinator to keep things on track and provide 'encouragement' where needed.

The meeting was followed by a visit to the Wingspan Bird of Prey Trust at their new premises. Debbie Stewart explained the vision behind the Trust's work and treated us to the fantastic spectacle of an New Zealand Falcon in action - although the local Fantails appeared less than impressed.

The first of the BoP/Volcanic Plateau events, led by Paddy Latham, was held at Maketu in September as part of the Birds A Plenty Festival. A mix of society members and local people enjoyed the sights of the estuary and were treated to some great views of the near resident Cattle Egrets, three of them in breeding plumage. Following the bay-wide wader counts in November, an event will be held in Taupo in February and Rotorua in May.

**TIM BARNARD**

## Taranaki

In addition to the usual members gathered together for our August meeting, we were joined by Ralph Powlesland who was in town for the start of the New Zealand Pigeon and Tui study in Taranaki. The study will take about three years and is to determine the seasonal habitat food and nesting patterns in the urban and rural environment. Information from the public of birds feeding on exotic plants and nesting sites will be welcomed. As those of us resident in and around New Plymouth know, Tui and Pigeons are relatively common, and often more visible around town than out in the backblocks. David Medway reported seeing at least 21 Tui in a Formosan Cherry in a residential street.

The August field trip was a two-part affair, kicking off with a tour around some North Taranaki coastal towns and farms in rather indifferent weather. The highlight was a Falcon seen landing in a tree, causing the hasty departure of two New Zealand Pigeons.

Late in the month saw us at the Grey-faced Petrel colony at Rapanui. Despite, or because of, having in excess of two million candlepower of light, only one Grey-faced Petrel was seen. Beach patrols have yielded few birds, the major find being a Caspian Tern in pristine condition at the Waiongana river mouth.

Amongst the September correspondence was a request from South Taranaki Forest and Bird for submissions on a proposal to create a mainland island at Lake Rotokare (a 220ha reserve east of Eltham). A copy of the annual report of the North Island Blue Duck Trust was also circulated. Genesis power has joined with the trust, and will contribute more than \$1.5 million over the next 15 years. This will benefit the Mt Taranaki re-establishment plan by at least \$225,000, assisting greatly in the maintenance and setting up of more traplines.

DoC will proceed with the banding of New Zealand Dotterels at Pungaereere. Local OSNZ members, who have had these birds under observation for some time, will then monitor the birds.

Several members migrated across the Tasman during winter. Two of the returnees, Bill and Rosemary Messenger, reported on their tour from Perth to Darwin via Port Hedland, Broome and points in-between and the many and varied species of birds seen along the way.

There have been a number of sightings of Falcon around the province and a pair of Kaka has been seen in and around Pukekura Park.

Our September monthly outing took us into the eastern Taranaki hill country for a ramble through the bush. All the usual birds were seen or heard, with Robin, as always, a real treat.

Being a small but erudite group, members report on the highlights of the previous month and with September being a rather wet and soggy affair most of us spent our time staring morosely out our kitchen or lounge windows. Nonetheless, there is still a wealth of knowledge to be gained and much to see whilst engaged in this pastime. One member in particular who lives in rural Taranaki has found that his house is the dividing line between two groups of Magpies. Despite the fact that they are introduced they are still worth watching and the continuing reports of their behaviour have created much interest and amusement amongst fellow members. To protect his reputation full details of their activities cannot be repeated.

Helen Elder and Marie Mitchell, who are also recent returnees from across the Tasman gave a brief talk about their time in Lamington National Park where all the species of birds they wanted to see particularly Albert's Lyrebird, Satin & Regent Bowerbirds and the Whipbird displayed themselves at the appropriate time. A three-day houseboat excursion on the Awoonga Dam produced a long list of species. This was followed up by the showing of an excellent video about the bowerbird courtship ritual with its trials and tribulations.

It was third time lucky for the monthly expedition up the Mangorei track. A fine sunny day was a change for the better, having been thwarted by inclement weather on two previous attempts. Tui were absent, but three Riflemen were seen.

Carole Medway once again won the unofficial competition to hear/see the first Shining Cuckoo in Taranaki.

**PETER FRYER**

## Wanganui

Bill Greenwood saw an unusual heron on Turakina Beach on 25 August. From a distance what appeared to be a white bird was seen, but on closer approach it became a pair of herons. One was a perfectly normal White-faced Heron, the other differing in having a perfectly white head and neck and some white smudges on its body. When

approached even closer the pair took off and, in flight, the unusual one was seen to have two conspicuous white stripes on each wing running from front to back.

Still at Turakina Beach, a pair of black phase Variable Oystercatchers, once regulars but not seen for nine months, have made a welcome reappearance and were seen in both September and October. Wrybills were once a regular sight up to 2000 but since then there have been only two sightings, one in October 2002 and the latest in October this year when a solitary one seen was feeding on the edge of the lagoon. Another rare sighting in October was a bittern flying over an extensive swampy area at the north of the lagoon.

The migratory waders have returned to the region. Ian Sutherland saw two Lesser Knots and seven Bar-tailed Godwits on the Wanganui river estuary on 26 October and Bill Greenwood saw six knots and a solitary godwit on Turakina lagoon on 29 October.

The Little Shag colony at Virginia Lake has had another successful season with the 14 nests (all in the one willow tree) having fully fledged young, commonly two per nest. The colony has expanded to an adjacent willow tree, which in October had four nests, each with a Little Shag sitting. One of the two pairs of Mute Swans has nested, fortunately a few metres from the lake edge.

On 28 September, right in the city, in the Bastia Hill subdivision, Ian and Jocelyn Bell had a Shining Cuckoo singing in a tree in their garden and a female Pheasant on their lawn.

Finally, still in the city, on 3 November Ian Sutherland watched an Arctic Skua harassing a Caspian Tern over the Wanganui River opposite the hospital.

**BILL GREENWOOD**

## Manawatu

The period has seen two of the most informative talks at our three-monthly regional meetings. First, a great first-hand account of the handling of oiled seabirds following the "Prestige" disaster off the Spanish coast, by Dr Richard Norman, which also included insight into the New Zealand Oil-spill Response network, and some of Richard's work at Massey University rehabilitating birds. Second, Brent Stephenson talking on his forthcoming travels with the Ridgeway Round-the-world voyage to highlight the plight of Albatrosses and other birds killed as by-catch, particularly by pirate long-line commercial fisheries.

On the birding front there was a Chestnut Teal at the Manawatu Estuary in August and the Estuary has had a storming start to spring, with a Sanderling, three or four Asiatic Whimbrels, a male Shore Plover and three juvenile Great Knots together, all within a month from mid-October to mid-November.

**SAV SAVILLE**

## Wellington

In an engaging address on 1st September Ralph Powlesland summarised some experiences of a Department of Conservation study of the use of 1080 poison for the control of small animals in the Whirinaki Valley (western Ureweras) and the impact of this poison on the loss of native birds, especially New Zealand Pigeon and Kaka.

1080 poison continues to be an effective tool for reducing populations of possums and rodents. However its use is known to cause bird losses because dead native birds have often been found after poisoning operations. Ralph outlined the approach and the results of a study that examined this issue. Two comparable sites near Minginui were selected, one where poisoning was undertaken in autumn/winter, the other was a control. Bird populations were monitored for two breeding seasons before poisoning and continued for two breeding seasons after poisoning using the radio tagging of selected New Zealand Pigeon and Kaka (20 individuals of each species) in each of the treated and non-treated areas. Possum, rodent and mustelid populations were also monitored over this period through trapping.

The main conclusion is that no significant differences have been found in bird losses between the two areas and Ralph emphasised that no Kaka or Pigeon died through accidental 1080 poisoning. Kaka survival rates in the non-poisoned site were low and there was little nesting during the study period. Twenty-one Kaka nest failures were recorded but poisoning did not cause these. Kaka mortality is high due to cavity nesting and predation of birds by rodents. Only one pigeon died during the study period and that was not due to poisoning. Twenty-six non-tagged dead pigeons were also found. Of those that died, the average life span was only 1.5 years. By way of contrast, Ralph explained that Chatham Island Pigeons have an average life span of 22.4 years! Pigeons are vulnerable to predation in the autumn, mainly from stoats and cats, and especially when drinking water at ground level. Regrettably, the Whirinaki Pigeon population appears to be declining.

Don Merton addressed a very interested audience on 6th October on some of the highlights of his 40 years of experience in the conservation of rare native birds. Don's first professional role was in 1960 when he worked on the conservation of the North Island Saddleback when the only population was located on Hen Island. The use of transistorised tape recorders, mist nets, and boats for bird transport were all new tech-

niques for bird conservation at the time. Saddlebacks are now more widespread on islands, an encouraging outcome of Don's early conservation work.

In his entertaining way Don pointed out that there were frequent debates amongst professional wildlife biologists 30 to 40 years ago as to why rare native birds were confined to a few small localities, mostly islands, some people arguing that animal predation was the cause, others suggesting other reasons. The final proof that animal predation was responsible was an invasion of Big South Cape Island by rats. Species threatened were the South Island Saddleback, Stead's Bush Wren, Stewart Island Snipe, as well as the short-tailed bat, and various invertebrates.

After several months of agitation, it was agreed in former Wildlife Service that urgent action was needed if these species were to survive at all. Despite the atrocious sea conditions in which Don's team worked at the Big South Cape Island three snipe were rescued and 15 Saddlebacks. This experience led to new quarantine plans to protect offshore islands and this New Zealand model is now followed in several other parts of the world. Although the three snipe later died (and the subspecies is now extinct) because not enough was known about their food requirements, a great deal has since been learned about feeding native birds in captivity. For example, the use of mealworms is now common.

Stead's Bush Wren was also a live food specialist. They survived for six or seven years on Kaimohu Island, but became extinct in 1972. The greater short-tailed bat, once seen in their thousands on Big South Cape Island are also now believed to be extinct as have various insects that were found there. Despite these failures, Don considers that much has been learned that has helped with later conservation work. Examples are on Campbell, Chatham and Pitt Islands following the removal of sheep, cats and rats. There is now some optimism regarding the survival of the Taiko on Chatham Island, and the Black Robin conservation story is well known but didn't suffer from a retelling by Don. The outlook for the Chatham Island Snipe and the Shore Plover (on South East Island) now appears to be good.

Several members completed the October counts of the quarterly survey of birds in the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary over the weekend 11-12th October. This was the second year of October counts in the 2002 to 2005 resurvey that will be completed in July 2005. Colin Miskelly, who has arranged the survey, comments that six species showed significant increases in conspicuousness compared to 1995-97 baseline. In decreasing order these are: Tui, Kingfisher, Eastern Rosella, Dunnock, Fantail and Grey Warbler. House Sparrow and Silvereye showed a significant decrease in conspicuousness. Colin explains that Tui continue to show a massive increase in numbers compared with 1995-97 as last year (726% in 2002, 631% in 2003, compared with 1995-97 data). It is now an increasingly common suburban bird in much of Wellington Region. Counts for seven reintroduced species showed increases in six species since last year (Bellbird, Kaka, Robin, Saddleback, Tomtit and Whitehead). The most marked increases were for Kaka, Robin and Whitehead.

Monthly surveys of birds in the Pauatahanui Inlet, arranged by Allan Munroe, have continued and we are now into the second year of monitoring in the 2002-04 survey period. In the early October count there were surprisingly few birds on the tidal mudflats but several species were observed on flooded farmland, including Royal Spoonbills, Canada Geese, Pied Stilts and Spur-winged Plovers.

The on-going survey of birds on Somes Island/Matiu, co-ordinated by Rod Orange, has continued during October and included counts made from a boat, mainly shags that nest on the island's cliffs. Spotted Shags are the dominant nesting species followed by Little Shags. During the recent survey five species of shags were observed on the island at the same time - Spotted, Little, Little Black, Black and Pied Shags.

Under the enthusiastic guidance of Peter Reese several members have again helped with bird capture and banding work at the Wellington Zoo. Yellowhammers, Silvereyes and Greenfinches continue to be caught frequently at the zoo during the winter. Peter explains that, in general, the number of recaptured birds of all species has been lower this year than he would have expected. Two recent recaptures were particularly interesting, a Blackbird was banded as a nestling in late 2000 has been recaptured regularly and it is now our longest recaptured blackbird at 1,050 days. Another interesting recapture was a Silvereye that was banded in August 2002 and has been recaptured twice in different parts of Wellington City.

**IAN ARMITAGE**

## Nelson

Seven Cattle Egrets have been in the Waimea Inlet area for several weeks, each evening returning to a particular group of trees near the estuary. There is great hope that they will decide to breed here.

One particular Tui has been behaving like a Welcome Swallow, swooping, hovering and manoeuvring to snatch insects caught in spiders' webs above a veranda.

**GILLIAN POLLOCK**





## Canterbury

With 'spring' the migratory waders have returned to the area, with good numbers of Red-necked Stints, Turnstones, and Pacific Golden Plovers at the Greenpark Sands mudflats of Lake Ellesmere. A few more unusual species were scattered amongst the above species – a possible Great Knot, a probable Western Sandpiper, a seemingly annual crippled Black-tailed Godwit, and a few Sharp-tailed and Pectoral Sandpipers.

In the same area Wrybills were present in greater numbers due to weeks long flooding of the major rivers. Black Stilts passed through coastal Canterbury and Lake Ellesmere in September, with probably half a dozen individual birds involved (colour banding aids this estimate). This is not a usual feature of recent years, and must either mean individuals of the re-introduction scheme went for a short excursion, or they were returning from wintering further north.

At Lake Wainono Alan Collins found a Hudsonian Godwit in late October, and the Royal Spoonbills are again nesting on a number of the maimais in the lake. At the Ashley Estuary only two Eastern Curlews are present this year, and are sharing the estuary with two Whimbrels.

Back from an extended sojourn in Singapore, and now working as a senior ranger for Christchurch City Council, in August Andrew Crossland explained why Christchurch was such a gem of a city for wildlife – it is a well-wooded and watered area on the edge of a relatively barren plain. The City Council have been proactive in restoring, safe-guarding, and creating habitat suitable for birds, witnessed by the large increase in numbers of birds such as New Zealand Scaup, Australasian Shovelers, Paradise Shelduck, and breeding Pied Stilts.

Last year Frances Schmechel spent a number of months working for the Black Stilt recovery programme based in Twizel. In September she explained the work of the programme to the indoor meeting. This involved weeks of scanning of riverbeds by telescope to locate breeding pairs, then the swapping of eggs for dummies before removing the dummy eggs to trigger relaying, feeding released young birds, and patiently persuading the young to weigh themselves.

In early November Paul Scofield, Vertebrates Curator at Canterbury Museum led an indoor trip to the newly upgraded work suite and storage areas out the back of the museum. The new facilities are a great improvement of the previous cramped facilities and non-environmentally controlled stores. A small number of Canterbury members have been checking the identities of a vast collection of foreign birds received in exchange for moa bones many years ago. In the process they have been discovering such species as the extinct Hawaii O'o and Paradise Parrot, as well as sorting out a frustrating array of hummingbirds. The opportunity was taken to compare various species or sub-species of kiwi, and also to look at one of the Stephens Island Wrens that the museum has in its collection.

The day out sampling Banks Peninsula bush reserves in August was a rather wet and windy affair, but nonetheless produced birds such as Rifleman and Tomtits in the placed where we expected them, so perhaps the birds minded the weather a little less than us humans did. I must remember to pack crampons next time – rain and clay on the tracks made going interesting in places.

In a recurring theme from last year the proposed river censuses of the Ashley and Hurunui Rivers were cancelled due to unusually high river levels in one instance, and a lack of members prepared to do the necessary work in the other.

NICK ALLEN

## Southland

Our Birding Weekend at Borland Lodge was a great success with nine people taking part in glorious weather. Highlight of the weekend was the discovery of a Black-fronted Tern colony in the Waiau River near Wairaki and the appearance along the river of a pair of Caspian Terns, which could have been nesting in the same vicinity. We were disappointed not to see or hear either of the cuckoo species and there was also no sign of the Yellowheads, which have been seen recently in the same area. Falcons were heard or glimpsed on a few occasions, and parakeets heard once during the weekend.

It has been a successful month for rarer species in Southland with a Wrybill spotted at Oreti Beach, a Cirl Bunting reported by Ralph Powlesland in South Invercargill, and an immature Little Tern seen on Ulva Island (Stewart Island) by Richard Schofield.

We are heading to Lake Monowai soon to knock off about seven atlas squares using a hired jetboat. These squares have not been visited for the current atlas and will hopefully produce some interesting results.

We have permission to use an old farmhouse at the head of Awarua Bay this summer to help with the annual wader count. In past years we have had to wade for more than an hour through very cold water on returning from counting the birds – not the most pleasant of tasks especially on a higher tide. This base allows us to set up the telescopes amongst the flax cover and watch the birds at our leisure. We can also gain access to Waituna Lagoon along the coast.

PHIL RHODES

## What's on



### Northland

Evening meetings, second Thursday of the month, ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954. West coast beach patrols ph. Prue Cozens (09) 437 7760. East coast beach patrols ph. Pauline Smith (09) 435 3060. Whangarei Harbour wader count ph. Tony Beauchamp (09) 436 2661. North Kaipara wader count ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

### Auckland

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at 7.45pm in the Kohia Teachers' Centre in the grounds of Auckland College of Education, 74 Epsom Avenue, Mt. Eden.

### South Auckland

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

### Waikato

Evening meetings, every third Wednesday, 7.30pm, DoC, London Street, Hamilton. Ph. Paul Cuming (07) 829 8215. Beach patrols ph. Hugh Clifford (07) 855 3751. Hamilton Lake census ph. Barry Friend (07) 843 6729. Forest Lake census ph. Brian Challinor (07) 855 2561. Cambridge Lake census ph. Hugh Clifford or Paul Cuming. Bird sightings and field trips (monthly) ph. Paul Cuming. Atlas sheets ph. Stella Rowe (07) 843 5199.

### Taranaki

Evening meetings – first Tuesday of the month (exc Jan) 7.30pm, ph. Barry Hartley (06) 757 8644. Field trips on first conducive weekend thereafter.

### Wanganui

Evening meetings – fourth Tuesday of the month, Davis Lecture Theatre, Wanganui Regional Museum (Watt Street).

### Manawatu

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

### Wellington

Evening meetings - first Monday of the month, DoC Science and Research Centre, ph. Stuart Nicholson (04) 934 5940. Matiu/Somes Island surveys, ph. Rod Orange (04) 473 1912. Pauatahanui Inlet surveys, ph. Allan Munro (04) 566 4834. Mist-netting and passerine banding at The Zoo, various Saturdays, ph. Peter Reese (04) 387 7387. Informal field trips (can include atlassing), ph. Stuart Nicholson (04) 934 5940. Beach patrols, ph. Jean Luke (04) 904 1704.

### Nelson

Evening meetings – usually first Monday of the month, 7.15pm upstairs in Café Affair, Trafalgar Street, Nelson. Ph. David Melville (03) 543 3628 or Rob Schuckard (03) 576 5371.

### Marlborough

Lake Grassmere count – third Saturday of month. Ph Brian Bell (03) 570 2230

### Canterbury

Evening meetings last Monday of the month, Spreydon Bowling Club, Domain Terrace, Christchurch. Monthly field trips – dates vary. Ph. Nick Allen (03) 312 7183.

### Otago

Evening meetings Otago Art Society building, cnr Albany & Great King Streets. Ph. Louise Foord (03) 467 5041.

### Southland

Evening meetings (in conjunction with Field Club) held second Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. Please phone numbers below for venue and further information, field trip usually on Saturday following. Beach Patrols on a casual basis, phone Phil Rhodes (03) 213-1228 or Lloyd Esler (03) 213-0404.



