



# Southern Bird

No. 20 December 2004. • ISSN 1175-1916

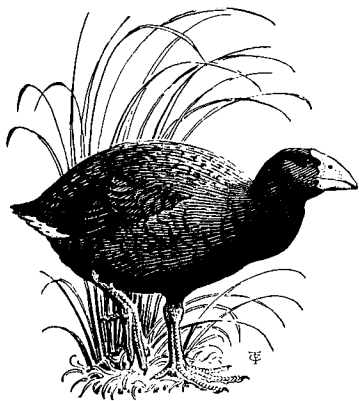


Audio Archives

Antarctica - tourism & effects

2001 Fantail decline in Nelson





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## Quotation

*There was an Old Man with a beard,  
Who said, "It is just as I feared! –  
Two Owls and a Hen,  
Four Larks and a Wren,  
Have all built their nests in my beard!"*

From *The Book of Nonsense*  
by Edward Lear (1812-88)

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## Cover Photo

**Front cover:** Kea in flight by Ann Sherlock

**Back cover:** A bird in the hand. This well-marked immature bird was found well off-course in Christchurch. Photo by Alexa Sanders

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

Articles for inclusion in *Southern Bird* are welcome in any form, though electronic is preferred. Material should be related to birds, birdwatchers, or ornithologists in the New Zealand and Pacific region, and can include news on birds, members, activities and bird study, literature/product reviews, letters to the editor, birdwatching sites, identification. Illustrations are especially welcome, though they must be sharp.

## Tūi to go 'on air'

Tūi are set to get airtime in more ways than one, as researchers prepare to radio-track birds to find out where they nest and how successful their nests are.

Hamilton has low numbers of Tūi compared with many other cities (Tūi numbers in Christchurch are even lower; they are only rarely seen). Hamilton Landcare Research staff are conducting research on how many Tūi visit central Waikato properties, and what plants they feed on. Their overall aim is to design planting and predator control strategies to increase the numbers of Tūi present in and around the city. Their work should also help other urban centres to increase Tūi numbers.

Landcare Research scientist John Innes says public response to a request for Tūi sightings has yielded much valuable information. Radio tracking will help fill some knowledge gaps.

We have reports of sightings around central Waikato spanning three years. From these we learned that during the breeding season from November to February, Tūi occur only in native forests, or within one kilometre of them. Tūi first appear in semi-urban to urban areas from about May, when nesting finishes, and feed readily on introduced plants in parks and gardens over winter and spring; possibly because very few native plants flower in winter. These results mirror results from an Auckland study in the 1980s, so would seem to represent a clear pattern.

Armed with this information, our next step is to use radio tracking to ascertain exactly where the urban birds go back to nest. This is a key step to deciding where best to target control of rats, possums and other predators that are affecting Tūi populations.

We know from our sightings that Tūi breeding success is poor, as the birds in Hamilton are generally only seen in ones and twos, whereas these foraging trips should be by family groups.

John Innes and his team had caught and banded 11 Tūi by September by the time-consuming process of luring them down from trees with recorded song. They intend to target more Tūi in the same way, attach small radio transmitters and then release and track the birds. The transmitters will reveal the exact locations of the birds as they move around urban and rural areas and choose their nesting sites.

The transmitters will be attached to the main tail feathers, and will stay on for about five months until the birds moult. The first four weeks should provide information about where these birds are nesting. Monitoring after that will tell us the fate of the nests.

The knowledge gained through this project will be applicable to many other urban areas as well. Tūi seem to visit urban areas only in winter and early spring all over New Zealand. If there are reasonably large forest areas in or adjacent to towns, the towns will have Tūi all year round. However, factors such as predation and lack of food supply are likely to be generally the same everywhere, with small local variations.

### For more information on this project, please contact:

John Innes, Landcare Research, Hamilton  
(07) 858 3700  
InnesJ@LandcareResearch.co.nz

Neil Fitzgerald, Landcare Research, Hamilton  
(07) 858 3700  
FitzgeraldN@LandcareResearch.co.nz

Diana Leufkens, Landcare Research, Lincoln  
(03) 325 6700 (025) 277 6183  
LeufkensD@LandcareResearch.co.nz

LANDCARE RESEARCH

## Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc),  
P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, New Zealand. • Email: [osnz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:osnz@xtra.co.nz) • Website: [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz).  
Edited by Nick Allen, 65 Allin Drive, Waikuku, North Canterbury 8254. • Tel (03) 312 7183, • Email [nick\\_allen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nick_allen@xtra.co.nz).  
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# Natural History Audio Archives

'Why archive natural sounds?' is a frequent question asked of me. For most collectors and archivists the simple answer is because very few others are inclined. Indeed, in some parts of the world, or government institutions, archiving of natural sounds is actively discouraged, leaving the field open to interested parties to take up the slack.

In the New Zealand region an archive was built up by the New Zealand Wildlife Service through the efforts of John Kendrick, now retired. This was the most comprehensive set of field recordings available, initially taped for departmental research use, but later made available to *bona fide* researchers everywhere. The collection featured mostly the calls of birds, but also included sounds of the Tuatara, bluebottle, mammals, and even geysers and mud pools.

With the merging of the Wildlife Service and sections of other government departments into what is now the Department of Conservation, casualties inevitably occurred. The breaking up of the Wellington-based audio and film archive was one. At about this time the award-winning National Film Unit, based in the Hutt Valley at Avalon, was collecting both film and audio of the natural history of New Zealand and its near neighbours under the direction of Grant Foster and others. These, in turn, utilised the skill of a retired banker from Hawaii and his wife, William and Jean Ward, to augment material held by the unit.

The National Film Unit was eventually sold to TVNZ to become the well-known Avalon Studios, with much of the archive formerly held there being widely dispersed, making it almost impossible to use this material for research purposes.

Much of the film stock eventually found a home at the then TVNZ Natural History Unit in Dunedin, since sold to Foxtel, an American production house. All of the Wards' recordings from New Zealand and its islands and around the Pacific, including Norfolk Island, have been archived at the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, so at least that material is still available for research. Copies of all the New Zealand and Norfolk Island recordings had been donated to the then National Museum of New Zealand, now Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, as was a set of the recordings made in 1956/57 by the late Carl Weismann and his wife, of Singing Dogs fame. The status of these recordings is not certain at this time, and unfortunately they are not generally available for research.

Before 1959, Kenneth and Jean Bigwood, working with the National Publicity Studios, had been actively recording bird sounds in the field as part of their brief, and published some of these on vinyl, making history in the process. The original recordings now reside in Te Papa.

Some years ago Radio New Zealand, via its National Radio network and short-wave

service, began playing a birdcall of the week with considerable success, these clips being drawn in the main from the early Wildlife Service recordings by John Kendrick. Most of these are still available on both cassette and CD formats.

A number of university-based researchers, both staff and undergraduates, have made a considerable number of recordings associated with the species under study at that time. While much of this audio has been lost, a considerable amount has been saved by some of the more forward-looking institutions involved.

One large lifetime collection on seabirds from the University of Canterbury has recently been archived with the British Library in London. Other large collections are held by at least two other New Zealand-based universities, one in particular holding a considerable amount of Pacific Island material.

Natural History New Zealand, based in Dunedin, holds a huge library of both visual and audio clips from many rare and out-of-the-way places in New Zealand, the Pacific and Antarctica. Applications to view/access this material are on a case-by-case basis.

In late 1969, I made an experimental recording outdoors in windy conditions in a northern suburb of Christchurch (Holly Road, St. Albans) of a House Sparrow, using a dish microphone and a reel-to-reel recorder. This was so successful that it was kept and has been published many times in a variety of formats.

Encouraged by the result of this experiment, the support of individuals such as John Kendrick and William Ward and the availability of reasonable equipment, field recording was taken up as a spare time activity. Some of the early work was published on a series of 45 rpm microgroove gramophone records, which drew the attention of a very wide section of the public.

What was to grow into the Les McPherson Natural History Sound Archive started in the 1960s and has continued through gifts from deceased estates and exchanging birdsong with other sound recordists. It includes a late 19th century German recording of an Indian Shama, thought to be the oldest surviving birdsong recording, and a 1950s recording of the Greenmeadows Brown Kiwi in Napier – one of the first ever done in New Zealand, which was a latecomer to such recordings.

As the collection grew, and more researchers became aware of the material held in their midst, both requests and donations to my archive grew. A major turning point was when the Weismanns heard about the archive from a colleague in Dunedin, who put them in touch. As a result, copies of all the Weismann New Zealand recordings and some of the relevant Australian cuts were donated to the archive.

Cornell University came to the party later, and helped to fill some gaps, mostly of waders that reach the end of their migration here in New Zealand and are usually fairly quiet here. A number of Australian sound recordists,

notably those who contributed to the Australian Sound Guide series, also exchanged a number of recordings. The Academy of Sciences in Puschino, near Moscow, contributed a complete set of the wader recordings they held by way of an exchange deal for a set of the then available New Zealand recordings.

At a much later date I was able to travel in the Pacific and do limited amounts of sound recording at various locations. Niue Island was one place I visited, and I was able to bring back a number of sound clips from there. A two-day stopover was made on Western Samoa both on the way to and home from Niue, and so some recordings were made there as well.

While working in Samoa, I was advised about a party on a yacht that had done some sound work earlier in the year. Following this lead eventually led me to Tim Lovegrove and his *Derwent* Expedition recordings. These recordings were not only from Western Samoa, but Tonga, Fiji, and a real coup, New Caledonia. Therefore, these islands have some excellent recordings now archived here.

Three sets of sound recordings from the Cook Islands were also donated for preservation purposes. A huge collection of material from most of French Polynesia arrived here, courtesy of the French military, when the nuclear weapon tests ended in the region. Included in this collection are some of the rarest pigeons, doves and warblers in the world.

The Pitcairn expedition also made a number of recordings and archived some of those here, again including some rare and endangered species, among them the first known audio of a new species of petrel.

Copies of the recordings by the late Gerry Clarke of *Totorore* fame are also held here, as are a series of recordings from Christmas Island, Kiribati and Palau. The only known recordings from Rotuma in the north of Fiji, and from Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands, are archived here as well. One of the Bougainville recordings is of an as yet undescribed flycatcher.

The collection will continue to grow. One aim is to obtain recordings of all the species that have been recorded in New Zealand. There are still at least a dozen species to locate and record.

In New Zealand and Oceania as a whole, very few government or conservation organisations have been able to assemble an archive such as this, let alone maintain it on a permanent basis. Most of the material held here is on tape. However, work on archiving to the more permanent medium of CD has started thanks to an environmental sector grant from the Community Trust for the purchase of the specialised electronic equipment and computer required to perform this work.

LES MCPHERSON

With thanks to *The St Albans Neighbourhood News* for use of part of an article published in March 2004

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2005 Annual General Meeting will be held in Hamilton on Saturday 4 June 2005.

ELIZABETH BELL

Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington

## 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](mailto:wmil@clear.net.nz)



## Call for Nominations for council

Several positions on Council will be vacant at the conclusion of the 2005 Annual General Meeting. The position of Vice-President will be vacant, and vacancies will be created by the retirement in accordance with the Constitution of Mark Nee as Treasurer, and of David Melville and David Pye as Council members. In addition, Kerry-Jayne Wilson and Ros Batcheler have tendered their resignations as Council members to be effective at that time.

David Melville and David Pye, as retiring Council members, are eligible for re-election to Council and have indicated their availability. However, Mark Nee does not wish to stand for another term.

**NOMINATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS ARE THEREFORE CALLED FOR:**

**VICE PRESIDENT  
TREASURER  
COUNCIL MEMBERS (two required)**

Nominations will close with the Secretary on **28 February 2005**. Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society.

## Conference and AGM

University of Waikato, Hamilton  
Queen's Birthday Weekend 2005

A registration form is included with this edition of *Southern Bird*. The main difference is that this year atlassing will be replaced by two challenging and interesting field trips:

- Friday 3rd June** Council and RR meetings, registration
- Saturday 4th June** Registration, Waikato Bird Rally, dinner and AGM
- Sunday 5th June** Scientific Day, dinner and 'prize giving'
- Monday 6th June** Half day field trip to 'Warrneheip', Maungatautari

*We look forward to seeing you there.*

**WAIKATO CONFERENCE COMMITTEE**

## New Members

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

Frank Antram (Wellington), Brent Barrett (Manawatu), Emma Buchanan (Otago), Tim Buma (Canterbury), Mrs C E Dawe (Wellington), David Dawson (U.K.), Amelia Geary (Wellington), Roz Heinz (Otago), Nyle James (Marlborough), J Knight (Auckland), Manukau Lewis (Volcanic Plateau), Max McRae (South Auckland), Ornithological Society of Japan (Japan), Mrs W Parsons (Marlborough), Will Parsons (Marlborough), Kate Richardson (Auckland), Stacey Rod (Canterbury), Ann Sherlock (Canterbury), Vanessa Smith (Canterbury), Kath Varcoe (Canterbury), Donna Worthy (Taranaki).

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

Sandra Anderson, Elizabeth Bell, Judy Bendall, Peter Bull, Mia Colberts, William Cook, Michael Criglington, Jack Davidson, Michael Fitzgerald, Barry Friend, John Geale, Mike Graham, Jill Hamel, Michael Hermansson, Peter Howden, Ted Kirk, Rob Lawrence, Bruce MacKereth, Mary McEwen, Philip Moors, Stuart Nicholson, Greg Nye, Mrs J Peel, David Pye, Mary Powlesland, Elizabeth Revell, Mr L. S. Rickard, Ross Silcock, Martin Snowball, Ian Southey, Mr D M Stracy, Ian Sutherland, Michael Taylor, Kenneth Thomson, Kerry Walshe, Alan Wright, Mr DJ Wright.

## OSNZ Annual Conference Scientific Day 2005

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand is holding its Annual Conference at the University of Waikato, Hamilton over Queen's Birthday Weekend 2005. As part of the overall programme the Sunday (5th of June) is reserved for presentations relating to the study of birds in New Zealand.

The day is open to students, academics and members of the Society who wish to present a talk or a poster. Each speaker will be allowed twenty minutes including questions. The preferred method of presentation is PowerPoint but slide and overhead projectors will be available.

If necessary, preference will also be given to those speakers who have registered for the full conference.

People interested in presenting a talk or a poster (please indicate which) are invited to send a title, an abstract of not more than 250 words, and return contact details, (preferably email) to:

**The Organisers**

Scientific Day, 2005

OSNZ Waikato, P.O. Box 12476

Chartwell, Hamilton

Or: philbattley@quicksilver.net.nz by 30th March 2005.

Presentations will be grouped into themed sessions. If there are particular topics you would like to see addressed, please let us know. We may also solicit talks where appropriate, so be warned. Dobbing potential speakers in is considered acceptable behaviour.

Hope to see you all there!

**DAI MORGAN AND PHIL BATTLE**

## Call for Papers and Expressions of interest



Third Biennial  
Australasian  
Ornithological  
Conference

Australasian  
Shorebird  
Conference  
2005



The Third Biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) will be held at Blenheim, New Zealand on 6th to 10th December 2005. This conference provides a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region. It is a joint Ornithological Society of New Zealand and Birds Australia initiative to promote ornithology.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group will hold their two-day conference immediately following the AOC 2005 at Nelson, from 11th to 13th December. The ASC is the conference of the Australasian Wader Study Group and is focused on shorebird research and conservation.

Both conferences will have post-conference field excursions. Following the AOC these include boat trips off Kaikoura to see seabirds, Marlborough Sounds launch trips to see inshore seabirds and rare forest species surviving on predator-free islands, and the opportunity to visit a Department of Conservation Mainland Island project. After the ASC a two-day trip to Farewell Spit will be run. People attending both conferences will be in a position to join AOC field trips before the ASC conference.

### AN INVITATION

You are invited to express your interest in attending these conferences, and presenting a paper by visiting [www.osnz.org.nz/conference](http://www.osnz.org.nz/conference) or by writing to the conference co-ordinator:

Sue Bell, 35 Selmes Rd, RD 3, Blenheim, New Zealand.

Email: [wmilblenheim@clear.net.nz](mailto:wmilblenheim@clear.net.nz)

For further information see the brochure included with this publication or visit [www.osnz.org.nz/conference](http://www.osnz.org.nz/conference)



## Temporary decline of Fantails in the Nelson region

During the spring of 2001 the Department of Conservation in Nelson received many calls from the public asking about the absence of Fantails. The number of calls quickly escalated and the virtual absence of this species, usually common in most habitats throughout the region, became a local phenomenon. A lack of any monitoring of such common species made it difficult to quantify the event, nevertheless it is important to document it and the following selected observations must suffice.

- In November 2001 B. Crutchley from Redwoods Valley, near Nelson, reported that he was unable to find a single Fantail on his 1.5 ha property where six pairs were usually present.
- In January 2002 Adrian Riegen compiled species lists from 25 10,000 m grid squares in Golden Bay, Nelson and Marlborough, all of which included native and/or exotic forest habitat. Fantails were recorded from only six of these squares. In addition, a week spent in the Nelson square (2530 5990) enabled him to record 36 species, but not one Fantail.
- Staff from the Department of Conservation recorded a lack of Fantails on islands in the Marlborough Sounds. No Fantails were seen on Maud Island during a two-day visit in December 2001, and none were seen during three days on Blumine Island in February 2002. Also in February 2002, only one was seen during five days on Motuara Island, and one family group during two days on Long Island. Fantails remained common on Stephens Island, although several birds were, unusually, found dead in stock troughs. All of these islands, with the exception of Blumine, are free of mammalian predators.
- At Nelson Lakes National Park, five-minute bird counts conducted quarterly in the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project area and at a non-treatment site at the head of Lake Rotoiti provide figures confirming this picture. During May 2001 birds were counted at only one of these sites and Fantail numbers were between 10% and 15% of the average May count of the previous four years. It is likely that this decline continued through the winter, as the February 2002 count recorded Fantail numbers from both study sites as between 5% and 8% of the average February count during any of the previous four years. A recovery in numbers was apparent from February 2003 (D. Butler, unpubl. data).
- At Grovetown (near Blenheim) J. Allen reported that he would normally have c.30 birds present on his property over summer, but had not seen one by late March 2002.
- Ingrid Hutzler and I spent ten days in the Waihopai catchment (Marlborough) during November 2001 and recorded solitary Fantails on two occasions only.

Similar unsolicited observations were provided by the public from locations such as Dovedale, Lud Valley, Cable Bay, Mahau Sound, Waikawa and Spring Creek. By mid-April 2002 birds were being seen or heard again and public calls about the lack of Fantails ceased. Numbers appeared to recover further during the summer of 2002/03. An observation on this recovery comes from M. and B. Chipchase at Waikawa (Picton), who recorded Fantails on four days during March 2002 and a year later recorded them on 22 days over the same period.

The cause of this phenomenon remains unknown. In areas close to or within beech forest, the dramatic increase in rat numbers during the summer of 2001/02, following record levels of beech seeding, is likely to have increased predation rates and reduced nesting success. The decline also occurred at a time when strains of salmonella were known to be affecting House Sparrow and some other wild passerines (M. Alley pers. comm.). Apart from the birds on Stephens Island no sick or dead Fantails were found.

I believe that the most likely cause of such a widespread and dramatic decline was the cold winter of 2001 during which Powlesland (2002: Communal roosting by South Island fantails (*Rhipidura fuliginosa fuliginosa*). *Notornis* 49: 125-126) recorded the unusual communal roosting of Fantails in Wellington. In 1932 Edgar Stead (*The life histories of New Zealand birds*. London, The Search Publishing Co. Ltd.) recorded a similar decline of Fantails in Canterbury during 1918, which he attributed to the exceptionally cold winter of that year. The dramatic loss of Yellowheads from the Eglinton Valley in 1996 was similarly attributed to an unusually severe winter by Peter Dिल्s (1999). Recovery of a Mohua (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) population, following predator control in the Eglinton Valley, Fiordland, New Zealand. *Notornis* 46: 323-332).

I appreciate help from David Butler in providing the quantitative data from his work at Nelson Lakes National Park and to Peter Bull for drawing my attention to the observations of Edgar Stead.

PETER GAZE

## SOLOMON ISLANDS ADVENTURE BIRDING

AUGUST 2005 FOR 2 WEEKS

During a long period of isolation this archipelago has evolved a highly endemic avifauna of many colourful and interesting birds. From the remote villages in the mountains where undescribed birds are still being found, to palm fringed beaches make this a fascinating area to visit.

We have created an excellent itinerary that will provide us the opportunity to see as many of the endemic species as possible in the amount of time we have allowed.

If we ever tire of looking up at the birds we can always swap our binoculars for goggles and observe the equally delightful fish in the warm waters surrounding the islands.

Tony Wilson and Carol Harker

MANU TOURS

106 Ocean Beach Rd, Tairua 2853, New Zealand

Email: [ManuTours@nzbirding.co.nz](mailto:ManuTours@nzbirding.co.nz)

Phone/fax 64 7 864 7475, Cellular: 025 281 3809

[www.nzbirding.co.nz](http://www.nzbirding.co.nz)

## How Harriers can cope with the wind when crossing the sea

Although the Australasian Harrier is known to fly above the sea, even making quite long flights across Cook Strait and to offshore islands, it may not always be seen making these journeys nor showing how it can cope with the risks faced when crossing the sea. Harriers are regular visitors to Somes Island/Matiu, within Wellington Harbour, flying to and from the nearby Hutt Valley or Eastbourne hill country.

When visiting the island one July I had the unusual opportunity of observing how one Harrier coped with severe wind when it was blown away from the island. The weather was fine at the time, but very strong northerly winds (>60 km/hr) were blowing. A Harrier was present on Somes Island/Matiu for most of the morning and was making its familiar soaring flight above the land looking for food, but it tended to fly mostly near the coastline where winds may have been less than over the upper parts of the island.

During a particularly strong blast of wind when I, and the Harrier, were near the southern end of the island, the turbulence not only quickly blew the bird offshore, but it also forced it to fly very close to sea level for at least 400 m. I was able to track its movements through binoculars during this event. Black-backed Gulls and Spotted Shags caught in this wind-blast were also struggling.

The Harrier appeared to fly with difficulty and it may, in fact, have briefly touched the waves during this period. It was certainly exposed to wind-blown sea spray. When the wind turbulence eased the Harrier commenced a rapid spiral ascent (with scarcely a wing beat as it ascended) to 200 or 300 m and then allowed the wind to blow it south-east, gaining more height as it flew.

Within three or four minutes the Harrier was near Ward Island (Makaro) and I lost sight of it as it approached the coastline about four kilometres away. This swift wind-assisted journey to Eastbourne would have taken no more than five minutes.

IAN ARMITAGE



# Norfolk Island Survey

The Norfolk Island Flora & Fauna Society has extended an invitation to our members to visit Norfolk Island for a week in the spring of 2005. The island's long-established environmental association would welcome your help to survey the birds of the island group, last surveyed in 1978.

In 1978 members of the (then) Royal Australian Ornithologists Union held their annual Congress and Field Outing over a nine-day period in Norfolk Island. With the help of local ornithologists they surveyed the bird populations of Norfolk Island, and offshore the uninhabited Phillip and Nepean Islands. The Australian National Parks & Wildlife Service Special Publication [8] *A Review of Norfolk Island Birds: Past and Present* (R. Schodde, P. Fullagar, and N. Hermes) presented the findings of the 1978 survey, along with general information about the island group, its prehistory and the birds inhabiting, migrating and visiting there. Birds Australia (previously RAOU) members have also been invited to the island for the 2005 bird survey.

Workshops are planned, and speakers with hands-on expertise in island species will lead discussions about the island's species, those that are extinct, the reasons for extinction, and the ongoing efforts to prevent more losses.

This event is being supported by the Norfolk Island Government, the Norfolk Island National Park, the Norfolk Island Administration and Norfolk Jet Express, the island's airline.

Special packages have been negotiated for our members, travelling to assist with the Survey. Packages include return airfares, airport

transfers, seven nights' accommodation (at a choice of accommodation properties), a hire car and a half-day familiarisation tour, all for under \$A\$1,500 per person (airport taxes and levies are not included).

The dates to set aside are from 27 November to 4 December 2005.

**Please contact Margaret Christian, President of the NI F&F Society, if you wish to be advised of further details of the Survey as they come to hand.**

**P.O. Box 999 Norfolk Island 2899**

**Phone/fax 0011 6723 22800**

**E-mail birdsurvey@norfolk.nf**

**Norfolk Jet will handle all travel arrangements.**

**Information and bookings for the special packages should be directed to Norfolk Jet Holidays**

**Phone: +61 7 3221 3381**

**Fax: +61 7 3221 7899**

**Email: res@norfolkjet.com.au**

**Address: GPO Box 1973, Brisbane, Qld, 4001**

**All inquiries please quote 'Birdwatchers Packages'**

Visit the Norfolk Island Government Tourist Bureau website [www.norfolkisland.com.au](http://www.norfolkisland.com.au) for more information about the island, and to request an information package.

## OSNZ Sales Table

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

Checklist - SPECIAL PRICE \$5

Chathams Issue - \$10

Index to *Notornis* 1939-1989 - \$10

Wader Studies - \$20

*Birds of Hawke's Bay* - \$10

*A Flying Start* - SPECIAL PRICE \$5

Badges - *Notornis* design - SOLD OUT

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

Ticklist - \$1

Atlas microfiche - those with Atlases but not microfiche may like to consider getting one for completeness sake! \$5

Currently, the *Beach Patrollers' Guide to Stormcast Seabirds* is out of stock, but if enough people want a copy, a reprint will be done.

**Send orders to:**

Paul Cuming, OSNZ Sales, 2/7 Robins Road, Judea, Tauranga

Tel. (07) 571 5125, fax (07) 571 5126, email [birdo@post.com](mailto:birdo@post.com)

## New Zealand Kingfisher Killing Song Thrush

One December in the mid 1980s I witnessed a New Zealand Kingfisher swoop on a Song Thrush that was busy extracting a worm. The Kingfisher dropped from a height of about 10 metres and hit the Thrush on the head. The Thrush fluttered a bit then lay still. I picked the bird up (it was dead) and saw a hole in the top of its skull where the Kingfisher had hit.

This happened during the Kingfisher's breeding season, and so the act probably had a territorial/aggressive cause.

MICK SIBLEY

## News from the OSNZ Library

The OSNZ library collection (housed at Auckland Museum) is strong in bird serials from around the world, with a relatively small collection of bird books. It is complemented by the Auckland Museum library's own collection which has a very large holding of bird books, including old and rare items, and a few ornithological serials. Together these make perhaps the biggest ornithological library in New Zealand, with more than 1,100 titles.

As well as technical ornithological serials like *Auk*, *Condor*, *Emu* and *Ibis*, some of the more popular serials currently received by the OSNZ are: *Bird Observer* (Australia), *Birding in South Africa*, *British Birds*, *Dutch Birding*, *Living Bird* (USA), *Scottish Birds* and *Western Birds* (USA).

The ornithological material is available from the comfortable reading room of the Auckland Museum library on the top floor at the back (south) end of the building, with access via the museum's main public entrance. The reading room is open 1-5 pm Monday to Friday (including public holidays). A donation of \$5 is requested at the museum entrance, but is not required of visitors viewing their own collections.

The museum library's electronic catalogue can now be viewed on the museum website ([www.aucklandmuseum.com](http://www.aucklandmuseum.com)). Go to 'Library Services/Library Catalogue'. Most of the bird books (OSNZ collection and museum collection) are listed, but many of the OSNZ serials have yet to be incorporated into the catalogue.

Suggested search strategies for OSNZ members using the catalogue are:

- (1) Enter 'bird' as a keyword for a list of all bird-related items (mainly books) in alphabetical order.
- (2) Under 'subject keyword', press 'look up'. Enter 'bird' or 'ornith' and check the option 'contains' for comprehensive subject lists.
- (3) Using 'advanced search', enter 'bird' or 'ornith' (containing) as a keyword. In the 'type' field (bottom of screen) select 'manuscript' for a list of ornithological archives and manuscripts, including the entry for the OSNZ archive. Selecting 'serial' in the type field returns a list of bird journals held (an incomplete listing at present).

Members have access to the OSNZ collection in the following ways:

- (1) Members are welcome in the reading room during its opening hours. Here a selection of books may be browsed in the bird section, and other ornithological items (in storage) may be requested from library staff.
- (2) Members may join a circulation list for current issues of chosen ornithological journals (contact Kathy Barrow).
- (3) Queries about particular serial articles or books should be sent to Kathy.

Enquiries about the OSNZ library should be directed in writing to Kathy Barrow, c/- Auckland Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland. E-mail enquiries may be sent to the following address: [library@aucklandmuseum.com](mailto:library@aucklandmuseum.com).

BRIAN GILL AND KATHY BARROW





## Get your feet wet for whio

Sadly Blue Ducks (whio) are becoming less abundant. Males are still calling their chilling 'whio' but alas increasingly receive no response from a female. New Zealand's rivers were once full of Blue Ducks.

Blue Duck Recovery Group leader and DoC scientist, Nic Etheridge has witnessed this decline; "Fishing up the Travers Valley in Nelson Lakes National Park, I would be constantly reminded of the demise this species was facing. One lone male on the Travers River would religiously call but each season left him without luck."

There are fewer Blue Ducks than kiwi, and their ongoing decline probably outstrips that of our national symbol. With fragmented, declining populations which have sex ratios that are heavily biased towards males, combined with low breeding success, they face a very real risk of becoming extinct unless the causes for their decline are remedied or reduced.

The species is now limited to the less-modified catchments of the Urewera, East Cape and central areas of the North Island, and along the west coast of the South Island from Nelson to Fiordland. The remaining populations are increasingly becoming fragmented and isolated as their range decreases. It is estimated that about 640 pairs remain in the North Island while less than 700 pairs remain in the South Island giving a total population of between 2,000 and 3,000 individuals.

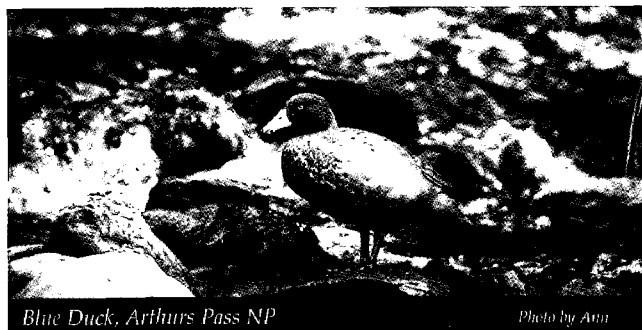
So why are Blue Duck populations declining? One of the major causes is habitat loss and degradation. Forest clearance for agriculture and poor riparian management has resulted in reduced water quality through sedimentation and nutrient run-off, changing in-stream invertebrate habitat in many catchments. In many other rivers, flows are now manipulated for hydro-electric power generation or irrigation, changing the characteristics of the rivers.

Blue Ducks are indeed an indicator of river quality and natural character. They prefer turbulent, bouldery rivers and streams flowing out of heavily forested catchment areas, which allow for high water quality, low sediment loadings and abundant and diverse invertebrate communities. Stable river banks with a good cover of native vegetation are also important features for Blue Ducks.

However, even where high quality river habitat remains, predation by introduced mammalian predators is playing a significant role in the decline of the species. Nic Etheridge believes that stoats and other introduced mammals are perhaps the greatest danger here; "The observation I referred to on the Travers River is typical. The lone male is a symptom of what appears to be the root cause of the decline; the high loss of breeding females. Stoats attack females on the nest, steal the eggs, and perhaps even take young ducklings from the river's edge. Feral cats, domestic dogs and ferrets are also known to attack Blue Ducks. We've also recorded rats and possums at nests, and they're likely to take eggs."

So what is being done to prevent the loss of this unique treasure and how can you help? The Department of Conservation in conjunction with communities and organisations like the Central North Island Blue Duck Conservation Charitable Trust (CNIBDCCT) are working hard to learn more about and protect key populations from unrelenting predators. However the need for, and the importance of, public and community help to protect remaining small Blue Duck populations have never been greater.

The central North Island has been a major centre of Blue Duck research and management for over two decades now. However a recent boost in funding, thanks to the CNIBDCCT, has enabled a



Blue Duck, Arthurs Pass NP

Photo by Anna

more intensive monitoring and recovery programme to begin this year, concentrating on the Whakapapa, Tongariro, Mangatepopo, Whanganui, Okupata, Makatote and Manganui a te Ao Rivers. A large amount of information about Blue Ducks on these rivers has now been collected; however the current population status of Blue Duck is unknown in lesser monitored sites and you can improve this situation.

A one-off full distribution survey of the entire Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy is required to compare the historical data to enable changes in the Blue Duck populations to be determined. The survey of 42 rivers will provide a 'snapshot' of the population of Blue Ducks on these rivers and will ascertain whether the population is increasing, is stable or is declining. It is estimated that the survey will take approximately 70 days to complete – a feat that could not be achieved without volunteer support.

The Tongariro Natural History Society (TNHS) is assisting the Department of Conservation with co-ordination of this ambitious project and is calling for keen outdoors people to do their bit for Blue Ducks this summer by participating in the survey. For the survey to be successful, volunteers are needed to tramp in groups of three to five, alongside or through river sections of varying difficulty and record sightings of Blue Ducks.

Survey co-ordinator, Sarah Gibb from TNHS says participating in the survey will be very rewarding: "Involvement will give volunteers the opportunity to see and learn about Blue Ducks. They'll see some spectacular parts of the central North Island and really make a difference to Blue Duck conservation."

The survey will run from December 2004 to March 2005. All potential volunteers, especially organised groups, that possess a good level of fitness and experience tramping through rivers or over rough terrain should contact Sarah Gibb (phone 07 386 6499) to register their interest.

The general public can also assist the Department of Conservation with the recovery of Blue Duck by reporting all sightings. Essential information needed is the date, location and number seen. Any additional information about their sex, age (juvenile or adult, size of juveniles), or what they were doing during the period they were being observed would also be useful. Sighting cards are available from all Department of Conservation offices or an electronic form can be filled out at [www.blueduck.org.nz](http://www.blueduck.org.nz)

For further information about Blue Ducks, you can access the Department of Conservation web site at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or contact your nearest Department of Conservation office.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

## Users of a Garden Birdbath

As a source of interest and to help the birds, especially during hot weather, I maintain a birdbath in the middle of my small suburban lawn. The bath is a shallow, pottery dish (300 mm in diameter, raised 150 mm off the ground) in which the depth of the water is about 60 mm.

The most frequent users are Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Starlings, in that order, but I have seen six other species at or in the bath: Silvereye, House Sparrow, Myna, Spotted Dove, Tui and Grey Warbler. Most will only use the bath singly, however, Starlings will bathe in twos and threes, and Silvereyes gather on the rim, popping in and out of the water, even when a larger bird is in occupation. When there is competition, Starlings, then Blackbirds are usually the dominant species.

I had not expected either Mynas or House Sparrows to take to the water, but they sometimes do – Sparrows in particular are attracted by the presence of other bathers and give the appearance of 'getting into the act'. Incidentally, House Sparrow numbers have recovered in this area (Orakei, Auckland) after dropping sharply for several years.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

## Robin Attacking Mouse

As part of a capture and banding study to monitor nest success for the Friends of Rotoiti, I have been feeding Robins around our house with mealworms.

At lunchtime (12.15pm) on the 25th March 2003 I was feeding the male Robin that visits our house. I fed him one mealworm at a distance of about 40 cm from me, and threw a second one down. He ignored this and hopped around behind me. I turned to see what he was doing and saw a juvenile mouse crouched about 15 cm from my foot.

The Robin hopped on the mouse, which moved off about 20 cm. The Robin followed the mouse, jumping on its back and pecking it. This happened for about 30 seconds before the mouse finally ran off into a clump of grass.

I have never seen anything like this before and had no idea that Robins could be so aggressive.

KIMBERLEY PARLANE



# What a Wonderful Job!

Text & Photos by Nigel Milnes



Coulman Island Emperor Colony

Antarctica is a continent around which I have been lucky enough to spend a considerable amount of time, most recently as ornithologist on board the icebreaker *Kapitan Khebnikov* operated by Quark Expeditions as a tourist ship. Exceptional weather during the two trips I was on last summer gave the ship the opportunity to visit some little-known sites in and around the Ross Sea as well as more usual haunts.

Departing Lyttelton a couple of days after Christmas, the voyage began by crossing the Southern Ocean, calling briefly into the Auckland Islands and Campbell Island. These are fantastic places for birds in their own right, indeed they hold a far greater variety than the areas further south we were heading for, but in Antarctica it is more than just the birds. True, they're special, but so is everything else.

Around dinner time on 3 January we got our first sighting of the great white continent at Cape Adare. It was overcast, around 0°C, but calm. Landing conditions were good, and with 24-hour daylight we went ashore. The cape rose high above us, black rocky outcrops, white ledges where snow lay on the gentler angles, and the flat areas... pink. Yes, that's right pink! The main food item in the diet of Adelie Penguins is krill, and with half a million of them calling this promontory home, the guano certainly colours the landscape.

A Southern Giant Petrel which just sat on the beach; a few Wilson's Storm Petrels, presumably finding homes in crevices in the steeper sections of the cliffs; and a small population of South Polar Skuas, always looking for a chance to turn the sick and dying of the penguin colony into a late night snack, completed the bird list. What a way to introduce many to the wonders of the Antarctic avifauna!

Usually it is the early summer cruises (November-time) which visit Emperor Penguin colonies. By New Year many birds are leaving and they are often more easily seen on the large chunks of sea ice which are by then breaking up and drifting. However, 'usual' is a word that doesn't always sit well on this type of trip; weather, sea ice and chance encounters provide both challenges and opportunities,



Emperor Penguin Cape Washington

and a good expedition leader, such as we had, is always on the lookout for the latter.

Cape Coulman and Cape Washington were both places we weren't really expecting to visit, but the chance to see Emperor Penguins, on their breeding grounds, and in sunshine, was too good to pass up. The former site still held about 3,000 chicks, along with a scattering of adults, Cape Washington far fewer, and many of those that were left were clearly not going to make it. Looking down from the helicopter on the return to the ship you could see the area of well-trodden sea ice which had recently been occupied by vast numbers of the world's largest penguin. The visit had been impressive enough, but I could imagine what it must have been like a couple of months previously.

Over the next few days we headed further south to enjoy many of the other sights of this region, Mt Erebus, the historic huts left by Scott and Shackleton, the Dry Valleys and some stupendous icebergs. Birds were not

really the main feature of this section of the voyage, but neither were they totally ignored. At Cape Royds we visited the world's most southerly penguin colony (many people were surprised to learn that it is Adelies rather than Emperors that lay claim to this record), Snow Petrels, South Polar Skuas and Wilson's Storm Petrels were seen frequently, and Antarctic Petrels regularly. Snow Petrels are surely the most beautiful of all the tubenoses, pure white except for the black of the eyes, bill and feet. Observing them flying from the ship they stand out clearly over the steely blue water, and then all but vanish over ice floes. Birds don't hide in trees in Antarctica, but it can still sometimes be difficult to get people onto them.

We did have a day of blizzard conditions as we were making our way north. Running ahead of the gale we found ourselves almost out of the Ross Sea with a day to spare. The weather having abated, another unscheduled opportunity presented itself – zodiac cruising around Sabrina Island in the Balleny Islands group. Just inside the Ross Dependency, (and therefore, part of New Zealand), it is also very spectacular. The weather, as on our first landing of the trip, was dull but calm with some of the higher rock outcrops disappearing into the low cloud.

The Balleny Islands are home to large numbers of Adelie Penguins, and New Zealand's only population of Chinstrap Penguins. The latter were outnumbered enormously by the former but we'd soon located five or six, and as our small craft weaved around both ice and islands we were able to relay sightings to ensure all those interested got good views. Looking higher up the cliffs, other species were wheeling around nest sites; Antarctic Fulmars and Cape Petrels on the more exposed ledges, Snow Petrels (the only pure population anywhere of the slightly larger Greater Snow Petrel, *Pagodroma nivea confusa*) preferring slightly more hidden spots, and Wilson's Storm Petrels tucked even further in.

This wasn't the end of the trip of course. We still had a few days of watching albatrosses and other seabirds on the way to Hobart and landings to be made on Macquarie Island. I was even luckier – after changing the passengers in



Balleny Islands



Unger Island, Lyall Island Group

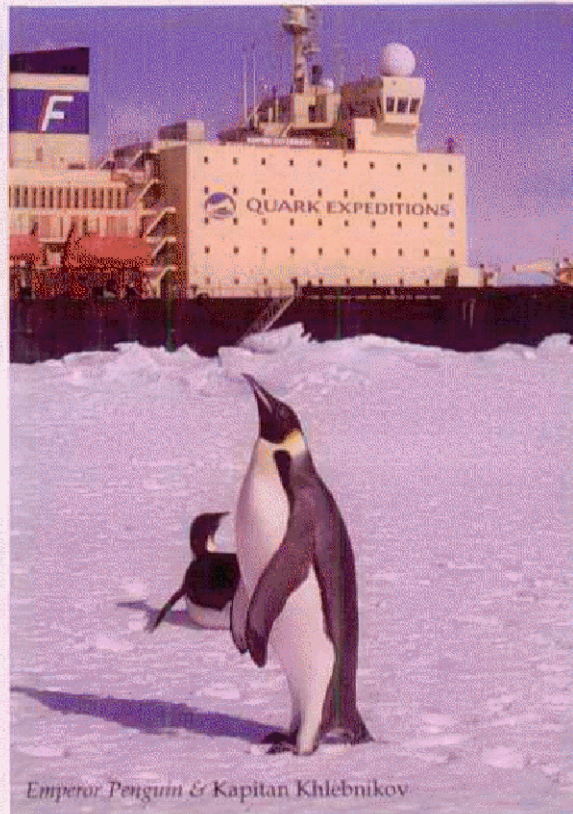
Tasmania, I was soon heading south to do it all again!

Although the broad outline for this voyage was similar to the first, no two trips to this part of the world will ever be completely the same. The weather contrived to be even better than on the first trip (something most of us would have considered nigh on impossible). Emperor Penguins were dispersed far and wide in small groups, most of the sea ice on which they had bred having broken out. Antarctic Petrels seemed much more numerous, and the Adelie Penguin chicks on the various colonies were that much more advanced.

It was coming north again out of the Ross Sea, that fortune presented us with the chance to visit somewhere new to all on board, the very rarely-seen Lyall Islands. A brief reconnaissance located a helicopter landing site just over 1 km

from Unger Island across solid sea ice. Not the largest island in the group, but the one which appeared most interesting, small and conical with a small Adelie Penguin colony on one end. It was by now the first week of February, but there were still 93 chicks present. A brief exploration of the island also found breeding South Polar Skuas and Wilson's Storm Petrels. Two Emperor Penguins came and joined the line of what might have appeared to them lots of larger red penguins stretching from our landing site to the island. Around the ship anchored a few kilometres away were Snow Petrels. These could well have been breeding on what looked to be suitable cliffs on a larger island in the group, Surgeon Island, though exploration of that will have to wait for another time.

*Truly, a wonderful job!*



Emperor Penguin & Kapitan Khlebnikov



## Impacts of Tourist and Scientific visits on Adelie Penguins

*Text & Photos by Dai Morgan*

Little is known about the long-term consequences of human disturbances on Adelie Penguins, despite sharp increases in the number of recreational and scientific visits to Antarctica. University of Waikato Associate Professor, Joe Waas, has started a three-year project to determine whether exposing Adelie penguins to differing levels of tourist and scientific disturbance can have negative impacts on stress hormone levels and reproductive performance.

South Cape Bird on Ross Island was chosen to conduct the study as the Adelie Penguins that nest there are seldom visited by people, ensuring that they were a naïve population (however, this did mean that we had to live in a tent close to the study sites for the duration of the event!). Colonies of different sizes were disturbed at varying rates by simulating tourist visits (i.e. walking around the colony, talking and taking photos) and scientific visits (collecting blood and faecal samples from a couple of birds five times over the breeding season). Observations on selected birds during these disturbances also occurred to see if behavioural patterns were changing as the season wore on and reproductive parameters such as egg and

chick survival, hatching success and rates of nest abandonment were also monitored. Most of the data are still being analysed, so unfortunately firm conclusions on whether our visits really upset them cannot be reached yet.

This was the first time that I had ever been down to the ice, although it is somewhere I have wanted to go for a long time. The event started in October 2003 with the first team going down for eight weeks to setup trial and get things running. I went down in the second team that was there for December and January.

The Cape Bird region of Ross Island offers spectacular views of McMurdo Sound, the Dry Valleys on the other side and Mount Erebus. However, it was the birds that really stole the show (being an ornithologist) and what I spent most of my spare time observing. Although I only got to see Adelie Penguins and South Polar Skuas, these birds were in great numbers and had an enormous amount of character. Some Adelie Penguins would walk up and let you pat them on the head, while most skuas would clip you around the ears if too close to their nests!





## Address Changes

Unfortunately due to having to leave the area, Roger Day has resigned as regional representative of the Waikato region. Laurie Hoverd has agreed to take his place. His address is R.D. 3, Te Awamutu 2400. His telephone number is 07 871 8071 and email [jhoverd@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jhoverd@xtra.co.nz)

The nest records convenor, Russell Thomas, has a new address: P.O. Box 716, Kerikeri, Northland 0470. His email remains the same [rusnles@paradise.net.nz](mailto:rusnles@paradise.net.nz)

## Subscriptions reminder

Subscriptions for the Ornithological Society of New Zealand are due the 1st 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\\_Sharp@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Roger_Sharp@xtra.co.nz)

## NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2005 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 2005 and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Orbell, Margaret. 2004** *Birds of Aotearoa:*

*A Natural and Cultural History.* Reed Publishing Auckland.  
ISBN 0 7900 0909 9 198pp Soft Cover \$39.99

With a gorgeous cover this book is away to a good start. It is a Kokako, wings spread. The book is square, 24 cm x 24 cm; a satisfying size and shape. The design of the interior lives up to the promise of the cover. There are 20 short chapters, each covering a group of birds, 60 species in all. They are all illustrated with good black and white photos or a lively hatched drawing by Piers Hayman. A central section contains excellent coloured photos of each bird.

Each bird is described in one to four paragraphs followed by discussion of Maori perceptions, knowledge and use of the bird. Many of the chapters include Maori songs or sayings. They are all apposite, interesting or charming. Here is an example:

*Ko te kaupapa waka ki te moana hoe ai,  
Ko te kahui atua te rangi rere ai.  
The flock of waka are paddled across the ocean,  
The flock of gods is flying through the air.*

"... the Reverend Wiki Te Paa, in 1912 ... suggested that during these voyages (from Hawaiki) the ancestors were guided and protected by the kuaka (godwits) ..."

New Zealand Pigeons were food; Kaka were pets; Tui were taught to speak; Huia feathers enlivened cloaks; Haast's Eagle lives on in myth; and the Shining Cuckoo reminded people it was planting time. Orbell provides comments from early settlers on delights we will never enjoy, like the song of the Piopio.

The appendices of notes and references are comprehensive, and the scholarship convincing. There is an introduction, a glossary and three indices.

Margaret Orbell's writing is descriptive, clear and pleasant. It leans towards the scientific rather than the literary or imaginative. There is no 'I' in this book – it is a little remote for my taste. I am walking through a museum with first-class displays and impeccable descriptions. The songs and sayings, though a pleasure, are not enough to dispel my sense of distance.

*Birds of Aotearoa* has 200 pages, but there is a lot of white space. This is not a solid tome; in fact it is almost slight.

And who is Margaret Orbell? There is no photograph or a word to tell me. From the web I have found that she was Associate Professor of Maori at Canterbury University and is now a full-time writer – the author of seven books.

If you are interested in birds and Maori culture you will be pleased with this book; prop it up for a week or two and enjoy the cover; delight in the sayings and songs; hope that those hatched drawings become greetings cards or frameable prints; and as a gift for an overseas birder or fully-fledged ornithologist this book is ideal.

SHEELAGH LEARY

**Gaston, Anthony J. 2004** *Seabirds:*

*A Natural History.* T & AD Poyser, London.  
210pp hardback £35.00

As New Zealand is a centre of seabird biodiversity, any book about seabirds or their biology is likely to attract attention. This book is different from many of the more classical scientific tomes and is aimed at the general reader and amateur birdwatcher. It is also ideally suited to the young student venturing seriously into the field of seabirds.

The author takes us systematically through various aspects of seabird biology starting with an introduction to the marine environment and on to how seabirds have adapted to fill various niches. A special chapter is devoted to plumage.

A large chapter discusses distribution and communities. This compares species composition and numbers throughout the world, and New Zealand comes in for considerable comment.

From here we are led into chapters dealing with aspects of living; feeding behaviour, migration and movement, and the final two chapters on birth and death dealing with the theory and practical observation.

The approach has been to summarise the natural history of seabirds as known and to arouse an interest in pursuing studies to answer some of the many questions that are raised. The author has achieved his objective.

The book has much to commend it. It is easy to read and the author's own enthusiasm pervades the text. There are a limited number of photographs which cover most seabird groups (but this isn't a guide book). There are numerous line drawings to illustrate different aspects of seabird biology; these are both effective and attractive.

This is a worthwhile book to have on your shelf, but will perhaps prove a little expensive for some.

BRIAN BELL

**Nguyen Quang, Phach; Vo Quang Yen;**

**Voisin Jean-Francois. 2002** *The White-nest Swiftlet and the Black-nest Swiftlet* A Monograph with special reference to Vietnamese populations. Societe Nouvelle Des Editions Boubee, Paris. ISBN 2-85004-103-3. 297 pp. Soft cover, tables, figures including maps, references.

Owing to the high prices reached for their edible nests, the White-nest and the Black-nest Swiftlets are birds of high economic value for the countries where they live. Continuous overexploitation of their nests led to the breakdown and even to the extinction of many of their populations. Their conservation has been limited by lack of knowledge about their biology.

The first long-term research programme devoted to these birds was launched in 1981 and directed by Dr Nguyen Quang Phach under the auspices of the Oceanographic Institute of Nha Trang, Vietnam. This book presents the first conclusions of this research. It is hoped this will give useful management guidelines. The book is well provided with tables and figures and has an extensive reference section.

ROS BATCHELER





## POSITION AVAILABLE NEST RECORDS CONVENOR

OSNZ is looking for a member who is interested in taking on the position of Nest Records Convenor. Responsibilities include supplying blank cards on request; receiving all completed cards from members; recording and counting all details of the returned cards; and thanking all contributors. An annual report must be provided to Council for publication in *Southern Bird*. Would any interested members please contact Biz Bell, OSNZ Secretary, PO Box 12397, Wellington (wmil@clear.net.nz or osnz@xtra.co.nz).



## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

### Northland

The Northland region has had an interesting few months with members organising a few long weekend trips away to complete the winter and spring atlas squares.

In September Rodney Lloyd talked on New Zealand Pigeon distribution in Waipoua Forest using regular and new survey techniques. At our October meeting James Fraser discussed his work with the Campbell Island Teal on Campbell and Codfish Islands, and the transfer of the species back to Campbell Island. He also had some wonderful slides to show us. For the November meeting Jacqui Walls gave us an interesting talk on some of the work she has assisted with on Ulva Island with Saddlebacks, and mentioned some of the other on-going projects.

We'll be finishing off the year with a barbeque at Jean Hawken's place, and Audrey Williams is coordinating volunteers to help with the monitoring of Fairy Terns over the breeding season and following their dispersal at the end of February. This usually means up to five or six volunteers for one or two days a week, and their assistance is much appreciated. The regular beach patrols on the east and west coast beaches, organised by Prue Cozens and Pauline Smith, will also continue over summer.

GERARD PILON AND KATRINA HANSEN

### Auckland

It has been another busy winter and spring for the Auckland branch with some excellent talks, the winter wader surveys, monthly beach patrols at Muriwai, and the New Zealand Dotterel census.

'A vision for birds in the Auckland region' was presented by John Craig from Auckland University's Environmental Science department. Professor Craig commented on the decline in biodiversity nationally, and the need for us to have a vision of what birds we want to conserve in the Auckland region. He stressed the need to look after what we have here in Auckland by taking responsibility for pest control and creating more protected areas in the region. Once we lose pollinators and seed dispersers, we lose ecosystem functions, he said. He posed the question whether native birds need native ecosystems and challenged some beliefs, such as Kokako needing tall forest and Takahe needing alpine grasslands. Both birds do well on Tiritiri Matangi Island in very different habitats where there is protection from introduced predators.

When birds were protected on inshore islands, they could build up scattered metapopulations and disperse into the greater Auckland area. Bellbirds could be re-introduced to inshore islands such as Rangitoto and Browns Island where they can breed in a protected habitat close enough for them to make their way to the mainland. This was one way birds that used to inhabit the Auckland isthmus could be re-introduced to the city. Pest control in urban and rural areas of Auckland, of both plant and animal pests, was an integral part of this, he said. A vision for the future of birds in the Auckland region was needed, and this could be co-ordinated by Auckland OSNZ in co-operation with councils, the Department of Conservation and other groups such as Forest and Bird. 'If you convince 20 per cent of Aucklanders to believe in the vision, you will get the rest', he said.

The progress of Whiteheads translocated to the Hunua a year ago was the topic of a talk by Tim Lovegrove. Tim talked about the release, follow-up monitoring, and dispersal of the Whiteheads throughout the 600 ha Kokako protection area in the Hunua where there is intensive pest control. He reported on recent Whitehead sightings in the area and the possibility of doing another transfer in the near future.

In August, Phil Battley spoke about the biology and migration of the Great Knot. His presentation outlined research into migration effects on Great Knots, including questions such as whether

## Cirl Buntings Needed

As part of a research project on population bottlenecks and reproductive success in introduced birds I am looking for an area that has a reasonable number of breeding Cirl Buntings (or even a few pairs). If you know of any likely locations, please contact me via email at Jim.Briskie@canterbury.ac.nz

Any help will be greatly appreciated!

JIM BRISKIE

body condition and plumage during the fuelling phase predict northwards departure dates, fat and protein consumption during their 5,500+ km journey, and the effects of heat on the birds in tropical Australia. He also spoke about the effects on the metabolic rates of Great Knots during long distance migratory flight, and body composition and organ changes during trans-oceanic migration. 'The Road Home' was a captivating insight into birdwatching and especially mist-netting techniques around the world from Kevin Parker in September (see article in the next issue of *Southern Bird*). He recently travelled to Antarctica, North America, Europe and the Middle East.

Instead of a regular October meeting, we had an evening visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum's bird collection, led by curator of land vertebrates (and OSNZ member) Dr Brian Gill. His talk included an introduction to the bird collection including its conservation, types of preparation and its use for identification and research. Half of the museum's collection of about 2.7 million objects is in the natural history collection. In the bird collection there are 12,500 specimens that cover all New Zealand's extant bird species, as well as some foreign birds. The Museum gets about 100 birds a year from the public, bird rescue and the Department of Conservation. Many of these also come from OSNZ beach patrols where identification may be needed with the aid of the reference collection. Brian told us that each bird has 130 bones and with 380 species of New Zealand birds, that's almost 50,000 different bird bones that could be found in New Zealand.

The bird collection is more than 150 years old and was started when the Museum first opened in Auckland in 1852. Brian talked about the history of the collection and the curators who were involved in adding to it over the years including Thomas Cheeseman, Andreas Reischek, Geoffrey Buddle, and Sir Robert Falla.

In the bird store, Brian showed the group examples of the types of preparation done on the specimens, including mounts, study skins, spread wings and feather sheets. The display included examples of eggs, nests, spirit specimens, and bird bones. There was also a display related to the historical collections with a catalogue of specimens from Cheeseman's collection 1898 to 1917, a fragment of a moa eggshell collected by Walter Mantell in 1847, several birds from 19th century missionaries and explorers, and some highlights from the Smithsonian exchanges. The visit was an excellent insight into the bird collection and much enjoyed by everyone who took part.

The New Zealand Dotterel Census in the Auckland area involved many volunteers from OSNZ as well as rangers and staff from the Department of Conservation and the Auckland Regional Council. New Zealand Dotterels were counted at coastal sites south from Te Arai (at the northern end of Pakiri Beach) on the east coast, Hauraki Gulf islands such as Great Barrier, Waiheke, Motuihe and Browns Islands, and west coast sites such as the Taporu Peninsula, South Kaipara Head, and Whatipu. The South Auckland region covered the sites further south on the Auckland isthmus. More than 80 sites were checked during the census and the results are being collated (along with those from other regions), by co-ordinator John Dowding.

In November, a wader census was conducted on the Kaipara and Manukau Harbours, and at Mangawhai and the Firth of Thames. Members also took part in the Tiritiri Matangi Island survey.

SUZI PHILLIPS

### South Auckland

Another year has now gone by with successful meetings each month. It was good to welcome several new members during the year and we hope they will stay through the coming year's activities.

Recent speakers have been: David Lawrie showing slides of the area around Yalu Jiang Nature Reserve in China, visited with the Miranda Naturalists' Trust delegation to sign the sister site agreement; Phil Battley describing the biology and migration of the Great Knot; and John Craig providing the background to the role of genetics and inbreeding in New Zealand bird populations.

The twice-yearly censuses have been undertaken, and while the joke of Tony Habraken and the weather is wearing thin it still proved to

be true, despite Tony claiming not to be involved in picking the dates. The annual overnight trip to Tiritiri Island was once again a great opportunity to enjoy forests full of birds. Beach patrols have continued on a monthly basis thanks to John Brown and his team.

It is now hard to get even a small flock of waders without garish-coloured leg bands on some of the birds. It does add some interest to examining the large flocks in the harbours. We look forward to following the movements of the birds, and it will be good to see where they move to over the summer, and on return trips from migration in the future. Some good birds have over-wintered in the Manukau Harbour, and these have been supplemented by new birds from up north. Nothing really different this year yet, but we are always hopeful.

Our year rounded off with a barbeque at Tom and Hazel Harty's place. This was a good chance to mingle with our birding friends.

DAVID LAWRIE

## Waikato

At the August meeting Rachel Kelleher gave us a comprehensive overview of Waikato's diverse wetlands with particular emphasis on those at Whangamarino. Bitterns are monitored annually here using a programme devised by Ray Pierce.

In September we heard from David Lawrie and Gillian Vaughan about the Miranda Naturalists' Trust five-member delegation to China to mark the establishment of a sister site partnership between Miranda and Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve. Yalu Jiang is a hugely important staging site for Bar-tailed Godwits on their northward migration from New Zealand.

In October Chris Gaskin shared with us his expert knowledge of the seabird species of the Hauraki Gulf. Of particular interest was an update on sightings of the New Zealand Storm Petrel.

The August Cattle Egret count gave a score of four at Lake Ngaroto and at least 105 at Rangiriri. We combined the latter count with a circuit of the Whangamarino Wetlands (no Bitterns were seen as water levels were high) and a census of Lake Hakanoa in Huntly where an upgraded walkway and some willow clearance now give improved views of birds using the lake. Shovelers outnumbered Mallard on the day.

The September weekend at Pureora suffered from showers, cold temperatures and strong winds; not a good recipe for bird watching. However, it was relatively sheltered in the forest and most of the expected species were observed.

Even worse was the October day chosen for the National New Zealand Dotterel Survey when strong nor-westers and huge tides made some parts of the beaches and sand banks inaccessible to both birds and people. Surprisingly the figure of 17 birds located was the same as the last census. One bird, of as yet unknown provenance, had a metal band.

Hugh Clifford reports low numbers of seabirds on beach patrols since August. Buller's Shearwaters started to appear in September. There was also a scattering of the normally uncommon Blue Petrel at this time. Other species found have been a few prions, White-headed Petrel, Cape Pigeon, and White-capped and Grey-headed Mollmawks.

Notable recent sightings include two Cape Barren Geese by Laurie Hovord (18/8), two Fernbirds (heard) at Napinapi Wetland by David Riddell (16/9) and a Grey Teal, also on this date, by John Riddell in Gordonton. During the New Zealand Dotterel census on the 16th October Hugh Clifford found three Royal Spoonbills and 13 Lesser Knots in Aotea Harbour. Finally, Stella and John Rowe saw a Robin and three flocks of Whiteheads, and heard Tomtits, Bellbirds and parakeets on the Waihaha track on 4th August. Four Fernbirds were heard by Stella and John on the same day on farmland and in bush at the start of the track at Waihaha.

STELLA ROWE

## Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

The New Zealand Dotterel census was held on the 17th and 18th October, with OSNZ members assisting DoC with a huge area to cover. Bill Plunket's orange-flagged Bar-tailed Godwit was the find of the census, when he located it amongst 3,000 of the species at Ohiwa. Also rounded up were four Whimbrels, and a Royal Spoonbill. The Dotterel census found 145 birds from Waihi Beach to Ohiwa, up 32% from the 1996 figure of 110. Matakana Island's population is the jewel of the Bay, as it is well monitored and protected. From Bryant's Beach south of Ohiwa to Cape Runaway, another 35 birds were located.

Phil Battley visited the area on the 27th October and found another colour-flagged Bar-tailed Godwit, this time banded by himself and Nigel Milius. The ultimate recovery! This was in amongst the 3,360 Bar-tails recorded in the various sites visited. Another orange-flagged bird at Matahūi Point, Katikati, was from Victoria, Australia.

Up to eight Cattle Egrets have spent the winter at the Maketu Estuary and wet fields near the Kaituna Cut. Quite a few are now in breeding plumage and it will be interesting to see if they stay over the summer again this year. For visitors to Maketu they can usually be seen roosting on top of a blue maimai on the western edge of the estuary. The maimai is also frequented by Royal Spoonbills, and the occasional appearance

of a White Heron makes up the set. A White Heron has been a very approachable and obliging visitor to the Matata lagoons recently. If you are passing why not drop in and have a look.

Maketu and Little Waihi remain happy watching grounds for members. Elaine Ward recently reported great views of a Reef Heron in the harbour. The numbers of Lesser Knots continue to build, with the occasional Wrybill and Turnstone putting in an appearance. The current cover bird for our regional *Bay Watch* newsletter is 'Snowy' - a completely white Variable Oystercatcher. Snowy has attracted a lot of interest from locals and birders alike, resulting in the local DoC office having to field some enquiries from members of the public. Three immature Little Terns, including a metal banded bird, also appeared at Maketu at the end of October and were still present at the time of writing in early November.

Bush birds are keeping a low profile, or is it our members? The only notable records are the returning cuckoos, one Shining example being presented to Paul Cuming at the Acquisitions Department of his work at the Tauranga City Libraries. This caused some concern when the staff questioned him as to whether I intended to cover it in plastic, give it a barcode, or glue a date due slip onto it...

Eastern Rosellas seem to be continuing their expansion in the region as are Spotted Doves. On the subject of introductions, a Barbary Dove was seen near Owahata, Rotorua in late October, sitting on a telegraph wire.

The annual Birds a Plenty Festival was held in the first week of October, with members holding photographic exhibitions, leading field trips and giving talks. This event is becoming a feature of ornithology in the region: note the calendars and diaries for next year!

PAUL CUMING AND TIM BARNARD

## Taranaki

Taranaki's spring that didn't happen and a winter that started early and left late made birding a rather soggy experience around the province and kept us close to shelter of some sort. The August field trip was no exception with the day starting fine enough but gradually deteriorating as a group of us motored into Eastern Taranaki. We were lucky to get a fine break around lunchtime at the Moki Forest but the clouds rolled in again with the rest of the trip spent peering through a rain-covered windscreen.

At the September meeting a report of predator trapping around Lake Rotokare was presented. Although trap-lines are still being laid out, 11 stoats, one ferret, one weasel and other nasties have already been caught. A report in the local newspaper that two people had been prosecuted for taking dogs into Egmont National Park was met with satisfaction. Beach patrols yielded few results apart from a juvenile Spotted Shag, a rarity on the Taranaki coast.

During members' reports Wayne Peters spoke of seeing a flock of 17 Fantails, one of which spent 10 minutes fossicking amongst gravel using its extended wingtips for support. Members also commented on the many Tui seen around the city over winter. A discussion was held as to whether the South Island Kokako should be declared extinct. The consensus was that DoC may be moving too quickly.

Barry Hartley gave a slide show of shore and sea birds that we are likely to see around the region's coastline. The September field trip into the Patea Dam and Lake Rotorangi was in much-improved weather with 28 species of birds recorded, but Tui were absent (perhaps they were still in the city).

Carole Medway's seemingly unbeatable winning streak in hearing the first Shining Cuckoo of the season was finally ended when at the October meeting Ian Dudding's report of hearing one at 9.15am on the 26th September was just 30 minutes ahead of David Medway. A debate ensued as to whether it had to be the full call or just part. The real event was, of course, at Waiongana with the return of Godwits, Turnstones and a brief sighting of a Whimbrel by Julie Fryer.

Ian Dudding gave us an account of his October 2003 Japan Nature tour that had him and a group of like-minded people visiting birding hotspots around Hokkaido and Honshu, with a total of 89 species seen, a few of which are summer migrants to our shores.

A field trip took us to the other end of Lake Rotorangi and inland. The weather was again rather indifferent with members sheltering in a derelict shack for lunch, with conversation centred around what the building may have been in a previous life.

With only a month to go to finish atlasing, we were informed at the November meeting that all Taranaki squares had been covered but a few required a bit more effort, meaning a busy time for those not gainfully employed. Members told of hearing Shining Cuckoos regularly around town as well as Moreporks. A Pukeko seen in school grounds in central New Plymouth was considered unusual. Six Royal Spoonbills were seen at the Mokau River. A Kaka seen in the same locality was probably the first for 50 years or more. Julie and I attempted a twitchathon but only a paltry (or should that be poultry) 49 species were ticked off, the highlight being a Red-necked Stint at Waiongana. Birds seen at Waiongana once the time was up included Little Tern, Pied Oystercatcher, Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot and Reef Heron.





Cees Beavers gave us a rundown on the Kiwi Trust's Operation Nest Egg, one aim of which is to release ten juvenile Kiwi a year for the next two years into Egmont National Park. A viable population found at Purangi 30 km east of Inglewood produced three eggs, which are now at Rainbow Springs, and if they hatch successfully the chicks will be released into the park's protection zone when big enough to fend for themselves. Trapping since August 2002 in the zone has eliminated 298 stoats, 20 ferrets, 83 weasels, one cat and 1,100 rats.

An atlasing trip into the Aotuhia region saw a vast improvement in both weather and bird numbers with 27 species recorded compared to just six in the previous visit at the start of the 'big wet' in February. Two members even made a trip deep into the bush.

PETER FRYER

## Wanganui

Following July's high counts of Lesser Knots on the Wanganui River estuary, migrant wader numbers have settled down to more normal numbers. At the end of October there seemed to be about nine or ten Godwits. The Knots have moved on, although there were still 22 to be seen in the middle of the month. Up to six Wrybills have been seen.

The most exciting recent sighting was of a Royal Spoonbill with colour-banded legs. Ian Sutherland spotted it on the Whanganui River estuary on 31st October. The bands, red on the left leg and green and yellow on the right, enabled it to be identified as an individual banded on the Wairau Lagoons near Blenheim in 1995. It was sighted nine months later at Kawhia Harbour near Hamilton and now has turned up in Wanganui.

Two other unusual sightings in October were in suburban Wanganui East. On 23rd October a Black-backed Magpie was seen on a front lawn, and on the 28th a godwit was seen flying up-river several kilometres from the estuary.

There is good and bad news from Virginia Lake. One pair of Mute Swans nested, but chose a site too close to the edge of the lake, and the nest was vandalised. A Feral Goose nest similarly located suffered the same fate. The Little Shags that have nested for the past few seasons seem to have abandoned Virginia Lake this year. The willow trees they used were damaged in the winter storms, and this may have put them off. On the bright side Black Swans, Coots and Pukeko are all successfully nesting.

BILL GREENWOOD

## Wellington

A well-attended indoor meeting in September provided us with the opportunity to listen to Peter Moore (DoC Science Unit) describing his conservation management research on the Chatham Island Oystercatcher. This species is endangered, restricted to the Chatham Islands, and in 1998 numbered only 142 birds. Recognising its vulnerable status a DoC-supported programme aimed to double the population by 2011; an aim that was considered to be realistic and achievable.

Peter explained that the primary research aim was to identify the causes of nesting failure upon which conservation management could be based. The Chatham Island Oystercatcher usually nests on the upper edge of beaches and it quickly became evident that losses of chicks were caused largely by predation by feral cats (more than 50 per year) and Weka (more than 500 per year). Very high tides, wandering livestock and people moving amongst nest sites also caused chick losses. Peter showed us several fascinating pieces of video recordings made using remotely-controlled cameras that showed quite dramatically the damage caused by cats, Weka, and even a sheep sitting upon a nest and chicks! Peter added that the establishment of several 'management zones' at different locations on the coastline where the exclusion of livestock, people, and intensive cage trapping of predators has led to a rapid increase in nesting success. In 1997 nesting success was less than 0.8 per adult pair but increased to more than 1.0 after 1998.

Reducing the extent of marram grass in one management zone and improved beach management has also improved nesting success. A better understanding of the factors affecting the conservation of the Chatham Island Oystercatcher now provides a sound basis for good species management and has led to a doubling of the population by 2003, eight years earlier than was aimed for. Peter concluded with the encouraging comment that although vulnerable, the future of the Chatham Island Oystercatcher is more assured than it was five years ago.

In early October Jean-Claude Stahl, (ornithologist, Te Papa), presented a fascinating account of his recent research on the foraging of the Buller's Albatrosses that nest on The Snares. Jean-Claude's work extended over a 12-month period and included breeding and non-breeding individuals. It is estimated that about 9,000 pairs of Buller's Albatross nest on The Snares and a further 4,000 pairs nest on Solander Island. Satellite-tracking technology was used to monitor the movement of four birds, using small satellite transmitters taped to the long feathers on the back of the birds. It is not clear where juvenile birds travel to after fledging but Jean-Claude suggested that is probably towards the south-east Pacific, near the South American coast. Movements of these birds

were not monitored. Buller's Albatrosses are about six years old when they return to The Snares to breed. During the breeding period satellite-tracking has revealed clear patterns of feeding movement westwards towards Tasmania, south-east Victoria and the west and east coasts of the South Island. Males seem to make shorter feeding journeys (about 250 km) than females (up to 2,500 km). After hatching there is a sharp reduction in trip distance and time, again males and females showing different foraging tracks and journeys of different length. Jean-Claude illustrated his talk with a range of computer-generated images showing clearly the movement and range of birds at different periods of the year that were tracked during the study. His work has greatly expanded our knowledge of the movement and distribution of the Buller's Albatross.

In November Bob Brockie, (ecologist, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University), addressed a large gathering and delivered a thoroughly entertaining and lively talk on 'Freaky Bird Behaviour', based upon Bob's range of experiences through his long career of studying different aspects of bird behaviour. Bob firstly described the mobbing behaviour of possums by several bird species as possums recovered from anaesthesia during tagging and tracking studies. Continuing, Bob recounted the curious and laughable antics of an Australian Magpie as it lived in his house for two years. Its ability to imitate many sounds, including telephones and cars, and its boldness in learning how to walk through the cat door of the neighbour's house were some of its antics! Bob continued by describing the outcome of studies on the roosting range behaviour of Starlings in the Wellington region, and of efforts, including the effective use of a toy cat, to disperse Starlings that gather each evening in their thousands in some central city trees. Bob also explained that Starlings often roost on rat-free islands, flying up to 35 km to do so. Finally Bob described in colourful terms the freaky behaviour of some House Sparrows that have learned to activate the sensors of automatic doors to shops and some other public buildings.

The survey of birds on Somes Island/Matiu, coordinated by Rod Orange, has continued and several members have worked closely with DoC to monitor the behaviour and movements of parakeets on the island, including breeding during the spring. Several chicks have been seen lately.

Several members have once again helped with the quarterly five-minute count survey of birds in the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. In early November Colin Miskelly explained that Tui continue to be noticeably more conspicuous, as are Kingfishers. Populations of Bellbirds, Kaka, Robins and Whiteheads are stable. Saddlebacks, Weka, Tomtits and House Sparrows appear to be declining.

Under the guidance of Peter Reese several members have again helped with bird capture and banding at Wellington Zoo. Peter says that since mid-2000 2,300 birds have been banded; more than 580 recaptures have been made of 15 species and this is an increasingly useful body of data on the age of birds living in Wellington City.

Notable recent bird observations include Red-crowned Parakeets in Porirua Scenic Reserve, an increase in the range of Bellbirds to Porirua and Colonial Knob Scenic Reserves, a Greenshank in Porirua Harbour, large flocks of Fluttering Shearwaters in Wellington Harbour, and several sightings of Falcons in the Wellington region.

IAN ARMITAGE

## Nelson

Willie Cook found a beach wreck on Rabbit Island, which was eventually identified as a Kerguelen Petrel. He also sighted the first Chinese-tagged Bar-tailed Godwit seen in the South Island, near Bells Island in the Waimea Inlet on 26th September. David Melville has been involved in banding operations, mainly during the northward migration, at Chongming Island, Shanghai during the last 18 months, and it is one of these birds, a female, which appeared here. David and several others confirmed the sighting over the next few days.

During October, Bar-tailed Godwits, banded in the South Island, Queensland and Victoria were seen near Bells Island, with a count also of 52 juvenile godwits in a flock of 850, and one orange-flagged Lesser Knot.

Rob Schuckard returned safely from Russia and gave a very interesting talk of his time at the Kamchatka Peninsula showing slides of the flora and fauna.

Rob and David are the South Island project team for an intensive summer programme to catch/mark and subsequently re-sight birds to determine the extent to which individual Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots use the network of estuaries whilst in New Zealand. In addition to capture in Tasman and Golden Bays, David and Rob have assisted groups in Christchurch and Southland with cannon- and mist-netting sessions.

Peter Field saw a Marsh Sandpiper in the Haven, by the Boulder Bank, in early November and also noted a Lesser Knot and a Whimbrel. Several others saw the Marsh Sandpiper over the next week or two, and on a later visit Peter also saw a Northern Giant Petrel: quite a feast!

Peter Gaze arranged for sixteen members using four-wheel drive vehicles to spend a weekend atlasing along the Awatere River around

Molesworth and Tarndale and back through the Rainbow Valley, covering 16 ten-kilometre squares. This is a scenic and interesting area and the good weather made it a very enjoyable time. About 40 species were seen or heard including two pairs of Riflemen. One pair was in an old fallen willow tree and appeared to be nesting.

GILLIAN POLLOCK

## Marlborough

Our Grassmere count has continued on the third weekend of each month. In September we hosted the local branch of Forest and Bird. August produced two surprises: 110 Wrybills and one Black Stilt, perhaps delayed by a fierce southerly front. In September we had a strong nor' west wind which made observation difficult. There were still 16 Wrybills present, and what we thought were 18 Turnstones seen in flight but we were unable to confirm. October saw our first Bar-tailed Godwit of the season. A very noticeable feature was the almost total absence of ducks over the three months August to October inclusive. Please note that in 2005 the Grassmere count will continue but will be on the third Sunday of the month.

In the week prior to Labour Weekend, four members carried out the annual five minute bird count around Maud Island. There was nothing too outstanding but we had splendid views of Falcon and Rifleman. Tui, Bellbird, Kingfisher and Grey Warbler were the most prominent native species, but introduced passerines were also very common.

On Marlborough's Anniversary weekend four members joined a Nelson OSNZ/DoC party to help with atlasing some of the backcountry squares on Molesworth Station. It was a great weekend, with the Marlborough members finding Chukor while the Nelson members missed out, despite vain attempts to locate them. The presence of Riflemen in willows along the rivers and streams was an interesting feature.

Currently we are actively involved with the colour banding of Royal Spoonbills at Wairau lagoon. So far we have banded four, but the main group will be ready in mid- to late December. A very successful banding-cum-social afternoon was held on 14th November when 19 adults and four children turned up (out of a membership of 20). All but two adults and the youngest child walked through the water and mud to the breeding island, although only one chick was ready for banding. Everyone wants to come again.

BRIAN BELL

## Canterbury

The bird of an up to then very indifferent spring (rare-bird-wise) has to be the probable Australian (Clamorous) Reed Warbler reported on 14th November by a non-birding Christchurch resident (originally an inhabitant of Holland) who amazingly knew what a reed warbler sounded like, and even more amazingly phoned the OSNZ in the form of Sheila Petch pretty much straight away instead of waiting the more usual month or two. I believe this is the first record of the species for New Zealand.

Sheila phoned me at about 7pm, leaving just enough time to put out an email, run round the house gathering up gear and drive to St Anne's Lagoon just north of Cheviot to be greeted by the intermittent wall of sound that the species puts out, and 35 minutes viewing time before the light got too poor. The bird is rather plain, but a great songster, singing almost continuously mostly low down and out of sight in a small clump of raupo. The bird stayed in the area until at least the 28th November.

The waders at Lake Ellesmere have been rather uncooperative this spring, choosing the rather remote 'tip end' of Kaitorete Spit over the more easily reached Greenpark Sands. Red-necked Stints seem to be present in smaller than usual numbers, with the maximum count so far being 44, rather than around the 100 mark. The usual small numbers of such species as Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper are present, and Pacific Golden Plover numbers are about normal at just over 30 (the only migratory species regularly gracing Greenpark Sands in any numbers). A Hudsonian Godwit and a Black-tailed Godwit (the individual with part of one of its legs missing) have passed through. The Hudsonian Godwit may have moved on to the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, as one has been noted in the roost there.

The Ashley Estuary has hosted a long-staying Black Stilt for much of spring. One was noted in mid-November up the Ashley River near Rangiora, which may be the same individual. The Ashley/Saltwater Creek Estuary is currently collecting Whimbrels, with a small flock of seven present, along with the usual two Eastern Curlews in mid-November. One Whimbrel may have wandered to the Avon-Heathcote, as one was noted in the roost there.

In early November a small delegation of Nelsonites in the form of Rob and Anneke Schuckard and David Melville visited to cannon-net and colour-band waders as part of the project to track their movements through and use of New Zealand estuaries. The first attempt was a bit of a disaster with the tide not getting high enough to force the birds off their island roost to the ocean beach. On the second attempt the following day various devious means of persuading the birds to go to where they might get caught were employed, with the result that

63 Bar-tailed Godwits were colour-banded. A red band over any other colour band on the left leg means it is one of these birds. A godwit previously metal-banded in Japan was also caught.

Talks recently have focussed on Banks Peninsula, with Frances Schmechel explaining what opportunities exist for either boosting or re-establishing populations of Weka, Sooty Shearwater and Tui. Unfortunately none sound totally straightforward, with Weka causing potential problems to rare invertebrates in some places, the lack of a reason as to why Tui basically went extinct locally, and setbacks for the sole-remaining mainland colony of Sooty Shearwater when what was probably a stoat breached a predator-proof fence at Stony Bay. A dramatic increase in bush cover on Banks Peninsula in recent decades is a positive feature that may make the area more suitable for the three species in the not-too-distant future, however.

One species that seems to be holding its own on Banks Peninsula is the New Zealand Pigeon. Maaik Schotborgh from Lincoln University is radio-tracking 15 birds to work out where they go, what they feed on, how much they move about, and where they nest. Some birds move quite long distances, whereas some stay put in the same small patch of bush. On Banks Peninsula exotic trees are extensively used as food sources – especially tree lucerne. One native that the birds flock to is fruiting poroporo. This can lead to their downfall as this plant species is quite low-growing and to feed successfully the birds must face inwards into the bush. Consequently they are liable to ambush without an easy escape route from stoats and cats.

A pelagic trip out of Akaroa in mid-September encountered weather far too good to attract seabirds in any numbers. With no sightings of mollymawks after a couple of hours, in desperation we stopped and chummed with popcorn soaked in fish oil. Miraculously within just a few minutes this attracted a few Buller's Mollymawks, then a couple of Salvin's Mollymawks, four Northern Giant Petrels and a small number of Cape Petrels. The bird highlight for most was the good numbers of Spotted Shags closer inshore in their stunning full breeding plumage.

The other field meetings of spring have been the Ashley River censuses, helping the Ashley River Care Group. The first kept getting put off due to high water flows, but eventually part of the study area was done, the river still up to 'jewellery box' height in places. The river had dropped appreciably to knee height by the second census in mid-November. Wrybills are down in number this year, but Banded Dotterels and Pied Oystercatchers numbers are slightly up.

NICK ALLEN

## Otago

Over Labour Weekend we held another atlas camp in the Alexandra area. Seven members in three cars travelled nearly 3,000 km in four days. One of the highlights was driving to the top of the Carrick Range, at 1,300 m the highest public road in New Zealand, and looking down into the Nevis Valley where gold-miners worked 150 years ago. I heard a Falcon at this point. One lucky car was able to negotiate the rocky road down into the Nevis Valley. The road was cut like steps in the rock. The members in this car covered two more 10 km squares, finding 16 and 17 species respectively, and interestingly Banded Dotterels in the Lower Nevis.

We all pushed our cars to the limit. It involved four days of the roughest and steepest climbing. At The Neck area of Lake Hawea we had the pleasure of watching two Australasian Crested Grebes performing their courtship display out across the wide bay. One more was sitting on a nest near the edge of the open water. No raupo or rushes were available for cover, in contrast to the northern end of Lake Dunstan, where at least three more Crested Grebes were seen.

California Quail were found in a number of locations, though no chicks were seen. The square with the highest number of species was Bannockburn, with 28, closely followed by Alexandra, with 27. We visited 75 10 km squares, with 22 of these not previously visited in spring. Forty-five species were identified, 16 of these definitely breeding; others must have been.

The summer wader count was done on 7th November. As usual, we planned to count at high tide. We became aware of how variable the tides are. At 1.7 m, the tide was 40 cm lower than our average, and this left vast areas of mud and sand not covered by water. At the Aramoana harbour entrance it resembled low tide with the whole sand flat exposed. There were no Banded Dotterels there; they may have all been inland, nesting in the mountains.

LOUISE FOORD

## Southland

Banding has been the key word for Southland in the last few months with Rob and Anneke Schuckard and David Melville spending several days chasing Southland's waders at Awarua Bay. The weather behaved perfectly although the mist-netting in the early hours was thwarted by an almost full moon that made the nets stand out quite clearly. Nature also had a hand in the abandonment of the first attempt at cannon-netting when after hours of meticulous work a mini tornado or willy





willy whipped up the dried seaweed camouflage and spooked the birds into the air and they departed to some other part of the bay.

Fortunately the team decided to have another go on the Tuesday and were successful with 17 Bar-tailed Godwits, one Lesser Knot and three Turnstones all being captured in the one shot. These birds are now all flagged and banded with individual colour combinations and the team are hoping to come back to Southland for one more session in February.

Awarua Bay is certainly worth a visit if you are venturing down this way, with nine Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 48 Red-necked Stints, two Sanderlings and six Pacific Golden Plovers present at the time of writing in November.

Rachel McLellan has begun her Black-billed Gull banding project on some of Southland's river colonies, and with the help of Lloyd Esler and some other helpers managed to band approximately 150 chicks in early November.

Other interesting news from the region has been the discovery of another Royal Spoonbill colony between Awarua Bay and Waituna Lagoon, and I am certain this won't be the last. Stewart Island must be a future target.

Lloyd Esler advertised an owling night at Queens Park recently and was amazed to see 40 people turn up. Due to the large turnout the owls were very secretive but everyone enjoyed a brisk walk in the park by torchlight.

PHIL RHODES



## Regional Reps & What's on

### Far North

Detlef Davies, Waipapa Lagoon, Landing Road, Kerikeri 0470. Ph (09) 407 3874. Email [detlefdaviesd@yahoo.com](mailto:detlefdaviesd@yahoo.com)

### Northland

Katrina Hansen, 3 Harbour View Road, Onerahi, Whangarei. Ph (09) 430 2133. Email [khansen@doc.govt.nz](mailto:khansen@doc.govt.nz)

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

Suzi Phillips, Private Bag 1, Helensville 1250, Auckland. Ph (09) 420 5278. Fax (09) 420 4086. Email [suzi@dialogue.co.nz](mailto:suzi@dialogue.co.nz)

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

David Lawrie, 52 Mill Road, R D 2, Pukekohe, Auckland. Ph (09) 238 8407. Email [lawrie@ps.gen.nz](mailto:lawrie@ps.gen.nz)

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

### Waikato

Laurie Hoverd, R.D. 3, Te Awamutu 2400. Ph (07) 871 8071. Email [jlhoverd@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jlhoverd@xtra.co.nz)

Evening meetings, every third Wednesday, 7.30pm, DoC, London Street, Hamilton.

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. Bird sightings: Regional recorder, Dai Morgan [dm30@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:dm30@waikato.ac.nz) Atlas scheme: Stella Rowe 07 8435199

### Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Tim Barnard, 5 Larcy Road, Lynmore, Rotorua. Ph (07) 345 3433. Email [tim.barnard@xtra.co.nz](mailto:tim.barnard@xtra.co.nz)

### Gisborne/Wairoa

RR's position vacant.

### Hawke's Bay

Murray Jeffries, 2a Cobden Road, Napier 4001. Ph (06) 834 3865.

Fax (06) 834 3867. Email [mcejffries@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mcejffries@xtra.co.nz)

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

### Taranaki

Barry Hartley, 12a Ronald Street, New Plymouth. Ph (06) 757 8644.

Email [Barry\\_Hartley@clear.net.nz](mailto:Barry_Hartley@clear.net.nz)

Evening meetings – first Tuesday of the month (exc Jan) 7.30pm.

Field trips on first conducive weekend thereafter.

### Wanganui

Tom Teasdale, 33 Paterson Street, Aramoho, Wanganui 5001.

Ph (06) 343 9992. Email [teasdale.family@clear.net.nz](mailto:teasdale.family@clear.net.nz)

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

### Manawatu

Ian Saville, 23 Duke Street, Feilding. Ph (06) 323 1441. Email [binzsav@clear.net.nz](mailto:binzsav@clear.net.nz)

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

### Wairarapa

Miles King, Olivers Road, R D 6 Masterton 5921. Ph (06) 377 5252. Email [kingsmeade@contact.net.nz](mailto:kingsmeade@contact.net.nz)

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

### Wellington

Stuart Nicholson, 15 Bruce Avenue, Brooklyn, Wellington 6002.

Ph (04) 934 5940. Email [Nicholson@paradise.net.nz](mailto:Nicholson@paradise.net.nz)

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

Steve Wood, Hursthouse Street, Lower Moutere, R D 2 Upper Moutere, Nelson 7152. Ph 03 528 6438. Email [utopia.landscapes@clear.net.nz](mailto:utopia.landscapes@clear.net.nz)

Evening meetings – usually first Monday of the month, 7.15pm upstairs in Café Affair, Trafalgar Street, Nelson. Ph. Steve Wood (03) 528 6438 or Don Cooper (03) 544 8109.

### Marlborough

Brian Bell (acting RR), 35 Selmes Road, R D 3 Rapaura, Blenheim.

Ph (03) 570 2230. Email [wmilblenheim@clear.net.nz](mailto:wmilblenheim@clear.net.nz)

Lake Grassmere count – third Sunday of month. Ph Brian Bell.

### Canterbury/West Coast

Nick Allen, 65 Allin Drive, Waikuku, North Canterbury 8254.

Ph (03) 312 7183. Email [nick\\_allen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nick_allen@xtra.co.nz)

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

Louise Foord, P.O. Box 12002, Maori Hill, Dunedin. Ph (03) 467 5041. Fax (03) 467 5071.

Evening meetings Otago Art Society building, cnr Albany & Great King Streets. Ph. Louise Foord.

### Southland

Phil Rhodes, 92 Marama Avenue North, R D 9 Otatara, Invercargill.

Ph (03) 213 1228. Email [p.rhodes@xtra.co.nz](mailto:p.rhodes@xtra.co.nz)

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.



