



Southern *Bird*

No. 21 March 2005 • ISSN 1175-1916

Beach Patrols
mean more than birds

Kokako Recovery
in the Mangatutu Valley

Enderby Trust
Subantarctic Odyssey





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Quotation

Then this ebon bird beguiling my sad
fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the
countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,
" I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly, grim, and ancient raven, wandering
from the Nightly shore.
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the
Night's Plutonian shore."
Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49)

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Cover Photos

Front cover: Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Back cover: Wood Sandpiper

Both photos by Don Hadden, taken at Lake Moondarra, near Mt Isa, Queensland.

To pre-empt any angry letters, the Editor is aware Wood Sandpiper has yet to be recorded in NZ, but it was rated the most likely next occurrence in *Southern Bird* 2 (June 2000).
Don can be contacted at hadden@clear.net.nz

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.

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 • Website: www.osnz.org.nz.

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Ward Island Expedition

Islands have a strange appeal, especially those we haven't visited. There is a little island that is visible from the ferry as you come in to Wellington Harbour. It has steep cliffs on the western side and some scrub and long grass on the top. On the Eastbourne side there is a little beach where you can sometimes see boats sheltering off the lee shore. The island is called Ward Island or Makaro and can only be 300 m by 100 m at the most.

Stalwart OSNZ member and conservationist Reg Cotter visited the island in August 2002 with Rob Stone and Sue Caldwell from DoC, Stan Butcher from Forest and Bird, and George Gibb an entomologist and educator well-known for his Wellington conservation work. Perce Harpham provided transport in his yacht.

Jobs were allocated: Rob to do weeding, Sue and Reg planting trees, George to do a weta survey, Stan to survey the botany, and Reg the birds.

The day augured well with a Reef Heron being seen at the Seaview Marina as they headed out to the island. They were able to spend five hours on the island, plant 40 native trees (provided by Rob), and fill two domestic rubbish bags.

Reg reports there were about 75 Black-backed Gulls, 10 Variable Oystercatchers, one White-fronted Tern, two Starlings, two Black Shags, two Little Shags, and one Chaffinch present. On the western side there was a new nesting colony of Spotted Shags with at least eight nests and 22 birds present.

There was no sign of Blue Penguins despite them being busy nesting elsewhere in the harbour. White-faced Storm Petrel burrows were seen on the island but there was no activity: perhaps it was a little early in the season.

Beach patrolling wasn't forgotten and a Little Shag, Red-billed Gull, Blackbird, and one adult and five juvenile Black-backed Gulls were found.

We hope you've been able to visit that little island in your mind even though you haven't been able to get there.

REG COTTER AND STUART NICHOLSON

Another Pugnacious Robin

Following on from Kimberley Parlane's observation of a Robin attacking a mouse in *Southern Bird* 20, in mid-January 2001 while taking part in bird surveys on Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) another volunteer and I were travelling to a monitoring site approximately 2 km south east of the main landing. Pausing for a break whilst crossing the rugged terrain a few hundred metres inland we observed a Fantail flying with its usual darting manoeuvres approximately 2 to 3 m above ground in mature 10 to 15 m high canopy. A North Island Robin which had escaped our attention until then flew up from a lower perch head-first into the Fantail. The outcome of this was that the Fantail dropped one metre in out-of-control flight shaken but unharmed, whereas the Robin landed on a nearby perch and started preening. No other interaction occurred. This action occurred in close proximity to both observers (approximately 5 m).

JAMES RUSSELL

Canadian-Birding Down the Whanganui River

As you drift slowly down the Whanganui River, your eyes will lift to the tree-line and the inevitable question arises "How long has this river been running?" Around 25 million years according to *New Zealand Geographic* magazine. But Maori have a more graphic explanation – brother volcanoes Tongariro and Taranaki were at perpetual war over maiden volcano Pihanga (so male!). Taranaki was getting a hiding and beat a hasty retreat to where he sits sulking today, gouging a deep scar as he retreated. Out of Tongariro's side came a spring that filled the ugly scar. We have today the healing river of the Whanganui.

Most kayaking trips down-river start at Cherry Grove, a DoC reserve just outside Taumaranui, and my river trip started disappointingly, with rough pasture on either side for the first few days. Most birds encountered were the usual suspects: Mallards, Spur-winged Plovers, Paradise Shelducks and several shag species. However, at the first campground, the failing light heard the Tui say 'goodnight', the Ruru say 'morepork' and the Bellbirds sing 'good morning'. What we said about the screaming Spur-winged Plovers was unprintable!

Slowly poplars, willow, privet and Italian walnut trees gave way to more serious native bush such as kahikatea, rimu, totara and the occasional hinau. Great stands of tawa would once have been fed upon by myriad New Zealand Pigeons in the fruiting season, and they would have been a staple diet for the river Maori, along with Tui and Kiwi. In the five nights camping along the river, I never once heard a Kiwi calling. Their numbers here will have crashed along with the rest of the country. We really have no idea the damage we humans have done to our unique birdlife. A true holocaust!

As the famous steep sided gorge approached so the birdlife increased. Tui in particular were very evident crossing and re-crossing the river. By the amount of kowhai trees on the river bank, I would imagine early spring would be a good time to go up the river from Pipiriki in a jet-boat and check out the frenzied feeding of Tui, Bellbirds and New Zealand Pigeons.

Five days paddling on a river has a mesmerising effect on one. You get into a rhythm, and the pain in your shoulders almost becomes pleasurable. You have plenty of time to think...or not think. You plan your day

by the reaches and bends, and of course, the rapids. You quickly snap out of your trance and aim your Canadian at the 'V'. Miss the 'V' into the rapids and you're 'sunk', ending up feeling wet and silly and heading for the bank to empty your craft while your colleagues wait patiently and look the other way.

I was hoping to see the legendary Blue Duck or Whio somewhere along the Whanganui. But like the literal translation of the river's name itself, to see a Blue Duck on the river now, would be a 'great wait'. The best chance is to go up the river tributary of the Whanganui called the Manganui o te Ao. This tributary had a protective covenant forced upon it by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society to ensure the future of Blue Ducks.

The upper reaches of the river often have huge, round white boulders with pieces, chipped out of them, resembling large skulls. This rather Gothic experience was not helped when we drifted past a large bull, standing, but dead in the water!

As we went further down river, I noticed more and more that the only ducks we saw were the native Grey Ducks, replacing the Mallards we saw nearer the start of our journey. I wasn't sure why, but I gather the Grey Duck prefers small lakes, slow-flowing rivers and tidal waters surrounded by forest rather than farmland. They seemed to tolerate us much more than Mallards. As we drifted past them the poor dears would shuffle nervously, and only take off when we got too close. In 1970 there were 1.5 million birds; today they are down to less than half a million, and every year they are legally shot by hunters.

One of the highlights of the trip down the Whanganui River is a stop at the 'Bridge to Nowhere'. Like most other New Zealanders, I had heard of this strangely named bridge and was curious to check it out. It was built after World War I to service the pioneer farms given to veterans who had survived the true holocaust of the trenches. But the land was unforgiving and capitalism failed them in form of the Great Depression. It was all too much and the people walked off the land, just as the bridge was being finished. A bridge to nowhere indeed! As we walked the track to this symbol of heroic futility, a Robin flitted briefly past me. Another hopeless case, I thought. The Robin struggles to survive in the presence of predatory rats that 'milk' the eggs

and chicks for months on end. What does the Robin know of the rat? Even the Tomtits we saw at our camps seemed more clued up to the ways of rats than the poor old Robin.

On our last day on the river we saw a little ornithological drama that made the aching muscles all worthwhile. As we rounded into one of the last stretches I saw in the distance what looked like a Harrier falling into the river. As we got closer I could see the Harrier was trying to lift something out of the water. Did it have a dead possum caught in its claws, I wondered, or an injured duck? Finally the Harrier caught sight of us and dropped what looked like an eel into the water and then slowly circled above us. Quickly we came upon what turned out to be a fairly small, dead long-finned eel. With my paddle I carefully lifted the limp creature, and as we came close to the bank, I flipped the eel onto it. As we drifted away we watched the Harrier drop onto its lunch and start feeding. For a moment I'm sure I saw the hawk lift its head, look at us quizzically and murmur 'thanks mates'. But then I could have been mistaken!

And so the journey ends: six days and five nights of sun, rain, hyperthermia, good companionship, star-filled nights, rat-filled tents and miraculous flora and fauna. We pull slowly over to Pipiriki, its haunted history shouting silently at us; the warriors, the wahine, the red-coats, the missionaries, the boatmen. Then a shout, "Gerry, what's this bird?" I hurry to the Pipiriki Bridge and raise my binoculars. Incredible - a Nankeen Night Heron! The only area in New Zealand where the species is regular, and there it was. Hunched like a Dickensian clerk scanning the stream for food, this attractive small heron is a relatively recent arrival in New Zealand. But is it?

For some obscure reason the Nankeen Night Heron was brought to New Zealand in 1852. Why? Wellington Zoo successfully bred the heron in the early 1980s and it was rumoured they were subsequently released (or did they escape, or did someone say they escaped...). One was seen near Warkworth in 1984. Then, in 1994, the species bred between Jerusalem and Pipiriki, and we were looking at one of them. What a great way to end an ornithological journey with a close look at one of our rarest, and newest, native species.

GERRY BRACKENBURY



Calls for expression of interest and papers



For the first time these two conferences are being held in New Zealand. This is your chance to be involved in two important international conferences at a budget rate. To date proposed papers range from conservation action and species' breeding biology to the maintenance of national monitoring schemes. There is such a wide variety that there will be something to interest everybody. Both have post-conference field trips to key birding sites, including Farewell Spit, seabird watching off Kaikoura, Pelorus and Queen Charlotte Sound trips and a visit to a 'mainland island' project in Nelson Lakes National Park.

At present we are calling for expressions-of-interest and papers, and will shortly be asking for registrations. Expression of interest forms and then registration details and forms will soon be on the OSNZ website www.osnz.org.nz/conference. Don't miss this chance to be involved in the biggest ornithological gathering in New Zealand since the 1990 International Ornithological Congress.

For all your conference details, including accommodation providers, travel options and field trips check out the OSNZ website.

THE AOC2005 TEAM

Personnel Changes

Roger Sharp has taken over the role of Nest Records Convenor. In future all completed nest record cards or requests/inquiries for the nest recording scheme should be directed to him at P.O.Box 12-1039, Henderson, Auckland. Phone (09) 836 9931. Email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz

Corrections

The photograph of the Blue Duck on page 7 of *Southern Bird* 20 was taken by Ann Sherlock. The photograph on the back cover by Alexa Sanders was of a wayward young Long-tailed Cuckoo; it wasn't intended that this photo would be a 'mystery bird'.

BIRD DISTRIBUTION ATLAS MAPPING SCHEME

Searching finished at last!

Can the birds of New Zealand relax for another 20 years? As a corporate national mass probably yes, as over 1,000 bird observers have put away their atlas sheets and pencils after a frenetic five years of national searching. Currently the tally of sheets received stands at 29,500, which equates to some 560,000+ individual species reports. The last atlas (1969-1979) recorded just under 19,000 record cards over a period of ten years, so the effort this time has been quite spectacular, especially from some teams who seem to have spent much of their life recently, both off and on the road.

Completed data entry has already reached 27,000 records and is expected to be completed by the end of May 2005. Then there will be a period of about six months when the data will be checked for errors before the final map preparation can commence. It is hoped that a draft of the final printed atlas can be ready for the AGM in 2005. An abbreviated electronic version should be online after the main atlas is published.

Contributors have been invited to request a draft 'map' of their travels so that they can help the checking process by ensuring that their records don't contain strange locations. Some of these travel maps are quite remarkable with the top contributor having covered more than one third of the squares in the country!

Not only has the atlas project introduced a lot of people to new countryside and birds, but seems to have included a large number of people who are not members of the Society. There would seem to be a challenge for the existing membership to ensure that these people with an interest are gathered into a wider understanding of birds through membership of the Society. Help keep your Society alive.

It is now most important to check to ensure that all your records are returned to the atlas office in time to be included in the final atlas.

Records must be received by 31 March 2005.

The Society owes a grateful vote of thanks to all those who have contributed in many ways, great or small, to the data collection for the Atlas Project. The results already suggest that the efforts made have been well worthwhile.

CJR ROBERTSON
CONVENOR
22 FEBRUARY 2004

My New Tripod

After 20 years of regular use supporting my telescope, including several trips around the world, my old tripod's legs were worse for wear. One of the legs was permanently extended utilising a hose fitting and this reduced its effectiveness, particularly on wild windswept shellbanks, as is typical of census days in the South Auckland area.

Despite broad hints just prior to every birthday, Christmas, Fathers' Day and any other opportunities for gifts over the previous several years, no new tripod had appeared either from Santa or in any parcels. Therefore, I decided to take the plunge and buy a new tripod as my own Christmas present for 2003.

The new tripod was duly extricated from its box, admired, tested and prepared ready for use. However, on its first possible outing on Boxing Day I left the new tripod at home and took the old faithful one to the Karaka shell banks instead.

While out on the shell banks I explained to Gillian Vaughan about my lovely new tripod sitting at home in the lounge because I did not want to get it dirty on the mudflats. She gave me the look that the young reserve for the old(er) and made a suitably cutting comment.

Two days later I returned to the same shell banks accompanied by Tony Habraken. I believed it was time to give the new tripod a christening. We had a good day on the mudflats although it was rather cool and windy as we trudged home just as the sun set.

I was first to climb over the stile on the coastal fence and then it happened! My foot slipped off the bottom rung of the stile, and as I grabbed the upright support it broke. This sent me sprawling on my back into the mud, complete with tripod and telescope over my shoulder.

It was the maniacal laughter from Tony Habraken that made me realise that I had not yet made the journey to the place where the sun always shines and the inhabitants are sweet and angelic. As I gradually righted myself I then began the task of extricating my lovely new tripod out of the mud along with a well-encrusted telescope. All three of us were liberally coated in thick goeey mud. Once I had pulled myself together I limped off across the paddocks to head home. To add final insult to injury, my wet muddy coat dragged onto an electric fence as I climbed over and I received a shock, but at least the jolt shook half the mud off me!

It took two days to carefully clean the mud out of every orifice on the tripod legs, several more days to clean the telescope, and it has taken six weeks of physiotherapy to restore my damaged knee to something like normality.

The moral of the story is, therefore, to show more respect to well-worn instruments that have served you well over the years, and not to replace them with flash, fancy new gear as they often have cruel ways of exacting revenge.

DAVID LAWRIE

OSNZ AGM and Conference

We apologise that, due through circumstances beyond our control, registration forms were not included with the December issue of *Southern Bird* and *Notornis*. A form is included with the publications this time.

Remember to get your registrations into us as soon as you can, and if you wish to present a talk at the scientific day it is not too late to do this either. All enquiries can be made by emailing Laurie Hoverd (jlhoverd@xtra.co.nz) or Dai Morgan (dm30@waikato.ac.nz) and they will happily sort you out.

If you do not receive a registration form or want another, let us know and we will send one out. Those without email should write to: Conference Organisers, P.O. Box 12476, Hamilton.

THE WAIKATO CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Jane Ashby (Waikato), Graham Bird (Taranaki), John Bown (Marlborough), Heather Davidson (Auckland), Paul Davis (Auckland), Anna Grant (Wellington), Mark Hauber (Auckland), Sandra Haydon (Canterbury), Graham Howie (Auckland), Elzabe Kruger (Wellington), Barry Lawrence (Otago), Euan Mason (Canterbury), Elizabeth Meek (Otago), Alan Miller (Marlborough), Katherine Morris (Waikato), Lloyd Nielsen (Australia), Viola Palmer (Wellington), Nic Peet (Wanganui), Zoe Phillips (Auckland), Rosalie Stamp (Auckland), Wayne Taylor (Auckland), Peter Thompson (Auckland), Peter Turner (Wellington), Jac Vaughan-Sanders (Wellington), Janet Walsh (Canterbury), John Whitehead (Southland), Gayelene Wright (Wellington).

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

Dorothy Alloo, Harry Battam, David Bell, Keith Bell, Mike Bell, David Booth, Patrick Buxton, Anthony Carey, Joanne Cooper, Marj Davis, Geoffrey de Lisle, Mr G L Don, Geoff Foreman, Wendy Goad, Tony Habraken, Terry Hatch, Paddy Latham, Miss N. MacDonald, Mr R. J. Meadows, Colin Miskelly, Mrs G. Norman, David Seay, Elise Smith, Heather Smithers, Andrew Styche, Kevin Taylor, Spencer Unthank, Gillian Vaughan, Mr W. A. Watters, Tony Wilson, Steve Wood, Lois Wagener.

Report of Rare Birds Committee

It was mentioned in *Southern Bird* 19 that all reports of rare or unusual birds for consideration by the Committee are now to be sent by post to the Secretary, Rare Birds Committee, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington or by email to the Secretary, Rare Birds Committee at osnz@xtra.co.nz. Paul Scofield took over as convenor of the Committee on 1st January 2005.

The following sightings have been accepted by the committee since preparation of the report in Southern Bird 18.

UBR 15/04 - Report from Sheila Petch of a problematic shag seen by herself and Thomas Hanley at the Godley Head entrance to Lyttelton Harbour on 15/12/03. This sighting was accepted as being of a *Leucocarbo* shag, but species uncertain.

UBR 20/04 - Report from Jim Moore of a **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* seen at Foxton Beach on 25/1/04.

UBR 21/04 - Report and photographs from Jim Moore of a **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* seen by himself and Ian Saville at the Manawatu estuary on 8/1/04.

UBR 24/04 - Report and photograph from Jackie Stevenson of an **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* seen by herself, Gary Stevenson and Margaret Pearson at 'The Kumaras', Motueka on 19/3/04.

UBR 26/04 - Report and photograph from Colin Miskelly of a **Moseley's Rockhopper Penguin** *Eudyptes chrysocome moseleyi* seen by Sarah and Tim Gregory-Hunt and others at Star Keys Island, Chatham Islands on 3/1/04.

UBR 27/04 - Report from Richard and Suzanne Schofield of an **Erect-crested Penguin** *Eudyptes sclateri* seen at Tahakopa Beach, South Otago on 8/2/04.

UBR 28/04 - Report from Richard and Suzanne Schofield of a **Royal Penguin** *Eudyptes chrysolophus schlegeli* seen at Nugget Point, South Otago on 22/2/04.

UBR 29/04 - Report from Chris Petyt of a probable **Japanese Snipe** *Gallinago hardwickii* seen by himself, Peter Field, Charmaine Mead, Robyn Jones and two others at Taupata Point, near Puponga on 6 & 7/3/04.

UBR 30/04 & 30A/04 - Reports from Richard Parrish of **Grey Ternlets** *Procelsterna cerulea albivitta* seen by himself and Reuben Williams at Sugarloaf Rock, Poor Knights Islands on 3/2/04, and by himself, Katrina Hansen and other OSNZ Northland members at the same locality on 27/3/04.

UBR 31/04 - Report from Richard Parrish of a **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* seen by himself and Audrey Williams at Tapura, Kaipara Harbour on 6/5/04.

UBR 32/04 - Report from Ted Wnorowski of three **Great Knots** *Calidris tenuirostris* seen at Mangere Sewage Ponds, Auckland by himself on 1, 4, 5 & 8/4/04, and by John Dowding and Ray Clough on 4/4/04.

UBR 33/04 - Report from Ted Wnorowski of a **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus* seen at Mangere on 5 & 8/4/04.

UBR 34/04 - Report from Ted Wnorowski of a **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* seen at Lake Omapere, Northland on 11/4/04.

UBR 35/04 - Report from Ted Wnorowski of two **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* seen by himself, Gwenda Pulham, Adrian Riegen and others at Mangere Sewage Ponds on 22 & 23/5/04.

UBR 36/04 - Report and photograph of a **Nankeen Night Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus* seen at Double Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound by Rosie Furniss and others on 4/4/04, and by Ray Waters on 3/5/04.

UBR 37/04 - Report from Chris Gaskin of a **Providence Petrel** *Pterodroma solandri* seen at sea east of Whangaroa Harbour on 22/5/04 by himself, Brett Rathe, Karen Baird, Derek Bettesworth and Mike Imber.

UBR 38/04 - Report from Richard Schofield of a **Chestnut Teal** *Anas castanea* seen by himself and Suzanne Schofield at Clutha River, Balclutha on 14-17/2/03.

UBR 39/04 - Report from Margaret and Wayne Twydale of a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* seen at East Clive, Hawkes Bay on 25/7/04.

UBR 40/04 - Report and photographs from Richard and Suzanne Schofield of an **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* seen at Lawrence, Otago on 17 & 18/6/04.

The following sighting was not accepted by the Committee.

UBR 41/04 - Report of a suspected **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* seen north of Amberley on 26/5/04.

New Zealand Storm Petrel

Two reports of sightings of supposed New Zealand Storm Petrels were received for consideration by the Committee. They are:

UBR 87/03 - Report and photographs from Sav Saville & Brent Stephenson of a supposed **New Zealand Storm Petrel** seen on 25/1/03 by themselves and others at sea about 11 nautical miles due east of Opito Point, Mercury Bay, near Whitianga.

UBR 87A/03 - Report, video footage, and photographs from Robert L. Flood of supposed **New Zealand Storm Petrels** seen on 17/11/03 by himself and Bryan Thomas at sea about 2 km north of Little Barrier Island.

Having considered all the evidence presented in and with UBRs 87/03 and 87A/03, the Committee is of the opinion that the storm petrels reported could be the same as the storm petrel originally described by Mathews under the scientific name *Pealeornis maoriana* that Oliver later called the New Zealand Storm Petrel *Oceanites maorianus*. However, the Committee is not satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the birds seen and photographed by the reporters in the outer Hauraki Gulf are identical to the only three known specimens in Tring and Paris that Mathews described as *Pealeornis maoriana*. Key information lacking in the submitted reports are details of the foot structure (necessary to eliminate *Fregatta*), and measurements (to allow comparisons with the existing specimens).

RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE
9 FEBRUARY 2005

Nominations for Regional Representatives 2006

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

Nominations for the RR of each region close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) on 31 July 2005.

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

If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2006 year.

Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award 2006

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) by 30 June. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs and the Secretary.

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

Contact your RR for further information on OSNZ award procedures. They are set out in the RR's Manual.

Bird news



Leucistic White-faced Heron
by George Pope



King Penguin by Steve Wood



Grey Plover by Tim Barnard



Australian Reed Warbler
by Paul Scofield

Mohaka, a **North Island Brown Kiwi** living in the Boundary Island Mainland Island in Hawkes Bay was found dead in December, the victim of a dog attack. In the western Bay of Plenty there are thought now to be fewer than 15 individuals left; they were relatively common at the last census in 1982. DoC in Tauranga are asking for sightings of the species in the area. Please contact Dave Wills on (07) 578 7677.

In a first for the species, **Fairy Prions** translocated as chicks from Stephens Island to Mana Island in 2002 in a project to re-establish the species there returned to artificial burrows on the island in November signifying success of the project. Common Diving Petrels were successfully translocated to Mana Island in 1997-9.

A **King Penguin**, which may (subject to RBC confirmation) be only the third recorded on the New Zealand mainland, was found in late January moulting on the beach just south of Barrytown, West Coast. Unfortunately the bird chose a beach with easy access just down the road from a pub. The ensuing publicity on TV and in local press brought a steady stream of the public to see the bird, a good proportion of which could be best described as lacking the grey matter which would tell them that driving right up to the bird, taking their dog to see the bird and standing over the bird or prodding it with a stick could possibly stress it. Thus to try to ensure the continued survival of the bird DoC in Punakaiki picked it up and transported it to a relatively inaccessible beach nearby, where it has seemingly carried on with its moult successfully.

Yellow-eyed Penguins have been hit by a mysterious illness, thought to be a *Corynebacterium* infection, which has killed up to 80% of chicks in North Otago, the Otago Peninsula, the Catlins Coast and Stewart Island.

A leucistic **White-faced Heron** has been present near Waikawa Beach, near Levin, Manawatu, for the past year or so.

An **Australian Wood Duck** was reported in February from the rather unlikely and unsuitable location of the Mueller Glacier terminal lake near Mount Cook.

Stoat-trapping as part of Operation Ark in the Cleddau, Arthur and Clinton valleys near Milford Sound, Fiordland has turned around the productivity of **Blue Ducks** in the area, with good numbers of young surviving and starting to breed. In addition, four Blue Duck chicks reared in captivity were released

into the eastern Kahurangi National Park in January 2005

Brown Teal released at Port Charles, Waikato, seem to be doing well, with several broods in the area and 37 of the 43 birds released in May 2004 still alive in December.

Campbell Island Teal were finally re-introduced to Campbell Island in September 2004 after an absence of nearly 200 years. This follows the successful rat eradication on the island in 2001. One individual had already made its own way to the island, entailing a 20 km swim from Dent Island – home to the only known wild population of the species.

A bird reported as an **Osprey** was seen by participants on a Subantarctic Islands birding trip. It flew past their ship near Pitt Island in the Chatham group on 8th December 2004. If accepted this will be the first record for New Zealand.

In a research paper, New Zealand researchers at Oxford University's Ancient Biomolecules Centre run by Professor Alan Cooper extracted DNA from fossil **Haast's Eagle** bones about 2,000 years old. A research team led by Dr Michael Bunce found results so radical that at first they questioned their authenticity. The research team demonstrated that the New Zealand giant was in fact related to one of the world's smallest eagles; the Little Eagle from Australia and New Guinea, which typically weighs under 1 kg. Even more striking was how closely genetically related the two eagle species were. They estimated that their common ancestor lived less than a million years ago, suggesting that the eagle arrived in New Zealand and increased in weight by 10-15 times over this period. Such rapid size change is unprecedented in terrestrial vertebrates. (Source PLoS BIOLOGY www.plosbiology.org).

The **New Zealand Dotterel** has undergone a 55% increase on the Coromandel Peninsula from 1996 to 2004, with 272 individuals counted in the recent national census there. Nationwide numbers of the species were found to be stable, with decreases on the west coast compensated for by increases on the east coast.

A well-watched **Grey Plover** has been present at the Maketu Estuary, Bay of Plenty since November 2004.

Yellow-crowned Parakeets transferred to Mana Island in June 2004 had started to breed in January 2005. The theory behind transferring the species there is to allow a

population to become established on Mana before the apparently more competitive Red-crowned Parakeets self-colonise from Kapiti Island, about 22 km to the north.

On November 12th an **Australian Reed Warbler** was found by a Naturetrek bird tour group at St Anne's Lagoon, near Cheviot in North Canterbury, however they didn't put the news out until the bird had departed on 28th November. The person responsible for alerting the birding community was a member of the public, Harry Furling, who formerly lived in Holland and recognised the call as being that of a type of reed warbler. Harry phoned Sheila Petch, who is the OSNZ phone contact in Canterbury (listed under Ornithological Society in the phone book) who alerted Nick Allen at about 7pm on 14th November. Nick almost immediately drove to St Anne's Lagoon to be met by loud calls from a small raupo bed. Over the next two weeks the bird stayed in the same small area and was seen by about 40 birdwatchers and ornithologists. On the 28th November the bird was moving around a bit more, and seems to have left that night. If accepted it will be the first record for the species in New Zealand.

In mid-February **Stitchbirds** were translocated to the Karori Sanctuary on the outskirts of Wellington. This is the first transfer to a mainland location, albeit protected by a predator-proof fence.

In early September 2004 36 **Saddlebacks** were released into the Boundary Stream Mainland Island in Hawkes Bay, this is the first re-introduction of the species into a non predator-proof fenced area on the mainland. Six weeks after release 21 birds were estimated to be still extant, a 57% survival rate. None are thought to have attempted to nest yet.

OBITUARY NOTICES

John Smith, who used to act as a guardian for the New Zealand Dotterels at Maketu, Bay of Plenty.

Rod Cossee, who until recent DoC restructuring was the Banding Officer for New Zealand.

Sources: Birding-NZ email group, What's up DOC? website newsletter, Rarebits (the DoC newsletter about threatened species work), BirdLife News Alert, Alan Collins, Tim Barnard, Peter Bull.

Oamaru Penguin Symposium, 2005

The 5th Oamaru Penguin Symposium will be held in Oamaru on Thursday 30th June and Friday 1st July 2005. The meeting will be concerned with the penguins of New Zealand, Australia and their Subantarctic islands. It is proposed that the focus will include the following themes:

- Penguin diseases and hazards
- Conservation issues for penguins of our greater region.
- Crested penguins – biology, populations and changes.

However, papers submitted for consideration for presentation do not need to be limited to these themes, as all aspects of New Zealand and Australian penguin biology will be considered. The Conference programme will be designed to aid registrants' opportunities to visit both the Oamaru Blue Penguin facility and the nearby Yellow-eyed Penguin colony.

The meeting will be held at the Kingsgate Brydone Hotel, where all conference, presentation and accommodation facilities are available. Hotel management is offering concessionary rates for accommodation to registrants of the Symposium, for all grades of accommodation.

Registration will be \$70 per person. Late registration after 13th June will attract a \$10 penalty. The registration fee includes a book of abstracts of all presentations, morning and afternoon tea and buffet luncheon for both days of the Conference.

In order to help programme-planning, notice of a wish to submit a paper at the meeting will be required. It would be appreciated if this could be with the Convenor by 16th May. Facilities for poster presentation will not be available.

Registration and abstract forms will be made available on the website, www.penguin.net.nz/events in due course. They may be downloaded for completion and, accompanied by the registration fee, sent to the Convenor, to whom all enquiries should be directed.

A G HOCKEN,
"EAST RIDING", 223 WHITEROCKS ROAD,
RD 6-D OAMARU, NEW ZEALAND.
EMAIL:AGH@IHUG.CO.NZ

Ahuriri attracts stray seabird

What started off as a short walk for Ann Sherlock and Sabine Bertucchi in mid-December led to the unexpected discovery of a seabird about as far from the sea as possible in that part of the South Island.

Starting from the bridge near Omarama going downstream along the Ahuriri River, they had walked no more than a kilometre when they saw the bird, which Sabine later managed to photo. What looked to be a strange-looking young tern was flying quite near a Black-fronted Tern. It was hunting up and down the river close to Ann and Sabine (turning several times over a short section of the river) and was flying strongly. The bird then flew very low over the river and actually came down into it. The current took the bird downstream backwards but the bird seemed to be frolicking in the water and maybe feeding. It didn't seem distressed or weak.

Walking back to the bridge the bird (or another one) was seen again, flying strongly, again with the Black-fronted Tern in its vicinity.

The photo of the bird was circulated electronically to a number of birdwatchers and ornithologists who agreed that it seemed to show the astonishing sight of what was almost certainly a young Broad-billed Prion flying over a gravel river bed. At around the same time there was a small wreck of young birds of the species on some coasts.



photo by Sabine Bertucchi

ANDREW P. ANDERSON'S

AA BIRDING & TRAVEL

2005

Mar 28-Apr 8. NE. AUSTRALIA with Ben Blewitt
April 2 - 22. PAPUA NEW GUINEA with
22-30 an 8 day extension to New Britain & Bougainville
May 16- Jun 6 N.E. USA - vibrant birding;
American spring warblers (& other birds)
June 8-22 SOUTHERN FRANCE - a Tastebirds tour
(birding with history, wine & food)
July 3-16. MT ISA and the BIRDSVILLE TRACK.
The real outback.
Jul 30-Aug 19. PAPUA NEW GUINEA.
Up to 22 Birds of Paradise
Aug 22-Sep 1. CAIRNS & AREA. Especially for Kiwis.

AFRICA -

Sep 6 - 28. A Prospecting tour of MADAGASCAR
Sept 28-30. J'BURG & PILANSBERG Conservation Park
Oct 1-8. KALAHARI to CAPETOWN, Desert & semi-desert endemics with a
coastal section at Lamberts Bay.
Oct 9-14. WESTERN CAPE - a Tastebirds tour (Excellent birding with
history, wine & food)
Oct 15/16. CAPETOWN PELAGIC
Nov 26 -Dec 12 NEW ZEALAND

SOUTH AMERICA

Dec 19 Dec to 10th Jan 2006 CHILE, north to south.

2006

Jan 10-21 South Shetlands & the Antarctic Islands & Peninsula
Feb 5-25 THAILAND, north & central.
Mar 5-25 COSTA RICA

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tel/fax +61 7 4031 8803, mob 0438 318804
web page: aabirding.com • birdo@aabirding.com

Shining Cuckoo Eating Chaffinch Egg

On a farm near Matamata one November in the late 1970s I witnessed a Shining Cuckoo with a Chaffinch egg in its beak. The bird tossed the egg a bit, seemed to eat the contents then flew off. I was very close and I retrieved the empty Chaffinch egg when the bird was gone.

MICK SIBLEY

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*.

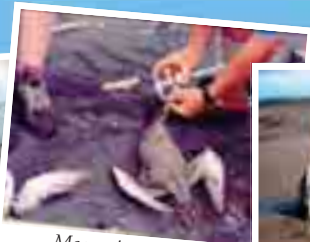
Please send to Biz Bell, PO Box 14-492, Wellington,
or wml@clear.net.nz

Beach patrols mean more than birds

Make your beach patrol generate as much value as possible by taking an interest in more than just dead birds! Then turn this interest into valuable records by promptly reporting your finds to the appropriate authorities.



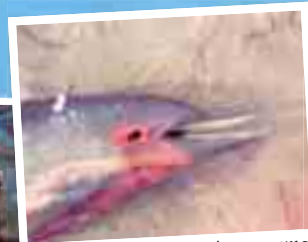
Windlass. Photo by Neville Ritchie



Measuring a Sooty Shearwater



The well-preserved remains of a hand-powered windlass.



A photo of a dead marine mammal helps its identification.



Partial remains of a large whale skull

All other photos by Hugh Clifford

Dead birds

The OSNZ Beach Patrol Scheme is based on finding dead birds on beaches. It is like a treasure hunt and you never know what you will find. One pleasure comes from being in a coastal situation, and enjoying the fresh air and views. Another comes from finding interesting and unusual dead birds and going through the sometimes challenging process of identifying them.

On rare occasions, you will find a banded bird and feel really lucky. The fascinating information on date and place of banding that you will receive from the Banding Office when you report your find, will compensate for many patrols when you didn't find anything very exciting. The greatest benefit from your beach patrol effort, whether it be a large or small effort, is the contribution you make towards the national scheme, but at a personal level you are honing your skills at seabird identification and getting a really close-up look at species you would otherwise never get close to.

However, there may be more on the beach than just dead birds.

Live birds

The hours spent on the beach are ideal for observing and recording live birds too. The value of this is not just during the period when you were doing it for the Atlas of Bird Distribution. Some OSNZ Regions have a long-established formal system of recording live birds during beach patrols, and no doubt many individuals in other regions keep their own personal records. If the series of observations extends over a long period of years it should provide a good insight into changes that have occurred during that time.

In most accessible beach areas the impact of humans is escalating tremendously. A comparison of past, current, and future records of live birds on each of these beaches will no doubt be very revealing. Sadly, I expect it will fill us with nostalgia

for 'the good old days' when more birds of more species were present, including more species breeding, but without the figures we would only be guessing.

Recording live birds on beaches also gives us a chance to contribute to knowledge of the movements of migratory shorebirds within New Zealand. The coast is often their highway. Flocks of waders are sometimes seen in flight, and flocks or individuals sometimes drop in for a rest and a feed on beaches where they are never normally seen.

Ask your OSNZ Regional Recorder which records are worth submitting to them, or to the New Zealand Wader Study Group. If you don't record the sighting, or if it remains only in your notebook (which is then burned by your family after your death) your potentially valuable observation will be lost.

Marine mammals

Seals both live and dead are becoming more common on beaches as their population recovers. Their increasing numbers result in them extending their range northwards to latitudes where they have been rare since the great slaughter of the 19th century. Are those statements correct, or is it merely an impression?

Beach patrollers can help turn opinion into fact if we always record our sightings of live and dead seals and report them to the local DoC office; and similarly for other marine mammals. On remote beaches beach patrollers are often the first to see (and probably more often the first to report) dead whales and dolphins. There is a set of standard measurements which you should take and submit with your report, and photos are very helpful too. Your report may be the only information ever recorded about a carcass, as it could disappear from the beach on the next high tide.

A good book for helping with identification of species is *Whales and dolphins of New Zealand and Australia* by Alan N. Baker (published by Victoria University Press, most recently in 1999).

Marine Reptiles

Reptiles: whatever next? Yes, beach patrollers do occasionally find a live or dead turtle or sea snake. These should be reported to DoC and/or maybe to the museum if there is a large one in the area. Photos of marine reptiles are always good for identification. A helpful book for identification is *New Zealand Frogs and Reptiles* by Brian Gill and Tony Whittaker (published 1996 by David Bateman). This book contains accounts of the five species of turtle and two species of sea snake which have been reported in New Zealand.

Archeological items

The coast provides important information on past human activities. Human settlers over the centuries had to land at the coast. They and later generations often lived on the coast, or visited it for periods, to take advantage of the seafood available. Traces of their presence are numerous. Beach patrollers should keep their eyes open for these traces.

Don't assume that because the remains might be hundreds of years old they will be well-known to tangata whenua or to science. If they have been recently exposed by shifting sands you might be the first person to see them for hundreds of years. Just because there is not much showing don't assume that the remains are insignificant; there may be much more buried there. Above all do not disturb the site yourself as your disturbance could mean that less can be revealed by proper study. Also your actions would be breaking the law.

Reports of threats to sites are important too, such as evidence of recent fossicking, or active erosion of formerly stable in-situ sites. Report your find to someone who will treasure and evaluate the information and know what to do with it. The New Zealand Archaeological Association is the main repository for this information and in each region there is a file-keeper who maintains the records. They will know

whether the site is on record already, and if so what the results of any past studies have been.

Probably the best way to make your find known would be to report it to the DoC archaeologist for your region. By all means make the initial report to your local DoC office or local museum if this is more convenient. The important thing is to start the reporting process somewhere, straight away.

The shipping industry is another type of human activity which can leave traces to be seen by beach patrollers. A huge number of ships have been wrecked on the coastline of New Zealand. Documentation of some of the earlier ones may be scanty or non-existent. On one recent Waikato beach patrol the sand had been scoured out to a much lower level than normal. This revealed remains of a

shipwreck, which would normally have been buried. When DoC was informed, the staff quickly decided the find was significant and carried out a substantial recovery operation. The items are now being conserved and it is expected they will eventually be on display.

No record has yet been found of the loss of this wooden sailing ship, but hopefully some day it may be identified and its history revealed. The value of the speedy action was soon shown, as within a few days the sea had buried the site in sand again. An Authority from the Historic Places Trust was necessary for this recovery, as items more than 100 years old may not be altered or moved without the Trust's approval.

If you encounter archaeological remains (terrestrial or maritime) always try to take a photograph. Other useful

things to do include drawing a sketch, marking details on a photograph or photocopy, and recording the grid or GPS reference. I always carry a small camera in my beach patrol gear now. All the types of shots I have mentioned above are going to be of stationary subjects at close range and all you need is a small, light, cheap camera; even a disposable is good enough. A photo is truly worth a thousand words.

Finally, don't hesitate to follow through to see where your report has ended up. Everyone has their own interests and priorities. Sometimes it may not be possible for an agency to take action following your report immediately, but you have the right to expect that information you have provided is appropriately housed and available to future researchers.

HUGH CLIFFORD

Enderby Trust Subantarctic Odyssey

TEXT & PICTURES BY KERRY BORKIN

Sitting amongst the brilliantly coloured megaherbs watching Light-mantled Sooty Albatross pairs match each other in flight on Campbell Island; hearing the eerie cry of White-capped Mollies through the swirling mist of Auckland Island; and sitting amongst a group of Royal Penguins on Macquarie Island whilst they pecked insistently at my gloves were just some of the highlights of a trip to the New Zealand and Australian Subantarctic region.

I travelled the Southern Ocean as an Enderby Trust scholarship winner with Heritage Expeditions, a Christchurch-based ecotourism company in December 2004. This trust was set up to encourage young people aged 18 to 35 to visit the Subantarctic region.

I had read a number of books on the Subantarctic but nothing could prepare me for the sights, sounds, and smells of Sandy Bay: a Macquarie Island beach filled with thousands of inquisitive Royal, and stately King Penguins with elephant seals brawling intermittently. Macquarie Island is managed by Australia – they even stamp your passport – and was the most southerly of the islands I visited at 54° 30' S.

Historically New Zealanders have had a large impact on the Macquarie ecosystem. Joseph Hatch, a keen entrepreneur and one-time member of the New Zealand parliament, developed the elephant seal and penguin oil industry on Macquarie, and other New Zealanders released Weka there in the mid-1800s. This introduction led to the extinction of the Macquarie Island Parakeet and the Macquarie Island Rail, both endemic species.

Trips to these islands now have many restrictions due to their vulnerability to human impacts. Each time we got on or off the ship our boots were scrubbed and sterilised, and clothing and bags checked for seeds, mice, or rats to prevent their introduction. Tourist numbers are also restricted in some places to only 150 per year.

Landings are not permitted on New Zealand's Snares, Bounty, and Antipodes Islands groups, but we were able to get close views from naiaid inflatables. Hundreds of penguins, mostly Erect-crested, could easily be seen during our naiaid cruise around the Antipodes Islands. Seeing these penguins under the water was quite a treat; little bullets, their yellow still obvious, their streamlining perfect.

One morning I woke to see two rocks literally covered with animals; the Bounty Islands. Actually about 20 granite rocks, the highest about 70 m above sea level, it seems

as if not even a square metre is empty of life. Salvin's Mollies, Bounty Island Shags, Cape Pigeons and Erect-crested Penguins are jam-packed between New Zealand fur seals on these 135 ha islands 700 km from the South Island. The Bounty Islands were discovered in 1788 by the notorious Captain Bligh and are named after his ship.

In 1895 the New Zealand Government made the unusual decision to advertise a pastoral leasehold opportunity on the Bounty Islands for a period of twenty-one years. Presumably the advertiser had never visited the island group as there is no vegetation above the high tide mark!

I had visited the Snares previously as a volunteer for the Otago University Kia mau te titi mo ake tonu atu (Keep the titi forever) research team, but as a tourist, from a naiaid, you can see far more of the islands. Fortunately this island has never been invaded by rats as they would be sure to eat the eggs and chicks of the many millions of seabirds who breed on this small island group 200 km south of Bluff. However, even this remote island is not immune to external effects. Since the 1970s Sooty Shearwaters on the Snares are thought to have declined by 37%, or about one million breeding pairs. Fisheries bycatch is a likely cause of decline.

Enderby Island, one of the Auckland Island group, was one of the places we were permitted to land. Watching Northern Giant Petrels plunge their bills into a dead Hooker's sea lion made me feel as if I was in a nature documentary. The Northern Giant Petrels had large still fluffy chicks by mid-December and we were lucky enough to see several huddled under low *Hebe* bushes.

Brown Skuas also provided gruesome entertainment to many passengers. Quick to scavenge stillborn Hooker's sea lion pups from their howling mothers on Enderby Island, one was also seen attacking a Broad-billed Prion and then flew off with it in its grasp.

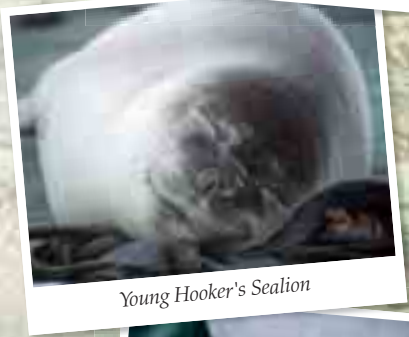
A further highlight for the many keen birdwatchers on board was seeing a Chatham Island Taiko less than 20 m from the ship on our approach to the Chatham Islands.

This visit to the New Zealand and Australian Subantarctic region was the chance of a lifetime to observe some of most vulnerable ecosystems. Memories of these places will last for a lifetime.

Enderby Trust can be contacted through Heritage Expeditions, P.O. Box 6282 Christchurch, New Zealand (www.heritage-expeditions.com).



Buller's Molliehawk



Young Hooker's Sealion



Buller's chick yawning



The author and King Penguins



Kokako Recovery in the Mangatutu Valley

MIKE AND SHAREN GRAHAM

Prior to 1995 pest control was limited to drops of 1080 over the valley on irregular occasions, but this random effort was just enough to maintain a dwindling Kokako population. As uncoordinated and limited as it was, the 1080 protection, without question, saved this bird population that otherwise would have been lost.

In 1995 the Otorohanga Kiwi House supported by DoC initiated a predator control programme in the Mangatutu Valley involving the laying of over 900 bait stations on a network of marked tracks covering some 1000 ha. Laurence Gordon did most of this work, then went on to enrol a volunteer group led by Howick Tramping Club which in 2003 took over the pest control responsibility with support from the DoC office in Te Kuiti.

In the first three years sponsorship funding was obtained from State Insurance, with additional contributions from the Waikato branch of Forest & Bird. Sponsorship stopped with the sale of State Insurance, and DoC picked up the cost of pest control. In 2004 the Howick Tramping Club received sponsorship funding from Transpower, and with help from DoC were able to purchase the bait needed to maintain the low pest status achieved in the valley.

It isn't cheap; many thousands of dollars have already been spent on this project plus the countless hours of unpaid time. But the good news is that it is getting cheaper as both technology and methodology improve with experience-based evolution. The positive outcome is that in the not too-distant-future we hope to have the ability to apply the protective cover over four times the area for roughly the same cost and energy expenditure as we do servicing the current 1000 ha.

The above is not just driven by hopes of improving efficiency; the success of the project and the expanding population of Kokako make it an operational imperative. To maintain the momentum we will have to do more in the future with the limited resources we can muster.

Sharen and I organised an OSNZ field trip to the area in 1998 and have been actively involved there ever since. Our bird and botany expertise is clearly appreciated by the members of the Howick Tramping Club who are a great bunch of people and another wonderful example of the environmental volunteer group phenomenon that is sweeping across New Zealand.

Although we were already members of the Auckland Tramping Club we subsequently joined the Howick group so we could be identified with and participate as a legitimate part of the leading team. We are involved in the project planning and have made submissions to DoC and others on various matters, so that identity issue was important to all of us. I would, however, have preferred to sign the correspondence as "Mike Graham – OSNZ Auckland" and in truth I believe Sharen and I are probably regarded more as the *de facto* representatives of OSNZ and Bot Soc than genuine HTC members.

I rather like the idea of this expert 'attachment' status to volunteer groups and it is perhaps another way for the future of the Society that warrants further examination.

Kokako Population Surveys

The Mangatutu Valley has been identified as one of 23 key sites necessary to achieve the goals of the DoC Kokako Recovery Plan. The recovery plan requires key sites to achieve a population target of 50 pairs and conduct population monitoring every four years over the next 20 years of management.

The first comprehensive survey of the Kokako population in the Mangatutu Valley was conducted in March 1996 (DoC: S.L. Marsh 1996) and discovered 10 territorial pairs and nine territorial singles – 29 birds in all. The second survey was done in 2000 and found 33 territorial pairs and 9 territorial singles, giving a total of 75 birds, which at the time we thought was conservative given that we identified 33 fledged juveniles that year. Either way the population had more than doubled.

The latest survey was carried out in May/June 2004, and in a smaller field area than the previous surveys. 46 pairs and 16 singles were found (108 birds) which again is undoubtedly conservative given that we know the birds have now spread out of the intensively protected area – but we are not unhappy with that result!

Since the 2000 survey 11 Kokako have been captured in the Mangatutu Valley for translocation to the Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre. There has been no subsequent decline in the territorial bird numbers in the areas where Kokako were taken, so others must

have rapidly taken over what are desirable locations in the forest.

In addition to Kokako, observations have been made on other bird species:

parakeet sightings have increased from one sighting in 2000 to 15 sightings in 2004; eight Kaka were seen in 2000 and 12 in 2004.

These and other general observations of species such as Robin, Whitehead, New Zealand Pigeon, and even bats suggest the pest control programme is having a beneficial effect on other species in the forest. Programmes of five minute counts are to be started which will attempt to more precisely quantify such general population increases.

Trials & Tribulations

Any such programme will encounter one problem or another in the course of time, and the Mangatutu Valley Kokako Recovery programme has been no exception.

The adopted management regime is to apply bait to the 900+ Philproof bait stations at the start of every month from August to November then return in February and March to assess the breeding success by looking for pairs with juveniles.

The latter is done with the help of tape recordings of local Kokako calls and can be very effective. However, we didn't count on that effectiveness extending to bringing in a New Zealand Falcon that beneath the canopy flew in at great speed to a branch about 3 m above my extended arm holding the tape recorder.

There are one or two pairs of New Zealand Falcons in the area that we see on almost every visit. The behaviour we witnessed suggests that occasional Kokako predation is very likely.

We had other more serious animal problems:

until 2003 we had used brodifacoum (Talon®) as the pest control bait and it worked well for us – very well in fact. However, DoC scientists believed there was a risk with this toxin in the form of potentially harmful residues that could impact on humans eating hunted venison or wild pork. We also heard somewhat irrational claims that the bait killed Moreporks. It remains an emotive subject, which is a pity.

Smart Sparrows and Live-wire Gulls

The recent report by Bob Brockie and Barry O'Brien on House Sparrows opening automatic doors (*Notornis*, 2004, Vol.51: 53-55) is nice example of learned behaviour. Common birds in New Zealand appear especially prone to feed indoors, although this may simply reflect the number of cafés etc. with wide-open entrances. House Sparrows, of course, are always ready to pick up our crumbs, but when lunching in Auckland's Albert Park I noticed a difference in behaviour between the sexes. Males of this group usually secured any crumb tossed into a mixed group, but only females would take food from the hand, and the accompanying male sparrows became very agitated while they did so.

Turning to gulls, the trick of breaking open a shell by dropping it from a height is common behaviour of Black-backed Gulls. However, I once saw a Black-backed Gull twice drop a shell on to the firm sand of Onetangi Beach, Waiheke Island, without success, after which the bird

carried the shell to the tar-sealed Marine Drive where a third attempt from a similar height was successful. What can we make of such an observation?

My example of Red-billed Gulls learning a new trick relates to perching. At Snell's Beach, north of Auckland, soon after my arrival in this country in early 1966, I spotted a solitary gull at rest upon a power line. My companion saw nothing odd in this (but he was not a birder). However, I had to keep a close eye on Red-billed Gulls for another 20 years to see another instance of wire-perching (at Kohimarama, and surely a different individual), and to see that the gull achieved this without wrapping its webbed feet around the line. This is in contrast to shags, which readily cling to wires and thin branches.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

The Mangatutu Valley is approximately 1500 ha of unmodified podocarp/hardwood forest with a tawa dominated canopy. Montane forest with totara, horopito, toatoa and *Dracophyllum* as predominant species occurs at higher altitudes. The valley is located adjacent to Rangitoto Station; a 427 ha property owned by the Native Forest Restoration Trust in the North Pureora region east of Otorohanga. The farm house provides welcome comfort as a base for the recovery work given that the relatively high altitude generates very variable climatic conditions.

We moved on nevertheless and for the 2003 season were supplied with Racumin® – a Bayer product with a big reputation for attracting rats, which was exactly what we wanted.

We serviced the 900+ bait stations in early September but on the return trip a month later found our efforts devastated by wild pig. The pigs were equally attracted to the bait and developed a taste for it. They followed our bait lines and the Philproof bait stations we had installed were no match against the snout of a hungry porker. Many of the bait stations were dislodged from their mountings and several were lost altogether.

We repaired the damage and re-charged the bait stations but a further month on found a repeat of the predicament. We also found quite a few dead pigs, and that angered many of us as we were not there to kill pigs; we were there to protect Kokako. The wretched pigs devastated an estimated 84% of our bait stations, leaving a paltry 16% to kill rats. It was a huge waste of money and effort; it wasn't going to work for the birds and we were not happy.

Volunteer groups are great because all sorts of people make up the numbers and in our bunch we had a chemist. We rushed his views into print – expressing our concern to both DoC and Bayer. To their credit both organisations responded positively and professionally, but couldn't offer any explanation or solutions.

There was only one thing we could do, so it looked like we would be busy through the winter months relocating over 900 bait stations nailed to trees in the forest to a level beyond pig reach. In the end we didn't have to go through the arduous task of relocating all the bait stations.

Unbeknown to us DoC had a new bait delivery system from Auckland manufacturers Connovation under trial and for the 2004 season suggested we use it in the Mangatutu valley. It was a very attractive offer.

Although the bait was comparatively expensive the big advantage was that it didn't need to be put in a bait station; instead it could simply be stapled to a tree, which was very quick and easy to locate above pig reach. Secondly a single application would do for the entire season, so we wouldn't have to replenish the bait stations each month as had been the requirement until then.

A team of 29 volunteers assembled in early September 2004 and we rushed about the Mangatutu forest where the 'snap-snap' of staple guns drowned the odd plaintive Kokako call as hundreds of Connovation bait capsules were vigorously attached to tree trunks. A week later a smaller group of us returned to lay the rat monitoring lines and check on how things were going.

The rat tunnel is a simple but ingenious device consisting of a narrow plastic tunnel with a timber base, on the inside of which is a removable plastic tray. In the centre of the tray is a thin sponge that is saturated with a blue-green food colouring liquid. On either side of that absorbent brown paper strips are applied and the final touch is a small dab of peanut butter at both ends of the tunnel. The rats are attracted to the tunnels by the peanut butter, which they consume at one end then run through the tunnel to reach the dab at the opposite end. In the process they wet their feet in the sponge with the food colouring and leave green footprints on the brown paper strip that tells us of their presence.

We have 100 such tunnels organised into four runs of 25 located in different parts of the Mangatutu valley and in each run the tunnels are 20 to 30m apart. Our 2003 rat count was 4%, that is we had rat footprints in just four out of the 100 tunnels deployed. Anything under 5% is just great for the birds. The first 2004 rat count done in early October was a devastating 80%. It is a vivid illustration of just how quickly a rat population can grow, and is almost certainly due to the fact that our bait in 2003 was eaten by pigs and not rats.

We were also reasonably sure there was a problem with the new bait. The Connovation bait package is 'b' shaped – the top portion being a waxed card that is stapled to the tree and the lower portion a tube with pre-feed on the outer edges and the toxin in the middle. The idea is that the rats are attracted to the pre-feed and keep eating in towards the poison in the middle. It's a great idea but success is dependent on the rats being attracted to and liking the taste of the pre-feed.

It didn't look good but we decided to make absolutely sure so left the bait for another three weeks then returned to work the rat tunnels for a second time. A little more of the bait had

been eaten but we still had an unacceptable rat count of 78%.

By now we were also running out of time. Sharen had been in the Hunua Ranges with an Auckland Regional Council team the week before, and the group found the first Kokako nest of the season. The Mangatutu birds start breeding later than average but we had to move fast if we were to get any rat control done before their season really started.

We sent our tame chemist around to the manufacturers and to consult with DoC, and I should add that by now group members were not particularly happy given that we had spent the money we had raised on a product recommended and purchased through DoC and it wasn't working. We could not afford mistakes like that. To their credit Connovation came to the party and supplied 3000 sachets of Feracol®, a bait DoC have used previously and are confident it will do the business. On 5th November a group of 15 returned to install this latest batch of bait and once again the 'snap-snap' of staple guns echoed through the forest as 3000 sachets were attached to trees. It was another huge physical effort.

There is quite a lot more to this conservation story. We have had a few people problems as well as pest problems. Some Howick Tramping Club Members questioned the extent of their involvement, especially as many went for some considerable time without actually seeing a Kokako, and some pointed out they had joined a tramping club not OSNZ or Forest & Bird. In contrast, but in the same vein, there is a definite irony in the fact that Sharen and I, OSNZ members, ended up joining a second tramping club purely because of the bird work they were leading.

We also had some early sorting out to do with DoC but that had a very positive outcome and a close and healthy relationship with the Te Kuiti office has since developed. It was a good exercise that underlines the value of communication and personal contact.

Our aim is to have over 100 breeding Kokako pairs in the Mangatutu valley and we are now well on our way. Should any OSNZ members wish to participate in this work or question us about anything in this report please make contact: our email address is: mandsgraham@clear.net.nz, or call us on 09 817 5537. We would be pleased to discuss anything with you.

Reflected Blackbird

Whilst staying at a hotel at Mangatawhiri (south of Auckland) we received an early and unscheduled wake-up call. I initially took it to be the sound of sparrows rattling around in the steel guttering or under the eaves, but the sound was very repetitious and loud.

On drawing back the curtains it was apparent the noise was due to a very determined male Blackbird defending his territory from a virtual intruder in the form of his own image reflected in the one-way window glass (doubtless rendered more reflective when the curtains were closed on the inside).

He stood resolutely on the broad outer sill and proceeded to fling himself against the glass, bouncing off and diving straight back in to the fray. Periodically his fury saw him rise up the glass to the highest point before tumbling back to the sill or down to the garden beneath. In this latter case, having lost sight of his adversary, he would fly back up to the sill and repeat the whole performance.

We watched in macabre awe as he pounded himself again and again. Eventually a sense of compassion combined with having had quite enough of the racket saw us frighten him away. I sincerely hope he doesn't make a career out of this behaviour, as I would fear for his longevity.

MICHAEL AND TANE TURNER

Corkscrewing Variable Oystercatcher

On Paraparaumu Beach on 19th August 2004 I watched a Variable Oystercatcher, about five metres distant, feeding in an unusual manner. It inserted its beak into wet sand to about 2/3 of its length then, without lifting its beak, it ran around four or five times like a corkscrew.

It then pulled up its beak and was seen to be holding a pipi, which it spent a while eating before flying off. On examination the empty shell was completely clean of flesh.

ROSEMARY HEATHER

BOOK REVIEWS

Moon, Geoff. 2002 *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. New Holland Publishers (NZ) Ltd. ISBN 1 877246581. 140pp soft cover.

Geoff Moon states in his opening paragraph that this is 'a guidebook for the average nature lover to identify birds in New Zealand – it is not a comprehensive guide for serious birdwatchers'.

Is this the guidebook you would give someone who shows an interest but is not quite hooked on birdwatching? Certainly this photographic guide is an excellent introduction and provides a sure way into the pleasures of observing nature.

The photographs are generally sharp and clear and show the birds actively engaged in their environment. This is an advantage of photographs over drawings. It is precisely the 'bird in action' that helps in identification and gives lively interest to the subject matter.

Even though the book is pocket sized, Moon has generally been able to include two photographs of the one species. One photograph shows the adult bird and the second the adult bird with its young, either feeding or just being protected. The wonderful image of the Royal Spoonbill on page 46 provides an excellent close up of the spoon-like bill, the yellow eyes set in the upper edge of the black mask and the yellowness of the breast feathers in contrast with the iridescent whiteness of the rest of the feathers, and we are given a glimpse of a downy-grey spoonbill nesting. A very clear photograph on page 130 of a male and female Redpoll nesting in an apple tree shows all the red feathers on the male's breast and top of the head and the smaller amount of red feathers on the female's head only.

Moon covers all the same birds, both native and endemic in the same order as the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* (Heather and Robertson). With this pocket edition the reader is not missing out on quantity. The text is also informative and covers similar ground to that covered in the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* but it is written in a less academic style that suits the intended reader. Moon's previous,

smallish field guide in hardback using photographs, the *Reed Field Guide to New Zealand Birds*, (Reed, 1992 with reprints) needed updating to the more flexible format.

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of New Zealand with its soft cover, slimmer volume, and easily held in one hand is a worthy successor. However the very small print size and stiff binding style detract a little from the pleasure of using it.

Its relative cheapness and use of photography instead of line drawings may encourage those who think they are not serious birdwatchers to buy *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. It will certainly fit in a pocket, and through the small but excellent photographs the average nature lover will be given a taste of the pleasure of identifying birds. The informative text will also expand their knowledge and encourage the reader to further enquiry.

CELIA THOMPSON

Short Review

Molina, Kathy C., Shuford, W David (eds). April 2004. *Ecology and Conservation of Birds of the Salton Sink: An Endangered Ecosystem*. Studies in Avian Biology No 27. (Proceedings of symposia). Published by the Cooper Ornithological Society, California, U.S.A.

This volume is the result of two symposia on the past and present status of the avifauna of the Salton Sea, California. This compilation of papers includes such topics as the history of the area, waterbirds, shorebirds and waterfowl use, landbird migration, Burrowing Owls and conservation issues.

ROS BATCHELER

At our January indoor meeting 17 of us (a record for our venue) listened to CJ Ralph giving an illustrated talk about Moturoa Island, his New Zealand home in summer. After intensive pest eradication, New Zealand Robins were introduced here and are doing well. Following on from this, Carol and I couldn't resist the opportunity to visit the island two days later on CJ's invitation and we took part in a Robin census that morning. Another visit is planned for 3rd April.

DETLEF DAVIES

South Auckland

After a particularly windy and rather wet November and December the weather has now settled and we are able to spend time observing the large wader flocks in the northern harbours.

A programme has been arranged for the first six months of the year including a speaker at our monthly meetings and also several organised field trips. If anyone wants a copy of details of these in our newsletter contact me and I will forward one. Visitors are always welcome.

The February meeting started off with the annual meeting and approval of the accounts for the year and then we got down to serious birding issues. The guest speaker was Luis Catedral from the University of Auckland describing the parrots of Mexico and their conservation challenges. Luis is studying Red-crowned Parakeets on Tiritiri Matangi Island with a view to learning conservation techniques to apply to parrot species in his homeland, many of which are under threat.

On the birding front there is a good range of unusual wading birds at Miranda and in the southern Manukau Harbour, and also extensive flocks at the old sewer pond site at Mangere. This latter site is now proving to be one of the top spots in the northern area and is currently holding in excess of 3,000 Wrybills, with a number of other interesting species. There have also been at least three Brown Teal in recent times adding to the mystery of the origin of these birds which are becoming reasonably regular in the western parts of our district.

In the Manukau Harbour at the moment there is a mixed flock of Large Sand Dotterels and Mongolian Dotterels. These species always create vigorous debate amongst visitors to that area (and the locals). The consensus seems to be that there are six Large Sand Dotterels and two Mongolian Dotterels, but they are very seldom all seen at the same time. There has also been a Grey Plover seen on several occasions and a Little Curlew is still regularly seen.



REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Far North

▶ The marshland area around Taipa was searched by three members on 16th August for Spotless Crakes. The good response from our tape in habitat which is widespread in New Zealand suggests that this species is much more common than we usually appreciate.

Later in August at the indoor meeting I showed slides of a pelagic trip from Cape Town to the Antarctic pack-ice via the Prince Edward Islands.

A 19th September search of Aroha Island looking for early Shining Cuckoos was clearly over-optimistic and too early. However, nine Royal Spoonbills at the high tide roost were nice to see.

Summer 2004 was late, with continued rough rainy weather causing our planned boat trips and pelagics from local harbours to be cancelled. One member from the region went on a short-notice overnight pelagic from Houhora past North Cape with Kiwi Wildlife Tours early in January. This trip recorded White-naped Petrel and White Tern, among a good variety of other species. The ocean up here is a vast unknown as far as seabirds are concerned and we could do with more participants in order to make more trips out there viable. Our hardy beach patrollers found an adult Chatham Island Mollymawk in August; so what else is out there?

On 18th September a number of us joined Tony Habraken and David Wilson on a trip to Parengarenga Harbour to search for waders, banded Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots in particular. Among the godwits were an orange-flagged individual, banded in Victoria, and knots also banded there along with one from Chongming Dao, China. With the flocks were a tattler (probably Grey-tailed) and a Great Knot.

In mid-October our members assisted DoC with the New Zealand Dotterel census, the first since 1996. The full results have only just been released and show little change in total population, although numbers seem to have dropped in the west and increased in the east. The organiser, Richard Parrish, was disappointed at the poor coverage in the far north-east and suggests that this area should not be included in the comparisons with earlier censuses. During the census we found a tattler in Te Ngaere Bay. This is surely another species which must be overlooked on the vast Far North coastline.

There are several Pectoral Sandpipers at Miranda and a Marsh Sandpiper was briefly seen there.

Over the past few years there have been reports of Weka around Kawakawa Bay on the western shore of the Firth of Thames. These reports were received with some scepticism, but just before Christmas an injured bird was handed into bird rescue that was clearly a Weka. Since then several photos have been obtained of birds around this residential area on the edge of Auckland City. The big mystery is where did these come from and when? This is just yet another challenge for our region.

DAVID LAWRIE

Waikato

The Waikato group is slowly getting back into gear after all the great weather we are used to in this region! The last monthly meeting of 2004 was given by Shannon Fergie from DoC in Hamilton, and was about the birds in the Whangamarino Swamp and the techniques used to survey them, the difficulties DoC have had in doing this, and how these difficulties are being overcome.

In December the annual pot-luck Christmas dinner was held and attended by many. Once again, Zoe Clifford outdid herself with one of the best looking Pavlovas I have ever seen and we were entertained by Frank Bailey after dinner with amusing anecdotes.

Official OSNZ Waikato activities were scarce in the latter half of December and January, but the committee has been busy, especially with conference business. It seems as if most things are just about organised and we are looking forward to showcasing the Waikato Region to other members.

The first meeting of the year was held recently and was presented by Kerry Oates from EnviroResearch. Kerry spoke about his work over the last seven or eight years or so monitoring Blue Ducks in the central North Island. A thoroughly interesting talk and the group learnt and enjoyed it a lot; so much so that one aim of the next field trip is to try to spot a few.

Not too many bird sightings have come to notice over the past few months. Stella and John Rowe saw a large (300) flock of Little Black Shags fishing at Port Waikato on 25th October. Six New Zealand Dotterels and one approximately four-week-old chick were recorded at the northern end of Kawhia Beach by Bev and Brian Woolley on 16th February. A pair of New Zealand Dabchicks was seen on a farm dam outside of Cambridge by J. Taylor on 30th January and another couple outside of Whatawhata by Liz Wang (Jan/Feb). Furthermore, Hugh Clifford heard a Morepork calling at his home in Chartwell, Hamilton on 15th February and also saw a Wrybill at Ruapuke Beach on 19th February.

DAI MORGAN

Volcanic Plateau/Bay of Plenty

December saw some hardy members and guests braving impressive Lake Rotorua swells on their way to Mokoia Island for traditional mince pies around Hinemoa's hot pool. John Sich treated the party to some fascinating insights on the development of conservation work on the island. Everyone enjoyed the company of the ever-present Saddlebacks and Robins now thriving in the predator-free environment of the island. John and his party managed an additional bonus, hearing a Weka on their descent from the summit: a great way to celebrate the festive season.

Brian Chudleigh received a call from a Pahoia (north of Tauranga) resident, about a pair of Tui busily constructing a nest in a *Bougainvillea* growing over a pergola just outside the back door of a house. They were first observed on 22nd December. He went out for a look a few weeks later, after the adults were observed carrying food to the nest. Late January he saw the two chicks in the nest. It was a hive of activity, the young well-feathered with an adult bird bringing food every few minutes. He could see three young, which were frequently stretching their wings. It was not long before the young began hopping out of the nest and along the branches trying to be first in line for food. The following day all the young had left the nest and began moving around the pergola. It was then that a total of four young were seen. Another day later and all had left the *Bougainvillea* and were perched in a liquidambar about 20 metres away.

The nest was situated about four metres from the back door of the house and about 2.5 metres above the deck. To ensure the cat did not get to the nest the resident got some old plastic buckets, sliced them down the side, cut a hole in the centre of the bottom to match the shape of the pergola posts and taped them around the posts upside down. So, a lesson in predator control all of us can apply!

Fernbirds continue to be picked up in the Bay, with two being heard by Paul Cuming and Murray Smith near the Te Maunga settling ponds, Tim Barnard heard many at Ohiwa on Auckland anniversary weekend, and Brian Chudleigh heard them on a reserve in the street where he

lives in Katikati! His neighbours reported three Moreporks successfully fledging from a hole in a tree where rats and possums used to reside. This is possibly the result of a nearby pest-poisoning programme.

Tim Barnard found two Cattle Egrets on the sports grounds at Maketu on anniversary weekend, one in full breeding plumage, while picking up a couple of banded New Zealand Dotterels at the same place, one with an orange band and one yellow. He also noted the first Red-necked Stints there mid-January, while over the hill on the same day at Little Waihi, a Pectoral Sandpiper presented itself. Murray Smith has been busy lately, tracking five Golden Plovers and two Royal Spoonbills at Te Maunga, Tauranga Harbour in January, seeing Reef Herons near the harbour bridge the same month, and picking up a Black Petrel on a beach patrol in February.

White-fronted Terns are nesting on Coronation Wharf, downtown Tauranga. Paul Cuming is keeping an eye on them. Two or three chicks have fledged so far, an incredible feat for urban terns. Just don't go too near them as they have the scalping skills of Apaches!

An unusual plover was seen by Stella and John Rowe, and Trevor Taylor, then confirmed by Paul Cuming and Tim Barnard at Maketu in November. The record is with the Rare Birds Committee at this moment, hoping to be converted into an official Grey Plover. Tim got some superb photos of it, not without a few dark mutterings as it was very flighty initially. The bird was seen whilst the Waikato group was seeking the presence of two Fairy Terns, which Tim had spotted a week prior, and which had visited Maketu from Pakiri Beach, in Northland.

PAUL CUMING AND TIM BARNARD

Taranaki

There was, as always, a good turnout for the December meeting, including Dr Herbert Schifter, the recently-retired Curator of Ornithology Natural History Museum Vienna, a guest of David and Carole Medway. He gave us a brief off-the-cuff talk about the museum and in particular the Andreas Reischek collection, of which Kiwi and Kakapo are on public display with many other birds in storage.

Beach patrols for November were more productive than of late with 30 birds found, four species of shearwater being the predominate group. Barry Hartley reported that three pairs of New Zealand Dotterels are nesting at various locations along the South Taranaki coast. A White-winged Black Tern was seen at the disused Bell Block oxidation ponds: this is becoming an annual event.

The field trip up the Mangorei track in Egmont National Park was undertaken in the usual wet and windy conditions. This trip has yet to be done in fine weather. A retreat to Lake Mangamahoe, where conditions were much improved, produced more birds.

There is no official January meeting, but a trip into Eastern Taranaki and the Rerekapa Track was enjoyed by a few members. Robins were seen and heard, along with a flock of Tui feeding in a towering rata in full flower. A Falcon was seen flying around a clearing where an old hut is sited.

Those who remembered to check their calendar attended the first meeting of the year in February, when we caught up with what had been happening over the summer break. With the migration of one member back to the sun and sand of Bahrain, to compensate another flew in to join the group. Members complained about the number of noisy and aggressive Mynas in the city, though David Medway spoke in their defence.

Shining Cuckoos were still being heard in late January and a few Long-tailed Cuckoos have been seen. Barry Hartley summarised our atlasing efforts over the past five years whereby all 129 Taranaki squares were covered and 1,979 sheets were filled in.

The February field trip ventured into the uncharted territory of Mohakatini, North Taranaki, on a fine sunny day. A Falcon was seen by all participants, along with the usual bush birds and a pair of Variable Oystercatchers with a fledgling at a nearby estuary.

PETER FRYER

Wanganui

Ian Sutherland spotted another colour-banded Royal Spoonbill on the Wanganui river estuary on 28th December. It turned out to have been banded as a chick at Green Island, Dunedin on 21st January 2004. It was subsequently sighted by Gwenda Pulham at Shelly Beach, Kaipara Harbour on 25th July 2004.

On the same day Ian found a white-flagged godwit amongst a flock of 15. The following evening Colin and Robyn Ogle were walking across the City Bridge to post a letter when they heard a kik-kik-kik-kik-kik call and looked up to see a New Zealand Falcon make two circuits over the buildings at the bottom of Victoria Avenue. It was flying very low, just above the buildings. It then seemingly vacated the area.

In early February large numbers (well over a hundred) of Paradise Shelducks were on Westmere Lake just outside the city. Amongst the

usual variety of other waterfowl there was a pair of New Zealand Scaup with a brood of eight young chicks.

At Virginia Lake the Black Swans, Coots, Mallards and Pukeko all had chicks, but the Mute Swans have not been successful in breeding this year. The Little Shags have deserted the willow trees, where they breed successfully for a number of years, after they were blown over in last year's storms. There was only one Little Shag seen roosting in the trees in early February.

BILL GREENWOOD

Wellington

This summer has provided many opportunities for Wellington members to enjoy watching some out-of-the-ordinary birds at a range of sites. Notable observations were an Arctic Tern at Titahi Bay, a White-flipped Penguin in Wellington Harbour, the discovery of a small breeding population of Whiteheads in the Porirua Scenic Reserve and a melanistic-phase Red-billed Gull at Waikanae.

Eighty Royal Spoonbills were counted on Kapiti Island (many are breeding there) and 11 were also seen recently at Pauatahanui Inlet. Further afield one member enjoyed watching Yellowheads in Fiordland and a Sooty Shearwater on Lake Taupo. Unusual behaviours observed were House Sparrows that were seen collecting clover flowers in Wellington and Welcome Swallows that were seen feeding on the ground at the Pauatahanui Inlet Wildlife Reserve.

At our first meeting for the year in February, Joanna Pierre (ecologist, DoC Wellington) spoke about some aspects of her post-doctoral studies when she was attached to the University of Tokyo between 2001 and 2003. Joanna's talk was entitled 'Using Remote Technologies for Reserve Design'. The objective of the study was to identify migration routes of several threatened wetland bird species and to determine their habitat requirements. She summarised main features that should ideally be considered during reserve design, namely, occupancy, connectivity, disturbance, edge effects, representativeness and functionality.

Joanna worked as a member of a team where the fieldwork was in North and East Asia, mainly in Russia, and she remarked on the difficulties of working in remote parts of Asia, including difficult access, having regard for sensitive political issues, the urgency of conservation and low national priority for environmental conservation. In a fascinating and well-illustrated review Joanna explained the development of techniques for tracking the migration routes and resting sites of several species through China, Mongolia and Russia, notably Oriental White Storks, Siberian Cranes and White-naped Cranes.

Small global positioning system radio transmitters were harnessed to birds that were captured in tundra habitats during the moult (when they cannot fly), mostly by jumping to the ground from a hovering helicopter and then running the birds down. Signals from the transmitters were relayed to the University of Japan laboratories by satellite, from where the migration patterns of birds were monitored and progressively recorded on maps. The Siberian Cranes moved quickly and flew about 5,300 km in about 51 days. By comparison, Oriental White Storks moved in a series of short daily flights, travelling 3,200 km in about 117 days and a White-naped Crane was tracked flying over 2,500 km over a 40-day period. Joanna concluded by saying that remote technologies can contribute to better reserve design and to the ability of authorities to enforce effective bird protection by revealing the movement of some species in relation to existing reserves and other sites where they are now known to rest and breed.

Several members once again helped with the quarterly five-minute-count survey of birds in the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in January. Colin Miskelly explained that over a three year period Tui continue to be noticeably more conspicuous than all other species and Silvereyes are also more conspicuous. Populations of Bellbirds, Kaka, Robins and Whiteheads are stable or slightly increasing. Amongst the introduced bird species House Sparrows and Eastern Rosellas appear to be becoming less conspicuous.

Several members continued to survey birds in the East Harbour Regional Park during the summer. Of particular interest was the occurrence of hundreds of Paradise Shelducks on one of the Pencarrow Lakes.

Peter Reese has again led a team of members in the bird-banding project at Wellington Zoo. In summarising recent work Peter reports that 2004 was a successful year at the zoo with 707 birds banded, compared with 686 banded in 2003 and 213 in 2002. A total of 2,416 birds of 15 species have been banded since the project commenced in July 2000.

IAN ARMITAGE

Nelson

Three Bar-tailed Godwits banded in previous years on the Tasman coast were observed in the Yukon Delta, Alaska, during August/

September, and many have been sighted in the Waimea Inlet and in Golden Bay during their summer sojourn back here.

Willie Cook continues his banding study of Caspian Tern chicks, with another 24 banded this season in two or three sessions. Some chicks processed during the first session were re-caught later and their growth and weight noted.

A remnant colony of Sooty Shearwaters has been discovered off the Golden Bay coast; they appear to be doing well. Also in Golden Bay Chris Petyt reports three pairs of Rock Wrens in the Henderson Basin, with one banded female at least five years old. No juveniles were seen, possibly because of heavy snow in December. Traps set in the area had caught one stoat. Pete Gaze found another Rock Wren nest, with chicks this time.

In Kahurangi National Park four Blue Ducks have been released in the Wangapeka area. Two pairs of the species have nested in both the Pearse Valley and on Goulard Downs. Predator control is carried out in all these areas.

Steve Wood successfully raised a Little Owl chick found by a neighbour. A Morepork was showing interest in the chick as it matured: are there any records of interaction between Little Owls and Moreporks?

Six penguin boxes were built into the new Wakefield Wharf, Nelson Port last summer. There has been some ensuing success, with one being used by a Blue Penguin this year.

GILLIAN POLLOCK

Canterbury

What few unusual wading birds that were around in spring have hung on into summer, with a Hudsonian Godwit at the Avon-Heathcote estuary being the star. Up to two Black-tailed Godwits have also been at that site, allowing good comparisons of all three godwit species recorded in New Zealand to be made. The new wetland reserve at Bexley at the head of the same estuary is turning up trumps with the site being used by up to three White-winged Black Terns. The moulting flock of Paradise Shelducks at the nearby sewage ponds held a female Chestnut-breasted for a short time in February. A White-winged Black Tern has been seen back at the usual site of Coopers Lagoon.

Lake Ellesmere is very low after a lake opening in December followed by a drought. The shore is now an almost-unheard-of 2 km further out than it should be and wading birds are very scarce. Questions probably need to be asked about the sustainability of the current protocol and timing of lake opening given the importance of the site to such species as Red-necked Stint, Wrybill, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper. Prior to the opening most waders could be found at the remote and inaccessible tip end of Kaitorete Spit, with about 40 Red-necked Stints and fairly normal numbers of other waders present there. Greenpark Sands has remained quiet throughout the season.

In November a group of members reported on their unofficial field trip to Northern Queensland in August. Titled 'Seven Go To Oz', photos showed the great wader habitat adjacent to the Cairns Esplanade, the close birds and crocs at the Cairns Crocodile Farm (now closed I am told), hand-feeding Spotted Catbirds in the Atherton Tablelands, and drier habitat birds near Georgetown.

The first field meeting of the year was to Ellangowan Reserve on Banks Peninsula. After the reserve, and its rather indistinct entrance, was discovered most of the expected bird species were found, with Tomtit being perhaps the most common native bird. The presence of some large totara suggests the reserve should be suitable for Rifleman and New Zealand Pigeon, but these could not be located. The trip was also notable for the interesting views of clouds flying towards participants at head height.

NICK ALLEN

Southland

The northern South Island banding team arrived in Invercargill in hot, muggy weather and were 'fogged in' at Awarua Bay as the mist rolled in from the sea and back out again. Unfortunately they only managed to catch one Bar-tailed Godwit, but were successful with six Turnstones and an amazing 70 Pied Oystercatchers in one catch on the last day. This gave the inexperienced banders a chance to learn how to band, measure, weigh and check for moult. Two teams were organised so that birds were not held in the holding pens for too long.

Phil Battley with the help of Sue managed to check all the most likely wading spots around Southland before and after the banding sessions. He found an amazing array of birds, some waders with bands and also spotted seven Cattle Egrets in breeding plumage at Fortrose. Cattle Egrets had been very scarce during Southland's winter so it was good to see we still had some birds staying in the province. Phil also located a large flock of Red-necked Stints that we had thought were absent from the head of Awarua Bay, but had been hiding at another spot all weekend.

Wynston Cooper and a party of British birders located a Cirl Bunting at the Te Anau Wildlife Park and a dead Australasian Bittern on the Tiwai Road. Other interesting bird news includes a Glossy Ibis which took up residence at Mill Creek on Stewart Island from late November to early December. Dallas Bradley found a live Antarctic Fulmar on Orepuki Beach on December 11, a little too late for the Atlas.

The southernmost Caspian Tern colony at the Invercargill Estuary has had a disastrous season after being washed out by high tides. The

birds re-nested but adults were trying to feed the small chicks fish that were far too large for them. We doubt that any chicks will survive.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask any OSNZ members travelling to Southland this year who would be prepared to give a talk at one of our meetings to please contact me as we are desperately short of speakers for our monthly meetings. These are held on the second Thursday of each month.

PHIL RHODES



Regional Reps & What's on

Far North

Detlef Davies, Waipapa Lagoon, Landing Road, Kerikeri 0470. Ph (09) 407 3874. Email detlefddaviesd@yahoo.com

Northland

Katrina Hansen, 3 Harbour View Road, Onerahi, Whangarei. Ph (09) 430 2133. Email 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
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
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
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 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

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 mcjeffries@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
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
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
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
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
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. Mist-netting and passerine banding at The Zoo, various Saturdays, ph. Peter Reese (04) 387 7387. Informal field trips (can include atlasing), 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
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
Lake Grassmere count – third Saturday 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
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
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.

