



Southern *Bird*

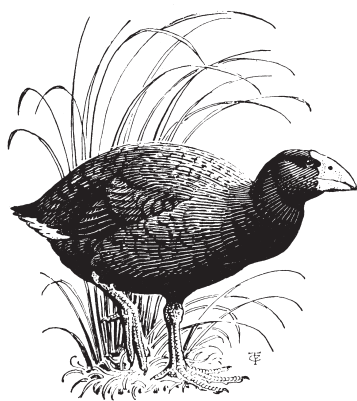
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The Royal Spoonbill
in New Zealand

Conference & AGM
Wellington 2006

Rare Birds Committee Report



Southern Bird

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Quotation

*Sound the Flute!
Now it's mute.
Birds delight
Day and Night;
Nightingale
In the dale,
Lark in Sky,
Merrily, Merrily, Merrily to welcome in the Year*

Spring by William Blake (1757-1827)

Contents

<i>Minutes of the 67th Annual General Meeting</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Revisions of the Schedules of the Wildlife Act</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>The Royal Spoonbill in New Zealand</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Conference & AGM 2006</i>	<i>15</i>

Cover Photo

Front cover: New Zealand Kingfisher

Back Cover: Southern Black-backed Gull

both photos by Murray Smith

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. Copy deadlines are 10th February, May and August, and 1st November.

From the President's Desk

OSNZ faces many challenges. From economics (e.g., fuel prices, a basic expense in surveys and indeed most bird work), to infrastructure development (e.g. wind farms), and environment issues (e.g. climate change, land use change, urbanisation), the pace of change from external factors is not often in favour of birds or people who study birds. The Society has to meet these, and many others, including pressure from organisations competing for our membership's time and expertise, and move ahead.

This will mean increasing the knowledge and abilities of present members, and increasing the membership, which is done best of all by retaining new recruits for more than the traditional one year. We will need to make more than cosmetic changes to deal with the challenges and move ahead. Council is working on bringing the Strategic Plan to life, as quickly as possible. But we will all have to participate, to contribute, and not leave it to a willing few. Criticism in any organisation is healthy, but it needs to be constructive, and be accompanied by a contribution of more than just words.

For the major issues, we need to develop general policies, so that everyone will be clear on the Society's position on various issues. The membership will be consulted in the development of these policies, but it will be Council's role to distil the issues and responses and to produce workable policies that allow OSNZ to function properly. Issues, such as the degree of association between regions and DoC conservancies, have been side-stepped: the increasing number of requests from other organisations for use of information generated by Society members will require our quantifying the contributions to the data, so that the Society can benefit from those efforts. Equally importantly, the contribution by DoC and other organisations to OSNZ activities has to be known, and not guessed at, if we are to operate and maintain these mutually beneficial relationships. This is one reason why I have asked for summaries of what every region is doing, or thinks is still active as a project.

The biggest challenge to appear recently is the review of the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1953. This may be one of the most far-reaching changes in our lifetime to the legal status of our birds. OSNZ's response needs to be carefully considered



Publisher

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and forthrightly presented because when the new provisions are adopted in legislation, it will set the landscape for bird study, protection, and conservation in New Zealand for a generation or more. The revised Act will also affect the way decisions on species' protection status are made, and those decisions need to be based firmly on science and not on interest group pressures. We need to emphasise the wider and large-term implications of decisions that could be taken now for reasons of expediency. Please read the article on this issue, in this issue, and provide feedback as soon as possible to the Scientific Committee. It is a chance for your views to be heard on a most important issue.

Another matter of interest in several regions, and one on which we should take a national stance, is wind farms. Currently, the Scientific Committee and Council are developing a policy on which to base OSNZ's reactions to requests for input at the planning and hearings stage of wind farm development. We want to steer a course between OSNZ's obligation to provide information and on our Constitution's restriction against conservation advocacy. The issue(s) is (are) extremely complex, ranging from potential conflict with bird flight paths to the ability of wind farms to replace other, more damaging, forms of electricity generation. A policy document will soon be available to RRs.

Leaving the bureaucratic problems, remember that *Notornis* is now on-line, on a separate web-site. This was launched by Chris Robertson and Rosemary Heather at the Wellington AGM. All issues will be available free on-line on this site until December. This is to allow for feedback on glitches in the content. After that, there will be an embargo period for recent issues; and access to those will be by subscription only. This is the practice for most on-line journals. The new *Atlas* is also well under way and will eventually be available on a third Society web site, probably with a facility for comparisons with a digital version of the first *Atlas*.

Based on our belief that enjoyment of birds increases in proportion to understanding and participation, we will be developing some new ways for training and self-learning for present and future members. New members might have their introduction to OSNZ and birding eased by receiving a '50-year' CD of *Notornis* (Chris Robertson revealed that 'goody' at the Wellington AGM, too) and another on bird identification, counting, banding, beach-patrolling, and designing, completing, and writing up small projects. And, if there is sufficient interest in organising them, field courses will

be re-established. These are great opportunities for the sharing of information and techniques, and developing the national identity of OSNZ, which has been in danger of becoming increasingly regionalised. If the Australians can conquer their vast distances for an annual 'campout', then it should not be beyond us to organise a field-oriented trip or two each year. These will not be luxury tours: nothing fancy; no nice hotels... just somewhere to sleep, somewhere to eat, and plenty of birds. Judging from comments from members I have spoken to, this would be a welcome retro-innovation.

Perhaps a focus for such events might be in the opportunity to establish base-lines for measuring the avifauna's response to climate change. For example, where do Mynas start and stop in Hawkes Bay and the northern Wairarapa, and why, so that if there are changes, they can tell us what might be going on. And when do Blackbirds start breeding in lowland Canterbury compared to the birds at Arthur's Pass?

And that brings us, finally for this column, to the thorny issue(s) of monitoring and recording schemes. OSNZ has its own initiative on the development of a web-based recording scheme. There are obviously competing 'products' out there. Paul Scofield and the Scientific Committee have been working for some time now on what we should, and could, and can, and cannot do in this regard. Anything we take on will have to be tailored to New Zealand requirements and to OSNZ's financial resources and personnel (<50 active contributors to the *Atlas* gives some idea of our ability to field person power). There are no quick solutions, despite what you might have been told. We do not have the resources to fund 'obvious', but inappropriate, programmes developed elsewhere; what is set up will have to be supported for the foreseeable future. We will keep you posted on progress and likely outcomes.

That's about enough from me. Just remember that you can contact me by all conventional methods of communication (see the OSNZ web site and *Notornis* and the White Pages), and I will be more than pleased to hear from any member with constructive comments or criticism, or, even better, an offer to contribute. Check out the OSNZ web site for the current vacancies for positions where you could make a difference!

Richard

DR RICHARD HOLDAWAY
President, OSNZ



Fourth Biennial AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE



Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest

The Fourth Biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Perth, Western Australia on 3rd to 5th December 2007. This conference provides a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region. The venue will be the University of Western Australia, and the Western Australian group of Birds Australia (RAOU) will host the conference.

A post-conference field excursion will be available.

An Invitation

You are invited to express your interest in attending this conference, and presenting a paper by visiting www.birdswa.com.au/aoc2007, or link through www.birdswa.com.au or www.birdsaustralia.com.au, or write to the conference co-ordinator:

S. Mather
Birds Australia Western Australia
167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, WA 6014, Australia
Email: aoc2007@birdswa.com.au
Telephone: +61 8 93896416

Minutes of the 67th Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand held at the Brentwood Hotel, Wellington. Saturday 2nd June 2006

The President, David Medway, opened the meeting, welcomed the members present, and commented on the pleasing number of members present. The President then introduced members of Council

Present: Stella Rowe, Mark Nee, Elizabeth Bell, Geoff Doring, Anneke Schuckard, Ros Batcheler, Derek Batcheler, Susan Tambllyn, Peter Reese, Laura Molles, John Rowe, Jon Sullivan, Penny Demetry, Ben Bell, Mark Fraser, Claudia Duncan, Richard Holdaway, Gillian Eller, Kathy Barrow, Sue Bell, Paul Garner-Richards, Ted Wnorowski, Stuart Nicholson, Stella Pye, Nick Allen, Chris Thompson, Michael Taylor, Pamela Slack, Sally Truman, Reg Cotter, Anne Young, Ralph Powlesland, Brent Stephenson, Ian Armitage, Gwyneth Armitage, Dr R. Nargarajan, Hazel Harty, Tom Harty, Chris Robertson, Mike Imber, Rosemary Heather, Murray Williams, Graeme Taylor, Murray Jeffries, Rob Schuckard, Hugh Clifford, Christina Troup, David Cornick, Dave Bell, Jill West, Marilyn Young, Detlef Davies, Gerald Pilon, Russell Thomas, Geoff de Lisle, Ken Bond, David Pye, David Lawrie, Brian Bell, Rod Orange, David Medway, D. Bishop, Cees Bevers, David Melville, Chris Petyt, Keith Owen, Roger Slack, Katrina Hansen, Tony Beauchamp, Nigel Milius, Wendy Hare, Karen Baird, Suzi Phillips, Mike Bell, Cielle Stephens, Scott Butcher and others who did not sign the register.

Apologies: Miles King, Peter Moore, Alan Wright, Raewyn Empson, Sue Moore, Enfys Graham, Les McPherson, Barbara Hughes, David and Ruth Crocket, Heather Smithers, Barry Hartley, Gwenda Pulham, Jamie Wood, Karl Davis, Mary Thompson, Tom Teasedale, Sheila Petch, Tim Barnard, Paul Scofield

Moved that apologies be accepted [Hazel Harty/Keith Owen Carried]

Deaths of members: Peter Bull, Jim Moore, Bill Sloane, and John Baldwin have passed away since the last AGM. A period of silence was observed in their memory.

Previous minutes: *Moved that the minutes of the 66th AGM held at Hamilton 5 June 2005, as published in September 2005 Southern Bird, be accepted* [David Medway/Rosemary Heather Carried]

Matters arising from Minutes: There were no Matters Arising.

Council membership

i. Nominations: Four nominations received, one for each of the vacant

positions, so all nominees were declared elected unopposed.

ii. Resignations: David Medway resigned as President but will remain on Council for one year as Past President. David Lawrie thanked David for his work as President. [Applauded].

iii. President: Richard Holdaway was elected President.

iv. Secretary: Claudia Duncan was elected Secretary.

v. Vice-President: David Lawrie was re-elected Vice-president.

vi. Treasurer: Mark Nee was re-elected Treasurer.

[APPLAUSE].

President's report:

Moved that the President's report be accepted. [David Medway/David Pye Carried]

Matters arising:

Rosemary Heather asked Richard Holdaway if he would still be Editor of *Notornis* as well as President. Richard replied that he would probably relinquish the editorial position by March 2007. Paul Scofield would be Chair of the Scientific Committee, replacing Richard in that position.

David Medway held a joint Council/RR's meeting on Thursday, noting there was nothing of relevance to report to the room. He then asked if anyone would like to contribute from those meetings.

Richard Holdaway thanked David Medway for his work as President.

[APPLAUSE]

Treasurer's report:

Moved that the Treasurer's report be accepted [Mark Nee/Brian Bell Carried]

There were no matters arising from the report.

Appointment of Auditor:

Moved that John Khouri be re-appointed as auditor [Mark Nee/Brian Bell Carried]

Presentation of Awards: No nominations had been received.

David Medway reminded members of the awards and asked that nominations be considered.

Twitchathon Award: Won by Ken Bond and Ted Wnorowski; David Medway presented the trophy.

Wellington/Manawatu Region Award: Ian Armitage presented the award to Chris Robertson, Rosemary Heather, and Murray Williams for the launch of *Notornis* on-line on 3rd June 2006

Notices of Motion

1. Proposal to amend Clause 5.2.5 of the Constitution.

That the last sentence of Clause 5.2.5 of the Constitution of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand shall be amended by deleting the words "four Fellows" and replacing them with the words "six Fellows".

Moved [Chris Robertson/David Medway] Carried

Notification of this Amendment should be sent to Registrar of Incorporated Societies.

2. Proposal to adopt a brand name for the Society.

That the Ornithological Society of New Zealand adopts the brand name of "Birds New Zealand" from 1st January 2007 and that this brand name shall be used in all correspondence and communication in the public domain, written or otherwise.

Discussion:

Murray Williams asked if the brand name is available as a website address. "No", but could be used if "net" is added.

Rob Schuckard asked if there is any evidence that the change will bring in more members.

Nick Allen said one reply to the survey said that he thought "ordinary" people would not be welcome.

Scott Butcher said people come to him enquiring what "Ornithological" means.

Brian Bell said that he is not too happy with "Birds NZ" but would favour something like "Birdstudy NZ". He feels that changing the name may not bring in more members, but we need to advocate and market ourselves.

David Medway talked about the Strategic Plan and its ideas.

David Melville said that the above ideas will be followed up. The name change will be considered as part of a strategic package as clearly there is a lot of interest.

David Lawrie moved an amendment.

That the AGM instructs the Council of OSNZ to consider a brand name such as Birds NZ as part of its implementation of the Strategic Plan and report to the 2007 AGM.

Moved [David Lawrie/Stuart Nicholson]

Gerard Pilon said that he did not want the situation to go on for three years.

Nigel Milius asked Council to report in nine months' time in *Southern Bird*.

Graeme Taylor was concerned that "Study of Birds" may split the Group. We need to go together into the future. He considered that the correct choice of name is vital.

Chris Robertson said that the Notice of Motion is very confusing. There is a conflict with Clause 1 of the Constitution. He queried whether the reason for the



proposed change was in an effort to gather new members. He pointed out that in 1998, the new *Atlas* was proposed as a means to bring in new members but it had not worked to that end.

Anneke Schuckard noted that the present name of the Society is difficult for children to understand. She promotes OSNZ to young children through the Kiwi Conservation Club.

Hazel Harty commented that the Ornithological Society is listed as such in the Auckland area and still receives many enquiries.

Nick Allen, in reply, spoke of a comment that the present name suggested to some that the Society straightens teeth.

Ben Bell suggested that the amendment be amended to read "with urgency".

Gerard Pilon suggested that a time frame of the end of 2006 be specified.

David Lawrie read clause 16.12 of the Constitution.

Scott Butcher said that Council has been given a mandate by the members to change the name, but it was pointed out from the Chair that the membership had replied to a survey; it was not a formal postal ballot.

Mark Nee talked of the need for a postal ballot so all members can see all considerations.

Richard Holdaway said that the whole membership should be given a chance to vote.

Brent Stephensen suggested that we add "postal ballot" to the amendment.

Stuart Nicholson asked that the meeting vote on the amendment.

Moved that the amended motion be put. [Russell Thomas/David Pye Carried]

The amended motion then became the Motion to be put to the AGM..

Discussion on the amended motion:

A member queried from the floor as to whether the postal ballot will refer to the name "Birds NZ", or would other names be included.

David Lawrie replied that part of the discussion in the Administration and Development Committee will encompass potential brand names as part of the Strategic Plan presently being developed.

Nick Allen suggested that Council is ignoring the survey of the members.

Mark Nee replied that the decision is now taken to be taken by the AGM.

Suzi Phillips said all the members should have received the survey, as it had been given to all RRs on the expectation that all members would then receive it.

Motion: That the AGM instructs the Council of OSNZ to consider a brand name such as "Birds NZ" as part of its implementation of the Strategic Plan and report to the 2007 AGM.

[David Lawrie/David Pye Carried]

David Medway suggested that it was not appropriate to invoke Constitution Clause 16.12, as referred to previously by David Lawrie.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Nigel Milius commented that he had enjoyed the two days of speakers and asked that a similar arrangement be considered in the future. David Medway explained that it was easier for more speakers to be organised in Wellington, but that it will be over to the local organising committee to decide whether two days would be set aside in future.

Rob Schuckard asked about the release of the wader census data, and whether it will be possible to get an update. Council has agreed that the data will be released, providing DoC agrees.

Brian Bell asked if the new pamphlets that were printed for the AOC in Blenheim can be used. Agreed, and all remaining pamphlets have been given to RRs. Council was then asked for a further printing to be used for publicity. Agreed.

Chris Robertson announced that the *Atlas* is close to the end of the checking stage.

Hard copy is planned to be printed March 2007. It will have about 2,000 maps, and will also go on the Web.

Each member will get a hard copy of the new *Atlas*. The overall error rate was remarkably low, but people recorded incorrect grid references.

Chris Robertson thanked Ian Armitage and his committee for organising the Conference.

The President thanked Ian and Gwyneth Armitage and Ros Batchelor for their hard work while organising the Conference and AGM, with assistance from Tom and Hazel Harty. He also thanked Graeme Taylor and Ralph Powlesland for organising the excellent Scientific Days. He noted that members attending had had a successful and entertaining time.

[APPLAUDED]

David Lawrie presented Gwyneth and Ros with some flowers with Council's thanks.

Next Annual General Meetings:

Members were advised that forthcoming AGMs were proposed for Taranaki in 2007, Kaikoura in 2008, and North Auckland in 2009.

Richard Holdaway made a brief statement on his vision for the next three years and said that the Society needed to move forward, and face the challenges, and to remember that it was the birds that brought us all together. He wants to get out with the membership and wants the membership to feel part of the Society.

The President thanked members present for their attendance and closed the meeting at 10 pm.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

Call for Nominations

Do you know anyone who has selflessly helped the OSNZ? These awards are one opportunity to officially recognise this person, and for the Society to thank them.

The person need not be a member, and need not even reside in New Zealand. Posthumous nominations are also welcomed. The person can even receive more than one Meritorious Service Award, though they need to be for different services to the Society.

The award is conferred for service furthering the objects of the OSNZ. These are:

- To encourage, organise and promote the study of birds and their habitat use
- To foster and support the wider knowledge and enjoyment of birds
- To promote the recording and wide circulation of the results of bird studies and observations
- To produce a journal and any other publication containing matters of ornithological interest
- To effect cooperation and exchange of information with other like organisations
- To assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information, from which sound management decisions can be derived
- To maintain a library of ornithological literature for the use of members and to promote a wider knowledge of birds
- To promote the archiving of observations, studies and records of birds
- To carry out any other activity which is capable of being conveniently carried out in connection with the above objects, or which directly or indirectly advances those objects

A maximum of five Meritorious Service Awards can be made every year. Nomination is easy. Simply write a citation of **not more than 150 words** on one side of an A4 sheet setting out the achievements of the person nominated, and include the signatures of two members of the Society.

The closing date for nominations is 31st December 2006. They should be sent to:
The Awards Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington

Revision of the Schedules of the Wildlife Act

The Strategy and Policy Group of the Department of Conservation has been asked to review the level of protection for some species of New Zealand wildlife. A discussion document recently published (available at www.doc.govt.nz/pdfs/wildlife-protection-review.pdf) sets out some issues in relation to a number of species that the DoC Strategy and Policy Group believes may not have an appropriate level of protection. It describes possible options for changes to levels of protection and the implications of such changes. This paper also provides lists of invertebrate and marine species that may warrant some form of protection. The department seeks comments from interested groups and individuals on possible changes to the levels of protection for wildlife species. Submissions are due by November 3rd. The Society encourages members to make individual submissions on this issue. The Society's Scientific Committee felt that this issue was of such significance to New Zealand's avifauna that the Society itself should make a submission on behalf of all members.

Background to the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Inc.'s submission on the proposed revision of the Wildlife Act 1953

The OSNZ Scientific Committee takes the view that New Zealand had, and still has the remnants of a unique avifauna, each component of which is valuable. The cohesion and evolutionary history of this fauna will continue to be challenged by environmental changes wrought by humans and foreign bird species introduced by humans. These factors immediately set the scientific context for our submission. The position has parallel relevance to conservation, which is the operational component of maintaining the scientifically-important suite of taxa, but there are fundamental scientific issues involved, on which the Ornithological Society must make its views known.

It is now clear that many, if not most, of the birds in our fauna originated by colonisation from Australia – the waterfowl and rails are obvious examples. If we choose to discriminate against these natural introductions, we are taking the scientifically-dubious position that humans can decide which taxa have the right to colonise and become part of our evolving fauna. The timescales involved make the 'value' of each self-introduced species a subjective judgment. How do we, for example, differentiate between species such as the Pukeko, Harrier, Pied Stilt, and Bittern, which colonised after the arrival of Polynesians 700 years ago, but before European settlement, and species such as Welcome Swallow, White-faced Heron, Spur-winged Plover, and Royal Spoonbill which arrived more recently? The Black Swan is even more difficult. It is an indigenous species that was extirpated here by early Polynesians; it then re-introduced itself at about the same time as Europeans brought in breeding stock. Now it is classed as an introduced species and can be hunted or even 'controlled' under that status. Actually, it is a more legitimate member of the avifauna than the protected Pied Stilt.

The intrinsic scientific value of the original and self-introduced species is in contrast to that of the species introduced by humans of which most, if not all, of whom come from areas that would have precluded their natural arrival. They are here because humans intervened. Their scientific interest lies largely in their adaptation to the New Zealand environment, and as a growing and probably

ineradicable part of the new New Zealand biota. They are 'out of context' evolutionarily and are not parts of the natural ecosystem here. Some of the introduced passerines have intrinsic conservation values here, because of their plight in their natural ranges, but that is outside the purview of the Ornithological Society and the issue must be raised by other organisations.

We feel that there are fundamental difficulties in enforcing a schedule system that tries to make value distinctions between indigenous taxa. These problems include matters as basic as identification, and also in deciding the basis for being declared 'superfluous to New Zealand requirements'. There are as many, if not more, people who complain about the effects of Welcome Swallows on their dwellings as complain about Canada Geese on their paddocks. Differentiating between fashion and real need for control is hazardous in the state of our knowledge on most species... dicker about which self-introduced species is 'good' or 'bad' or deserves or does not deserve protection will take us well beyond scientific knowledge. So, the Scientific Committee's position is that, for the very good scientific reasons above, all native species, whether we have witnessed their arrival or not, should be protected automatically, and all introduced species should not be accorded that privilege. Other organisations can argue the case for individual introduced species.

With these thoughts and provisos in mind the OSNZ Scientific Committee with the support of Council is recommending that the OSNZ shall (once members have made their feelings known to the President and Council) adopt the following position:

Position of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. (OSNZ) on proposed changes to the Schedules of the Wildlife Act 1953

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. (OSNZ) believes that important decisions on New Zealand avifauna as mooted in the Department of Conservation's Public Discussion Document *Review of level of protection for some New Zealand wildlife* cannot be made by public consensus, without the public having access to the solid scientific data on which alterations to the Wildlife Act must be based. The New Zealand Conservation Authority was set up specifically "to advise the Minister on statements of general policy prepared under the Wildlife Act 1953". As such, we assume – although it is not stated – that the Department of Conservation (DoC) is, by circulating this discussion document, asking for proposals that the New Zealand Conservation Authority can then assess, and on which they can base their advice to the Minister.

The OSNZ feels that the Department of Conservation would be negligent its administration of the Conservation Act 1987, and in its statutory responsibilities to administer the Wildlife Act 1953, if the public were left to make the only recommendations on the lists of species on the five Schedules to the Wildlife Act 1953. OSNZ believes it is the function of science and the scientific community, including the Department of Conservation, to provide relevant and recent data on population sizes, trends, demographic factors, potential threats, and other factors that affect the survival of native species. Only with those data in hand, could the New Zealand Conservation Authority make sound recommendations to the Minister on which species would not be affected adversely by any alteration of their status under the Wildlife Act 1953. The provisions of the revised Act will stand for a long time; it is essential that wise and prudent decisions are taken during the present review to



avoid potentially serious problems arising that will require remedial legislation, and possibly result in major losses to New Zealand's natural heritage.

OSNZ believes that there is no longer any justifiable reason for *any* native species to be legally killed, except for those few game species whose populations are able to withstand the controlled, regulated and managed regime of legal hunting stipulated under Schedule 1. OSNZ therefore recommends the removal of *all* native species from Schedules 2, 3 and 4 of the Wildlife Act 1953. OSNZ believes that it is the responsibility of stakeholders to justify – with robust scientific evidence – the inclusion of any species contrary to the general principle set out above.

Furthermore OSNZ believes that the harvesting of native gamebirds should be subject to regular population assessments both regionally and nationally to ensure that regional and national populations of these species can in fact sustain the level of hunting currently undertaken. This should not be an *ad hoc* process but one strictly administered by DoC. Thus we strongly recommend that native gamebird species only remain on Schedule 1 where there is a scientifically-robust research programme in place to measure the sustainability of their harvest and it is for this reason that we recommend the placement of the muttonbirds Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* and Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera* on Schedule 1.

On the other hand, OSNZ is not aware of any scientifically-justifiable reason for the protection of any *non-game* introduced species under the current Act. OSNZ therefore recommends placing all non-native species on Schedule 5. As there is

presently no authoritative scientific evidence on which to alter their status, OSNZ recommends that none of the species discussed in the document is downgraded in status until such time as the necessary authoritative scientific evidence can be produced to justify the change. Certainly, no native species (i.e. including self-introduced species such as the Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*) should have its status downgraded.

There is an inconsistency between the Wildlife and Antiquities Acts that offers no protection to the bodies and bones of recently extinct species. This means it is an offence to be in the possession of the bones of a Grey Warbler or Fantail but it is not an offence to be in possession of the bones of a piopio, moa or adzebill! Extinct species are considered part of New Zealand's priceless natural heritage and are thus protected under the Antiquities Act from export from New Zealand. The Wildlife Act should reflect this status. OSNZ proposes that the bones of recently-extinct species be protected under Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act. A complete list of these species can be supplied by OSNZ.

The OSNZ notes that its Checklist Committee is in the process of completing an authoritative Checklist to the Birds of New Zealand (partially funded by the Department of Conservation); OSNZ would be happy to provide expertise to the correction of names included on Schedules 1 to 5.

Comment on this draft can be sent to the President, Richard Holdaway, or Paul Scofield (chair of the OSNZ Scientific Committee) at the addresses given in this issue of *Southern Bird* before 20th October, preferably by email, though communication in any form is welcome.

Bird People

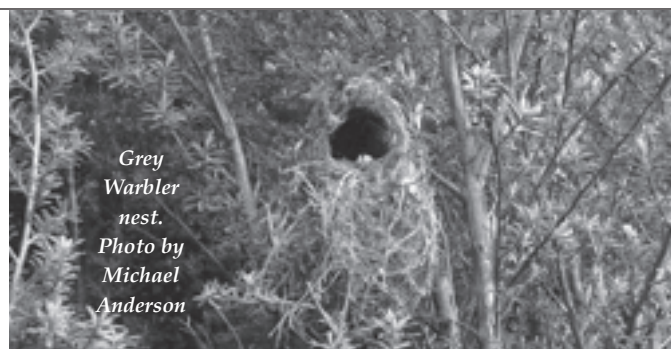
Hard-working Auckland member Ted Wnorowski has emigrated to Brisbane. Good wishes to him for his new life there.

Long-time rangers on Tiritiri Matangi, Ray and Barbara Walters retired on 5th July after an amazing roughly 20 years' work on the island.

Mary Thompson has taken over from Louise Foord as Regional Representative for Otago. Many thanks to Louise for her work over several years, including organising several atlassing trips to the more remote corners of her region. Please see the back of this issue for Mary's contact details.

Lloyd Esler is the new Beach Patrol convenor, taking over from Laurie Howell. Please contact Lloyd with your beach patrol card and specimen record card requirements, and send completed cards to him at 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD9 Invercargill. His phone/fax number is 03 213 0404, and email esler@southnet.co.nz

Congratulations to webmaster Brent Stephenson on purchasing his first house. As a result his postal address has changed to P.O. Box 8291, Havelock North 4157. All of his other contact details remain unchanged.



Have you seen a grey warbler nest?

Do you have a Grey Warbler nest in your backyard? If so, please contact me. I am PhD student working on the breeding biology of the Grey Warbler and Shining Cuckoo. I am seeking Grey Warbler nests that have been parasitised by Shining Cuckoos at sites within the Auckland Region. Shining Cuckoos lay eggs in the Grey Warbler nests from October to December, so I am primarily interested in nests found during this time. If you have a nest that you can see the interior of, the cuckoo egg can easily be recognised, as it has olive-green to greenish-brown colouration, whereas the Grey Warbler eggs are white with reddish-brown speckling. If you have a Grey Warbler nest with a Shining Cuckoo egg, or are unable to see inside the nest, please contact me. My contact details are:

Michael Anderson
Ecology and Conservation Group
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VACANCY FOR REVIEWS EDITOR

The Society is urgently seeking a Reviews Editor to replace Ros Batchelor who has done a great job for a number of years. This is your opportunity to get to see books and other publications before your friends and to gain satisfaction from organising reviewers and reviews. Interested? Contact the Secretary at osnz@xtra.co.nz or via P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

Rare Birds Committee report for the year to 31st July 2006

R. Paul Scofield (convenor)

Reconsideration of an historical record

As mentioned in last year's report (Scofield 2005) we have, in preparation for the forthcoming revision of the *Checklist of New Zealand Birds*, been reassessing some records of rare species in New Zealand to ensure that there is a uniform standard for first New Zealand records. In the past year one record was reassessed by the Rare Birds Committee (RBC):

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* [First New Zealand Record]

06/06 April 1944- July 1945 K.A. Wodzicki & J.R. Eyles.
This record has been the subject of much published literature (Wodzicki & Eyles 1945a & b; Wodzicki 1978; Crossland 1992). It was accepted as a white-phase Reef Heron in the 1953 Checklist. It was not mentioned in the 1970 Checklist but was considered the first record of Little Egret for New Zealand in the 1990 Checklist. It is the opinion of the RBC that this record represents the first documented record of Little Egret in New Zealand, thus formalising the decision of the 1990 Checklist Committee.

First records

Two records that were waiting on comments from overseas authorities were assessed. The committee encourages the observers of these records to submit accounts for publication.

Grey-backed Tern *Sterna lunata*

[First and second New Zealand records]

18/99 1/2/1999 Papakanui Spit Gwenda Pulham
44/02 18 & 24/01/2002 Pungaereere River Mouth Barry Hartley
The committee had great difficulty in assessing this record as little information has been published on the immature plumage of this species, and no member of the committee had much field experience with tropical terns. Extensive consultation with overseas experts has resulted in members of the committee being confident of the identity of both individuals as Grey-backed Terns.

First records of species for islands that pre-date or supplement records in Scofield 2005

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

49/05 6/11/2004 Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham Is Filipe Moniz

Fairy Martin *Hirundo ariel* [First record for The Snares]

15/06 10-13/11/2004 The Snares Thomas Mattern
Note this record predates 14/05 (Scofield 2005).

Bellbird *Anthornis melanura* [First record for Campbell Island]

39/05 23/02/2003 Campbell Island David Thompson
Note this record predates records 11/05, 25/05 and 28/05 (Scofield 2005).

Rare species accepted

Reports of the following rare species were accepted by the Rare Birds Committee during the past year. They are listed in the order used in the 1990 Checklist, with additional species inserted at the end of the appropriate family.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster plotus*

59/05 5/03/2005 Farewell Spit Steve Wood

Chestnut-breasted Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*

09/06 22/12/2005 Hagley Park William Cook & Joyce Miller.

White-eyed Duck *Aythya australis*

07/06 17/12/2005 Bromley Oxidation Ponds, Christchurch
Brent Stephenson

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

47/05 24/04/2005 Kaimai Range near Aongatete Robyn Skelton
60/05 21/07/2005 Moa Point, Wellington John Attwell
68/05 16/08/2005 Dashwood Hill, Seddon Mike Bell
76/05 20/09/2003 Big Totara River, Charleston Doug Arthur

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

67/05 28/08/2005 Waihopai Valley Rd, near Renwick Nick Allen
The long-staying vagrant still present in the same area.

Large Sand Dotterel *Charadrius leschenaultii*

13/06 18/10/2005 Waituna Lagoon Jurren Koets
43/05 10/04/2005 Papakanui Estuary (S. Kaipara Head) Ted Wnorowski
44/05 2/05/2005 Mangere Ponds Ted Wnorowski

Mongolian Dotterel *Charadrius mongolus*

11/06 28/01/2006 Farewell Spit Tim Barnard & Steve Wood
73/05 20/01/2004 Little Waihi Estuary, Bay of Plenty Tim Barnard

Pectoral Sandpiper *Caladris melanotos*

40/05 6/05/2005 Mangere Ponds Ted Wnorowski

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

12/06 9/01/2006 Farewell Spit Peter Bellingham
41/05 10/04/2005 Papakanui Estuary (S. Kaipara Head) Ted Wnorowski
53/05 23/06/2005 Manukau Harbour Ted Wnorowski

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

10/06 7 & 13/1/2006 Little Waihi Estuary Tim Barnard
52/05 25/06/2005 Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

42/05 11/04/2005 Mangere Ponds Ted Wnorowski

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

55/05 24/06/2005 Manukau Harbour Ted Wnorowski
64/05 24/07/2005 Big Sand I., Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski

Japanese Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*

77/05 11/09/2005 Forest Lake (Rotokaeo), Hamilton A B Challinor

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

03/06 6/07/2003 Waipapakauri, Ninety Mile Beach Rodger Cawte

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

46/05 15/05/2005 Lake Grassmere Brian Bell

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

63/05 27/07/2005 Big Sand I., Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski



Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
02/06 18/12/2005 Maketu Estuary, Bay of Plenty
Tim Barnard

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*
54/05 25/06/2005 Kaipara Harbour Ted Wnorowski

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*
38/05 9/04/2005 Foveaux Strait Colin Miskelly
04/06 5/03/2005 off Kaikoura Peninsula Alan Shaw

Brown Skua *Catharacta lonnbergi*
05/06 16/04/2005 Kaikoura Alan Shaw

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*
61/05 5/05/2005 Bell Block, New Plymouth Don Perham

Species outside their usual range:

Brown Teal *Anas chlorotis*
45/05 27/03/2005 Waikanae River Allan Munro
70/05 1/10/2005 Waikuku Beach, Canterbury Andrew Thomas

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*
37/05 10-16/4/05 The Snares Colin Miskelly

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
62/05 25/07/2005 Mangere Ted Wnorowski

Erect-crested Penguin *Eudyptes sclateri*
66/05 28/03/2005 Moeraki Lighthouse Nick Allen

Fairy Tern *Sterna nereis davisae*
74/05 20/11/2004 Maketu Estuary Tim Barnard
75/05 22/10/2005 Maketu Estuary Tim Barnard

Snares-crested Penguin *Eudyptes robustus*
65/05 28/03/2005 Moeraki Lighthouse Nick Allen

Records for which no definitive species identification could be given

Unidentified hawk or owl
48/05 11/06/2005 Eastbourne

Unidentified boobies *Sula* sp.
14/06 3/01/1993 Upper Whangarei Harbour

Probable South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*
01/06 29/12/2005 near Clive, Hawke Bay

Possible Yellow-eyed Penguin *Megadyptes antipodes*
72/05 14/10/2005 Eastbourne

Probable White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*
71/05 4/03/2005 Erebus Cove, Port Ross

Probable black morph New Zealand Fantail *Rhipidura fulginosa*
51/05 7/07/2005 Lake Matheson

The following sightings have not been accepted or could not

be identified using the information provided
Submitters are welcome to provide more information to the committee.

Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*
56/05 21/05/2005 40 km NNW North Cape

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*
57/05 21/05/2005 40 km East Northland

Mongolian Dotterel *Charadrius mongolus*
58/05 12/03/2005 Farewell Spit

Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*
69/05 20/09/2005 Cam River, Kaiapoi

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*
08/06 1/07/2004 Wellington Botanic Gardens

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*
50/05 30/12/2003 Awarua Bay

Species to be removed from the RBC appraisal list

Please note that in last year's report it was noted that it had been decided that due the large number of records submitted the following species no longer meet the criteria to be classified as rare birds, and so have been removed from the RBC appraisal list:

Australian Little Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

Large Sand Dotterel *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Mongolian Dotterel *Charadrius mongolus*

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

This year the large number of records of the following species has meant the following species no longer meet the criteria to be classified as rare birds, and so have been removed from the RBC appraisal list:

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

The committee does have a policy that any member may submit descriptions of any species that they are unable to identify.

Literature Cited

Crossland, A. C. 1992. 1992. First record of white phase reef heron (*Egretta sacra*) in New Zealand. *Notornis* 39: 233-4.

Scofield, R.P. 2005. Rare Birds Committee report for the six months to 31 July 2005. *Southern Bird* 23 (Sept): 7-9.

Wodzicki, K.A. and Eyles, J.R. 1945a. White phase of the Reef Heron or Matuku-moana *Demigretta sacra* (Gmelin) at Wairau Bar. *NZ Bird Notes* 1: 115-117

Wodzicki, K.A. and Eyles, J.R. 1945b. White phase of the Reef Heron in New Zealand. *Emu* 44: 181-182.

Wodzicki, K. 1978. Letter. *Notornis* 25: 356.

Fiji Important Bird Area Book Launched

A book on Fiji's best sites for birds was launched in early June by BirdLife International. *Important Bird Areas of Fiji: Conserving Fiji's Natural Heritage* describes 14 sites in Fiji which are of global importance for bird conservation. The book describes and updates the status and conservation needs of Fiji's 11 globally-threatened species of birds and 27 endemics, and is the first in a series of books that will eventually cover French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Palau.

For more details contact BirdLife International Pacific Programme at 11 Ma'afu Street, Suva, Fiji, or email don@birdlifepacific.org.fj



The Royal Spoonbill in New Zealand

Royal Spoonbills nesting on Kapiti Island. Photo by Ian Armitage

Originally an Australian species, with the odd straggler reaching New Zealand, the Royal Spoonbill started breeding at Okarito in 1949. This remained their only colony until 1979, when a few birds were seen breeding at the Wairau Lagoons. From then the number of spoonbills expanded rapidly and breeding colonies were detected mainly in the South Island, with two in the North Island. See the accompanying table:

Location	year of establishment	approx no. of nests
Okarito, West Coast	1949	5
Wairau Lagoons, Marlborough	1979	4
Maukiekie Island, Moeraki, North Otago	1984	7
Green Island, Dunedin	1988	4
Omaui Island, Southland	1991	25-30
Parengarenga, Northland	1992	4
Kapiti Island	1995	3
Nugget Point, South Otago	1995	4
Taieri Island, Dunedin	1997	25-30
Pig Island, near Riverton, Southland	1998	2
Wainono Lagoon, South Canterbury	2003	14
Heywood Point, near Otago Harbour Mouth	2003	3
Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsula	2004	3
Waituna Lagoon, Southland	2004	few
The Catlins	2005	4

To find out more about these spoonbills two programmes were initiated. The first one was a winter census, and later on a banding programme was launched. The winter census was carried out nationwide from 1991 until 1996 with another one in 2000 to determine the size of the expansion of both the numbers and range of the birds in New Zealand. This programme provided rather useful results with an initial 242 counted in 1991, increasing to a high of 956 in 2000.

Banding commenced at the Wairau Lagoons in 1991 and at Green Island, Dunedin in 1994 with a total of 165 chicks banded to date. It was a good opportunity to follow up these individually-banded birds during their dispersal within New Zealand, and a large number of enthusiastic members participated in following these birds and checking for bands. Unfortunately this enthusiasm waned somewhat after 2000.

What have we learned about these spoonbills? For a start they are not stupid and the majority of the colonies are on islands nicely tucked away from the public. Some nests are not visible, hidden on the east from prying eyes in the west. Some nests are high up (Okarito), and some are at ground level (Wairau Lagoons).

It took a while for some Canterbury members to convince their fellow members of the possibility of spoonbills nesting on maimais at Wainono Lagoon. Yes, they are breeding there on manmade structures, a first for New Zealand, although this was tried unsuccessfully at the Wairau Lagoons, where platforms were erected to entice spoonbills to breed. There were plenty of takers, but unfortunately, all were Pied Shags.

The banding programme gave some idea of dispersal, but not enough. At least 13 juveniles banded at the Wairau lagoons had their first stopover in the Waimea Inlet or at Farewell Spit. Five of these birds turned up in Auckland and/or the Far North within one to four months. What we don't know is what happened in between these stopovers.

There is no evidence that spoonbills cross to the North Island straight from the Wairau lagoons to say Lake Wairarapa before travelling to the Far North, where large numbers over winter. This winter a total of over 300 spoonbills were seen at Parengarenga and Rangaunu harbours, and about 300 in and around Auckland, including a high of close to 150 at Mangere and 70 in the Kaipara harbour.

Other locations with large concentrations in the North Island are the Manawatu Estuary with about 80 birds, but this doesn't tell the story of whether this includes the surrounding wetlands in the Wellington District. Are the 50 Spoonbills on Kapiti part of the Manawatu crowd? Banded birds seen at these locations might give the answer.

In the South Island the normal flight path is the east coast via Lake Ellesmere and the Heathcote estuary with a high of

over 100 birds counted at these locations. A smaller number will over winter here and at the Waimea Estuary and Farewell Spit. However, only a few banded birds are reported from these locations.

Royal Spoonbills are strong flyers. During the breeding season of 2004/5 a juvenile, banded as chick on 14th February on Green Island turned up at Raglan Harbour on 19th April. From a three-week-old chick to a competent fledgling would take at least another three weeks. One month to get from Dunedin to Raglan is not bad. Another juvenile banded on 14th November 2004 at the Wairau Lagoons turned up at the Ahuriri river estuary on 27th March 2005, followed by a sighting on 19th April 2005 at Raglan.

It might be helpful to explain the banding combinations used on these spoonbills. Prior to 1996 all chicks had two colour bands on one upper leg (tibia), one colour band on the other upper leg and a metal band below it on the lower leg (tarsus).

Since 1997 all chicks have two colour bands on both upper legs, and a metal band on one lower leg. **In other words the metal band is always on the lower leg.** Only one bird is flying

around with a metal band on the left tibia, due to a momentary lack of concentration by this bander.

The older the colour bands, the more chance one has to come across faded or discoloured ones. Blue becomes light grey, yellow becomes off-white, and white pale yellow. Pale green can look like any of the above white or yellow ones; however pale green is still preferred to dark green. Try looking towards the sun with a leg showing dark blue and dark green. Both colours look black!

Normally all sightings on banded birds should go the Banding Office, but since 2003 it has been arranged that all sight recoveries come to me and I will sort out the banding locations and ages.

The scientific world might frown upon this statement, but I believe that spoonbills over the age of three seen on or near a breeding ground in the breeding season are actually breeding there. I mention the three years, since it has been proven that they can breed at the age of three.

Please make every effort to check and report more banded Royal Spoonbills.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

FIRST BREEDING OF ROYAL SPOONBILLS IN CANTERBURY

A field trip by the Canterbury branch of the OSNZ to Lake Ki-Wainono (South Canterbury) on 16th February 2003 was a largely uneventful affair, with very few waders on view. So attention turned to the large number (80+) of Royal Spoonbills present on the hunters' maimais in the middle of the lagoon.

An interesting discussion broke out on whether they were breeding or not (comments were made that they couldn't possibly be breeding). I had been visiting the lagoon regularly during the spring and summer and had taken it as read that they were indeed breeding. It was only after these comments that I realised that Royal Spoonbills breed at very few sites in New Zealand and had never before been recorded breeding in Canterbury.

During my visits in the spring I had seen birds displaying and carrying nesting material, but the distance out to the maimais made viewing them very difficult. Sheila Petch who, like myself, had been firmly of the opinion that breeding was taking place, emailed me a few days later to say she had returned to the lagoon for a closer look and was confident that at least two nests had sitting birds on them. I had another look and was certain that there were a number of occupied nests, with at least one with young. Having contacted various people, all of whom were sceptical that the Royal Spoonbills would nest on maimais, Sheila Petch and I tried unsuccessfully to get the loan of a boat to confirm our suspicions.



Spoonbill nest and eggs



Maimai-nesting Royal Spoonbills

Photos by Jan Walker

On a trip down to Ki-Wainono at the end of March I could see that some of the maimais had been 'refurbished' ready for the coming hunting season. It was clear that after the maimais were readied for the shooting season there would be little, if any, evidence left of breeding. Sheila Petch contacted DoC, stressed the urgency of the matter and explained the importance of getting out to the nests. Sheila's persistence paid off and on 3rd

April a DoC ranger and I took a boat down to the lagoon. It was immediately clear as we checked the maimais that there were a number of nests present.

A total of 14 nests were present on five of the maimais (due to time constraints, it was not possible to check all of the maimais). The focus of the colony was a single maimai with seven nests on it; the other maimais had one or two nests on them. All the nests were built on branches or wooden beams projecting from the sides of the maimais. No nests were built on the tops of the structures and those maimais that were 'neater', i.e. had no projections from the sides, were not used. The determining factor for the size of the colony may have been the presence of side projections to build on, as all these had been utilised.

The nests were shallow bowls of interwoven twigs. Their height above the water varied from less than 30 cm up to about 150 cm. Seven of the nests were empty, one nest contained two eggs, and another had a small desiccated (12 cm long) chick in it. Four nests had large (45 cm or more) desiccated young with no sign of predation. One nest had been recently predated, almost certainly by an Australasian Harrier, and contained the fresh remains of a chick. Whilst I can find no previous records of predation of Royal Spoonbill by Australasian Harriers, the latter species has been recorded preying

CONT. ON PAGE 14 ►

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TWITCHATHON 2006

TWITCHATHON 2007

At the Regional Reps meeting prior to the 2005 OSNZ AGM I was asked to change the dates of the National Twitchathon from October to January. This duly occurred, so there was no Twitchathon in 2005.

At first glance the move of date seems to have been a success - with eight (maybe nine - more of that later) entries, so a welcome increase on the last few years. Paradoxically, many of the participants claimed that they would have had much more success if the weather hadn't been so awful!

A total of 136 species was recorded, including all the Tiritiri specialties and Yellowhead, but missing were many of our most sought after, iconic species such as Blue Duck and New Zealand Falcon. Only one species of kiwi was noted, and only one penguin.

Congratulations go to Ted Wnorowski and Ken Bond for reaching the 100 species barrier, totalling exactly that number in their 24 hours. The Mantelpiece Monstrosity will be housed by one or other of them for the next 12 months (lucky guys!). The Plains Wanderers, led once again by Nick Allen, managed a hugely creditable 95, and if there were prizes to give out one would surely go to Nigel Milius for his effort of 11 species (three of which would be lifers for me) from the Antarctic Peninsula - since he couldn't get to any part of New Zealand during January.

Thankyou to all those who took part - this really is one of those events where taking part is way more important than winning. The increase in fuel prices may well have added to peoples' enthusiasm for short range Twitchathons; the 20 km radius option was quite popular. Full results follow:

Canterbury Catbirds (Jan Walker)	54
Plains Wanderers (Nick Allen)	95
3 Sheilas (Sheila Petch)	56
Happy Birders-4 (Kathleen Todd)	26
Waiongona Wanderers (Peter Fryer)	56
Schofields (Richard Schofield)	63
TK Twitchers (Ted Wnorowski)	100
24 hrs in Hollyford Valley (Wendy Goad)	23
Nigel in the Antarctic	11

Now you have seen the impressive results of the 2006 twitchathon, Twitchathon 2007 will again take place in January.

For those who have yet to take part in a twitchathon it is an exercise in having a bit of fun with your mates whilst testing your birdwatching skills. The rules are pretty simple, and are outlined below. You may choose any 24-hour period in the month of January. Starting part way through one day and finishing at the same time the next is fine.

It may be attractive to work within self-imposed restrictions e.g. no boats, no islands, 20 km radius, no driving etc. I urge the inclusion of school-age children as much as possible - some of you are teachers, how about a class project?

Entry is open to all, and if there is sufficient interest there may well be some real prizes to supplement the dubious pleasure of protecting the 'Mantelpiece Monstrosity' for a year.

After your Twitchathon effort, please let Sav have a list of claimed species by mail, fax or email as soon as you can.

The rules:

- Teams are to consist of at least two members. For a species to count, two or more team members must agree the identification (by sight or sound).
- Wild, live birds count (zoos, museums, corpses, Wood Ducks etc. do not).
- Team members must stay within visual contact of each other for a species to be registered.

So give it a go, have a great day out birding and achieving whatever challenges or goals you set yourselves, then send your bird lists, with name of team, participants, and what self-imposed restrictions you competed under to:

Sav Saville
23 Duke Street
Feilding
06 323 1441 (ph and fax)
sav@wrybill-tours.com



NATIONAL FALCON SURVEY

The Raptor Association of New Zealand (RANZ) is conducting a national survey of New Zealand Falcon sightings. The aim of this project is to record and collate all past, present and future sightings of this fast-flying raptor. The New Zealand Falcon is a unique species endemic to New Zealand, yet very little is known about its current distribution and the threats that are affecting this.

In the 1970s Dr Nick Fox undertook the first detailed survey of the distribution of the Falcon, his results were published in *Notornis* (vol 25(4): 317-331 (1978)). During the period 1994-98 RANZ and the Department of Conservation (DoC) undertook a breeding survey of the species. Twenty-eight nest sites were located, described and their breeding success recorded. An additional 395 sighting records were also received during this period. These have now been added to a database and it is hoped to have them mapped-out using a Geographical

Information System (GIS) in the not-too-distant future.

In order to commence the capture of present and future sighting records RANZ has established a website (www.ranz.org.nz) to which sightings can be reported online or a Sighting Report Form downloaded. For those without Internet access forms may be requested from RANZ, C/- 9 Spencer Place, New Plymouth 4312, or phone (06) 757 2570.

Please ensure only one sighting record per form. For those that may have multiple sightings a special form may be obtained from the above address/phone number or from enquiries@ranz.org.nz.

Since the launch of the national falcon survey and the RANZ website at the OSNZ AGM in Wellington on 2nd June 2006, 115 new sightings have been received (25 via the website) with an outstanding 49 sightings coming directly from John and Stella Rowe, gathered during their travels around the country.

It is hoped that OSNZ members and associates will be able to assist RANZ by reporting all and any Falcon sightings from now on, and also take the time to report any from the past. Though RANZ is concentrating on the last 10 years (from 1995) any previous records would be most welcomed and can only add to our knowledge of these fantastic birds of prey.

Further effort will now be undertaken by RANZ to collect and collate additional historical records, including those from the CSNs and if members know of any additional sources of sightings please let RANZ know.

Currently (as at 31st July) there are a total of 694 sighting records of the New Zealand Falcon held.

DAVE BELL
National Falcon Survey Coordinator
Raptor Association of New Zealand

on Little Shag nests on maimais. One nest had both a desiccated well-grown chick in it and a nearly-fledged, live sibling with both parents in attendance.

Whilst the number of dead chicks seems to indicate a poor breeding season, the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* Volume 1 (HANZAB) states that success rates for Royal Spoonbills are often very low, citing the example of five seasons at Okarito where only five chicks were fledged from 37 nests, with losses often due to exposure or falling into the water. Previous documented colonies in

New Zealand have been on offshore islands, on the tops of tall trees, on the ground or on top of low-growing shrubs near shag colonies. Therefore, the use of maimais is a radical departure from the species' normal nesting habits in New Zealand.

This expansion in breeding sites can be clearly seen as part of the spread of Royal Spoonbills within New Zealand, with two new colonies also having been recently started in Otago. It is impossible to know if this was the first year that spoonbills nested at Lake Ki-Wainono, but it seems very likely that they will be

back in the future. HANZAB stresses that Royal Spoonbills are very intolerant of disturbance during the breeding season and in that respect Ki-Wainono is an ideal place with virtually no human activity during the spring and summer months.

In the future it will be interesting to see if the birds' use of the artificial structures (maimais) as nesting platforms is taken up elsewhere in such places as Lake Ellesmere.

ALAN COLLINS



CHARLES FLEMING (1916-1987) was one of New Zealand's pre-eminent twentieth century scientists. A geologist, palaeontologist and ornithologist, he later added biogeography, entomology, and the history of science to his specialist subjects. In 1942, aged twenty-four, he spent a year on Auckland Island as a coast watcher with the secret wartime Cape Expedition and kept a detailed and well-illustrated diary recording day to day events as well as the scientific work he undertook at No. 2 Station in Carnley Harbour. He also visited No. 1 Station at Ramai Cove and No. 3 Station on Campbell Island.

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Membership Renewals

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

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Michael Anderson (Auckland), Jonathan Boucher (Auckland), Ian Carberry (Marlborough), Nicholas Church (Otago), Paul Davey (Otago), Chris Day (Wairarapa), Maj De Poorter (Auckland), Stephen Gemmill (Wellington), Clare Green (Canterbury), Kelly Hare (Wellington), Ingrid Kuipers (Auckland), John MacKenzie (Waikato), Mark Mitchell (Hawkes Bay), Deidre Mussen (Canterbury), Howard Pharo (Wellington), George Pope (Wellington), Jonathan Pote (Auckland), Florence Reynolds (Wellington), Mr D H Roxburgh (Marlborough), Mrs J D Roxburgh (Marlborough), Freya Sadgrove (Wellington), Richard Seaton (Manawatu), Emma Stanyard (Auckland), Cielle Stephens (Wairarapa), Eva Sullivan (Canterbury), Kathryn Sutton (Canterbury), Catherine Underwood (Wellington), Birgit Ziesemann (Auckland).

We also thank the following members for their generous donations to the Society:
Sharon Alderson, Bill Campbell.

Conference & AGM 2006 Wellington

All photos by Nick Allen

About 120 members were treated to a busy four-day programme based at the fairly sumptuous (as far as OSNZ conferences go) surroundings of the Brentwood Hotel in Kilbirnie. In an impressive turnout, well over a third of participants were from the organising region. The four-day programme was a new and popular development brought about by an embarrassing number of offers of scientific day presentations. These took place on the Friday and Saturday and were all of the excellent standard conference-goers have become used to in recent years. Check out your copy of *Notornis* for summaries of the presentations. The final presentation on Saturday was the launching of *Notornis* online, performed appropriately by Rosemary Heather, widow of Barrie, ably aided by Christopher Robertson and Murray Williams. Brent Stephenson followed the Friday scientific day with a digital slideshow of his excellent photos, this being so popular that most people went back for a repeat showing on Saturday.

The AGM on Saturday night was over before many people realised what had happened, after David Medway threatened to extend his presidency by adjourning the meeting for a year. This did not eventuate and a smooth transition was made with Richard Holdaway taking over at the conclusion at 10pm.

In a long tradition the Scientific Days were held in sweltering temperatures and almost cloudless skies, with only the interesting topics on offer preventing post-prandial soporify or sun-bathing,

and the two following days of field excursions were adversely affected by rain, gales and high seas. They were so adversely affected, in fact, that visits to Mana and Kapiti Islands were out of the question (weather three ornithologists nil in the case of Kapiti and recent past conferences). Indeed given the size of the waves on Monday it might have been possible to surf across to Kapiti.

Anyway those who bravely ventured out enjoyed their trips to Karori, the coast to the north, and Somes Island (the Mana alternative), donning the very necessary waterproofs and in the case of the coasters using strategically-situated rain and wind shelters that were supposedly there for watching bird life from. Those who wisely anticipated, no doubt from previous bitter experience, the rather indifferent weather enjoyed on conference field trips went behind the scenes at Te Papa to view the collection held there. Those who lingered outside long enough might have encountered the obviously trained Tui that sings from a small tree near the main entrance, or perhaps it was just a tape like in a certain 'Birdsong Gully' in Karori to confuse passing birdos.

All in all a great experience with huge buffet-style meals providing a truly unhealthy amount of great grub and a very handy bar which was depleted of many ales by attendees. Many thanks to the organising committee, especially Ian and Gwyneth Armitage and Ros Batcheler who made the weekend run so smoothly. See you in Taranaki in 2007.

NICK ALLEN



Former president David Medway talks to the AGM



Conference delegates brave the weather at the entrance to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, left to right Suzi Phillips (Auckland RR), Jon Sullivan, Laura Molles, Mark Nee (Treasurer) and David Medway (immediate past president).



Ken Bond (left) and Ted Wnorowski with the *Porphyrio mantelli* Mantelpiece Monstrosity, awarded for finding the most species on Twitchathon 2006.

Far North

There has been a lull in activity in the Far North over the winter, the only field event being the winter wader count which extended into July because of adverse weather. The count eventually held in mid-July produced reasonable numbers of birds, with 12 Whimbrels on Walker Island being a high figure for the time of year. There were also high numbers of Royal Spoonbills, both at the roost at Awanui Wharf and around Parengarenga Harbour. Perhaps the particularly cold winter has tempted members to find warmer weather abroad as the regional representative has been in Central and South America for a month.

In late September we will be welcoming the Society's wader enthusiasts who plan to carry out the first wader trapping and banding in the Far North, hopefully with the assistance of some of our local members. They will spend a week around Parengarenga with a view to mist-netting on Kokota Sandspit.

Kevin Matthews, whose boat we have recently used for wader counts, reported a Nankeen Kestrel in July in the vicinity of Kaitia Airport. The bird is still present in late August.

News of other local projects includes the completion of another season's kiwi-monitoring, indicating that North Island Brown Kiwi numbers in the studied area are at least similar to those of the past couple of years. The Guardians of the Bay of Islands, a recently-formed group, have ambitious plans for intense predator control and the translocation of native birds to some islands in the Bay.

DETLEF DAVIES

Regional Roundup

Northland

Northland's birding this winter brought a bout of cold feet, literally. It seemed like every trip involved cold water, with two trips to the Kaipara Harbour and two Whangarei Harbour surveys looking for coloured flags on waders. We didn't have a huge amount of luck finding flags but still managed to see large numbers of birds on some trips. One trip on Whangarei Harbour surprised us as we were expecting a moderate tide according to the tide-tables, but all the roost sites that were checked by boat were well covered even before high tide. Therefore, even though an early start had been made, not many birds were sighted.

A group of members also made a weekend trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island in August. Unfortunately it was another wet weekend, so several people returned after a day visit, and those that stayed had a bonus day on the island as the boats couldn't get out in the rough seas. Everyone was pleased to see all the birds they were expecting to see, even in the wet weather, and enjoyed the different behaviour of the birds in the wet.

Meetings over winter have been marked with lots discussion amongst the regular group that attend. We have had a report back on the AGM, and spent one evening going over the list of all records of surveys held



by members. Tony Beauchamp also reported on actions taken to 'scare' large numbers (hundreds) of Black-backed Gulls from the Whangarei Transfer Station. The roosters weren't doing the job, but regular hosing down works well! Following discussions of gull populations around the Whangarei area we are looking at surveys over summer to see what is happening with the birds.

We are looking forward to getting out on a range of bird surveys over summer – the usual wader and shorebird surveys, plus some new banded rail, shag and gull surveys.

KATRINA HANSEN and GERARD PILON

Auckland

Auckland has had a busy six months with the now 20-year survey on Tiritiri Matangi Island continuing in March, the post-breeding flock count for New Zealand Dotterels, the South Kaipara Lakes dabchick survey and the usual June wader surveys in the four harbours. We are grateful to our members who take time to organise and run these surveys each season, as well as those who participate in the counts.

Our monthly evening meetings have now settled into our new venue in the Natural Sciences building at Unitec which has excellent meeting rooms. In March, Suzi Phillips talked about a three-week visit to Ecuador with Gillian Eller, and her presentation included highlights of their birding trips north-west of Quito and in the Galapagos Islands.

Quito is the highest capital city in the world at 2800 m, and on the first day they travelled to Mindo via the slopes of nearby Pinchincha Volcano climbing to a breathtaking 3500+ m. High altitude birds seen there included a Tawny Antpitta calling from low bushes on the roadside, and an American Kestrel out hunting. They also visited the Yanacocha Cloud Forest Reserve where they saw the first of hundreds of colourful species of tanagers and hummingbirds.

Based in Mindo for a week, they saw many of Ecuador's iconic birds including, during visits to the cloud forests of Bellavista, a pair of the spectacular Plate-billed Mountain Toucans, hundreds of hummingbirds, the cryptic Toucan Barbets and Crimson-mantled Woodpecker. They also saw the Mindo specialty, the stunning red and black Cock of the Rock during a dawn vigil at the lek where about a dozen males had gathered in the early morning.

After a week of stunning birds and hundreds of species, Gill and Suzi returned to Quito and a flight out to the Galapagos, spending 12 days cruising the islands. Highlights were many including swimming with turtles, penguins and seals, and the marine and land iguanas and Giant Tortoises. And of course the birds, including three species of boobies, the mighty Galapagos Hawk, mischievous mockingbirds, the fascinating Darwin's finches, up close with Waved Albatross and nesting Flightless Cormorants and gulls.

"Strategies of host manipulation in parasitic cuckoos, finches and cowbirds", was the title of Dr Mark Hauber's talk to us in April. Mark (a lecturer and researcher in animal behaviour at the University of Auckland), gave us an entertaining talk on the exciting evolutionary dilemma of brood parasitism.

Brood parasites exhibit several traits that are adapted to their unique life history, such as strategies for egg-laying, and host deception at the egg and nestling stages, he said.

A Cowbird lays an egg every other day in a variety of host bird nests. They can lay up to 72 eggs in a summer, and take just three seconds to lay an egg in another bird's nest. The Cowbird has an efficient nest-searching strategy and a memory of where it has already laid its eggs. It may also lay up to two eggs in one host nest.

Brood parasites also have strong egg shells, short incubation times, some mimicry of the host eggs and nestlings, and often kill their host nest-mates, he said. Cowbirds hatch earlier than the host's chicks, so they are bigger and more vigorous. They toss out host eggs resulting in a 10 to 100 per cent reduction in nesting success for host birds, such as phoebes. Cowbird chicks respond to everything, but pay a cost for being so vigorous, as they get predated more often.

Mark also talked about brood parasitism happening in other species such as ants, termites and bumble bees. In birds, parasitic species include cowbirds, cuckoos, and ducks. The South American Black-headed Duck is a brood parasite whose hatchling leaves the nest and needs no parental care. Species recognition is an important factor for potential host species. It is important for the host to discriminate between brood parasites and its own species. The Great Reed Warbler expels cuckoo eggs, but how does it recognise the European Cuckoo eggs? Is it a genetic template or learned behaviour?

Some research done on egg colours found that about 30 per cent of

eggs were rejected when eggs with large dots were placed in nests, but when a black egg was placed in there, the rejection rate was 80%. Most female birds appear to have an acceptance threshold. In New Zealand, it is known that the Shining Cuckoo mainly parasitises the Grey Warbler and the Chatham Island Warbler, while the Long-tailed Cuckoo will parasitise the nests of Whitehead, Yellowhead and Brown Creeper. In this case, there is no visual mimicry with the host chicks at nestling stage, but the Long-tailed Cuckoo chicks' begging calls are vocally similar to their hosts. The Shining Cuckoo chicks' begging calls also sound very like those of Grey Warblers.

Auckland members and guests filled a lecture theatre for Dr Richard Holdaway's presentation on the richness of New Zealand's avian fossil record. His talk was on New Zealand's Quaternary avian ecology and perspectives and prospects for palaeobiology in New Zealand. Dr Holdaway summarised recent progress in the exploration phase of New Zealand Quaternary avian palaeobiology, and demonstrated the richness of the fossil record, both in the number of sites, and the preservation of bones and other materials. He said the task now was to use this research to work out the structure and function of those ecological systems, both as they existed, and as they changed before human intervention. He explained the effects of human intervention, and showed how the new technologies were being used in this research, including analysis of ancient DNA and the application of stable isotopic analysis to specific problems.

"The major shift has been towards question-based research, developed within a theoretical structure that was largely missing until 2000 and beyond," he said. "The results are already yielding important insights for terrestrial and marine ecology, and a theoretical basis for conservation and management of surviving species and systems. Some of the examples show the astounding level of detail that can be achieved under certain conditions." Dr Holdaway said these results suggested that New Zealand could look forward to increasing returns from the application of new technologies, and improved understanding of the 'reach' of methods at ecosystem and taxon-specific levels. "Such progress should lead to a melding of palaeobiology with modern ecology, exploiting and enhancing the strengths of both fields," he said. He also discussed prospects for progress, both in the application of this research and in the preservation of New Zealand's Quaternary resource.

At the June meeting, the emphasis was on New Zealand Fairy Terns, with Marleen Baling discussing genetics and Sam Ferreira talking about survivability of the species. Marleen's study on conservation genetics of the Fairy Tern was a two year contract for the Department of Conservation and the University of Auckland, (supervised by Dr Dianne Brunton). The New Zealand Fairy Tern population only numbers about 30 individuals and is listed as "Acutely threatened – nationally critical". Marleen investigated the level of endemism and genetic relatedness of the population to the larger breeding populations in Australia and New Caledonia. She sequenced the mitochondrial DNA with samples collected from the three populations.

The results showed that the Fairy Tern populations in all three locations are genetically distinct with very restricted gene flow. The single Fairy Tern mitochondrial DNA haplotype found in New Zealand is not found elsewhere. This backed up previous studies that had found morphological and behavioural differences between the main breeding populations. In future, more studies are needed on male Fairy Terns, to see if they are migrating between New Zealand and Australia, she said.

Dr Sam Ferreira presented a comprehensive statistical analysis of Fairy Tern breeding success and survival rates. He concluded that there was a factor limiting the population that had nothing to do with management. The Fairy Tern population had good and bad years, but was stable at around 30 birds. He identified two possible reasons for this. One was that some birds were moving away from New Zealand, such as males possibly migrating and breeding elsewhere. The other possible reason was the food supply and a lack of suitable small fish at the right time.

He also identified the plethora of coastal development, especially further development in areas with Fairy Terns, as a real threat to the survival of Fairy Terns. "Given that adult survival rates are so bad (possibly due to predation outside the breeding season), there needs to be a strong stand against coastal development in Fairy Tern areas, until we are sure that it is not going to be part of the problem," he said.

"Management and observations of Fairy Terns are critical to their survival, and we only have Fairy Terns now because of the interest from some OSNZ members," said Dr Ferreira. "Adult survival is declining and we need more research, observations and information to minimise any potential new threats."

In July, Dick Veitch gave Auckland members a presentation on the Red Knots of Delaware Bay. At Delaware Bay in the eastern United States, the Red Knots are under serious threat due to the depletion of Horseshoe Crabs and their eggs. Delaware Bay is a critical refuelling and staging point for flocks of Red Knots migrating north from South America. The waders time their arrival for when the Horseshoe Crabs are spawning on the beaches around the bay in May. Since the 1980s, the numbers of knots feeding in the bay has declined sharply from



100,000 to around 13,600 last year. A decline in the crab population is believed to explain the decline in the knot population stopping there. Crab numbers in the bay had declined dramatically (a 90% reduction in eggs by 1996), and this was thought to be mainly due to over-harvesting of crabs for bait.

One of the moves underway to address the situation is the possibility of the US placing Red Knots on the federal endangered species list which would place limits on beach access, coastal development and fishing. Last year state officials banned hand-harvesting of the crabs during the peak of the season, and closed 15 beaches – two measures that were successful.

Our much-respected local wader expert, Adrian Riegen, drew a full house to the August meeting with his talk on the search for Bar-tailed Godwits in Alaska. This was the story of his visit to the Yukon/Kuskokwim River Delta in Alaska with the aim of putting satellite or radio transmitters on 60 godwits. It's a vast area of ponds, lakes, and rivers about 200 km across with one regional centre (population 5,000) and transport solely by float-planes and boats. The area is relatively flat, (mostly 1-2 m high and up to 8 m on a hill) with breeding grounds for millions of water birds including waders, swans, ducks, cranes, geese and other birds.

The main research centre Adrian stayed at was Karnaryaraq Camp, which had recently been swept 20 km inland by a storm surge and surrounded by sea. The vegetation is lowland grasses that are regularly inundated by high tides. The group was there in late July and early August when most breeding finished. Most of the adult birds had gone, but juveniles were still there and moving to the coast. Adrian and the other New Zealand researchers, David Melville and Dick Veitch, were there to catch godwits. The godwits had been seen on a nearby sandbar for last two seasons with thousands roosting each day, and they expected to be able to cannon- or mist-net them.

Unfortunately this year there were no godwits roosting there, so while the researchers waited, planes went in search of other roosting sites. A plane soon found a flock of godwits 19 km away, but unfortunately this site was 65 km by sea. The flock of 700 godwits, Dunlins and Grey Plovers, had mostly juvenile godwits. One adult godwit seen there was a colour-banded bird from Nelson, banded by David Melville. Most of the godwits were 4-5 weeks old and just full-sized.

The intention was to get satellite transmitters on the birds to track them back to New Zealand, but this time they were thwarted by the weather. They went back to camp for all the gear, intending to return the next day but found that there was a storm brewing in the Bering Sea and 4-5 m waves were expected. The river route also became too rough and they were stuck in camp for ten days. Of six birds that had had transmitters put on in the previous season, three were seen in New Zealand and another at Brisbane in the summer. Three of six also returned to their same nest site the next year, but they could not catch them to remove the transmitters.

SUZI PHILLIPS

Waikato

Evening meetings this year have ranged from a general discussion on the running of the region in the absence of an RR to a mid-winter pot luck dinner. In between there have been some excellent and informative presentations from a range of speakers, to all of whom I would like to express our appreciation.

Following the AGM, chaired by Hugh Clifford, we heard from Gerry Kessels about conservation issues he is involved with, including the siting of a wind farm south of Raglan. Gerry is a consultant on landscaping schemes for the benefit of wildlife. Another of his projects was the landscaping of a wetland area near Pauanui Golf Course which has attracted a number of birds including New Zealand Dotterel.

Southern birds and animals were the focus of an entertaining talk by Hugh Clifford, with great photos taken on a voyage on a Russian icebreaker to the Falklands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Chris Smuts-Kennedy showed us some breathtaking Fiordland landscapes when he spoke on the latest Kakapo search earlier this year. Sadly no birds were located, only overgrown track and bowl systems. Chris also brought us up-to-date on progress with the predator-proof ring fence around Mount Maungatautari (which has since been completed).

Dai Morgan presented a fascinating paper on Australian Magpies in developed rural landscapes and their impacts on New Zealand birds. He found that though birds tended to keep their distance from foraging or breeding magpies (but not non-breeding flocks); there is a good case for their having a less negative effect on other bird species than is sometimes thought. Magpies were responsible for one out of twenty-two instances of nest predations recorded by time-lapse recording techniques during the study.

Bruce Postill described his recent trip to the Yellow Sea area of China as one of the team from the Miranda Naturalists' Trust. A priority was to count migrating waders at the Yalu Jiang Nature Reserve, all 29,000 of them, over a period of five days. Bruce shared his feelings of awe at the sheer numbers of birds and also of people in this area which is

one of the most densely-populated regions on Earth. It is not a happy situation for the biodiversity of the mudflats on which the migrating flocks depend. Especially is this so in South Korea, also visited by the Trust, where huge areas are being drained and reclaimed.

Some of the recent bird sightings from Waikato members... Kaka: five were reported in trees at Pukekawa (12/7) and one on the Hakarimata Track near Huntly (23/7) (both Hugh Clifford), three were at Waingaro (6/5, David Riddell). New Zealand Dabchick: seven on Raglan Sewage Ponds (5/4, Betty Seddon), one at Taharoa Beach near the dam (21/7, John and Stella Rowe), and two at Te Aroha wetlands (14/5, Ken Wedgewood). New Zealand Pigeon: two in Hamilton City, one in Hillcrest (24/7, Bev Woolley) and one at the University, one in Cambridge (16/4, Betty Seddon). Tui: one heard in Hillcrest and another seen at the Hamilton Gardens (19/7, Bev Woolley), one seen on 10/4 and 14/4 in Cambridge (Betty Seddon).

Other interesting sightings include a Reef Heron in the Raglan Estuary (5/4, Betty Seddon), and a black Fantail photographed at the Hamilton Gardens (14/7, Bev Woolley and Neil Fitzgerald). Hugh Clifford has been busy and reports a Caspian Tern at Lake Hakanoa (30/4), Moreporks singing around his house in Chartwell (21/4), and a Cook's Petrel found dead in Hamilton City (via Tony Keen). Finally Ken Ayers and Kim King report a Spotted Dove at their house on the southern outskirts of Hamilton and Nick Dunkley has 'sketchy' photographic evidence of a spoonbill at Perry's Sandpit in Te Rapa.

STELLA ROWE and DAI MORGAN

Taranaki

The long-running regional discussion about why and which birds walk and/or hop continued at the June meeting. The question was asked as to whether this study is fruitless and futile or scientifically useful. No definitive answer was produced which means it isn't over yet...

Amongst members' reports we were told of 40 plus Mynas roosting in an inner city garden. A few flocks of Pied Oystercatchers have been seen along the coast. Bill Messenger told us that three Eastern Rosellas seen at his home were the first ever and Ron Lambert complained that Starlings were plundering his apple tree. Dean Caskey from DoC continues to keep us informed of the unusual things he sees, this time 300-plus Welcome Swallows roosting in a raupo swamp in eastern Taranaki. David Medway gave us a résumé of the 2006 AGM in Wellington and a discussion was held regarding the plan for the 2007 one to be held in this region.

During the June field trip around north Taranaki birds seen ranged from giant petrel (close to the Waitara River Mouth), a Royal Spoonbill, and at a coastal estuary seven or eight Kingfishers taking crabs from the mud.

July's meeting saw all incumbents returned to their respective positions with the usual swiftness that is a hallmark of our elections. An email from an ex-Taranaki member Graham Bird, now residing in Waikanae, had us a little envious as his bird list from there was quite extensive. The building of the Excluder fence around Lake Rotokare is due to begin this year, with most of the money for it having been raised. It will be good to have this so close to home. Beach patrols have yielded few results.

We were out and about New Plymouth on a lovely winter's day for a July field trip visiting Lake Rotomanu. As this lake is close to a river and the sea, a good variety of birds was seen. A Black, Little and Little Black Shag sitting close together gave David Medway an opportunity to point out the differences between these three species. A Little Shag having flounder for breakfast and 70-plus Scaup on a nearby tidal pond were also a highlight. On to Pukekura Park for lunch and a chance for David to give us a tour around the area he knows so well. Although the birds were reluctant to show themselves it was a great day out.

Alan Standcliff was the guest speaker at the August meeting. The only full-time officer for Fish and Game New Zealand in Taranaki, he covers an extensive area. He spoke about the methods used in monitoring bird populations for setting bag limits during the hunting season. He concentrated on the main target species around Taranaki, namely Paradise Shelduck, Mallard/Grey Duck, Shoveler, Canada Goose and Black Swan, and highlighted the decisions made in maintaining bird numbers without some species becoming pests.

A pair of New Zealand Falcons seen close to New Plymouth were reported to be vocal and interacting. A New Zealand Falcon and two Kaka have been seen around Pukekura Park. The Australasian Coot population at Lake Mangamahoe seems to be on the increase, with 28 seen. This is the most so far. The Morepork at Waiongana has yet to be heard moreporking.

Wellington

The Wellington Region was pleased to host the Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Society, and that has been a big event for us this year. We are pleased that the conference was well attended and that the two-day presentation of scientific papers was popular. It was a pity though about the weather that spoiled opportunities for many people to visit Mana and Kapiti Islands.

At our July meeting Susan Cunningham spoke to us about "How Kiwis hunt: Is smelling underground the best way?" A mixed population of about 300 kiwi of various North Island Brown Kiwi subspecies on an island in the Hauraki Gulf has served as an excellent research resource due to their dense population and low conservation value. Thirty-eight are fitted with transmitters. As part of her BSc (Hons) project, and with work by others, it has been shown that 80% of kiwi food is gained from underground. Susan studied preferred soil and habitat types (with five types in the study area) and concluded that soil resistance and water content were the most significant factors during the July–October study period.

Probing hole depth and size were also measured and confirmed that vibration sensing could be in use as the hole pattern was similar to that of waders. Work by others on the bill of the Western Sandpiper showed vibration sensory cells in the tip, and Susan examined kiwi bills at Tring (in the UK) looking for similar cells. She found these to be highly-developed in all kiwi species, but in a different pattern and distribution on the bill, including a unique overlapping formation on the underside of the tip. Her PhD work will describe this organ on the bill tip, its uniqueness, and what it has to say about convergent evolution – the waders being widely separated from kiwi taxonomically. Susan joined OSNZ as a junior member and she told us of her attending meetings and thinking she might be up there giving a talk one evening – she was, and on an exciting new finding too!

Recent bird observations around Wellington include: a banded Brown Teal and a Cape Pigeon in Lambton Harbour right in the city, a Shining Cuckoo in full song in Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in early August, at least two Reef Herons in Wellington Harbour and several Royal Spoonbills in Porirua Harbour.

Peter Reese has again guided several members and students in the art of banding small birds with his banding weekends at Wellington Zoo. There are always notable observations and recently a Dunnock was recaptured after 924 days, our longest recapture for this species.

IAN ARMITAGE

Nelson

The five members taking part in the winter wader census on Farewell Spit on 17th June were blessed with good weather for the count. Numbers for most of the regular species were up compared to the last couple of years. One group of Pied Oystercatchers numbered close to 3,000 and made an impressive sight. In one group of 48 Bar-tailed Godwits four were colour-banded. Interestingly they were standing only about 200 m from the site where they banded on the 2nd February this year.

A few weeks later Rob Schuckard returned to Farewell Spit with a small team for the sole purpose of checking Bar-tailed Godwits' colour bands. A total of 12 birds were noted whose complete sets of bands could be seen.

In June an Australasian Bittern was seen on a number of occasions in a creek flowing into the Waimea Estuary. Willie Cook commented that this was only the fourth time he had seen a bittern in this location in the last 35 years. Following on from this Peter Gaze retrieved a bittern from a timber yard in Richmond. A vet gave the bird a check over, finding no apparent injuries, but the bird was lacking condition so some feeding was recommended. Willie Cook was recruited for this task, and he in turn enlisted the help of two others to assist with feeding and the supply of suitable food. The bird was released a few days later in a creek close to where the earlier sightings had been made. A close watch was kept on the area but no further sightings were recorded.

A group of six Cattle Egrets have been seen regularly over the winter in paddocks close to the Waimea Inlet. Similarly Pauline Samways noted a group of nine in the Lower Moutere area. Two different hybrid Black Stilts have been present throughout the winter in the Motueka/Moutere Estuaries. Peter Field saw one Black Stilt amongst a group of Pied Stilts in the Nelson Haven, at a site where construction is taking place on sewage ponds. On a visit to Delaware Bay in July he was surprised to see a single Eastern Curlew amongst a group of Pied Oystercatchers.

At the August meeting Steve Wood gave an interesting account of a full-day pelagic trip from Kaikoura with Oceanwings in the company of other OSNZ members.

In recent days in late August Wrybill numbers on Bells Island shellbank have gone from the low twenties to sixty-eight. This fits the usual pattern of birds heading south to their breeding grounds in August.

A pair of Banded Rails were heard calling in a section of the Waimea Inlet where tracks of this species are frequently seen. This area has been intensively trapped for mustelids over the past 18 months and results have been good, with rats, hedgehogs, and cats also among the tally.

DON COOPER

Marlborough

Over this winter we have been blessed with some good birding and some exciting sightings. A Glossy Ibis has been resident in the lower Opawa River for several months now. The two Red-necked Phalaropes are still at Lake Grassmere, with one bird now in full breeding plumage. A Black Stilt has been seen at the Wairau Lagoon, where a good number of Royal Spoonbills have recently arrived back and are starting to breed. The Black Kite is also being seen regularly up the Waihopai Valley.

We have been busy with winter banding programmes, mist-netting passerines at the Blenheim sewage ponds. Large numbers of Yellowhammers, Greenfinches and Redpolls have been caught, along with a good number of Cirl Buntings. This year we have been colour-banding the Cirl Buntings, so if anybody spots any of this species please check them out for colour bands.

In addition to passerines over 80 Australasian Harriers have been caught and banded, mostly on the Wairau Plains. As we all know harriers often fall victims to cars as they forage on road kills. As we build up the number of banded harriers, and with young dispersing as breeding birds become more territorial, we ask that if you see a dead bird on the road please take the time to stop and check if it is banded.

With spring upon us we have a busy programme ahead, continuing with monthly counts at Lake Grassmere, a census of braided river birds on the Wairau River, Black-backed Gull and Royal Spoonbill chick banding, and then passerine banding at Jack Taylor's in the autumn. Anybody passing through Marlborough over the next few months is welcome to join any of our activities – feel free to contact me for more details.

MIKE BELL

Canterbury

This winter, in contrast to those in the past few years, has been a long, cold, wet one. Heavy snowfall affecting much of inland Canterbury in June caused much damage, not only to buildings, but also to forests, bringing down many branches and whole trees making access to many areas difficult. Less obvious damage, for example to already pest-ravaged mistletoe, is unlikely to do the bird populations in the area any favours.

Perhaps partly because of the inclement weather, and also the impressive pest control work being done by the Christchurch City Council on the Port Hills, Bellbirds have been noted all over Christchurch City this year, even the eastern suburbs where they have either been very scarce or absent in recent decades. Sporadic sightings of the Travis Wetland Bittern and Glossy Ibis have continued. Nearby Windsor Golf Course has hosted two New Zealand Falcons, which tended to favour a large pine tree near the No 12 hole and Burma Road. On one occasion one was seen to do a spot of Feral Pigeon control.

On the estuaries two Eastern Curlews have wintered over on the Avon-Heathcote Estuary. They were roosting with Variable Oystercatchers in the unusual location of Sumner Beach in early August. Another curlew was at the more regular haunt of the Ashley Estuary in early June. This latter location has also continued to host a Black-tailed Godwit over winter, and one of its semi-regular Black Stilts was seen to mount a Pied cousin on 17th June, and chase off another Black Stilt maybe hopeful of doing the same. One of the Ashley Black Stilts was at the unusual location of the Waipara River Mouth on 16th July. A Black-fronted Dotterel at this (regular) site in full display on 23rd August was a fine sight. Wrybills were moving through as they usually do in late August with 33 at the Ashley Estuary on the same date, and one of the banded birds noted up the Ashley River earlier the same week.

Numbers of Australasian Crested Grebes wintering on Lake Forsyth continue to rise year-on-year, with 226 counted by Andrew Crossland on 28th June being the maximum count, almost being equalled by Jan Walker and Marion Macbeth's count of 223 on 1st July. Cattle Egret numbers are also up again on recent years with up to 30 in the Waikuku area and about 20 near Lake Ellesmere. A white Fantail was reported just north of the Rangitata River Mouth in June by local farmer Gary Webb.

Geoff Henderson talked at the June meeting about the work he did after being awarded a Royal Society scholarship to take a year out of teaching to study the feeding preferences of native and introduced birds for native and introduced plants. Geoff worked in a series of study areas of different species composition concentrating on frugivorous birds and issues concerned with seed dispersal of native and introduced (including weed) species. Some of the conclusions Geoff drew were that native birds visit native plants 99% of the time in native habitats (and still even 54% in urban sites) and so native species are vitally important for the continued success of our native flora.

Tony Crocker treated the July meeting to a tour of southern Africa and some of the spectacular birds living there in often interesting

scenery. The August meeting was given an update of what the Society is doing and intends to do by the President, Richard Holdaway, and a summary of happenings at the Wellington Conference and field trips by Jill West and Nick Allen.

The winter wader count at Lake Ellesmere in June was affected by a poor turnout of counters, having being put back a day due to poor weather on the planned day. The alternative day had good weather and fair numbers of birds, but almost all of the non-resident waders were absent, and many stilts were reported to be feeding on nearby wet and flooded paddocks.

The Ashburton Lakes census on 15th July was a great success held in fine weather amid beautiful snow-capped mountains. Decent numbers of birds were present on those lakes free of ice, including 46 Australasian Crested Grebes, 434 Australasian Coots and almost 3,000 New Zealand Scaup. There was also an Australasian Bittern on the edge of Lake Emma near the hut, a White Heron on Lake Trinity and

the usual smattering of New Zealand Falcons. On the following day only 170 Crested Grebes could be counted on Lake Forsyth, but the birds were feeding and there was fog rolling in off the sea so some birds could have been missed. It is just as likely, however, that some birds may have moved off in the good weather of the previous week.

The August trip up to Kaikoura for a trip on the Oceanwings boat was also blessed by good weather – perhaps too good to see great numbers and variety of seabirds. Numbers of Cape Pigeons and albatrosses out the back of the boat were a shadow of past years, maybe due to the almost lack of wind or possibly the almost complete demise of the local fishery (and so regular discards). The species that were present mostly provided good views, the main exceptions being fly-through Southern Royal Albatross and Common Diving Petrel.

NICK ALLEN

What's on



Far North

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

Northland

Katrina Hansen, 3 Harbour View Road, Onerahi, Whangarei. Ph (09) 430 2133. Email katrina.hansen@xtra.co.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, 36 Beulah Avenue, Rothesay Bay, North Shore City, Auckland. Phone (09) 479 5395. Email suzi@dialogue.co.nz

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

South Auckland

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 7.45 pm. Beach patrols ph. Wendy Goad (09) 292 7838. Manukau and Firth of Thames censuses ph. Tony Habraken (09) 238 5284

Waikato

RR's position vacant. Contact person Martin Day, 9 Conrad Place, Cambridge 2351. Phone (07) 827 3047, email mday@wave.co.nz

Evening meetings, every third Wednesday 7.30pm, DoC Area Office, 5 Northway Street (off Te Rapa Road), 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

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Tim Barnard, 23 Tennyson Drive, Owkata, 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. 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) 7.30 pm. 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) 7.30 pm, venue alternating between Masterton and Greytown. Field trips are the following weekend. Contact Miles King for further details.

Wellington

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

Evening meetings - first Monday of the month, DoC Science and Research Centre, ph. Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470. 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. 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, 7.15 pm upstairs at 50 Halifax Street, Nelson. Ph. Steve Wood (03) 528 6438 or Don Cooper (03) 544 8109.

Marlborough

Mike Bell, 42 Vickerman Street, Grovetown 7321. Phone (03) 577 9818 or 021 734 602. Email mikeandnoz@slingshot.co.nz

Lake Grassmere count – third Sunday of month. Ph Brian Bell (03) 570 2230. Passerine banding, each weekend during February and March, at Jack Taylor's farm, Ward, contact Mike Bell Ph (03) 577 9818.

Canterbury/West Coast

Nick Allen, 65 Allin Drive, Waikuku Beach, North Canterbury 7402. 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

Mary Thompson, 197 Balmacewen Road, Balmacewen, Dunedin. Ph (03) 464 0787. Email mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Evening meetings bi-monthly on the fourth Wednesday at 8.00pm in Benham Seminar Room, Zoology Department, 340 Great King Street. Contact Mary Thompson (03) 464 0787

Southland

Jamie Wood, c/- Geology Department, Otago University, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin. Email larusnz@hotmail.com

Evening meetings (in conjunction with Field Club) held second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm. 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.

