



Southern Bird

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**Birds and Windfarm
Development**

**Avian Influenza
Surveillance**

**Discovery of Nesting
Site of the Kermadec
Storm Petrel**

Dotterels at Orewa





QUOTATION

*The swallow of summer, she toils all summer,
A blue-dark knot of glittering voltage,
A whiplash swimmer, a fish of the air...*

*The swallow of summer, cartwheeling through
crimson,
Touches the honey-slow river and turning
Returns to the hand stretched from under the eaves –
A boomerang of rejoicing shadow*

Work and Play by Ted Hughes.

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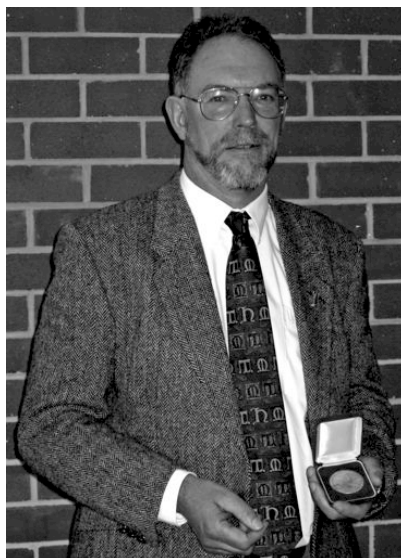
COVER PHOTOS

Front cover: Southern Royal Albatrosses by Barry Hartley
Back cover: Aerial ballet: two Tui, by Ian Bell

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

Articles for inclusion in Southern Bird are welcome in any form, though electronic is preferred. Material should be related to birds, birdwatchers, or ornithologists in the New Zealand and Pacific region, and can include news on birds, members, activities and bird study, literature/product reviews, letters to the editor, birdwatching sites, and identification. Illustrations are especially welcome, though they must be sharp. Copy deadlines are 10th February, May and August, and 1st November.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



The recent Council meeting saw great progress in implementing the Strategic Plan. The decisions made should allow the Society to better achieve its aims and provide added value for our members. One of the Society's great strengths is its volunteer ethos and it is the volunteer spirit which has resulted in the amazing achievements of the first and (soon-to-be-published) second atlases, many years of fundamentally important counts of waders, banding, and recording and the myriad other activities that are the Society's reason for existing.

As the Society has grown, however, and society at large has become more complex and time more the enemy, some tasks that were formerly within the reasonable bounds of volunteers

have become so complex and time-consuming that the functions, activities, and progress of the Society are being compromised. Since it was suggested in May 2006 that one way of easing the burden would be to appoint an Executive Officer, an idea that had been around for some time in various forms, the possibility of our being able to afford such an officer, and the duties and responsibilities that might be expected of them, have been under investigation by the Administration and Development Committee.

At its November meeting, Council decided, dependent on a positive result of a comprehensive financial appraisal by Treasurer Mark Nee and the Administration and Development Committee, that the Ornithological Society will appoint an Executive Officer. That officer will be contracted to be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Society's affairs, facilitating communication, ensuring that reports are prepared on time, that resources are available to convenors, and that all records are kept up to date and schemes implemented. The terms and conditions of the position will be advertised early in 2007, but I will be pleased to hear from anyone who might be interested in taking up this challenging and interesting position.

The roles of the present committees of the Society (Scientific, and Administration and Development) have been more clearly defined by the experience of the past couple of years. As the names indicate, these committees presently provide, respectively, scientific quality control for the Society's schemes



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Publisher

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policy to Council. That leaves something of a void in the field of developing activities and programmes for the members. I proposed to Council at the November meeting that a Projects and Activities Committee be set up to assist in expanding the Society's activities, and to develop information resources and training programmes. This committee would both generate ideas and programmes for Council, and oversee the production of information and training resources, and especially the organisation of activities such as national and local field study and other courses.

The committee would seek ideas from the Regions and membership at large, and bring to Council plans for furthering the study and enjoyment of birds in New Zealand. The terms of reference for such a committee are being considered at the moment; I will welcome ideas to put in the mix for consideration when the terms of reference are drawn up for submission to Council. While I am always wary of adding bureaucracy, I believe this would provide a chance for members to contribute ideas and expertise and enthusiasm in ways that will make a real difference.

The demise of *Classified Summarised Notes* as annual contributions in *Notornis* has left many members wondering where they can see their records and observations in print. With the Lazarus editions in the June 2006 issue being the last to grace the pages of *Notornis*, filling the gap created has, as Paul Scofield and I recently mentioned in a letter to Regional Representatives and Regional Recorders, been exercising Council and the Scientific Committee for some time. We appreciate the essential nature of an outlet for members' observations, in a less formal (and perhaps less threatening to the contributor) environment than that afforded by *Notornis* or even *Southern Bird*, and that many observations and records of birds in New Zealand can be lost. We had been hoping especially to be able to take advantage of the new information technologies and provide a web-based reporting system. Any such system has to be, so far as possible, 'future-proofed' and certainly affordable to the Society in the short and long terms. Unfortunately, the Landcare Research system, which showed considerable promise, is still not developed enough and we have decided to strike out on our own, to maintain continuity.

From 2007, OSNZ will publish an annual *New Zealand Bird Report*. To quote some of the content of the letter to Regional Representatives and Recorders, this will "include the present Rare Birds Report and CSN, as well as the annual reports of the Society's schemes. The *NZBR* would be distributed to all members annually, as an insert with the posting of *Notornis*. However, as with all OSNZ schemes, the new publication will need an editor with the drive and initiative to ensure that *NZBR* is produced. Council is keen to hear from any member who wishes to take on the task."

"Council and the Scientific Committee hope that Regional Recorders will still vet records, but would encourage members to submit their records electronically to a Web-based database (currently being developed) that will be accessible via the www.osnz.org.nz website. Records submitted electronically will be sorted by region and sent to regional recorders to vet. This will speed the digitisation of records and hopefully reduce the work involved in editing the report. We recognise that not all members have computers and that Regional Recorders may be required to digitise records that are not submitted electronically."

All members of the Society should acknowledge the many hours of toil by the compilers of CSN over the years; Council and I offer our collective thanks for those efforts by generations of volunteers, which have gone largely unrecognised and unappreciated over the years. *NZBR* will require a similar commitment in the future; we hope that having a separate publication will emphasise the value of members' contributions.

I hope, read) the policy statement on wind farms developed by the Scientific Committee and adopted by Council in November. I will be writing to Regional Councils and other local bodies and organisations actually and potentially faced with proposals for wind farms to circulate the document and so bring OSNZ's position to their attention. Recently, the Society has been mentioned, without the Society's prior knowledge or consultation, in decisions relating to conditions for proceeding with planning on such infrastructure projects. While it will be difficult to prevent statutory bodies making such conditions without our assent, we hope that by circulating our policy, we might encourage dialogue rather than have to react to pre-emptive strikes. The Society could then take advice on the merits of each case, as to whether we wish, or are able, to provide information to the parties involved.

This is perhaps the place to remind members that only designated office-holders, such as Regional Representatives, can speak for the Society at public meetings or otherwise, and then only after consultation with Council or its representatives. Inadvertent or misunderstood comments can, under present legislation, lead the Society into places it does not want to go, and indeed lay it open to crippling expensive proceedings.

The Society's submission on the proposed revision of the Schedules to the Wildlife Act 1953 reached DoC on time. I apologise for the lateness of the request for comments. However, despite that, a pleasing number of members took the opportunity to send in their views and suggestions and these have been noted. While some members did not agree with our treatment of some species, a clear majority supported the general thrust of the submission. In the end, as with most such exercises that appear out of the blue, with a short deadline, and yet with such far-reaching implications, the resulting submission has to be a compromise between the desirable and the workable.

We now know that species such as Spur-winged Plover and White-faced Heron colonised New Zealand for the same reasons that let those such as the Pied Stilt and Harrier colonise several hundred years ago – largely the elimination of competitors and the creation of new habitats by humans. Hence, to discriminate against species that came here in the past century would be to try and forestall a process that has been the origin of most of the avifauna: colonisation from Australia and elsewhere. The species introduced *deliberately* by humans are another matter, and most were recognised as mistakes shortly after their arrival. Indeed, several (including Mallards, Common Mynas, and Australian Magpies) are posing real risks to the well-being of the indigenous fauna.

We felt that subjective decisions, almost always made without recourse to data, on which species might or not be 'valuable' or 'damaging' to whatever interested party takes up a cause, are counter productive and that all decisions should be made on a scientific basis. We support a baseline position that all native species should be protected automatically. Exceptions based on cultural or other grounds should be made against the background of the intrinsic value and ultimate vulnerability of our own fauna, but, most importantly, on the basis that the harvesting of any native species must be done under a rigid scientific management structure to ensure that that species is not vulnerable to unforeseen decline.

Chris Robertson reported to Council on progress towards publication of the Second *Atlas*. I am not sure that he, close to the project as he is, really appreciates the magnitude of the achievement in terms of its impact on New Zealand ornithology, and indeed as a model for other sciences to follow. Achieved by Herculean volunteer efforts, it is a production of the first importance to New Zealand and will, I am sure, be valued and envied offshore as well. As co-author of a book that has been

that the New Zealand Ornithological Society, and New Zealand in general, owes a great debt to those responsible for the original *Atlas*, and for its larger and brightly-coloured offspring *Atlas II*. This is one instance where the sequel builds magnificently on the foundation of the original.

Finally, and to conclude an already overly long column, I want to remind members of the importance of the Society's retaining its own records, and of ensuring that we do not lose information. We must honour the efforts of past and present members in acquiring information on New Zealand birds and their habitats and behaviours by collecting and archiving these important documents. Please scan your bookshelves for old notebooks that could be held - either as the original or as a copy - in the ONSZ archives, and encourage other members to do the same. Too many important documents are being lost and things that may not seem important now, may turn out to be crucial in years to come. Rights to publication and other matters can all be agreed before lodgement, but New Zealand ornithology will be richer if these documents can be saved. My request for information from Regional Representatives on projects that are still 'above the horizon' for them has brought in three responses so far. I am looking forward to the rest so that the Scientific Committee can finish plans for national monitoring schemes. We need to know what people are doing and what they think that the Society is still doing, to move things ahead.

Good bird-watching - and recording!

Richard

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Subscriptions are due on 1st January. Those members with email should have received 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) should have received a renewal form as an insert with the previous 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. If you have not received a renewal form please contact the Membership Secretary.

Roger Sharp, P.O. Box 12-1038, Henderson, Auckland, phone 09 836 9931, email Roger.Sharp@rtng.co.nz.

RED-BILLED GULL USING A 'TOOL' AS AN AID IN FISHING

In the early evening of 29th December 2006 Sarah Langj was on the deck of her yacht moored in Mill Arm of D'Urville Island. The sea was as calm as the proverbial mill pond as she observed a single Red-billed Gull circling over the sea in the centre of the sound. The bird eventually flew some 100 m to the shore where it selected a pebble and returned to hover 5-10 m above the surface. It then dropped the pebble and swooped down to catch one of the small fish that scattered with the splash.

I am not aware of other observations of gulls using any sort of tool to aid their feeding. Jim Mills, who has studied this species for decades, agrees that it is a most unusual behaviour, and totally different from the common behaviour of dropping shellfish to break them on a hard surface.

Peter Gaze

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2007 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2007 and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2007 Annual General Meeting will be held in New Plymouth on Saturday 2nd June 2007.

Claudia Duncan, Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

One position on Council will become vacant at the conclusion of the 2006 Annual General Meeting as a consequence of the end of David Medway's one-year term on Council as immediate past president. Retiring Council members are eligible for re-election.

Nominations will close with the Secretary on 28th February 2007. Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include a brief curriculum vitae of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

NOTORNIS ON-LINE

Please note that from 1st January 2007 issues of *Notornis* will only be available on-line free-of-charge as they become three years old unless you are a member of ONSZ. A PIN number will be required to view those issues less than three years old, and this will be issued to members before the end of the calendar year.

NEW POST CODES

Roger Sharp, Membership Secretary wishes to convey a big thank you to all those supplying their new post codes when renewing their subscriptions.

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 onsa@rtng.co.nz or via P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

PREAMBLE

The OBNZ recognises that:

- 1) There is growing interest in wind-turbine electricity generation in New Zealand;
- 2) Wind-turbine generation has been shown in some instances overseas to be a reliable and environmentally-sensitive option for sustainable electricity generation;
- 3) There is a need to ensure that there is full and thorough analysis of the impacts of individual projects on the particular environment, including on the avifauna, where their erection and operation is proposed.

The OBNZ Constitution states that the Society shall:

Assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information, from which sound management decisions can be derived.

To this end, the OBNZ Scientific Committee and Council have prepared the following notes covering the potential effects of wind turbines on birds, for the benefit of those undertaking an Assessment of Environmental Effects for wind farms in New Zealand, and for those reviewing any such assessment.

What we know:

- 1) Globally, there have been few comprehensive studies of impacts of wind farms on birds, and even fewer have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Most studies suffer from a lack of 'before and after', or 'wind farm area and reference area' comparisons, or completely lack any assessment of relevant factors such as collisions or risk of collision, or differences in bird behaviour between night and day, or are of inadequate duration to provide conclusive results.
- 2) The available scientific literature identifies the main potential hazards to birds from wind farms to be:
 - a. Disturbance leading to displacement or exclusion, including barriers to movement;
 - b. Mortality caused by collision;
 - c. Habitat loss or damage resulting from wind turbines and the associated infrastructure.
- 3) There is a clear need for robust, objective baseline studies on which to base informed decisions on sensitive siting to minimise deleterious effects on birds, other wildlife and their habitats. There is also a need for post-construction monitoring at installations for which consents and approvals have been obtained, where there are environmental sensitivities. The potential impacts must be put into context to determine the spatial scales at which they may apply, for example at site, local, regional, national and/or international scales.

ORNITHOLOGICAL ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN AN ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS FOR ANY WIND FARM

Collision risk and mortality

1. We know very little about migration routes, prevalence of nocturnal movements of birds, or even which species migrate, in New Zealand. We must therefore rely on overseas information on which to base our assessment of wind farm suitability.
2. The OBNZ recognises the need for research into nocturnal movements and the migrations of birds in general in New Zealand.
3. Most studies elsewhere quote low collision mortality rates per turbine, but in many instances the data are based only on corpses that have been found, which leads to under-recording of the actual number of collisions. Even where collision rates per turbine are low, the collision mortality is not necessarily insignificant, especially in wind farms consisting of perhaps several hundreds or thousands of

turbines. In addition, even relatively small increases in mortality rates may be significant for populations of some birds, especially large, long-lived species which generally have a low annual productivity and which mature slowly. This effect is critical when such species are already rare.

4. Collision mortality at poorly-sited wind farms may have effects at the population level. The cumulative mortality from multiple wind installations may also contribute to population declines in susceptible species. Making projections of the potential magnitude of wind turbine-related avian fatalities is problematic, because of the overall lack of objective information.
5. The weight of evidence to date indicates that locations with high bird use, especially by species of conservation concern, are likely to have significant effects. Site selection is crucial to minimising mortality resulting from collision.
6. Wind speed and direction, air temperature and humidity, flight type, distance and height, time of day, and topography all influence the risk of collision, as do species, bird age and behaviour, and the stage of the bird's annual cycle. All these factors need to be incorporated in collision risk assessments. Collision risk is greatest in poor flying conditions, such as strong winds that affect the birds' ability to control flight manoeuvres, in rain, fog, and on dark nights when visibility is reduced. Lighting of turbines can attract birds, especially seabirds in bad weather or fog, potentially increasing the risk of collision.
7. Few studies report observations in poor weather; visual observations are of course limited in such conditions anyway. However, remote techniques such as radar and thermal imagery can be used to extend observations beyond the visible spectrum. Predictions of the likely frequency of weather conditions that increase collision risk can be used in risk assessment.
8. Most studies have been of small turbines, often in small clusters. The effects of newer, larger turbines and of larger wind farms are unknown but they may well be both quantitatively and qualitatively different. The importance of wind farm location and layout in determining the risk of collision by birds with wind turbines is apparent from studies both onshore and offshore.

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REPORT OF THE CHECKLIST COMMITTEE

The Committee passed a milestone in February 2006 when a first draft of the entire Checklist was completed and the last section (gamebirds) was circulated to Committee members. The new Checklist will contain fuller lists of synonyms for our endemic and other native birds than was given in the 1990 Checklist, and citations are being provided for the first time for all family-group names. Compiling and checking these details are proving time-consuming.

For final editing the Checklist has been divided into ten sections. Ricardo Palma is editing all the synonyms and compiling the master reference list, and Brian Gill is editing the text to achieve consistency of style and format. So far one section has been finalised. There is still much to be done in checking details and finalising texts.

Publication of the new Checklist remains at least a year away.

Brian Gill Convenor

result in impacts on a range of man-made structures, including turbines, meteorological masts, and power lines. Thus, assessment of bird collision risk and mortality, arising from collision or electrocution, needs to include the wind turbines and the associated structures, including overhead power lines transporting energy from the wind farm. It is recognised that the actual rate of collision is likely to be under-recorded, because of limitations of the study techniques, particularly corpse searches. It is essential, therefore, that each site is calibrated to enable correction factors to be applied to produce more realistic estimates of collision mortality.

10. Collision risk models are potentially useful in predicting the scale of the problem of collision attributable to wind turbines at a given location, but only if the models incorporate actual avoidance rates in response to fixed structures and post-construction assessment of collision risk at wind farms that are built, to test the models. Population models provide a means of predicting whether or not there are likely to be population level impacts from collision mortality. These models also require post-construction verification at wind farms that are constructed, to test the validity of the predictions and the models.

Disturbance

1. The effects attributable to wind farms are variable and are species-, season-, and site-specific. Disturbance can lead to displacement of some species and their exclusion from areas of suitable habitat; this is effectively loss of habitat.
2. Several studies indicate negative effects (i.e. a reduction in bird use of, or absence) at up to 600 m from wind turbines. In a large wind farm, even such a relatively small exclusion radius from individual turbines, can amount to a cumulatively significant exclusion area, or area of reduced use for the whole wind farm.
3. The scale of such habitat loss, together with the extent of availability and quality of other suitable habitats that can accommodate displaced birds, and the conservation status of those birds, will determine whether or not there is an adverse impact. Habituation may occur, and differences in behaviour between residents and migrants have been observed in some studies. Other studies over several years show little evidence of habituation. Few studies have been long enough to demonstrate whether or not habituation occurs. Disturbance potentially may arise from increased human activity in the vicinity of the wind farms during construction, maintenance visits, and improvement of road access, often in areas where there was little human activity before the wind farm was built. The presence and noise of turbines may also deter birds from using the area close to turbines. Few conclusive studies are available, because most lack well-designed studies both before and after construction of the wind farm. Furthermore, very few studies have taken into account differences between diurnal and nocturnal behaviour, basing assessments on daytime activity only. This is inadequate for those species, including many in New Zealand, that are active during darkness and which may behave differently at night.
4. Wind farm design, for example by including wide corridors between clusters of turbines, may alleviate any barrier effect. Research and post-construction monitoring at several pilot sites are necessary to determine whether and where this is an acceptable solution.
5. There has been little research into the impacts of off-shore wind farms on birds. Nonetheless, studies in progress suggest that responses vary in both site- and species-specific ways, as for on-shore sites. Most of New Zealand's extant

species may potentially be vulnerable to on-shore wind farm development because of their propensity to forage or move about at night. The siting of wind farms near large or significant seabird colonies or sites of significant foraging or aggregation should therefore be questioned and a caution be exercised until further data are available.

Habitat loss or damage

1. Loss of, or damage to, habitat resulting from wind farm infrastructure are not generally perceived to be of major concern for birds outside designated or qualifying sites of national and international importance for biodiversity. This does, however, depend on local circumstances and the size of the area to be occupied by the wind farm and the associated infrastructure. The cumulative loss of, or damage to, sensitive habitats may be significant, especially if several large developments are located in places such as sandbanks in shallow waters. Furthermore, direct habitat loss may have additive effects to those of exclusion by disturbance.
2. Onshore infrastructure, including turbine bases, substations and access roads involve direct habitat loss. The losses are generally relatively small scale, but could affect local hydrology in sensitive habitats and, again, the effects will depend on the size of the wind farm, and especially on the extent of any road network required.
3. Offshore, direct habitat loss is generally limited, primarily to the turbine bases and cables at sea. However, large wind farms, especially on feeding areas such as sandbanks in shallow waters, may be of concern, and habitat change or damage may be significant.

Other issues

Turbines may offer roosting or nesting sites for birds. However, research is needed to assess the extent of bird use. In the offshore environment, there may be adverse effects (e.g. collision risk for birds feeding among turbines) on birds as a result of disruption to, or encouragement of, avian food resources such as benthos and fish populations while turbine piles can act as artificial reefs or fish aggregating devices. These aspects require study to clarify whether or not they are significant issues.

A cheeky and hungry Falcon in Upper Hutt

Wellington OBNZ members Gordon and Sheelagh Leary's Upper Hutt neighbour Patricia was visited by a New Zealand Falcon in early June. She checked her chicken house one morning only to find one very scared chicken and a number more missing. Initially she thought her chickens may have fallen victim to a stoat attack, but later whilst weeding her garden found one of her missing chickens, and a falcon gorging itself on it.

Patricia continued to work in her garden during the morning and the falcon continued to feed. She tried to scare it off at one point, but it simply wouldn't budge. It was seemingly determined to stay the course and enjoy the meal. The accompanying photograph shows the falcon feeding, surprisingly staying put even though the photo was taken at close range. It is to be hoped that this imperturbable falcon, probably a young bird, survives – but a pity about the chooks!





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 93896436

OSNZ SALES TABLE

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

Chathams Issue.....	\$10
Index to Notornis 1939-1989.....	\$10
Wader Studies.....	\$20
Birds of Hawke's Bay.....	\$10
A Flying Start.....	SPECIAL PRICE \$5
Stickers - Pied Stilt.....	\$3, Notornis - \$3
<i>(specify outside glass/hanger or inside glass only)</i>	
Ticklist.....	\$1
Checklist 1990 edition.....	SPECIAL PRICE \$5

Send orders to: Paul Cumming, OSNZ Sales,
217 Robins Road, Invercargill, Tairāwhiti Tel. (037) 571 5125,
fax (037) 571 5126, email birdell@post.com

CONTRIBUTORS FOR ENHANCED PASSIVE AVIAN INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE IN WILD BIRDS

New Zealand has never had a case of avian influenza and there is good evidence that we do not have highly pathogenic strains of the avian influenza virus in this country. We do, however, have low pathogenic strains in wild birds. These present a negligible risk to other birds and no risk at all to humans. Nevertheless, their presence does demonstrate a risk pathway, so unless we conduct reputable surveillance in wild birds it will not be possible to continue to state with confidence that New Zealand is free of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Waterfowl and shorebirds are natural hosts for all avian influenza viruses. As such, they may harbour and excrete virus whilst usually remaining healthy. Migratory water birds may have close contact with birds in countries infected with exotic strains of avian influenza virus. MAF therefore intends to enhance surveillance in migratory and in-contact endemic wild birds as part of its strategy for early detection and reporting of highly pathogenic avian influenza should it arrive here. This is despite the fact that avian influenza virus is spread mainly by human carriage of contaminated domestic product rather than by wild birds.

There are three main components to MAF's wild bird surveillance programme:

1. To sample migratory waders arriving in large numbers via Asia, and local waders in close contact with them. The migratory waders of interest are Lesser Knots and Turnstones. The local waders of interest are Wrybills.
2. To survey Mallards potentially in contact with migratory waders.
3. To enhance surveillance for unusual wild bird die-offs (passive surveillance).

Passive surveillance is one of the most sensitive ways of detecting exotic disease incursions. Surveys provide scientific data that are needed for international reporting but they are relatively insensitive at detecting disease incursions compared with passive surveillance. This is because passive surveillance can draw on large numbers of observers going about their normal business. Ornithological societies can therefore help MAF greatly by reporting unusual bird mortality rates through its hotline (0800 809966). Such calls will be evaluated by veterinary epidemiologists at MAF's Investigation and Diagnostic Centre and may initiate an investigation.

We want to enhance passive surveillance mainly through experienced observers rather than the general public. This is because quite large numbers of wild birds can die of natural causes, and skilled observers can distinguish between normal and abnormal events whereas the general public can not. Public enhancement tends to result in a flood of insignificant reports that are nevertheless time consuming and expensive to sift, whereas informed observation can dramatically increase the effectiveness of surveillance.

Ron Thornton

Principal Adviser (Surveillance)
Biosecurity New Zealand





The bare, vascularised incubation patch of one of the incubating Kermadec Storm Petrels



An egg showing the reddish speckling concentrated at the larger end and the typical storm petrel shape.



A storm petrel's burrow: entrance by the left boot and nest chamber about 30-40 cm under the surface by the blue tape.



Mike Imber crouching a storm petrel's egg.

by water level changes. ridge *Cyperus ustulatus* with Ngalo (the only woody plant) behind here.

DISCOVERY OF NESTING SITE OF

The Kermadec (white-faced) Storm Petrel (*Pelagodroma marina albifrons*) was described in 1951 from 15 specimens collected off Raoul and Herald Islands of the Kermadec group by the Whitney South Sea Expedition during 18-20th November 1925. Before this, Choiseman in 1887 had reported storm petrels breeding on the Herald Islands but did not identify the species. Throughout the twentieth century the breeding grounds of this storm petrel remained a mystery. They were not found during several searches of the Herald Islands (I include here all the islands just north-east of Raoul) nor farther away at Macauley and Curtis Islands. Including the Whitney specimens there were less than 50 records from the Kermadecs before 2004.

Because of this failure to find them breeding, the fact that the records off the Kermadecs were only during September to November, and the structural similarity (apart from the rump colour) to Australian White-faced Storm Petrels, MI even suggested in 1984 that they could be wintering or non-breeding Australian birds. He suggested that the rump colour might be due to fading and wear in old plumage. Within ten years, when the first records of these birds ashore were obtained, this hypothesis seemed doomed.

All of the first records ashore of this storm petrel were made on Macauley Island at the usual camping site which happened to be adjacent to Hazard Island, barely 500 m offshore. There were eight of these records between 1988 and 2002, all but one

being in July and August.

Storm petrels are known to be highly vulnerable to introduced predators down to the size of rats in their colonies. Extinction usually occurs. Whether mice are more benign is debatable; there are still storm petrels on mice-infested Antipodes and Gough Islands but the long-term prognosis for these populations is uncertain. Thus the search for the Kermadec Storm Petrel tended to be concentrated on the accessible predator-free islands: the Herald Islands and Curtis Island. Macauley Island had kore until recently and we await the verdict on the rat-poisoning operation of winter 2006. Because all records of the storm petrel on land were from opposite predator-free Hazard Island, it became the prime objective in the search for storm petrel burrows.

Unfortunately the top of this island is inaccessible except by helicopter. Though only about 80 m high, the surrounding cliffs of volcanic tuff provide no leverage for climbing. Landings of a few hours were made on the beach opposite Macauley Island in November 1970 and November 1980 and the talus slope behind was explored. In July 2002 three persons were put onto the top by helicopter for less than two hours (the first landing there). Small burrows were seen during the latter visit but no other evidence for the presence of storm petrels was found.

In early November 2004 an expedition to the Kermadecs primarily for underwater ecological research provided Brent Stephenson and MI with an opportunity to land by boat on Hazard Island for up to 10 days. They intended to set up mist-nets on the talus slope and use recordings of storm petrel





Kermadec storm petrel: The nests, but not the birds, were to remain covered with a black tarp where they lay the eggs.

The wings of one of the storm petrels showing the basic white bar with much pale grey barring, particularly at the ends of the longer upper tail coverts. The extremely narrow tail is also evident.

Part of a flock of about 40 Kermadec Red-Crowned parakeets, seen on Haurangi.



THE KERMADEC STORM PETREL

calls to attract birds. Limited battery power would have kept spotlighting to a minimum, but they intended to fully explore all the burrows in the talus slope. Unfortunately a persistent strong easterly wind throughout the trip completely thwarted these intentions, though Brent swam ashore from a boat and managed less than an hour of searching as they headed home.

They were not entirely luckless however! By cruising as close as the skipper of Southern Soler dared off Hazard Island while going north to Raoul Island and on the way home, they quadrupled the tally of Kermadec Storm Petrel records. A few were also seen off Raoul Island's Hutchinson Bluff. Perhaps most amazingly, three flew aboard during the single night (7th November) that they were anchored off the Herald Islands (specifically off the Meyers) suggesting that a small population had persisted there since Cheeseman's early report. These were amongst a shipload of fledging Little Shearwaters and even one Wedge-tailed Shearwater. Brent and MI gave the storm petrels the usual treatment and the blood samples may contribute to discussions of their taxonomic status. A paper on the storm petrels has been submitted to *Notornis* and a note on Kermadec Petrels appeared in *Notornis* 52; another on at-sea and shipboard observations is planned.

An interesting discovery in the storm petrels handled was the state of their incubation patches and general plumage which indicated that the two adults had finished incubation, probably in October. This correlated with previous observations of their seasonal and over-land occurrences. It appeared that they were laying eggs in August-September, about two months earlier

than the subspecies *maoriensis* in New Zealand.

An opportunity to land atop Hazard Island in late August 2006 was provided by an operational visit to Raoul Island by the RNZN frigate *Te Mana*, which carried a Seasprite helicopter. Karen Baird of DoC, Warkworth arranged the side-trip. We undertook winch training at Whenuapai before departure as the helicopter would not land on the uneven and fragile top. On 25th August we landed in perfect weather and had nearly six hours ashore. The accompanying photos (mainly by Karen) reveal our successful conclusion of the search. In 50 Kermadec storm petrel burrows identified and examined we found six with an egg and a further two where the laying of an egg seemed imminent. Laying had occurred mainly around mid-August.

Judging by the density of burrows in the area we worked through, and if they occur throughout the *Cyperus ustulatus* habitat, there are probably at least 100 burrows of this storm petrel there and conceivably as many as 300. The only other petrel that seemed to breed in burrows there, though absent at the time, was the Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*.

A report detailing the discovery of the nesting site is being prepared for *Notornis*.

KAREN BAIRD and MIKE IMBER

In mid-2002 a resident of Orewa (north of Auckland) reported the presence of New Zealand Dotterels on a large area of vacant land adjacent to Grand Drive, the current exit of the Northern Motorway. This area is bounded on three sides by roads and on the fourth by a large area of housing. On 6th August 2002 four New Zealand Dotterels were seen, including GM-KY, banded at Waiwera on 22nd December 1999, a chick of M-808, a long time Waiwera resident and his then mate M-OYO.

On 23rd October 2002 this bird and an unbanded bird were displaying, and on 5th November 2002 John Dowding banded two approximately seven-day-old chicks. He remarked at the time how confiding the adult birds were, presumably because of the use of the ground as a shortcut by residents. Two other adult birds were also present. I didn't see them again that season after 30th December 2002. GM-KY was later found dead on Orewa beach.

By August 2003 there were six New Zealand Dotterels present, and numbers varied thereafter, with two displaying vigorously on 13th January 2004, though I did not see chicks that season. Varying small numbers continued to frequent the area and on 1st October 2004 Gwenda Pulham and I found a one-egg nest which was later lost. On 31st October 2004 there was a three-egg nest neatly lined with fine grass. Gwenda had previously watched the male bird pulling blades of grass through his toes, presumably shredding them fine enough for a nest lining.

On 19th November 2004 I found to my dismay that the area had been mowed, then discovered that the mowing contractor had carefully left untouched the area round the nest. On making contact I found him to be a keen observer and in fact it was he who found the nest in 2005, very close to the short cut taken by a number of children. On each occasion he has left the nesting area undisturbed until the chicks have fledged and several residents also keep a watchful eye on the birds' wellbeing.

Two eggs hatched and one young fledged from the 2004 nest, and three hatched and two fledged in 2005. Of these latter birds, John Dowding was able to metal-band one chick and colour-band the adult female so hopefully we may find her again when the inevitable development, planned to be on a very large scale, takes place.

Currently (July 2006) there are regularly seven birds, including two pairs of adults in breeding plumage, and it will be interesting to see if both will nest. There is certainly enough territory for two pairs and evidently an adequate food supply as I see the birds foraging steadily. Copulation by the 'new' pair has already been observed by Gordon Gorbey.

There are an increasing number of 'inland' NZ dotterels. John Dowding tells me that 20 years ago an 'inland' pair was rare but they are now relatively common, presumably reflecting the fact that many of the beaches around Auckland City are built up and no longer suitable. Construction sites, yards, motorway and airport verges in particular are being used, and friends near Waikanae have mentioned seeing dotterels on the mine tailings there.

For example, in late 2000 seven NZ dotterels were found on a large tract of bare earth near Gulf Harbour Golf Course and two pairs bred there in 2002, two small chicks being metal-banded there. As development progressed I saw two dotterels foraging on a heap of earth, flying off as the truck arrived with a new load, and returning to forage as the truck left. Similarly, during the census in October 2004 a number of adult dotterels and chicks were regularly seen, seemingly unworried by the presence of men and machines, at several sites where construction was under way for the Albany Park-and-Ride bus station.

I have no doubt there are other 'inland' pairs being monitored. The great thing about the Orewa dotterels is that they are so easily accessible, and that so many residents are taking an active interest in their welfare.

Margaret Wignall



Urban New Zealand Dotterels in Orewa. Photo by Margaret Wignall

WANTED

Papers On New Zealand Bird Species

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

Please send to the Secretary, Claudia Duncan, PO Box 12397, Wellington, or c.duncan@clear.net.nz

NEW ZEALAND MOULT RECORDING SCHEME 2005-2006

A total of 2,907 moult records for 131 species had been received by the New Zealand Bird Molt Recording Scheme up to June 2006.

Over the past year 201 further records were received, covering 22 species and comprising 96 records of birds in moult and 105 of non-moulting birds. The taxa involved are detailed in table 1 below. During the year there were no taxa new to the Molt Recording Scheme, but once again the Wellington region - and especially Ros Batcheler - contributed most records.

Records received by the Molt Recording Scheme over 2005-06.

Species	Moult	No moult	Alive	Dead	Total
Australasian Gannet	1	0	0	1	1
Black-backed Gull	3	0	0	3	3
Blackbird	0	3	3	0	3
Chaffinch	1	8	9	0	9
Common Diving Petrel	1	4	0	5	5
Dunlin	1	6	6	1	7
Fulmar	7	10	16	1	17
Feral Pigeon	9	2	7	4	11
Fluttering Shearwater	3	0	0	3	3
Goldfinch	2	0	2	0	2
Greenfinch	6	9	14	1	15
Grey-faced Petrel	1	0	0	1	1
House Sparrow	12	0	12	0	12
Blue Penguin	1	0	1	0	1
Mallard	6	13	19	0	19
North Island Robin	10	11	21	0	21
Redpoll	0	2	2	0	2
Shorebird	25	24	58	1	59
Song Thrush	1	2	2	1	3
Starling	4	0	4	0	4
Tui	1	0	1	0	1
White-fronted Tern	1	1	0	2	2
Total 2005-06	96	105	177	24	201
New overall total	1417	1490	1742	1165	2907

I thank Nicholas Allen, Ros Batcheler, Reg Cotter, Rob Cross, Annette Harvey, Christine Mander, Filipe Morris, Ralph Powlesland, Matt Robertson, Ian Southey and Gillian Vaughan for contributing these records.

Ben Bell

**SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND
TARANAKI REGION**

The Annual General Meeting
of the Society will be held in
New Plymouth during Queen's
Birthday weekend 2007.

Thursday 31st May
Registration

Friday 1st June
Council and RR's meetings

Saturday 2nd June
Field trips
Dinner and AGM

Sunday 3rd June
Scientific Day
Conference dinner

Monday 4th June
Morning field trip

Please refer to your registration
form with this issue of Southern
Bird for more details

Conference address:
OSNZ AGM, PO Box 315
New Plymouth.

(2nd edition). Oxford University Press, Melbourne. ISBN 0 19 558477 5, 610pp hardback.
New Zealand is well known for its unique fauna. Besides flightless birds such as Kakapo, ancient muttonbirds, primitive frogs, and a diversity of lizards that give birth to live young, we also have terrestrial mammalian fauna that "are clearly unique in the world". This is well explained in the second edition of *The Handbook of New Zealand Mammals*.

This book is about the 46 land-breeding mammal species which have lived in New Zealand. The majority of these (35 of 46) were artificially introduced from many countries with different natural habitats. The editor has brought together the efforts of 29 authors, all authorities in their fields of research, and presents for the reader comprehensive information about these species, their history, biology, ecology, behaviour, disease and significance to New Zealand's environment.

In her introduction, King presents the big picture of mammalogy in New Zealand. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about New Zealand's geological history and the historical background of New Zealand's mammal fauna. This includes the evolution of New Zealand's mammals and the history of exotic species introductions as well as their impacts on our environment. King outlines the challenges brought to us by such a unique mixture of mammals in which introduced species outnumber native ones.

This book is a beautiful synthesis of up-to-date research in relevant fields. The first edition was published in 1990 and has become an important reference amongst researchers and people that are interested in this area. Since then, a great amount of new information has become available, requiring a substantial update. Although the second edition has kept the original layout and format, it has incorporated 1,400 new studies which have expanded the reference entries from 1,600 in the first edition to 3,000 in the second. However, the book is by no means just dry facts. It is written in a language and style that makes it both an important reference book as well as an interesting and informative read.

Dr Weihong Ji

WHITE-FACED HERONS WITH DEFORMED BEAKS AND WINGS

Two birds from near Takaka were presented to our bird rescue group in autumn 2005 as fallen nestlings. The first bird had both wings rotated and a deformed bill, the second had

one wing rotated and a normal bill.

This year we have recently been presented with a third heron, this time it has a mild bill deformity. Like the others it has a 'very bill' where the bill is twisted to the side. It is not as dramatic as the first one and the bird is now taking food from a dish. It seems likely that it may be possible to release it once it can fly.

This latter bird came from Pakarua. Skeletal and bill deformities in wild and captive birds have been linked to metabolic bone disease, bacterial infection and environmental toxins such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and organochlorides. We must also consider a genetic link.

Attached is a photograph of the major deformities. If anyone is interested we in turn would like to hear of similar cases in New Zealand. [Reply via The Editor]

Marion Milne



Far North

The region's main event in the last couple of months has been a week's wader mist-netting from 20th to 26th September. David Melville, Rob Schuckard and Phil Battley made the long journey up to the area north of Kaitiaki, concentrating on Kowhai Beach and Pungarenga Harbour. Nine OSNZ members from the Far North and two from Northland came to assist for some or all of the period. It was very much an experiment. The first couple of days at Kowhai Beach produced over 200 Bar-tailed Godwits and a sprinkling of other waders but no banded birds were found there and the nets failed to catch any. The difficulty was how to know where to erect the nets without prior knowledge of the movements of the birds.

Fewer members were able to assist on the weekdays but those who stayed were treated to some success with finding some banded birds and finally the netting of three Bar-tailed Godwits and a Lesser Knot at Pungarenga on the last day. The harbour is very extensive and much was learnt over those days, in particular that birds do not always

Regional Roundup



rest in the same spot at night as they do in the daytime. The successful trapping was on little Ahiarua Shellbank which does not usually hold many Godwits in the daytime. Already plans are being made for another mist-netting visit in January.

At October's indoor meeting Carol and I gave a presentation on our two recent visits to Pungarenga including the seldom visited Darim National Park.

The Spoonbill roost at Awarua Wharf still held at least 44 birds in early November and New Zealand Dabchicks and Australian Little Grebes were present in good numbers on Far North lakes. Three Bitterns



sightings were reported in late October to early November, and Shining Cuckoos seem to be numerous in the region. A flock of 26 Bar-tailed Godwits have been at Anaba Island from early November.

The reintroduction of North Island Robins to the Russell Peninsula is progressing for March 2007 and some members have visited the site from which the birds are to be sourced with a feeding programme in preparation for trapping. It will be exciting to have this species at a mainland Far North site again.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

It has been a fairly quiet spring for Northland. We have carried out several trips around the harbours and estuaries to check for colour-flags on waders and also the usual November counts for the Whangarei and Kaipara Harbours. A couple of members went up north to help out the Far North group catching and banding Godwits and Knots. They had a good weekend, with lovely company, and felt it was great to get up north again, even if the birds evaded capture during their stay. A group of members have also carried out a couple of surveys of the birds around the Patana Estuary for a local Coast Care group that are looking at improving the habitat of the area.

The September meeting ended up being very casual, when the video equipment failed to work so everyone had a good chance to catch up. At the October meeting Ray Pierce gave a great talk about the work he has been involved with in carrying out surveys of the birdlife on the Phoenix Islands. The photos of the birds and islands were fantastic and it was interesting to hear of the group's findings. The November meeting was run by David Crockett who went through some historical reports on shag roosts around Whangarei Harbour.

The keen group of Fairy Tern volunteers – Audrey, Claire, Marie, Jean, Pnue and Den – are all geared up ready for the summer breeding season to help out the DoC wardens. All we need now is for the birds to get into gear.

KATRINA HANSEN

Research

Research into the social dynamics of Bellbird mating systems was outlined by Massey University student, Taneal Cope, at the September meeting. Ms Cope is an MSc student with the University's Ecology and Conservation Group at the Albany Campus. She is conducting a two year study on the social and genetic mating systems of Bellbirds on Tiritiri Matangi Island, and is looking to answer questions about the population size and success rate on Tiri. Which individuals are dominating feeder stations? How successful are the dominant males in comparison to the more submissive males? Is the species monogamous?

Pairs certainly defend their territory together, she says. But it appears there is unequal parental investment among nests. Ms Cope is investigating if this is an effect of the males being 'poor caregivers' or a result of them being less confident in the paternity of the clutch. A total of 32 nests were followed over the last breeding season. DNA was taken from both parents and all chicks in each nest to investigate the levels of extra-pair paternity. All pairs that were followed had at least one breeding attempt, she says.

She will continue to study their social behaviours including parental investment, individual success and degree of monogamy in each pair. Results of this research should provide insights into the mating strategies of Bellbirds for use in management, including translocations, as well as for theoretical studies.

"Walking and painting in the South Island National Parks" was the title of a talk by talented wildlife artist and long-time Auckland OBNZ member, Geoffrey Arnold in October. Geoff has taught secondary school art for the past 36 years and restricted his art to painting in his free time. Last summer, he treated himself to a three-month sabbatical in the South Island, and since then he has changed his lifestyle to concentrate full-time on his art. He has already produced several memorable works from his South Island sketches. These include a striking painting of the 'Anglian Basin', which this month won a prize in the North Shore City Art Awards, and a beautiful study of three Rifleman.

Geoff talked about his summer of tramping, sketching and painting in the national parks, the influences on his art, (including wildlife artists Robert Bateman, Lars Jonsson, and New Zealanders Bill Sutton, Rita Angus, Stanley Palmer and Ian Hardin), and the way his art has changed. In his latest works he enjoys the inclusion of several new motifs, responding to Maori art, and also the European tendency to have things sorted, dated and recorded. Geoff is planning his first solo exhibition next year.

"The impact of translocations on the cultural evolution of North Island Saddlebacks" was the title of a fascinating talk by researcher Kevin Parker in November. Kevin has looked at the effects on the male Saddleback's rhythmical song of successive translocations of Saddlebacks from the source population on Hen Island.

North Island Saddlebacks became extinct on the mainland due to predation, and by 1910 were confined to one population on Hen Island. Since the first translocation to Whangapoua Island in 1964, there have been successive translocations to establish 12 island populations and two mainland populations (at Karori and Busby Park).

These have involved first, second and third level translocations, meaning that there were three translocations from Hen Island (to Whangapoua, Red Mercury and Currier Islands) in the 1960s, but later translocations were taken from these three islands, (e.g. to Stanley, Tiri and Little Barrier Island), and later still, some were translocated from those islands to places such as Kapiti, Mokoia, and Motuhia Islands, and to Karori in 2002 and Busby Park this year.

Kevin and his volunteer helpers have recorded Saddleback songs, both the male rhythmical song (MRS) and the chatter call on Hen Island and in these translocated populations. Kevin explained that Saddlebacks have an innate chatter call, but the males learn their MRS from their neighbours. It is a cultural meme, and a successful Saddleback meme is a song type that becomes fixed in a population. The other birds pick it up, use it and pass it on to successive generations.

Kevin's research looks at what happens when birds are moved to new areas and the impact this has on the cultural transmission at the population level. One of the advantages of studying this in the North Island Saddleback population is that there is detailed information on the size, source and sex ratio of the founding population on each island.

Kevin used tape recordings and computer analysis to show the audience the variations in the MRS songs from Saddleback on three of the islands – Hen, Currier and Motuhia.

The Hen Island calls were different from the two translocated populations, and at each level of separation from the source population, the songs were more different.

It appeared that in translocated populations where birds were established in low densities in large territories, often with few or no neighbours to learn from, their MRS was a modified chatter call. This potential loss of cultural diversity posed several questions that Kevin was now researching. In terms of what it means for the Saddleback, Kevin is investigating how these chatter-like calls compare from island to island, how they compare with historically recorded calls done soon after some of the early translocations, and whether birds from different island populations still recognise each other, for example, as potential mates.

In the field, spring is always a busy time of year in Auckland. This year we have had the Cornwall Park Survey to compare species and numbers of birds now, to surveys done 10 years ago. These surveys, organised by Michael Taylor, will be done in October 2006 and February 2007. The latest survey showed a marked increase in the number and species of birds (for a full report see the November issue of Tara available on the OBNZ website). Newcomers to the park since the last survey in 1996 included Californian Quail, New Zealand Pigeon, Skylark, Pheasant, Spotted Dove, Paradise Shelduck and Shining Cuckoo. The only species present on previous surveys but absent this time was the White-faced Heron, though it was seen there on other days recently.

Other activities enjoyed by Auckland members were the Fairy Tern Watchers Orientation Day in September, the national wader study band spotting week, the regular monthly Muriwai Beach patrols, and wader census on the Kaipara, Manukau, Waiheke and Mangahau harbours.

Spring bird sightings of interest include a New Zealand Falcon and a Fairy Martin on Tiritiri Matangi Island, Wika on Rotomua Island, Royal Spoonbills on the Kaipara and Manukau Harbours, a Common Tern at Whatipu, and several pairs of Fairy Terns at Mangahau (3 pairs), Papakura Spit (Kaipara, 3 pairs) and the Waipua lagoon.

SUZIE PHILLIPS

South Auckland

Winter is a quiet time for us ornithologically in this region but monthly meetings continue and are well supported by locals and visitors alike; sometimes our visitors are people, and sometimes they are birds picked up on a beach patrol and brought in for discussion. However both the birds and people are always interesting.

The speakers at recent meetings (ably cosed by Morag Fodham) have also been interesting. In June Adrian Riegen talked about his 2005 trip to Alaska, where a group was attempting to catch Bar-tailed Godwits to put transmitters on them. Between this talk and Geraldine King's talk last year on her visit to Alaska, we are beginning to become familiar with this far distant area. Adrian's talk showed us a very different landscape from Geraldine's, bringing home just how large and diverse Alaska is.

At short notice the scheduled speaker for July was unable to attend



due to illness, Gillian Vaughan was persuaded by the Regional Rep to fill in at very short notice, speaking on her trip to the Gambia. She had previously attended a meeting to give this talk but the projector broke down after the first slide and she vowed that she would never return. However the short notice gave her no chance to think of a suitable excuse. Because of the short notice the slides were still in alphabetical order but that did not detract from the quality of the experience she outlined. In a belated answer to a query David raised during the meeting, a Ground Hornbill is bigger than a Turkey.

In August, Jacqueline Geerts spoke about the Masters' work she has been doing on Little Blue Penguins on Tiritiri Matangi Island. This was highly appreciated, given that she was due to hand in her thesis within the next few weeks and must have been incredibly busy. Jacqueline's talk really underlined the complexity of understanding marine systems, indicating that many of the factors that drive penguin populations, such as fish numbers and changes in sea surface temperatures, are still poorly understood.

The September speaker, the Regional Representative from Auckland, Suzi Phillips, gave us an illustrated talk on her trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. It would appear from her talk that Suzi had a wonderful experience and intends to return to that area and further explore the jungles of the Amazon. We look forward to an updated talk in due course.

The October meeting was a trip down memory lane by Tom Hart, who described the unsuccessful hunt for Kakapo in Fiordland during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The very steep and difficult terrain renewed our respect for the people who had worked on Kakapo in those mountainous areas of Fiordland and made us wonder how any birds at all could survive, particularly flightless birds. It also gave us new respect for Tom although it needs to be remembered that it was 30 years ago when he was much younger.

We are looking forward to the November talk on seabirds of the Hauraki Gulf by Karen Baird, particularly as she will be fresh back from her trip to the Kermadec Islands.

Over the winter period the harbours went through their traditional August emptying with most of the Pied Oystercatchers and Wrybills leaving for the breeding grounds while still waiting for the northern migrants to return. There were still a number of interesting over-wintering migrants that kept the wader types amused through that season. The star attraction was the Durlin, which went into full breeding plumage but was only present for about two months. Both Black-tailed and Hudsonian Godwits have over-wintered at Miranda and it appears that they are still present.

Reports of Kaka have come in from far and wide this winter and it would appear that these are now becoming regular; we are hoping for confirmation that they are breeding in the area. There were, however, no Galahs reported this winter and it would appear that trapping to obtain cage birds has had an effect on the population.

In Kawakawa Bay Rosemary Cotman is working with the Auckland Regional Council to set up a local group to protect the Weka population that appears to be expanding in that area.

Beach patrols have continued and there have been mixed bags over the winter period with a few good birds being found and some still in tweens awaiting official identification. The weekend trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island was fully supported, and while the weather was not brilliant there was a good opportunity to see most birds.

The return of the migrants has kept us busy with colour-band spotting, with many birds being seen. Apparent internal movements indicate that different birds are likely to be seen at each visit. A Greenshank appears to be resident at the Karaka shell banks, along with the usual mixed bag of sandpipers, Whimbrels, Curlews and Golden Plovers. There have also been records of a Terek Sandpiper, Curlew and Whimbrel at Miranda.

The final event of this year will be the Christmas barbeque at Tom and Hazel Hart's house in Runciman on 9th December. All are welcome.

GILLIAN VAUGHAN and DAVID LAWRIE

Waharo

Cattle Egret numbers at both Rangiri and Lake Ngareto this winter were up on last year. In August we counted 156 at Rangiri, compared with 110 and 139 in 2004/05 respectively. Martin Day saw 28 at Lake Ngareto (four and six in 2004/05). Ought conditions in Australia may be behind these increases, though the Rangiri figures still lag far behind the impressive 1987 count of 473. A flock of 11 birds stayed over the summer at Rangiri, the last bird being seen by a local resident at the beginning of May.

Betty Seddon reports a Tai feeding in Cambridge on Kowhai (13/10). John and Stella Rowe and Geoff Foreman saw two small groups of Whiteheads near the summit of Te Aroha Mountain on 5/11. On this trip John, Stella and Geoff also spotted Tai, Shining Cuckoos and possibly a bellbird.

During the October Forest Lake count, Brian Challinor saw a bird that all the hallmarks of the Japanese Snipe that was present last year.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Unfortunately a good enough visualisation was not possible to confirm this sighting. In Hamilton City, Dai Morgan spotted four Eastern Rosellas in residential housing (7/10), although it would not have been a very long flight for these birds to have come from the Hamilton Gardens. In other recent sightings, Martin Day spotted a Falcon at Mangakawa (10/11), two New Zealand Dabchicks were seen on a farm pond near Cambridge by Trevor Taylor (25/11), a Shining Cuckoo was heard in Chartwell by Hugh Clifford (25/11), and Jan Hovend reports that there may be a Tai nest being built by their house at Kakepoko.

Evening meetings have been well attended. In September, Andrea Dekonst gave a fascinating account of Long-tailed Bats in the urban environment of Hamilton City. These strictly aerial insectivores seem to be localised around Hammond Park along the Waikato River. Nine bats, all males, have been caught and fitted with transmitters. They appear to be resident, while others seem to fly in from further up river. Andrea's study aims to protect the bats and expand their habitat within the City.

Gillian Dennis, from DoC, spoke to the group in October about the Kaka research currently being conducted in Panora Forest Park. Gillian gave an excellent and insightful talk on this interesting bird, including some of the special challenges that are associated with working in a rugged environment such as Panora and how the pest management has improved the survival rates this species. In November, Laura Molles, a lecturer from Lincoln University, spoke about the Kokako research that she has been involved with. Kokako vocalisations are extremely unusual in the fact that songs can last for over 20-30 minutes and duets between pairs is common. Furthermore, dialects between isolated populations are different, so in order to keep the birds in new areas after translocation, pre-recorded vocalisations from the original catch sites are played to keep the translocated birds roughly within a known area. On behalf of Waikato members, we thank all the researchers who talked to the group this year.

The new location for our monthly meetings is at the DoC Awa Office at Te Rapa. We thank DoC, and in particular Bruce Postill, for providing this most satisfactory venue.

We look forward to the end of the year with the harbour censuses and a picnic tea at the Otomanga Kiwi House where we will be shown some of the captive rearing facilities 'behind the scenes'.

STELLA ROWE and DAI MORGAN

Taranaki

After three or four attempts the August field trip to the Patea Swamp and East Egmont was accomplished in early September. Fernbirds were heard at Patea with Tai and Bellbirds very active around the Mountain House feeding on flowers of the *Pseudopanax colensoi*. It was pleasant in the sun but a chill wind soon had us heading home.

At the August indoor meeting Bill Van Gorkum pointed out that his name had been mis-spelled in the June 2006 issue of Southern Bird, an error that was mine and I sincerely apologise for. He also informed us that he would not be attending meetings as he was approaching 90 years old and thought it best to retire in his prime than go the way of the Dodo. His contributions will be greatly missed and we are now looking for another member to do the bird calls.

Beach patrols were quiet with nothing to report. This is good news for the birds I suppose. A flock of nine Cattle Egrets on the western edge of New Plymouth was the largest number seen here for some time. There have been sightings of Falcons around New Plymouth, and a confirmed sighting at Lake Rotokare east of Eltham is a first record for the area and another reason to have this gem predator fenced. Ninety-two Australasian Shovelers seen on the Patea oxidation ponds in South Taranaki is a record for the whole of Taranaki. Two Wrybills paid a visit to Waingana in early September.

Beach patrols during October turned up a Blue Penguin and nothing else. David Medway finally saw a Falcon in Brooklands Park, though Carole Medway had seen it at the neighbours eying up their pigeons. Carole was pipped at the post in the annual 'Who heard the first Shining Cuckoo' by a couple of hours, with Marie Mitchell being this season's winner. New Zealand Pigeons have been busy eating *Magnolia* buds in residential gardens and Tai have been vocal all around. Six Grey Teals on the Pukekura Park Lake constitute a first record for the site.

Helen Elder and Marie Mitchell spoke to us about their trip to a little known corner of the world, Bulgaria, an area virtually unknown to us. They spent eight days on a guided tour looking at butterflies and moths but managed to fit in some birding with Nutcrackers and crossbills amongst the many species seen.

The October field trip around Lake Ratapeko and Tarata in Eastern

singing well for those able to hear them. At Tarata the two most audibly challenged headed off for a meander through the Scenic Reserve. Luckily the single Whitehead was calling most insistently, as was a Morepork, even though it was early afternoon.

A few migratory waders have started turning up around the Taranaki Coast. An Asiatic Whimbrel was seen on a South Taranaki beach, and at Waiongana a Lesser Knot in breeding plumage in the company of a Red-necked Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover and a Turnstone got the season off to a good start.

PETER FRYER

Nelson/Golden Bay

Nelson and Golden Bay members recently performed the Spring National Wader Census along Farewell Spit. Weather conditions were good but the predicted high tides did not move some of the flocks of waders onto the pans and lagoons as expected. Notable sightings included Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Golden Plover and Little Tern. Some local flagged Bar-tailed Godwits were recorded but two orange-flagged birds from Victoria and orange/yellow from South Australia were also sighted.

Caspian Terns continue to nest close to the Gannet colony; a total of 75 terns were on site. Numbers of Gannets appear to be increasing to the peak numbers present prior to Cyclone Alison and other subsequent storm events. A total of 47 Black Shags, an unusually large number, were in the vicinity of the nesting gannets and terns.

The annual November five-minute-bird-counts along the Flora Track are being co-ordinated again by Pauline Samways. This is designed by DoC to assess the bird population recovering after the predator control work undertaken by a community group 'Friends of Flora' which commenced in 2002. In their latest Newsletter the group reported that along with Blue Duck reintroduction in the Flora Stream, Weka are making a comeback into the Flora area.

David Melville, Rob Schuckard and Willie Cook recently went to Parengarenga Harbour to band migratory waders; the first attempt at this far north location. The success of this trip may not have been measured in birds caught, but the contact with local Iwi, who took a keen interest in the proceedings, and the hospitality and invaluable assistance given were much appreciated.

The returning Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots in this region are being watched closely for banded birds. Some excellent sightings were made on a very high tide that pushed small flocks onto a sandbar on Rabbit Island. Twenty-four complete sets of different combinations were read. These included birds from Golden Bay, the Heathcote/Avon Estuary in Christchurch, and Southland.

Peter Gaze received a report early in November that a Brown Booby had been sighted at Kapouai, a bay on south-east D'Urville Island. The bird was seen sitting on the water close to the shore and then took off and flew over the bay quite low to the water. It gave the observers good views to confidently identify the bird.

In October Willie Cook, Peter Gaze and David Melville went to Marlborough to assist the members there with the census of braided river birds on the Wairau River.

Alec Milne reported that Golden Bay members have made two trips to a study area to observe Rock Wrens. Good numbers of birds were noted and bands made it much easier to identify the pairs and their territories. He has also made nest tubes and these are now installed in the study area to provide a more predator proof option for the birds if they find these plastic holes desirable.

The deformities of bills and wings on some White-faced Herons are still a mystery in Golden Bay.

DON COOPER

Canterbury

What might by some be jokingly called spring has afflicted the region this year with unseasonably cold weather and frosts, little in the way of sunshine, and rivers in a seemingly constant state of flood to some degree or other. The region's sole rare vagrant of recent times was a Marsh Sandpiper found by Colin Hill at his home patch of Greenpark Sands, Lake Ellesmere.

An unusually exhibitionist Marsh Crake entertained many birders as it paraded round a cleared patch of willow swamp at the suburban Christchurch site of Travis Wetland in late September to mid-October. Indeed many locals got their first decent views of this relatively common marsh-living denizen. Two out-of-the-ordinary species may be breeding in the Christchurch/North Canterbury area, with a seemingly settled Black Stilt at the Waipara River Mouth in early September, and two Little Black Shags amongst a Black and Pied Shag colony at Bromley Oxidation Ponds in October. The White-winged Black Tern well up the Waimakariri in November may also be breeding.

Members gave talks on the Wellington AGM and the impressive predator-free reserves close to this city at the August meeting and

Andrew Crossland brought a tropical feel to the September meeting, informing members what work, mostly with waders, he has been doing whilst on visits, some extended, to Indonesia. The colourful wedding clothes he recently wore at his marriage to his Indonesian-born wife were quite an eye-opener, if sometimes amazingly impractical given the ambient temperatures there. With pollution and rampant development Indonesian shorebirds face problems fortunately not encountered in New Zealand, but then New Zealand doesn't host the mind-bogglingly diverse and numerically high assemblages present on some of Indonesia's mudflats and (some) paddy fields.

Keeping with an Asian theme Kerry-Jayne Wilson talked about her recent visit to Mongolia, a country off the beaten track as far as bird tourism goes, but undeservingly so. I had the misconception that the whole country was a cold desert, but the northern parts are within the Taiga forest zone and have a diverse avifauna, and one that bears more resemblance to the forests of Europe than to the rest of Asia to the north, south or east. Kerry-Jayne recommended the comfort afforded by the local felt tents, but the transport available in old Russian army trucks was at times a little character-building, especially when having to share with a cow or half a village, and the toilet arrangements available almost everywhere, posh restaurants included, are perhaps best glossed-over. At the same meeting visiting Australian spheniscophile Ken Simpson explained the work he is doing on the identification features separating species of penguins, especially crested penguins.

A visit to the Banks Peninsula gem known as the Hinewai Reserve on one of the few surprisingly pleasant spring days in September was a joy as usual, producing all of the expected species, though the Rifleman found refused to come out of its thicket. The September Ashley River Survey was cancelled due to high river levels. However the following month seven members and partners had a very enjoyable weekend in the Twizel area, finding Wrybill nests and young on the Hopkins River, getting a great show from a pair of Falcons at Temple Stream, spotting a distant Black Stilt at Lake Poaka, and being taken on a fascinating tour of the Black Stilt centre and some of its associated wetlands.

NICK ALLEN

Otago

Recent evening meetings have provided interesting insights into research being done on the Saddleback. Karin Ludwig told us of her study of song and inbreeding and Sabrina Taylor explained South Island Saddleback genetic variation. The taxon declined throughout the late 1800s and became extinct on the mainland by 1905. Populations remained on several islands off Stewart Island: Big South Cape, Big Island and Kaimohu. Birds from these islands have been sequentially translocated to Ulva, Breaksea and Motuara Islands.

There are now about 1,200 South Island Saddlebacks but the population has very little genetic variation. Results of research suggest that to maintain as much genetic variation as possible efforts should be made to transfer as large a number of birds as possible initially, then additionally introduce new birds to islands. We discussed whether Robins from the Eglinton Valley as well as our own local Robins from the Silverstream area should be transferred to the Orokonui Sanctuary.

Our October meeting was treated to slides of birds, geckos and the geography of the Cook Islands and delightful descriptions of their birding exploits by Suzanne and Richard Schofield. We may think that New Zealand has few species of birds compared to Australia, but we are positively brimming compared to the Cooks. Very little of what nature was originally present remains untouched, with exotic introduced plants dominating the flora and bird life being very sparse, with no passerines left. The only obvious birds are Common Mynas, introduced originally to combat coconut stick insect.

There is a surprising lack of seabirds too, but Reef Herons (including the white phase) and Wandering Tattlers were seen along the reefs. The observant Schofields, however, were rewarded with sightings of some quite rare endemics on several excursions to the precipitous mountain valleys and the outer islands of Atiu and Mangaia: Kakerori, Pacific Pigeon, Kopeka Swiftlet, Chattering Kingfisher and Cook Island Warbler.

The 'godwit project' has dominated our birding efforts; the National Shorebird Colour-banding Scheme for us really means the Bar-tailed Godwit Colour-banding Scheme, as any other migratory wader is a rarity here. On weekends with co-operative tides some Otago members usually go out to check the godwits present for bands. Numbers of godwits increased from the 160 that over-wintered to well over 800. So far 18 banded birds have been seen in the Dunedin estuaries, most of them banded here at Warrington in February.

Some banded birds have been found to move between Blueskin Bay, Aramoana and Hooper's Inlet, so this provides the first direct proof that all these estuaries are possibly viewed as a single habitat by the godwits, their use depending on tides and weather. Many thanks to Peter Schweigman who is the key person coordinating all our efforts for checking godwits for bands and who is an expert band-spotter. Summer will still see us godwit-spotting and if any birders visiting Dunedin are interested in helping, please contact our Regional Representative.



14th November dawned cool, overcast and calm and an enthusiastic group of about 20 people gathered to help the cannon-netting team of Rob Schuckard and David Melville. It was an excellent introduction for many of us to the whole process, from selecting the site, laying, furling and pegging the net, setting the cannons and camouflaging them. There was then the long, patient wait, hiding in the dunes for the arrival of the birds and their movement to the capture area, followed by the frustration of a failed cannon and the resulting catch of only two Pied Oystercatchers for an afternoon's work.

September and again in November when they were commencing with P. Sills so we now know two of them are males.

A new population of South Island Robins has recently been discovered in a plantation of 40-year-old Douglas firs in the Silverpeaks area behind Haeskin Bay. This appears to be the first recent record of a population of robins outside the Silverstream catchment. A full count is yet to be made, but at least 15 birds have been seen.

MARY THOMPSON

What's on



Far North

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

Northland

Katrina Hansen, 3 Harbour View Road, Orewa, 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 Crooks (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.

Hickland

Suzi Phillips, 36 Boulah Avenue, Rothery 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

KE's position vacant. Contact person Martin Day, 9 Conrad Place, Cambridge 2351. Phone (07) 827 3047. email mday@waive.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 Challiner (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 Torreyson Drive, Orhata, Rotorua. Ph (07) 345 3433. Email tim.barnard@xtra.co.nz

Gisborne/Wairarapa

KE's position vacant.

Hawke's Bay

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

Wairarapa

Tom Trindale, 33 Paterson Street, Araroa, Wanganui 5005. Ph (06) 343 9992. Email trindale.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 ihsav@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, Oliver Road, R.D. 6 Masterton 5023. Ph (06) 377 5252. Email kingmendo@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, 30 Ramsay 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. Motu/Somes Island surveys, ph. Rod Orange (04) 473 1902. 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, Handhouse 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, 7.35 pm upstairs at 30 Halifax

Street, Nelson. Ph. Steve Wood (03) 528 6438 or Don Cooper (03) 544 8109.

Marlborough

Mike Bell, 42 Vickerman Street, Greytown 7321. Phone (03) 577 9818 or 021 734 602. Email mikelandm@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 Allen Drive, Waiuku 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 Balmacresen Road, Balmacresen, Dunedin. Ph (03) 464 0767. Email mary.thompson@otago.ac.nz

Evening meetings bi-monthly on the fourth Wednesday at 8.00pm in Berham Seminar Room, Zoology Department, 340 Great King Street. Contact Mary Thompson (03) 464 0767

Southland

Jamie Wood, c/- Geology Department, Otago University, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin. Email jamie@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) 233 1228 or Lloyd Eder (03) 213 0404.

