



# Southern *Bird*

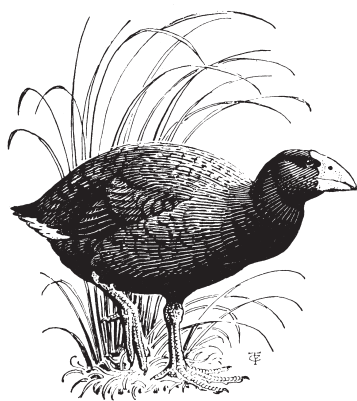
No. 31 September 2007 • ISSN 1175-1916



Launch of the Atlas of Bird  
Distribution in New Zealand

Stitchbird in a New Family

Beach Patrol Update



# Southern Bird

No. 31 September 2007 • ISSN 1175-1916

## QUOTATION

*...The sprightly lark's shrill matin wakes the morn;  
Grief's sharpest thorn hard-pressing on my breast,  
I strive, with wakeful melody, to cheer  
The sullen gloom, sweet Philomel, like thee...*

*Edward Young (1683-1765): The Complaint; Or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality (Night I) [1742]*

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## COVER PHOTOS

Front cover: Pied Shag

Back cover: Black-fronted Tern

Both photos by Peter Langlands

Silveryeye photo by Dianne John

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 FLIGHT DECK. . .

Elsewhere in this issue of *Southern Bird* there is quite enough from me, so this will be brief, but there are one or two really important matters that should be highlighted. First, congratulations to Chris Robertson, past-President and Convener of the Atlas Scheme, on the completion and publication of the magnificent volume that is the Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004. The launch by the Administrator and Chief Justice Dame Sian Elias at Government House on August 13th, engineered also by the 'Regional Representative for Shelly Bay', and the unprecedented content and presentation of the volume itself have yielded some of the widest and most positive exposure for OSNZ in many years. Just how great Chris's contribution over many years has been (and continues to be) was recognised by the award of a Fellowship, OSNZ's highest honour, at the ceremony. It is not often he is lost for words but the look on his face as I made the presentation (in front of the Chief Justice, the Minister of Conservation, and assembled guests and members and friends of OSNZ) told me that he might find a supply later! It was a real pleasure to both be party to recognising Chris's contribution in a tangible way, and to be metaphorical midwife to his latest (and perhaps heaviest at birth!) offspring.

OSNZ took another significant step forward earlier on August 13th, when the contract establishing the Society's first Executive Officer was signed. The exact form was decided in a last-minute flurry of emails that morning, and the signing took place at the Hotel Intercontinental at 4 pm, before the atlas launch at 5.30. OSNZ welcomes Ingrid Hutzler to this very important post, and Ingrid has hit the ground running, judging by the number of emails, and the three days of discussions that we had in early September. Ingrid will be contacting everyone over the next while, to introduce herself and to bring everyone up to speed on the range of services that her office will provide: Conveners and Organisers and Councillors will hear from her even more often, as she ensures that everyone can do, and does, the tasks they have taken on. We should all thank David Melville, Stuart Nicholson and Stephen Sharp for their efforts in putting together and developing the concept and the contract, and to Mark Nee, our Treasurer, for finding the funds and making sure OSNZ dollars are spent wisely and to most benefit. And thank you, too, to the other applicants; it was a very strong field.

The appointment of Sav Saville as inaugural editor of the new *New Zealand Bird Report* means that that is now under way. Start sorting your records for the new CSN, and Scheme Conveners should sharpen their pencils and get their annual reports under way, too. All schemes run by OSNZ will have their



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## Publisher

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P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, New Zealand • Email: [osnz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:osnz@xtra.co.nz) • Website: [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

Edited by Nick Allen, 65 Allin Drive, Waikuku Beach, North Canterbury 7402 • Tel (03) 312 7183 • Email [nick\\_allen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nick_allen@xtra.co.nz)

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reports published annually in NZBR. A decision is close on the form of the new on-line bird reporting system. Paul Scofield, the Chair of the Scientific Committee, has been working hard behind the scenes to obtain the system best suited to both our membership, and to the unique problems of recording our birds in meaningful, straightforward, and productive way.

Roger Sharp, our hardworking and innovative Membership Secretary, is unfortunately also overworked and standing down from that position and responsibility. It is one of the key voluntary positions in OSNZ, and we are indebted to Roger for his efforts and efficiency over a long period. He has been pro-active in finding a replacement, and Council is pleased to welcome Yvonne McKenzie who will gradually take responsibility for the correspondence and cash part of the position until Roger hands over fully next April. Ingrid will take over the membership database to consolidate the record-keeping in OSNZ and make it much easier to respond to requests for information and to provide analyses for Council, and to document contributions to OSNZ and to birding in New Zealand.

Finally, there are several opportunities opening for you to share in the new activities and to help shape the OSNZ of the future. The new Projects and Activities Committee will develop and implement new (and revived) activities for our membership, including field study courses, workshops, materials, and programs to enhance members' enjoyment and knowledge of birds. The problem is there are six vacant places on the Committee, which is all of them, so not a lot can be achieved at the moment. And while you are considering ways of contributing as well as receiving, three vacancies will arise on Council at the next AGM (in Kaikoura). The positions of co-opted members Phil Battley and Bruce McKinlay become vacant, but they can stand again (and I hope they do!). David Pye is unfortunately not standing for re-election, so his place becomes vacant, too. One measure of a Society's health is competition for places where you can make a difference. I want to see an election in 2008!

That is enough for now. Spring is here and summer approaches, with birding to do. And don't forget AOC in Perth in early December.

*Good birds for everyone*

*Richard*

## Bird People



Geoffrey Orbell MBE, re-discoverer of the Takahe died on 15th August, aged 98. The re-discovery of the Takahe was in November 1948 in the Murchison Mountains near Te Anau, and Dr Orbell's last visit to the area was on the 50th anniversary of their rediscovery in 1998. Our thoughts go to Dr Orbell's wife and family.

On a happier note congratulations go to Peter Howden and Geoff Harrow, who were recently received Old Blue awards from the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. Peter received his for his long-standing conservation work in the Ashburton area and for bird work elsewhere in the country. Geoff was awarded his for his solving of the mystery of where Hutton's Shearwaters bred in the 1960s and for his work with and for the species ever since.

## OSNZ Executive Officer

**Ingrid Hutzler**

Greetings everyone! I have just commenced a part-time contract as Executive Officer. Here are a few short paragraphs on my background. I moved to New Zealand from my native Germany 16 years ago, where I lived near the Swiss border amongst mountains and lakes. New Zealand won a place in my heart as it had everything I loved without the crush of population and rush of the European lifestyle. I now live with my partner Peter in Nelson and spend most of my spare time in the outdoors tramping, kayaking, sailing and, of course, birdwatching.

After finding my feet I decided to further my interest in nature by studying for a BSc. in Biological Sciences through Massey University. Studying turned out to be quite addictive. The more I learned about New Zealand's flora and fauna and its natural history, the more I wanted to know. Although I successfully finished my degree last year, I intend to never stop learning.

While studying part-time I did contract work for the Department of Conservation and private organisations, and was involved with monitoring Campbell Island Teal, bird surveys, threatened plant monitoring, plus many other projects. I also volunteered for numerous OSNZ field trips and helped counting, catching and banding birds. Being part of the team that tagged eight godwits in Golden Bay, and then followed their incredible journey to Alaska and back was a major highlight this year.

I am passionate about the protection of birds and nature in the long run. The key is to encourage knowledge and active involvement. If we understand how natural systems work and if we create enough interest we will be more likely to save them in the future. This is where I see the immense potential and importance of the OSNZ. The Society's volunteer spirit has achieved incredible results in the past, and its bird studies and observations will be even more vital in the future.

The main objective of my role as the Executive Officer is to enhance the efficient running of the Society by facilitating and co-ordinating the various sections and members of the Society. Above all, my aim is to make your birding life more rewarding.

*Happy Birding!*

*Ingrid*

*Photo by Peter Schweigman*





# MINUTES OF THE 68TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND HELD IN NEW PLYMOUTH SATURDAY 2ND JUNE 2007

The President, Richard Holdaway, opened the meeting and welcomed the members present.

The President then introduced Councillors.

**Present:** Mark Nee, Geoff Doring, Jenny Doring, Anneke Schuckard, Martin Day, Stella Rowe, Paul Cumming, John Rowe, Ralph Powlesland, Suzanne Tambllyn, Claudia Duncan, Richard Holdaway, Gillian Eller, Kathy Barrow, Sue Bell, Stuart Nicholson, Chris Thompson, Michael Taylor, Ian Armitage, Gwyneth Armitage, Chris Robertson, Mike Imber, Rosemary Heather, Rob Schuckard, Hugh Clifford, Geoff de Lisle, D.M. Bishop, Ken Bond, David Lawrie, Brian Bell, David Medway, Cees Bevers, Keith Owen, Karen Baird, Suzi Phillips, Mike Bell, John Woods, Andrew Thomas, Sharen Graham, Mike Graham, Phil Battley, Chris Gaskin, Bryan Woolley, Peter Fryer, Julie Fryer, Eila Lawton, Cynthia Carter, Ian Reid, Barbara Lovatt, Lawrie Hoverd, Barry Hartley, Eric Spurr, Barbara Spurr, Roger Slack, Pam Slack, Lynette Hartley, Hazel Harty, Tom Harty, A Nee, Bill Messenger, Rodger Wasley, Jennifer Wasley, Viola Palmer, Phil Palmer, Ingrid Hutzler, Jan Walker, Mary Thompson, Janie Vaughan, Kevin Vaughan, Te Rae Nicholls, Doug Arthur and all those who may not have signed the form.

**Apologies** Paul Scofield, Keith Woodley, Ros Batchelor, Derek Batchelor, Graeme Taylor, Scott Butcher, Betty Snedden, Arne Wright, Connie Wright, Zoe Clifford, Biz Bell, Nick Allen, Mark Fraser.

*Moved that apologies be accepted* [David Lawrie/Stuart Nicholson Carried]

**Previous minutes:** Moved that the minutes of the 67th AGM held at Wellington 2 June 2006, as published in September 2006 Southern Bird, be accepted [Brian Bell/Ian Armitage Carried]

**Matter arising from Minutes:** There were no matters arising.

## **President's report:**

*Moved that the President's report be accepted.* [Richard Holdaway/Mark Nee Carried]

## **Matters Arising:**

Moved a vote of thanks to David Medway as retiring ex-officio President. [Richard Holdaway/Claudia Duncan]

Applauded

Councillors co-opted Phil Battley to Council.

Council received a resignation from Scott Butcher with regret. The position will be filled by co-option.

Council approved the development of a Projects and Activities Committee  
Council is calling for applicants.

## **Treasurer's report:**

*Moved that the Treasurer's report be accepted*  
[Mark Nee/Chris Robertson Carried]

There were no matters arising from the report.

## **Appointment of Auditor:**

*Moved that John Khouri be re-appointed as auditor*  
[Mark Nee/Stuart Nicholson Carried]

## **Report to 2007 AGM on issue of brand name for the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.**

This was covered in the President's Annual Report but was reread as follows.

"As published in the March 2007 issue of Southern bird. In accordance with the Motion passed at the 2006 AGM, Council considered the institution and use of a brand name for the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Council referred to the Strategic Plan which has been

adopted by the Society, and noted that OSNZ aims to be recognised as the leading authority on birds in New Zealand. Council recognised the need to better market the Society to achieve this objective and noted that a number of factors were involved in the recruitment and retention of members. Council noted the progress that is being made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan, in particular the decision to employ an Executive Officer in 2007. The Executive Officer would have a pivotal role in generating future publicity and media work, and promoting membership. Council expressed concern at the additional financial costs that would be associated with any branding exercise and noted the uncertainty of the result of such action in terms of costs and benefits. Council determined not to proceed with the adoption of a brand name at this time".

A question was asked.

What sort of costs would be involved?

Richard replied: "For example the Society's logo would need to be changed. No business plans were put forward so costs are not available."

It was then suggested that maybe new members would cover costs.

Richard replied: "We've been moving forward on the Strategic Plan. We can see what effects would maintain membership." Membership remains stable.

## **Report on progress in actioning the Strategic Plan**

Richard to report on the strategic plan **ACTION**

Stuart Nicholson produced a report on membership. Recruitment seems to be OK but it's the retention that matters.

The President thanked Stuart for his report.

Question: Which are the five contributors for memoranda of understanding?

Answer: Department of Conservation, Fish and Game, Forest and Bird, Miranda Naturalists' Trust, and the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.

**Presentation of Awards:** No nominations had been received.

Question: Is Council able to put names forward?

Answer: Yes.

Entry dates: Meritorious Service Awards by 31st March

Robert Falla Award anytime.

## **General Business**

1. Kevin Parker holds the reviews editor position but OWL is still open.
2. Lloyd Esler is the Beach Patrol Convenor. Ian Armitage has offered to do the Beach Patrol Reviews and Summaries. His offer was accepted with thanks.
3. Richard thanked Tom Harty for preparing the 'OSNZ display board'.

Jan Hoverd asked if Council has thought about getting a consultant to look at membership?

Does the interest accrued go into each allocated area?

Mark Nee explained about ready monies and how the interest is allocated.

Stuart Nicholson could see a marketing consultant could be of assistance with membership.

The President thanked all of the Taranaki members who assisted in organising and running the Conference.

The 2008 AGM will be on 31st May at Kaikoura.



## A Taranaki AGM

New Plymouth wooed us west for a wintry few days to attend yet another AGM (I'm sure it was just a year ago that we had the last one), and so it was again a welcome respite from our respective natal territories. A couple of years of non-attendance on my behalf was washed away in a couple of moments when old faces appeared from behind winter woollies, or Woolley's for that matter!

It is always hard to juggle weather and field trips, and so Saturday's field trips to Pukeiti and Stratford Mountain House initially enjoyed a good wash, followed by a slow dry and blow cycle, priming the hoi polloi for dinner at the New Plymouth Club.

The official part of the evening proceeded at a reasonable pace and formalities were duly attended to with our President's characteristic succinctness. Treasurer Mark Nee had done a great job, again, with the accounts. A big THANKS from us all Mark, you are vastly underrated.

Sunday dawned crisp, clear, and topped off by some powder on the Taranaki summit, perfect for an indoor activity such as a Scientific Day. Well, at least the Scientific Day didn't fall on the ONLY fine day in June (Hokitika, 2002)!

Programme organiser Cees Beevers had put an interesting range of speakers on the dais for the day, ranging from the eloquently rousing to the intriguingly irksome. Aspects of the suite of subjects included: Andrew Thomas's humorous talk on watching New Zealand Falcons in pine forests from a hide which resembled Barbie's tool shed; Ralph Powlesland's amazing radio-tracking of Kereru around Invercargill and New Plymouth; Brian Gill's review of ornithological collections in museums in Australasia; an Atlas update from Chris Robertson, who gave us great news on the imminent birth of 'his' baby, which will, I hear, be a good weight upon arrival; and a whimsical and heartfelt talk on why we are birdwatchers from local member Peter Fryer. If only we could bottle that enthusiasm...Hats off to Cees for accommodating the whims and demands of 24 authors of papers and posters, and their respective technological abilities and demands.

This was yet another AGM where food was integral to the overall success of the weekend, and no more so than at the conference dinner. Helping us digest the scrumptious spread was local personality and Deputy Mayor, Lynn Bublitz, who regaled us with a potted history of Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and their association with the mountain which dominates the area. Peter Fryer walked away with the Mantelpiece Monstrosity for his Scientific Day talk after it was 'revealed' that he had some inside help with it: his long-'suffering' partner!

A perfect day dawned Monday for some lucky souls to be guided around Pukekura Park by walking encyclopaedia David Medway. About 19 of us sashayed through the spruces up to The Bowl of Brooklands and back, to the delight of many out-of-towners impressed with the sheer size of the park, and of the size and number of trees. Two hours was just the tip of the iceberg, so I for one will return for another Pukekura instalment in the near future. The afternoon was spent gunning for home via air, sea or tarmac.

So another memorable conference was etched on the annals of the OSNZ AGM history files. The organising committee is to be roundly slapped on the back in appreciation.

Until next year in Kaikoura, may all your birding experiences remain pleasant memories, to fit right next to the 2007 Taranaki OSNZ AGM.

PAUL CUMING



David Medway ably demonstrates to Rosemary Heather and Brian Gill the silent flight of the Morepork (with mouth closed).

Photos by Paul Cuming



Gwenda Pulham risks life and limb in the Pukeiti quicksand, to stand by Rhododendron 'Gwen'.

## Have you seen a Grey Warbler nest?



Do you have a Grey Warbler nest in your backyard? 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

Massey University

Email: [m.g.anderson@massey.ac.nz](mailto:m.g.anderson@massey.ac.nz)

Ph: 09 414 0800 extn 41197, Cell: 021 0677453

For more information about the project see our research group's website: [www.massey.ac.nz/~dhbrunto/](http://www.massey.ac.nz/~dhbrunto/)

## 12<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Ornithological Congress



**Goudini Spa Conference Centre,  
Western Cape, South Africa**  
(c. 100 km from Cape Town)

**7-13 September 2008**

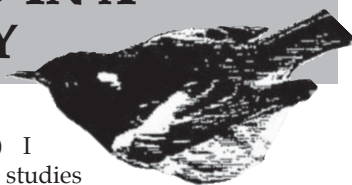
**Theme:** *Birds and People: interaction, utilisation and conservation*

For symposia and round table suggestions, contact Doug Harebottle, [doug.harebottle@uct.ac.za](mailto:doug.harebottle@uct.ac.za), Chair of the PAOC12 Scientific Committee.

Visit [www.paoc12.org](http://www.paoc12.org) to get more information about the Congress.



## STITCHBIRD IN A NEW FAMILY



In an earlier note for *Southern Bird* (23: 2, 2005) I mentioned recent molecular studies that showed the Stitchbird *Notiomystis cincta* was not a honeyeater (family Meliphagidae). In 2006 a team lead by John Ewen published findings that the Stitchbird had a relationship to the Kokako of the family Callaeidae (Ewen, J.G., Flux, I., Ericson, P.G.P. 2006. Systematic affinities of two enigmatic New Zealand passerines of high conservation priority, the hihi or stitchbird *Notiomystis cincta* and the kokako *Callaeas cinerea*. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 40: 281-284). The team that I have been working with found a distant relationship between the Stitchbird and the Saddleback (Callaeidae), an independent test of the same hypothesis yielding a similar result (Driskell, A., Christidis, L., Gill, B.J., Boles, W.E., Barker, F.K., Longmore, N.W. 2007. A new family of New Zealand passerine birds: adding heat to a biodiversity hotspot. *Australian Journal of Zoology* 55: 73-78).

The divergence of the Stitchbird's ancestors from the ancestors of the New Zealand wattlebirds (Callaeidae) is estimated to have taken place 33.8 million years ago in the Oligocene. Given that this split was so long ago, and the Stitchbird obviously lacks the outward characteristics of a wattlebird, it would not be appropriate to include the Stitchbird in the Callaeidae. Therefore a new family is required for the Stitchbird alone, and this family takes its name from its one included genus and becomes Notiomystidae.

In 1908 the Stitchbird was given the generic name *Notiomystis*, from classical Greek words meaning 'southern mystery' and reflecting the Stitchbird's unusual features and uncertain affinities. The new DNA studies have helped to solve this southern mystery. The findings stress the value of natural history collections in museums, since many of the DNA samples were from museum specimens. Also highlighted is the importance and relevance of taxonomic procedures so that research findings can be translated into a taxonomic interpretation. It is often the case that organisms get the conservation they deserve only when they are named. The recognition of the Stitchbird's uniqueness at the family level may lead to even more support for its conservation.

There are now eight families of birds unique to New Zealand, emphasising the country's position as a 'biodiversity hotspot'. The four surviving families are: kiwis (Apterygidae), New Zealand wrens (Acanthisittidae), New Zealand wattlebirds (Callaeidae), and Stitchbird (Notiomystidae). The extinct families are: moas (Emeidae, Dinornithidae), adzebills (Aptornithidae) and piopios (Turnagridae).

BRIAN GILL

## Report of the Checklist Committee

It is pleasing to report that the Committee has made steady progress across a broad front since the last report. Several major sections of the new Checklist (namely penguins, tube-nosed seabirds and gulls-terns) are in draft form. All other species sections are now in a final (or near-final) state, and formatted consistently. Two appendices (fossil birds and failed introductions) are finished, and a draft Introduction has been written.

Options for printing and publication will soon be drawn up and put before the Council for consideration.

BRIAN GILL

Convener, 31st May 2007



## 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 2007. They should be sent to:

The Awards Secretary  
OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397  
Wellington

## WANTED 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



# Isabelline Birds

There was a comment about isabelline birds in Southern Bird issue 30. The word isabelline comes from the colour isabella. I have never seen an albino bird but I have seen a good many isabelline ones. Whiteblackbirds turn up quite often in Invercargill.



These all have the characteristic buff smudging on the feathers and the normal-coloured eyes and bills and paler legs of the isabelline morph. I have also seen isabelline Yellow-eyed Penguins, Black-backed Gulls, Pied Oystercatchers, Australian Magpies and House Sparrows, all mis-named albino when the photo turns up in the newspaper. I doubt that an albino bird would be as successful as a normal or isabelline one. The lack of iris pigment would surely affect its eyesight. Isabellinism has a hereditary base. One pair of normal Pied Oystercatchers nesting at Wreys Bush in Southland produced an isabelline youngster with a normal twin for several years.

LLOYD ESLER

*Photo: Isabelline Pied Oystercatcher, by the late Roger Sutton*

## Marlborough Summer Banding

Marlborough branch had two banding weekends at Dog Hill farm, Ward, in February 2007. Ward locals are beginning to welcome our birding trips as the associated weather is more favourable to breaking droughts than banding records! However, we managed to band a total of 516 birds using mist nets, spread among manuka scrub along a stream, and seven Harriers with traps set in paddocks. Silvereyes made up 170 of the 186 native birds (seven species) caught with nets while Greenfinch (170), Blackbird (47), Goldfinch (31), Chaffinch (28) and Song Thrush (20) were the main introduced species (total of 337 birds of 11 species). Cirl Buntings, which were colour banded, were present in small numbers (13).

An interesting find was an unusually-coloured Silvereye. Five observers present all remarked separately on the bird's blue-grey colouration and didn't see green. However, pictures taken with a digital camera show a slight green compared to an accompanying typical silvereye. Green colouration is usually attributed to reflected blue light passing through yellow carotenoid pigment, so our bird's feathers may have been low in carotenoids. Please get in touch with us if you see something similar.

ANDREW JOHN

*Photo by Dianne John (see back cover for colour photo)*



## 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](http://www.birdswa.com.au/aoc2007), or link through [www.birdswa.com.au](http://www.birdswa.com.au) or [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://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](mailto:aoc2007@birdswa.com.au)  
Telephone: +61 8 93896416

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## REVIEW

**Braunias, Steve.** 2007. *How to watch a bird (The Ginger Series; 10)*. Awa Press, Wellington. ISBN978 0 9582629 6 5, 152pp, soft cover, \$24.99.

Written by a prize-winning journalist, the unstated purpose of this book is to bring to a wider audience an awareness of birds, bird literature and birdwatching in New Zealand. Readers could not resist being captivated by the author's growing enthusiasm for the birds around him, the books that have been written about them and the people who devote their time to the observation and study of birds.

The book develops along the author's personal journeys from uninitiated to converted 'birder' and, parallel to this, from unattached to expectant father. This allows a personable narrative which is engaging and accessible. Each chapter is endearingly illustrated by black-and-white photos from the collection of early ornithologist Geoffrey Buddle, which though surpassed in photographic technology remain captivating.

Species of birds that New Zealand has lost are examined, as are those that remain as viewed through a pair of binoculars, and species which have arrived more recently. Braunias peruses the range of field guides and their authors, especially Buller. He also provides an amusing insight to local ornithological society personalities, pays homage to some of the 'greats' both departed, retired and present, and takes readers with him on several ornithological society outings.

Braunias shares a thoughtful selection of anecdotes from correspondents to his Sunday newspaper column on birds, travels south to look at the practice of 'birding' on the muttonbird islands, and considers the increasing industry around birds and 'twitching' in this country. Using the pending godwit migration he prefaces his own journey to England on a literary scholarship to write the book, and includes a bird-ticking tour through the English countryside, before returning home to take stock of the birds recorded in New Zealand that year. In doing so he comes full circle to the birth of the daughter conceived at the outset of the book.

It is a thoroughly enjoyable read. The only disappointment, given the general readership and the generally sorry understanding of our biodiversity, was the various missed opportunities to provide ecological context with a light touch. Intending to set the record straight and acknowledge all birds he tends to overstate his case, wishing "good luck to the native birds cowering in the bush" and rejoicing instead in the number of introduced species that are increasingly regular garden visitors, without conceding that they can be found in gardens in many parts of the world. The arrival of White-faced Herons from Australia "so rare and then breeding ..." is celebrated, for example, without pointing out the parallel decline in the native Reef Heron. Again later, and despite his own musing on a stroll along the tidal flats that "...it would be despicable to interrupt the vital wading time birds have to feed...", he denounces the local ornithologists as "... killjoys, wringing their hands about people ...walking dogs on beaches" instead of shedding some understanding on the issue.

His enthusiastic exclamations of "birds everywhere...the overwhelmingness..." are not generally echoed by New Zealanders with any awareness of the plight of their avifauna. The suggestion that to attract birds in your garden you could just put up a bird box perpetuates the misconception that the birds around us are like those in any northern hemisphere garden. These quibbles aside, the book is charming and full of gems mined from a wide range of referenced sources, including fascinating accounts of the plight of early House Sparrow introductions and Buller's reflections as he hunts the last remaining Huia.

The book is attractively presented in the same style as others in the 'how to' series with a quirky modern cover and thoughtfully printed on environmentally friendly paper. Retailing at \$25 it is delightful and would appeal to people with an interest in birds at any level. For the would-be birder it is an interesting sampler of 'birdland', for the serious birder it is an amusing outsider observation of their world and colleagues.

SANDRA ANDERSON

## New Caledonian important bird area inventory unveiled

In early June the Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie unveiled Zones importantes pour la conservation des oiseaux de Nouvelle-Calédonie after two and a half years of research, led by Jérôme Spaggiari working alongside other organisations on the archipelago.

The publication, in colour, provides information on all 32 of the territory's Important Bird Areas, eight of which hold special significance due to the presence of mixed colonies of seabirds including tropicbirds, boobies and frigatebirds.

Source: *BirdLife International email news alert*

## Wader Count Dates

The New Zealand Wader Census for arctic waders during their non-breeding period has always been done in the month of November. The choice of this month as the most suitable time for population monitoring of arctic waders has been questioned, however. At the OSNZ AGM in New Plymouth it was decided to support two counts so that a comparison can be made between November 2007 and February 2008.

Where data from our counts are of great importance for population monitoring we must be sure that, when our census is done, the populations are stable and no late birds are trickling in from Australia after our survey. There is some support for the assertion that birds are still moving in after November but we are not sure about this.

The Australians are doing their regular wader survey in February 2008 so a synchronised approach for this effort makes it a real Trans Tasman Effort. Additionally, the Asian Waterbird Census administers census work in Asia, Australasia and Eastern Russia with over 6,000 sites in 27 countries counted, and this is synchronised with parallel water bird census work in Africa, Europe, West Asia and Latin America. Counts for this worldwide effort are accepted between December and February if it is evident that the populations of birds are stable in the region during the census. Our February count will be a great contribution to this global census network.

So, the November census will be on the weekend of 24th and 25th November 2007 with 10th and 11th November as a back-up for areas where assistance is required from outside the region. The summer count will be on the 9th and 10th February 2008, with a second back-up of 16th and 17th February in case of bad weather. I also propose a third back-up between the 24th and 27th January 2008 for areas where assistance is required from outside the region. If anyone is willing to join these wader counts, or maybe learn how to count the birds, or simply to enjoy these amazing birds, contact your OSNZ Regional Representative for further details.

ROB SCHUCKARD





## 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 objectives in encouraging and supporting the study and enjoyment of birds in the New Zealand region.

## Beach Patrol Update

Having just taken over the job of collating the Beach Patrol cards from Laurie Howell, I would like to receive cards from 2006 and earlier so that these may be entered into the database. Please hunt them out and post them in to me. I have plenty of spare cards if you require more. Here follows a brief autobiography of some of my beach patrol experiences.

My beach patrolling started at a young age when Hugh Robertson and I did the Himiritangi to Foxton stretch of the Manawatu coast, many times. We sometimes went north to Tangimoana and sometimes south of the Manawatu River Mouth to Waiterere and Hokio. I can't recall what we found apart from Australasian Gannets, but I remember lugging home as many glass fishing floats as we could carry. We found a Risso's Dolphin too and brought the head back. It sat in one of Hugh's trees for a long time and eventually made it to the National Museum.

After moving to Auckland I took part in the regular monthly beach patrols on Muriwai organised by Sylvia Reed. I recall some vast wrecks of prisms and some of the first Kerguelen Petrels and Antarctic Fulmars to be recorded. The most memorable finds were a Yellow-bellied Sea Snake, which I kept alive for a week, and a missile. I switched the missile from arm to disarm and carried it home. Eek!

A move to Dunedin meant an end to regular beach visits, as the prevailing wind there is offshore, the birds cast ashore there are few, and they seem to be random local casualties rather than part of a pattern of oceanic bird movements.

Beach patrolling became worthwhile once again following a move 20 years ago to Invercargill. It takes me four minutes to drive to Oreti Beach and I try to get out there a couple of times each week. In the past 20 years over 50 species of bird have been found there and three seasonal patterns to wrecks can now be identified. One is the presence of Antarctic birds coming north in August and September. These include Cape Pigeon, and Antarctic, Kerguelen and Blue Petrels. The second is the large number of Sooty Shearwater juveniles coming ashore in the first weeks of May and the third is the presence of a lot of juvenile Buller's Mollymawks in September.

The Southland region of OSNZ organises occasional patrols where a long stretch of Oreti Beach is covered, but the major effort is covering Mason Bay on Stewart Island in early May.

Beach patrollers are reminded that the Department of Conservation is interested in any stranded sea mammals they come across. Whale, dolphin and seal records are useful additions to their database.

I am also interested in the transport of seeds by ocean currents. Probably far more of these reach New Zealand than we realise. We get the odd coconut and *Barringtonia* in the far south and almost certainly a lot of smaller stuff as well. Keep your eyes open!

LLOYD ESLER

15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD9 Invercargill 9879  
Email [esler@southnet.co.nz](mailto:esler@southnet.co.nz)

## New Members

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

Lindsay Alexander (Far North); John Allan (Wellington); Clare Allen (Marlborough); Rosalynn Anderson-Lederer (Wellington); Julie Barber (Southland); Nicolas Barre (New Caledonia); Kristine Beach (Marlborough); Lyn Bentley (Otago); Steve Bentley (Otago); Ivan Blair (Hawkes Bay); Gary Blake (South Auckland); Matu Booth (Wellington); Danny Boulton (Nelson); Denise Brickell (Auckland); Chris Bycroft (Volcanic Plateau); Heather Campbell (Far North); Mr J Campbell (Wanganui); John Campbell (Nelson); Matt Charteris (West Coast); Graham Chorley (West Coast); Valerie Cleghorn (Wairarapa); Bruce Collett (Far North); Roy Collin (Auckland); Margaret Cooper (Far North); Heather Corin (Wanganui); Rose Couling (Manawatu); Ashley Cunningham (Hawkes Bay); Lisa Daghish (Waikato); Shay Dean (Taranaki); Jon De Vries (Marlborough); Mike Dickison (Canterbury); Arthur Dunn (Auckland); Nick Eade (Marlborough); Julian Fitter (Wellington); Ian Flux (Wellington); Gerald Freeman (West Coast); Murray Gavin (Nelson); Kathy Gilbert (West Coast); Maria Gill (Auckland); Peter Gibbons (Canterbury); Newmont Waihi Gold (Bay of Plenty); Kristina Grabow (Taranaki); Peter Griffiths (Wairarapa); Kristy Hall (Auckland); David Hare (Wellington); Terry Higginson (Far North); Nigel Horne (Auckland); Janet Hunt (Auckland); Jean Hyndman (Bay of Plenty); Tony Ironside (Hawkes Bay); Christopher Jardine (U.K.); Hamish Kendal (South Auckland); Sian Kendall (Far North); Anne Kiddie (Auckland); Mark Kingston (Canterbury); Noel Knight (Auckland); Erika Kuschel (Auckland); Elaine Lagnaz (Auckland); Derek Lamb (Auckland); Eilene Lamb (Auckland); Charles Landis (Otago); Joan Leckie (Manawatu); Simon Lewis (Canterbury); Kelvin Lloyd (Otago); Desmond Lovatt (Wairarapa); Margaret McConachie (Taranaki); Mr S J McDonald (Southland); Delcie McKenzie (Otago); Derek MacLeod (Nelson); Ruth Marsh (Far North); Kevin Matthews (Far North); Julia Melville (Wellington); Jan O'Boyle (Far North); Marian O'Brien (Auckland); Kevin Oates (Auckland); Dave Panckhurst (Far North); Keith Pay (Otago); Alison Perfect (Wanganui); Peter Pountney (Auckland); Moira Pryde (Canterbury); Aaron Randall (Northland); Charlotte Rivers (Canterbury); Neil Robertson (Southland); Mr V M Rutherford (South Auckland); Fleur Schultz (Auckland); Barbara Spurr (Canterbury); Elizabeth Stephens (Auckland); Barry Stevens (Northland); John Stewart-Smith (U.K.); Don Sutherland (Auckland); Anne Turnbull (Canterbury); Merle Turner (Auckland); Pam Turner (Hawkes Bay); Ian F West (Wellington); Alan Wilkinson (Wairarapa); Ian Williams (Canterbury); Michael Winch (Far North); Erika Woodger (Taranaki); Ashley Wright (Canterbury); Colin Young (Wairarapa).

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

Judy Bendall; John A Brown; Mary Craven; Geoffrey De Lisle; Dr R. E. Fordyce; Geoff Harrow; Richard Holdaway; Rosemary Jorgensen; Alan Miller; Dr P. L. Munns; Marie Neverman; Peter F Penny; Bernadette Russell; David Seay; Barry Stevens; Bice A Tennyson; Kerry Walshe; Mr W. A. Watters.



# ATLAS OF BIRD

*Launched at Government House, Wellington, New Zealand.*



Some 200 invited guests celebrated the launch of the Atlas, thus providing a suitable conclusion to the 1999-2004 phase of the atlas project. Guests included some 80 Councillors and members of the Society, their partners and friends, the Minister of Conservation, the MP for Wellington Central, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, representatives from the Royal Society of New Zealand, the Ministries of Science and Technology, Conservation, Agriculture and Forests, and the Environment, BirdLife International, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, World Wide Fund for Nature, Foundation for Research Science and Technology, regional councils, QEII National Trust, Biosecurity NZ, NZ Conservation Authority, Karori Sanctuary Trust, Te Papa Museum of New Zealand, Massey University, Te Ara National Encyclopaedia, the State Services Commission, GeographX Ltd, Intergraph Corporation, Datacom Ltd, Eagle Technology Ltd, Bateson Publishing Ltd, Printlink and assorted media, with music supplied by the Rosa Musica Trio.

Photographs are a selection from a collection generously provided by Anthony Phelps.

Guests partook of refreshments in the Ballroom of Government House, and were welcomed at the start of the launch proceedings by the Official Secretary at Government House, Adrian Simcock, before the presentation of speeches by the Official Party. Full transcripts of the proceedings are provided below.

Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Dame Sian Elias, the Administrator of the Government (Chief Justice of New Zealand). In particular, I want to offer special greetings to the Hon. Chris Carter, Minister of Conservation, and the Hon. Marian Hobbs, MP for Wellington Central and former Minister for the Environment. We know the pressures on your time. The fact that you're here to launch this publication speaks a great deal about the value you place on it, and those who have brought it about, many of whom are here tonight. Others I'd like to acknowledge are Dr Jan Wright, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Professor Richard Holdaway, President of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (that was going to be my biggest challenge, could I say "ornithological"), Don Stewart, Director of BirdLife International's Pacific Division, Christopher Robertson, the Atlas Convenor, and fellow co-authors Mark Fraser and Ross Picard. Welcome to all of you who are members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, and welcome, ladies and gentlemen who aren't.

His Excellency the Governor-General is, I know, very sad he can't be here tonight – as you know, he is overseas on a State visit to Samoa and the Tokelau. As a result, however, it is my very great privilege to welcome you in his stead to Government House, the home in the capital of the Governor-General. We are here to launch a very special book, the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004*.

It is impossible not to feel awestruck at the amount of work that has gone into the observations upon which this atlas is based. Thousands of hours of voluntary work lie behind it, and what has prompted such service is the deep commitment of all who have been involved, to a project that is vital for the birdlife of these islands. It is also a most handsome volume, with more than 500 pages of coloured maps and fascinating analysis. I had an opportunity to view it over the weekend – of course I zeroed in on the parts of New Zealand I spend most time in, and it certainly galvanised me into being more systematic in my own observations, now that I know what

birds should be there, so the book has much of interest in it, even for blunderers like me. But of course its principal value is as a record of the distribution of New Zealand birds in the five years it covers. It is a benchmark against which to mark future progress, or future heartache. It is key information to have if we are to protect the habitats essential to our wonderful birdlife.

This book is an outstanding contribution by many hundreds of committed New Zealanders, painstaking work by members of the Society over the five years of the survey, and has meant that 97% of the ten kilometre squares into which the whole country has been divided, including the Chatham Islands, has been surveyed. It is right that in launching this book, we celebrate all the individual effort in all parts of the country by so many great New Zealanders. But of course, such effort is not undertaken spontaneously; it requires huge organisation and it requires leadership to enthuse others, and that leadership has been provided by the named authors, Messrs Robertson, Fraser, Picard and Pasi Hyvonen (who, unfortunately, couldn't be here tonight). It is very right to honour their special effort and the movement that it has created. This book is a labour of love, comparable to Audrey Eagle's 50 years of work. She contributed to this volume too, as a member of the Society. Both publications I think are united by a passion and dedication to naturalism. The Society estimates the value of the survey work undertaken by its volunteers in collecting this data at some \$10 million. Amazing!

Voluntary organisations, such as the Society, are part of the fabric that holds our society together. Usually we think of service and community organisations when we think of social glue, but what better bonds join people of New Zealand than our love for this country, and its magnificent birdlife. Volunteers who advance our knowledge and understanding of the natural world around us sustain our nation, and it is worth remembering,





# DISTRIBUTION

13th August 2007

as we celebrate this march of amateurs, that some of the great discoveries of the natural world were made by amateurs and volunteers, rather than by professional scientists. Our examples include Joan Wiffen, New Zealand's dinosaur woman. Another is amateur astronomer Albert Jones of Stoke, near Nelson, who with a homemade telescope co-discovered Supernova SN1987a, the brightest explosion caused by a dying star seen in the night sky for three hundred years.

While the Department of Conservation would love to do more in cataloguing and researching New Zealand's natural environment, as I'm sure the Minister would agree, it is limited by the funds and human resources at its disposal. The value of the information the Society has collected, of which only some is in the Atlas, is almost inestimable. Obviously, it is of great value to the Department, but it is also critical information for regional and local planning. For those seeking a topic for postgraduate research at university, the Atlas poses many questions as to why some birds are found in plentiful numbers in some regions, but not in others. Finally, to the general enthusiast or twitcher, it will be a wonderful reference and guide.

**Christopher Robertson, Atlas Convenor:** It is my pleasant duty to acknowledge and thank a wide range of people and organisations, without whom, and their activities, we would not be gathered here this evening.

In an age when the use of computers and the modelling of future scenarios is a growing part of our daily lives, helping to improve our understanding of the importance of biodiversity, it is important to acknowledge the sourcing of those data sets upon which such understandings may be based.

In 1941, Count Kazimierz (Kazio) Antoni z Granowa Wodzicki came to New Zealand as the Consul-General for the exiled Polish Government in London, and while here joined the fledgling Ornithological Society of New Zealand, just born in 1939. He quickly started to observe and count our birds: the gannets at Cape Kidnappers, with my father – a series of annual counts which continue today. But probably more importantly, for this evening's context, the birds of the Waikanae Estuary, a study of

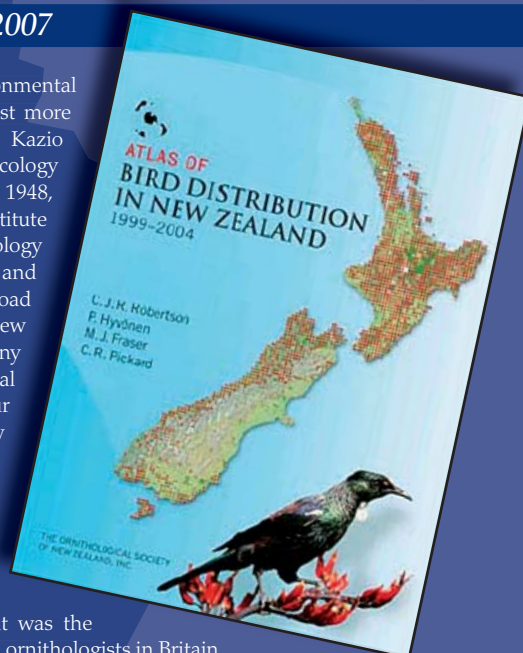
species and local environmental change which was to last more than forty years. Dr Kazio Wodzicki founded the Ecology Division of the DSIR in 1948, and was joined in that Institute by Dr Peter Bull. Ecology includes counting and mapping amongst its broad disciplines, and this new Institute laid many important national foundations for our understanding of New Zealand's natural biological processes.

Until the 1960s there were few New Zealand studies that mapped the distribution of individual species, but it was the example of botanists and ornithologists in Britain, who demonstrated during the 1960s that large-scale national mapping programmes could be undertaken successfully by amateurs. In 1969, Peter Bull initiated the first-stage trials of the Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand. Tonight we are gathered to celebrate the third and most comprehensive of the Atlases derived from 15 years of survey work, directed by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand between 1969 and 2005.

As the present Convenor of the Atlas project, it is my privilege to acknowledge those who have assisted the Society to the conclusion of the present Project. Regrettably, Peter Bull, father of the Project, died in April 2006, but as a contributor this time, he was still providing willing advice and comment, until a week before his death. I acknowledge the presence of members from his family, including two granddaughters and a grandson among the guests this evening. I acknowledge also the presence of Peter Gaze, my co-author in the previous two Atlases, who managed this time to escape the rigours of administration, and with a minor sense of déjà vu, to enjoy himself as a contributor.

Those world-leading Atlases in Britain during the 1960s had some ten to fifteen thousand contributors, for a land area slightly smaller than New Zealand. Our two New Zealand field surveys have been undertaken by less than 1,000 people or teams each time, only about half of whom were Society members. Not bad for a Society of one thousand to 1,200 members. Their sustained voluntary contribution in time and resources has amounted over the fifteen years of survey to an input value of some \$20 million. To their representatives gathered here this evening, some of whom have willingly participated since 1969, our fulsome thanks. You have enjoyed a wonderful exploration of our land, but your gift to the future of the country and its birds is a truly inestimable investment. Our thanks also to the Regional Representatives of the Society, who by providing the frontline organisation, harnessed and channelled this voluntary effort over the past five years.

In 1998, when the Council of the Society was wrestling with the potential risk to the financial viability of the Society of proceeding with the Project without a guaranteed source of funding, a donation of £5,000 sterling from Mr R J Meadows, a member and horticulturalist of Opotiki, provided the catalyst. From then on, by accident or design, the Project has managed to progressively solve both technical and financial problems.





Unsolicited, my Finnish co-author Pasi Hyvönen offered, at a Society meeting in Wellington during 2001, to assist with the mapping. His meticulous application of modern mapping software to bird atlas mapping reflected his exceptional abilities. I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of Eagle Technology Ltd as his employer at that time. Subsequently, he moved to Edinburgh with a new wife, and joined ESRI, the developers and purveyors of the ArcGIS software, used as the principal mapping system. I acknowledge and thank ESRI for their support of him, and their gracious provision of software when he rejoined the Atlas team last year. The exceptional mapping results speak for themselves. Unbeknown to me at the time, Pasi began making use of land cover and terrain data sets developed here in Wellington by GeographX Ltd, to vastly improve the visual appeal of the maps. The use of these datasets in the final product has considerably improved our ability to interpret the mapped results. We acknowledge and thank Roger Smith, of GeographX Ltd, for generously donating the use of this material.

The decision was made late last year to explore the mapped presentation of various elements of biodiversity to complement the presentation of single species results. I am greatly indebted to an old colleague, Ross Pickard, who had been technically diverted by me on a number of occasions in the past. He willingly undertook what proved to be a bit of a trial for both of us, and also the Geomedia software chosen for the task. This will probably prove to be the part of the Atlas that creates the most debate, as the results both confirm and challenge many popular conceptions. We acknowledge the donation of the exceptional support of time and resources given by his employers Intergraph New Zealand Ltd.

Two other significant benefactors will be treated separately, but I wish to conclude this part of the roundup of the Atlas support by acknowledging a group of scientific colleagues, including Graeme Taylor (the founding convenor until early 2001), who got this phase of the project underway, and have assisted and advised through to the end of the project. One of these colleagues was designated by me as my successor to complete the Project, should my recent, rather too numerous exchanges with the local medical and surgical fraternities not reach such satisfactory conclusions. He was quite delighted to be the first to be told when we'd finished the job.

But to return again to Count Kazio Wodzicki. He was a great stickler for the publication of results, as a number of people in the room will attest, and often went to extreme, but usually, diplomatic lengths, to persuade and ensure that publication was completed. He would surely have been satisfied with both the speed and the completeness of the present project's results.

The dataset for this Atlas was signed off and sent to Edinburgh on the 26th of November last year. The final Atlas was compiled between then and its delivery in early April to Bateson Publishing Ltd for typesetting and layout, indexed during May, delivered to the printers in mid-June and arrived individually packed in the warehouse on the 1st of August. Needless to say, with that sort of speed, it has been printed and bound in New Zealand. Printlink of Petone are the successors of the Government Printing Office who printed the last Atlas. I wish to acknowledge and thank them for their most generous support of the Project, through the provision of the

most comprehensive printing and binding services available under one roof in New Zealand. Their voluntary modification of the agreed printing technique, to doubly ensure the highest possible quality, is greatly appreciated, and is reflected in the final product. I acknowledge the presence of representatives of both the management and the production departments here this evening. Well done!

Ultimately though, willing volunteers can't do everything, and the production of the final printed Atlas required funding – not much good if you get all the way there, and then can't publish it. The New Zealand Ornithological Congress Trust Board ran two big international bird conferences in New Zealand during 1990. One of them was the World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, the oldest conservation body in the world, now known as BirdLife International.

Some of the invested trust fund surplus from that Conference, through the generous auspices of the Trust Board, and with the full support of BirdLife International, have ensured the printing of the Atlas, and I'd like to call on Don Stewart, Director of BirdLife International Pacific division, to deliver a message from his organisation.

**Don Stewart:** It is my pleasure to deliver a message from Dr Michael Rands, Director and Chief Executive of BirdLife International.

"Birds are no more extraordinary than any other living organisms, but it is the close familiarity with people that makes them feel so special. They fly, they sing, and are almost everywhere, and are usually to be found doing something

interesting. As a result, birds inspire people, and have a powerful place in our lives, as symbols of wisdom, freedom, romance, and sometimes even bad luck. Thanks to their own characteristics and our interest in them, we have a better knowledge of birds than any other life form. Such knowledge enables us to make good use of birds as indicators, to measure and monitor the wider environment, estimate the richness of areas for other biodiversity, and even assess whether we are using our planet in a sustainable way. *The Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004* being launched today is a most remarkable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of birds, and therefore the environment.

On behalf of the BirdLife International Partnership, that itself comprises over 100 national conservation NGOs (including of course Forest and Bird in New Zealand), I warmly congratulate the compilers, the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, and all those who contributed over 1.5 million individual bird observations to the Atlas. It is an incredible achievement, superbly put together and vital to the future of New Zealand's birds and habitats. One in eight of the world's ten thousand bird species is threatened with extinction, and many more are in decline. New Zealand as a nation has led the world in saving species from the very brink of extinction, thanks to the efforts of some remarkable individuals, dedicated and determined NGOs, and enlightened Government policy and action.

This beautiful, authoritative, and comprehensive publication is crucial for the wellbeing of all New Zealand's birds and other wildlife. It provides much of what is needed to plan and take action to conserve all birds, and the habitats they represent. I strongly urge all those with a responsibility, and the opportunity to make the best use of the information it contains, and to enjoy learning more about the fascinating avifauna of this wonderful country. It is an honour for BirdLife International to have been able to play a small part in supporting this fantastic Project. Once again I thank and congratulate everybody involved."



**Christopher Robertson:** Thank you, Don and BirdLife International.

The other major construction process for the Atlas was the creation and verification of the very large electronic database developed from the field survey sheets. My co-author Ross Pickard designed the data entry software, while a small group undertook data entry and verification intermittently over a period of three years. We must acknowledge and thank Derek Batcheler, Nicky Sinclair, Andrew Sanders, Paul Garner-Richards and Mark Fraser for their excellent compilation of that dataset. Further, as my other co-author, Mark Fraser has subsequently meticulously checked and verified the complete dataset, searched all the references, and has been responsible for ensuring that figures, tables, appendices, textual calculations and annotations and names are consistent. With the exception of the software development donated by Ross Pickard, these contributors were paid to complete their tasks, tasks not safely achievable with suitable quality control in any other way.

In 2003, the Society was successful in sourcing funds, for the purpose of creating an electronic database of the field surveys, from the Terrestrial and Freshwater Biodiversity Information System Programme fund, usually abbreviated to a thing called "TFBIS", administered by the Department of Conservation. The purpose of this fund is to support projects which are likely to make a significant difference to the conservation of New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity. I have much pleasure in inviting the Hon. Chris Carter, as the Minister responsible for the administration of that fund, to address you.

**Hon. Chris Carter:** It's a pleasure to be here tonight, speaking for the Department of Conservation as Minister. Dame Sian Elias, Administrator of the Government in New Zealand – thank you for hosting us tonight, I'm delighted also to have with me of course my very good friend and colleague and former Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs, the local MP for Wellington Central, and members of the New Zealand Ornithological Society. President Richard Holdaway, your members have done amazing work, and when you think about it, what could be more important for New Zealanders and our sense of identity than a comprehensive Atlas of bird distribution of avian species in New Zealand?

You know, as all of us are no doubt aware, especially members of the Ornithological Society, that in New Zealand (the land of the birds), our terrestrial ecosystems were dominated by avian species, where in other lands mammals occupied those niches. The world's largest eagle flew in our country, while those enormous, flightless moa species grazed through our forests. We have lost so much, but what we retain is so critical to our identity as a nation, and a unique place on Earth.

The Atlas, which chronicles the distribution not only just of endemic species, but also introduced and migratory species, is really important as a scientific base for further studies. The opportunity exists for great research, presumably by PhD and MSc students, as they continue their studies. So this is a very valuable document, and enormously helpful to us in the Department of Conservation, as we undertake our task (which we are entrusted to do), which is the protection of our unique biodiversity, and nothing, as I said at the beginning of my presentation, could be more important than bird species in our country because of the unique association of this land with avian species.

I want to thank everyone who's been involved, especially the volunteers. I heard Dame Sian Elias say, \$10 million of voluntary work at least went into the production of this document, this wonderful book, and I want to thank those contributors. I think that's probably an underestimation of the dedication and commitment that has gone into this very important piece of scientific work. From the Department of Conservation's view, and from the Government's point of view, I want to thank you. This book will be something that will be an important reference for many, many years to come. Thank you very much.

**Christopher Robertson:** Thank you Minister for your kind words, and the support of your Department.

Finally, it is my pleasure to introduce the seventeenth President of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Professor Richard Holdaway. Both as an editor of the Society's scientific journal *Notornis* and the distinguished co-author of *The Lost World of the Moa – Prehistoric Life in New Zealand*, Richard is well versed in the trials and tribulations involved in the production of scientific literature. The present Atlas records the near present, but the increasingly detailed mapping of the prehistoric distributions of New Zealand fauna underpins any debate about how we should avoid mistakes in our biodiversity management well into the future.

**Professor Richard Holdaway:** *The Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* is a landmark publication, both for the Ornithological Society and, we feel, for science and conservation in New Zealand. It will provide the basis for the research of a future generation of scientists seeking to understand the patterns and processes underlying the composition and

changes in New Zealand's avifauna and their habitat. That in turn, will be a powerful indicator of the health and sustainability of the New Zealand environment as a whole.

Globally, birds are the best-understood group of animals, but this new atlas shows, above all, the limits of our knowledge of what is happening to the New Zealand environment and why. If I may select an example which may be characteristic of recent changes, and what the future may hold, that would be the Waikato. There, despite a major effort during the atlas surveys, the diversity cupboard was relatively bare. Species after species that were present in 1985 are now rare or absent. This is reminiscent of the changes in the countryside of Britain and Europe, where lower diversity has accompanied the intensification and industrialisation of agriculture. The Waikato may be our 'Little Britain'; the changes there may well reveal what may be in store elsewhere. It is as an essential tool for conservation and environmental planners that the atlas may find its most enduring place.

We should not under-estimate, however, its strengths in other areas. A glance at the maps and the analytical sections will show what a fertile field it will be in stimulating ideas for researchers, particularly post-graduates, in formulating their projects. We hope it will provide data and inspiration for the next generation of post-graduate researchers. As a snapshot of the New Zealand avifauna at this time of unprecedented human influences on the environment, and a heightened awareness of the importance of maintaining biodiversity and ecosystems, it will provide a window into the past, and a basis for the future.

It demonstrates in the clearest possible way the power of commitment of voluntary effort, focused on a well-understood and developed goal. It takes energy and sacrifice to bring such a major programme to such a successful and fruitful conclusion. We should remember also the present atlas's origins and the founding foresight of Dr Peter Bull and others who started the process three decades and more ago. And it is not only a summary of the results of that effort, but also of the benefits and pitfalls of the voluntary system, and the methods of large-scale surveying. The authors have not shrunk from spelling out the limitations of the process, and have drawn only cautious conclusions in the volume itself. In that respect the volume is a challenge to the scientific community at large to both extend the knowledge of our fauna and flora, and to build on the experience gained in the process.

We have this Atlas here as a result of the efforts of hundreds and hundreds of New Zealanders and a wide range of technical expertise. But, it sits here on this table as a monument to the decades of service to New Zealand, New Zealand ornithology, and the Ornithological Society, of our Convenor, Christopher Robertson.

The Society wishes to recognise on this occasion, his unrivalled contribution to ornithological matters in New Zealand, by bestowing on him its highest award, a Fellowship of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. (Award presented). In recognition of the voluntary effort behind the voluntary effort, these are for Gillian (presentation of flowers).

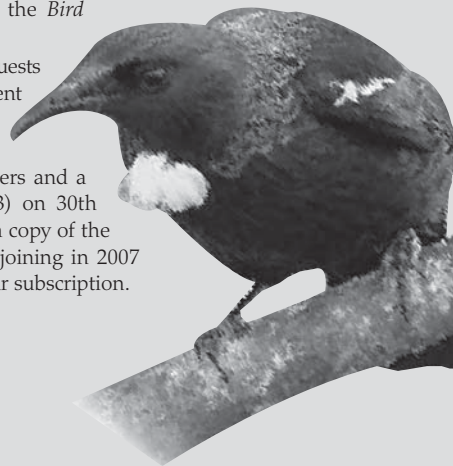
We hope that the atlas will inspire new efforts in all fields of the natural sciences in New Zealand, and will stand as an example of what can be achieved in the gaining and presenting of sound, unbiased information on the New Zealand environment.

I would now like to invite Her Excellency Dame Sian Elias to cut the ribbon, and officially launch the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004*.

Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Dame Sian Elias: It gives me great pleasure to cut the ribbon and launch the *Bird Distribution Atlas of New Zealand*.

Following the launching ceremony, guests were invited to move throughout Government House, and to view the environs.

Subsequent publicity resulted in a number of reports in National newspapers and a Television item on Campbell Live (TV3) on 30th August. All Society members were sent a copy of the Atlas during August. All new members joining in 2007 will be entitled to the Atlas as part of their subscription.





# OSNZ Contacts

## COUNCIL

Richard Holdaway (President), P.O. Box 16 569, Hornby, Christchurch 8042.  
Ph 03 349 3455. Email piopio@paradise.net.nz

David Lawrie (Vice-president), 52 Mill Road, RD2, Pukekohe.  
Ph 09 238 8407. Email lawrie@ps.gen.nz

Claudia Duncan (Secretary), P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, or  
51 Best Road, RD 1, Te Horo, Otaki. Ph 06 364 3410.  
Email osnz@xtra.co.nz or c.duncan@clear.net.nz

Mark Nee (Treasurer), 1/18 Carriage Close, Howick, Auckland.  
Ph (hm) 09 537 3759, (wk) 09 274 8263, fax 09 274 9579.  
Email m.nee@clear.net.nz

David Melville, Dovedale, RD2 Wakefield, Nelson.  
Ph 03 543 3628. Email david.melville@xtra.co.nz

David Pye, 1/74 Ravenwood Drive, Forrest Hill, Auckland.  
Ph 09 410 2879. Email morton.pye@xtra.co.nz

Paul Scofield, 277A Cambridge Terrace, Christchurch.  
Ph 03 365 6467. Email pscofield@canterburymuseum.com

Stuart Nicholson, 15 Bruce Avenue, Brooklyn, Wellington 6021.  
Ph 04 934 5940. Email nicholson@paradise.net.nz

Bruce McKinlay (co-opted), 97 Tomahawk Road, Dunedin 9013. Ph 03 454 4555. Email mckinlaywakelin@actrix.co.nz

Phil Battley (co-opted), Ecology Group Massey University, Private Bag 11-222, Palmerston North. Ph (wk) 06 356 9099 ext 2605.  
Email philbattley@massey.ac.nz

## EDITORS

### Notornis

*Editor:* Richard Holdaway, P.O.Box 16 569, Hornby, Christchurch 8042.  
Ph 03 349 3455. Email piopio@paradise.net.nz

### Editorial board

Mike Imber, 6 Hillcrest Lane, Levin 5510. Email mimer@paradise.net.nz

Paul Sagar, 38 Yardley Street, Christchurch 8004. Ph 03 342 9720.  
Email p.sagar@niwa.cri.nz or diomedea@paradise.net.nz

John McLennan, Landcare Research, 33 Simla Avenue, Havelock North.  
Email mclennanj@landcareresearch.co.nz

### Compiler of index to Notornis

Tim Lovegrove, 6 Deuxberry Avenue, Northcote, Auckland 1309.  
Ph (wk) 09 366 2000 ext 8575, (hm) 09 480 6587.  
Email tim.lovegrove@arc.govt.nz

### Southern Bird

*Editor:* Nick Allen, 65 Allin Drive, Waikuku Beach, North Canterbury 7402. Ph 03 312 7183. Email nick\_allen@xtra.co.nz

## BOOK REVIEWS

Kevin Parker, Institute of Natural Resources, Massey University, Private Bag 102904, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland.  
Ph 09 414 0800 ext 41197, mobile 021 701 639.  
Email K.Parker@massey.ac.nz

## LIBRARIANS

### Books and Journals

Kathy Barrow, Auckland Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland.  
Ph (wk) 09 309 0443 ext 662.

### Bird Slides and Sales

Paul Cuming, 2/7 Robins Road, Judea, Tauranga. Ph 07 571 5125,  
Fax 07 571 5126. Email birdo@post.com

### Back issues

Roger Sharp, P.O.Box 12-1039, Henderson, Auckland.  
Ph (hm) 09 413 8580, (wk) 09 625 3345. Email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz

## CONVENORS AND ORGANISERS

### Atlas Scheme

Christopher Robertson, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. Ph 04 472 8173,  
mobile 027 602 7947. Email cjrr@wildpress.org

### Checklist Committee

*Convenor:* Brian Gill, Auckland Museum, Private Bag 92 018, Auckland 1.  
Ph (wk) 09 306 7063. Email bgill@aucklandmuseum.com  
*Committee members:* Brian Bell, Geoff Chambers, David Medway, Ricardo Palma, Paul Sagar, Alan Tennyson, Trevor Worthy, Paul Scofield.

### Rare Birds Committee

*Convenor:* Paul Scofield, The Secretary, Rare Birds Committee,  
Box 12397, Wellington.

### Committee members:

Brian Bell, Colin Miskelly, Chris Robertson, Paul Sagar, Richard Holdaway (ex officio).

### Scientific Committee

*Convenor:* Paul Scofield, 277A Cambridge Terrace, Christchurch. Ph 03 365 6467. Email pscofield@canterburymuseum.com  
*Committee members:* Paul Sagar, David Melville, Paul Scofield, Graeme Taylor, Richard Holdaway (ex officio).

### Administration and Development Committee

*Convenor:* David Melville, Dovedale, RD2 Wakefield. Ph 03 543 3628.  
Email david.melville@xtra.co.nz  
*Committee members:* David Pye, Stuart Nicholson, Mark Nee (as treasurer), Richard Holdaway (ex officio).

### Membership Secretary

Roger Sharp, P.O. Box 12-1039, Henderson, Auckland.  
Ph (hm) 09 413 8580, (wk) 09 625 3345. Email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz

### Website

Brent Stephenson, 35 Te Aute Road, Havelock North. Ph 06 877 6388,  
mobile 0274 426 638. Email brent@eco-vista.com

### Beach Patrol

Lloyd Esler, 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD 9 Invercargill 9521.  
Ph 03 213 0404. Email esler@southnet.co.nz

### Moult Records

Ben Bell, School of Biological Sciences, VUW, P.O. Box 600, Wellington.  
Ph (wk) 04 472 1000. Email ben.bell@vuw.ac.nz

### Nest Records

Roger Sharp, P.O. Box 12-1039, Henderson, Auckland.  
Ph (hm) 09 413 8580, (wk) 09 625 3345. Email Roger.Sharp@xtra.co.nz

### Assets Register

Brian Bell, P.O.Box 14-492, Wellington; or 35 Selmes Road, RD3, Rapaura, Blenheim. Ph 03 570 2230. Email wmillblenheim@clear.net.nz

### Recorder, SW Pacific Islands - Vacant

### Banding Liaison Officer

David Melville, Dovedale, RD2 Wakefield. Ph 03 543 3628.  
Email david.melville@xtra.co.nz

### Liaison Universitie - Vacant

### Liaison NZ Raptor Association

Steve Lawrence, 94 Plateau Road, Te Marua, Upper Hutt. Ph 04 526 6818.

### Liaison Miranda Naturalist Trust

Keith Woodley, Miranda Naturalist Trust, RD 3 Pokeno, South Auckland.  
Ph 09 232 2781. Email shorebird@xtra.co.nz

### Liaison Birds Australia and French Polynesia - Vacant

### National Wader Counts

*South Island co-ordinator:* Andrew Crossland, Victoria Park HQ, Park Ranger Service, Greenspace Unit, Christchurch Council, P.O. Box 237, Christchurch. Ph (wk) 03 941 7570, (hm) 025 341 155, fax: 03 963 7745.  
Email Andrew.Crossland@ccc.govt.nz

*North Island co-ordinator:* Adrian Riegen, 231 Forest Hill Road, Waiatarua, Auckland 8. Ph 09 814 9741. Email riegen@xtra.co.nz

### Liaison Fish and Game Council/Ducks Unlimited

David Lawrie, 52 Mill Road, RD2 Pukekohe, Auckland. Ph 09 238 8407.  
Email lawrie@ps.gen.nz





# Regional Roundup



## Far North

After an increased publicity drive we are pleased to announce that nine new members have joined OSNZ in our region since June. This was no doubt helped by the attraction of receiving a free copy of the wonderful Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand. As we are a spread-out group with no obvious central town, an increasing number of members are too far away from Kerikeri to attend meetings so we are investigating a second venue in Kaitiaia.

Far North member, Russell Thomas, has been awarded a Northland Conservation Award for his very considerable work with endangered New Zealand birds over 40 years of OSNZ membership.

Highlights among recent sightings include Kookaburras in Kerikeri and near Whangaroa, 61 Cattle Egrets in paddocks north of Kaitiaia, and a Black-fronted Tern on Karikari Beach in May.

Many of our members are involved in other local organisations dedicated to conserving habitat and carrying out predator control in the region. The Guardians of the Bay of Islands are making some headway to turning some of the islands there into future Tiritiri Matangis. Likewise the Kiwi Foundation has plans for huge scale predator-control, particularly around Kerikeri and holds a vision of a possum-free Northland.

We hope that Ray Pierce will be available to give us a talk at our next meeting, on the Phoenix Islands and Kiritimati. Shortly afterwards we have a weekend trip to Tiritiri Island, jointly with South Auckland group. As the weather prevented us from launching any boats to carry out a winter wader count, we will make a special effort for November. Before the end of the year the group hopes to arrange an overnight trip to Waipoua and Waima Forests in conjunction with DoC's Kokako project.

DETLEF DAVIES

## Northland

The Northland region is continuing its usual activities over winter despite some stormy weather. Beach patrols are continuing each month on the east and west coasts, with the usual keen volunteers out in the wet weather. Lower than average numbers of seabirds have been found on the beaches for this time of the year. Even after a July storm the really high numbers of beach wrecks that might have been expected didn't eventuate. One unusual sighting was of a Sooty Shearwater found near the Hatea River in the centre of Whangarei; it was certainly blown well off course! We carried out wader surveys on the Whangarei and Kaipara Harbour surveys in June, and found the usual range of waders. Several Cattle Egrets and a White Heron have been seen in paddocks around Dargaville.

The June meeting involved discussions amongst members about the waders on Whangarei Harbour and the Marine Areas proposed for the harbour.

At the July meeting, Audrey Williams gave a presentation about the oiled wildlife training course that she attended at Massey University. Examples of overseas and New Zealand oil spills, including the Jody F Millennium shipwrecked off the Gisborne coast, were used to provide information on the types of oils and spills, and the effects on New Zealand's coastline and wildlife. The practical bird cleaning session turned into a real life exercise when oil was found in a local stream, and several oiled ducks were brought into the vet clinic and cleaned by the course participants. The skills learnt at this course and passed onto members will be useful during any spills in Northland in assisting with the rescue, prioritising and cleaning of oiled birds.

At the August meeting, members enjoyed watching a recording of one of the Life of Birds TV programmes. The first episode in the series shows quite a few New Zealand birds, including Kakapo, Kiwi and Weka; which were watched with interest and much discussion.

KATRINA HANSEN

## Auckland

The stormy winter gales have blown several large seabirds onto the west coast this month. Some have fared better than others. A Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was taken to bird rescue after it crash landed in bush near Helensville. After recuperation at SPCA Birdwing it was successfully released by DoC at the Muriwai Gannet platform in late June. In August a juvenile Southern Giant Petrel and a probable Wandering Albatross were both beach-wrecked and later added to Auckland Museum's bird collection. They were both banded overseas, probably on the southern Atlantic islands, and these bands are being traced to find out their origins. The winter wader surveys took place at the Manukau and Kaipara Harbours and at Mangawhai and the Firth of Thames. They were well supported by members as usual.

Restoration plans for Kaikoura Island (adjacent to Great Barrier Island) were presented by Auckland member Mel Galbraith at the July meeting. Rodent and cat eradications are planned for next year. The island was gazetted as a scenic reserve and is managed by the Motu Kaikoura Trust, who aim to restore it to a natural environment that is open to the local and

Auckland regional community. The vegetation on the island suffered from historical clearances and many years of grazing by goats, pigs and fallow deer. Under the canopy, there has been very little revegetation, with scrubby cover and low bio-diversity. Around the coast, some large native trees have survived including Pohutukawa, Mahoe and a copse of Kauri trees. Goats and pigs have now been eradicated, and deer are also being culled with a view to eradication.

Succession on the island was suppressed and this allowed Kanuka to dominate everywhere except in the most inaccessible places. As a result, bird life on the island is very limited for a 500+ ha vegetated island. A four-day survey was carried out this year, and three bird transects were cut and trialled. Some of the birds seen there include Banded Rail, New Zealand Pigeon, Kingfisher, and Kaka. Black and Cooks Petrels fly over the island, and potential colonists could include petrels, Bellbirds, Tomtits, and Brown Quail from Great Barrier. Bird counts will be done on a regular basis and the Trust is discussing possible translocations for the future. Restoration and regeneration on the island will take time and it is seen as a 100-year project.

Auckland member John Staniland talked in July about his year on a Royal Society Teachers Fellowship studying forest complexity at the Cascades in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. Early in his Fellowship year an outbreak of a new strain of salmonella in the Tiritiri Matangi Island population of Stitchbird forced him to change his focus, as it postponed the scheduled translocation to the Ark in the Park project in the Cascades (part of the Waitakeres). He switched from monitoring the survival and breeding of Stitchbird to carrying out a survey of the forest. He studied forest complexity in the Ark, following the protocol of a recent thesis which analysed the vertical habitat structure from 100 points within an 80 metre radius of each Stitchbird nesting site on Little Barrier Island and Kapiti Island. The thesis had shown that the sites with the greater complexity also had the greater fledging success in the Stitchbird nests studied on the two islands. The aim of John's study was to enable a comparison in forest complexity to be made between the Ark site and those two islands.

He also provided an assessment of the overall quality of the habitat, considering not only potential nectar and fruit food sources, but also the potential abundance of invertebrate food, and of protection afforded by the habitat. John's year did include some literally hands-on contact with stitchbird during a stay on Little Barrier Island, helping to mist net and band birds and take part in a DoC census of their numbers. He also made several trips to Tiritiri Matangi Island to observe stitchbird feeding and to help in the census there.

Other speakers this season included American visitor, John Carpenter on population decline in the Cerulean Warbler and a study of the bird's habitat preferences. A power cut did not deter the meeting and Auckland members clustered around a laptop for this presentation. Goodness knows what John thought of infrastructure services in the antipodes, although the power did come back on before the end of the meeting. John was in New Zealand to help with Stitchbird monitoring at the Ark in the Park as part of a fellowship programme.

In September, the Auckland Regional Council's new Open Sanctuary co-ordinator, Matt Maitland, talked about his restoration work around Lake Rotoiti in Nelson Lakes National Park, and his new tasks at Tawharanui and Shakespeare regional parks. One of the spring highlights was an update from Adrian Riegen on the progress of the satellite-tracked godwits, and the return of a female, E7, whose transmitter battery was still working after six months. Her epic round-trip migration journey of 29,000 kilometres between New Zealand via the Yellow Sea to Alaska and back to New Zealand was the subject of much excitement.

SUZI PHILLIPS

## South Auckland

Winter is a quiet time for us in South Auckland. There have been few rarities to keep us amused this winter. Luckily we have had good speakers. Since our last report Chris Smuts Kennedy has spoken on the work being done at Maungatautari Mountain, how it has progressed to date and the work planned for the future. One can't help but admire the dedication that has been put into making that project work.

Our members showed their dedication on a further winter's evening when, turning up on time they found themselves locked out of the Croquet Club. However, they stayed and were rewarded with a talk from John Staniland on his Royal Society Fellowship where he worked on the preparation for the transfer of Stitchbirds to the Ark in the Park. Over the past few years we have heard from several people who have completed Royal Society Fellowships, and their contributions have always been interesting.

The winter wader census came in June, with the usual collection of birds seen on the Firth of Thames and the Manukau. Tony Habraken appears to be getting the hang of organising census, with barely a drop of rain to be seen! As always more volunteers would be useful. The combined Pied Oystercatcher numbers for the Manukau and Firth of Thames was 36,340, down for the second consecutive year from their previous high of 42,298 (2005).





It will be interesting to see if this year's breeding season will regain some of the lost individuals of previous years using these two harbours.

The high tech godwits are winging their way south for the spring, it has been exciting to watch their trip both north, and now surprisingly south again. It's certainly providing motivation to get out there and look for the early arrivals.

GILLIAN VAUGHAN

## Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Our aging and sparsely distributed membership, me included, spend the cooler months relatively torpid! However, the activities of a few I deem outweigh the inactivity of the many, for which I am humbly grateful for the material in this column.

In May, Eila Lawton received a record of an Australasian Bittern in Katikati, adding to Brian Chudleigh's irregular reports over the years from the Uretara Estuary area near the town. I continued my semi-regular petrel night trips with the Kiwi Conservation Club (the junior arm of Forest & Bird), this time taking about 20 kids around Mauao (Mt Maunganui) in late May. I feel it is important for children to take ownership of their natural surroundings, and through hands-on activities such as this, I feel satisfied of small rewards such as kids enthralled with even holding a bag with a bird in it. A field assistant was gleaned from this exercise. The field work for the Grey-faced Petrel Project, administered through the Waikato region of OSNZ, continues with a mix of locally interested people, and students from the local Polytechnic Environmental Management course. Mirroring last year, the same three artificial burrows are being used, with eggs in at least one as of now (August 18th). Unfortunately, the weather is cursing us, and it has now been a week of us being unable to check due to storms, winds, or personnel shortage.

Tim Barnard remains on record as our wader-spotting expert, with his haunts of Little Waihi, Maketu and Kaituna Cut being fleeced of sightings regularly. Large numbers of Royal Spoonbills (85) were seen at Maketu/Kaituna in mid-June, with 10 Cattle Egrets and a Reef Heron also spotted. Thirty-five 'nearly-coloured' New Zealand Dotterels were also present, plus a North Island Fernbird. Tim also mentioned that the Banded Rails in the area were showing well, and he spotted them in five different areas.

We had an unconfirmed report of a Saddleback at Welcome Bay in June, with Eila Lawton receiving an email on the subject. Speculation suggests it may have flown from Tuhua/Mayor Island. No further sightings were forthcoming, and it remains a 'what-could-have-been'.

Also in June, Paddy Latham reported about Silvereyes feeding on golden kiwifruit in high numbers (100s, perhaps 1000s). He mentioned that Silvereyes hadn't been present in such numbers previously as green kiwifruit were picked before they ripened, unlike the gold varieties left on the vines to ripen.

In late June, images of another mystery bird circulated on the local email networks, with members guessing at its identification: Murray Smith identified it as an Alexandrine Parrot. Apparently it associated with Pukeko!

Bellbirds have been observed feeding on various exotic species in the winter months in Kawerau. John Brierley reported via Birding-NZ that "Bellbirds were feeding on the Bottlebrush flowers (*Callistemon*) and in the single *Camellia* flowers; also the odd remaining flowers on a large *Banksia integrifolia*. One arrived to enjoy the apple we'd put out for the Silvereyes right by our lounge window. Until the heavy frosts this week they were also enjoying the *Cestrum newellii* flowers. Until recently they have also been enjoying the fruit on our neighbour's Cherry Guava (*Psidium*). Once the *Chaenomeles japonica* comes into flower in the next couple of weeks they will spend a lot of time on that, followed by the succession of different *Prunus* we have in our garden. And then their favourite *Stachyurus* bush will come into flower". An impressive suite of species for fellow birdwatchers to consider when planting, thanks John!

Following on from the 'honeyeaters and fruit' equation, John Groom reported Tui with their heads 'buried in persimmon', for a period of the day, in July at Matata. He noted that the birds did not penetrate the skin, but took advantage of other species' sharper weapons, such as Silvereyes (about 50 in the trees), Blackbirds and Starlings.

PAUL CUMING

## Taranaki

With the AGM over, we attended the June meeting with a sigh of relief. Congratulations and thanks were offered to all those who helped, and from the feedback we received from attendees we felt we had done a good job and gave ourselves a pat on the back. We discussed what had and what had not gone successfully and will pass on what we learnt to the conveners of the next AGM. A suggestion that we take up where the Hartys left off was not so enthusiastically received.

Beach patrols for the month produced a nil result with no seabirds being found. From the members reports Ron Lambert told us of a New Zealand Pigeon scoffing the ripening guavas from his tree; a first record from his residence. Margaret Molloy reported a Redpoll in her inner city garden. Barry Hartley counted 32 Australasian Shovelers at Inglewood oxidation ponds.

Reports of a Pipit seen on the left side of the Waiongana stream by David Lawrie and Gwenda Pulham as they meandered home from the AGM is yet to be verified. The monthly field trip was cancelled due to inclement weather.

During the July meeting the annual election of officers happened in the fastest time ever, the three incumbents were returned to their respective positions one without even being at the meeting. We were all urged to take part in the Backyard Bird Survey, and most of us who are home for periods of an hour or more willingly participated.

The topic for the evening was Barry Hartley's 2nd New Zealand record of a Grey-backed Tern. Barry produced his photos and some information on distribution and abundance. David Medway followed up by explaining how the Rare Bird Committee worked through the process of reaching a decision. As no decision could be reached as to whether it was a Grey-backed or Bridled the photos and descriptions were sent to an overseas expert who helped them reach an unanimous decision. Members were reminded to inspect tern flocks closely, especially those birds around the edges.

The July field trip was a tour of several North Taranaki locations, where at Urenui six Tui were seen harassing three Bellbirds trying to feed in coastal *Banksias*.

Kris Grabow from the Taranaki Kiwi Trust was the guest speaker at our August meeting. She spoke to us about her involvement with the Kiwi Aversion Dog training, how it came about, how the course is run and the ongoing training. The course appears to be quite successful and members agreed it was far better than doing nothing. Beach patrols finally yielded some pelagic birds but nothing unexpected.

August's field trip took place on a fine winter's morning and was a gentle stroll around one of our favourite locations, Barrett lagoon. This is an area of diverse habitat close to New Plymouth. Thirty-five different species of bird were recorded, the highlight being a Bellbird – a rarity this close to town. It was suggested by David Medway at the start of the walk that all birds be identified by their Latin names. Modesty prevents me from reporting who got the most correct.

PETER FRYER

## Wairarapa

Ian Armitage, Wellington RR spoke at our June meeting on his visit to the Auckland and Campbell Islands. He covered the history, flora and fauna of these islands, illustrating his personal journey with some superb photography, which enabled us to 'virtually travel' with him to this remote area.

Our former RR, Miles King, visited Australia and submitted a birding report on his travels. He especially described his observations of Black Kites, which confirmed to us that our excitement regarding the possible presence of Black Kites in the Greytown area might have been misplaced. However, we continue to keep an open mind and open eyes on this matter.

In lieu of winter field trips we completed the Winter Survey of Wairarapa River Mouths, in conjunction with DoC. During the course of this survey, members covered over 4,500 km by road, 30 km by boat, as well as considerable distances on foot. In all, nine members contributed 292 man-hours to the survey. In addition, members were helped by two kind people with their boats. We were grateful to all those who took part in the survey, especially long-time members, Colin Scadden and Miles King, who organised the venture.

In July member Dr Neil Hayes spoke on his work conserving Brown Teal. He formed the Brown Teal Conservation Trust in 2004. Neil came to New Zealand from UK in 1962 and his birding journey progressed from hunter to conservationist. This is currently expressed in his own property, 'Gretel Lagoons'.

The Big Bird Cup Quiz night took place at the August meeting. Tenick Dennison inaugurated this event four years ago. It was initially a one-off event, but it was so successful that it has become an annual fixture. The 2007 quizmaster Chris Day, Educational Officer at Mt Bruce/Pukaha Wildlife Centre, compiled a very comprehensive and varied quiz using pictures, bird-calls, written answers, eggs, and charades. South Wairarapa defeated North Wairarapa by a tie-breaker point. The annual score is now two-all.

On August 14th we hosted a visit from OSNZ President, Richard Holdaway. He briefly outlined some of the directions for OSNZ in the future, and also presented an illustrated lecture on some aspects of his work as a palaeobiologist, especially in relation to avian fauna. It was also an excellent opportunity for members to meet their President, and to have some informal discussion with him. For this, we were most grateful to Richard.

BARBARA LOVATT

## Wellington

Graeme Taylor gave us an update in July on three seabird projects: the Taiko and Chatham Petrel recovery work, and a study of four species on two small islands at Bethells Beach. Seabirds suffer from the same threats as land birds in terms of mammalian predators and habitat loss, with added risks associated with fisheries at sea. Of New Zealand's 85 species of seabird, 35 are endemic and 52 are at risk of extinction. This includes three species with less than 150 individuals: the New Zealand Fairy Tern, the Chatham Island Taiko, and the Codfish Island form of the South Georgian Diving Petrel.

The news isn't all bad. Eradication of introduced mammals, as on Campbell and other islands, predator-proof enclosures and translocation are helping seabird species recover, whilst new technology is increasing our understanding of where these birds go at sea and what they get up to. Graeme illustrated these points with the Chatham Island Taiko and Chatham Petrel. Current Taiko numbers are around 120, with 15 breeding pairs. They are benefiting from intensive rat trapping. A predator proof fence has been built around a 4 ha site at Sweetwater, which is about 0.5 km from the coast. Eight chicks were transferred there in April 2007.

Chatham Petrel numbers are a little healthier, at about 1,000 with about 150 breeding pairs. Prior to current work with the species their only remaining breeding site was on Rangatira/South East Island. There are 1-2 million seabird burrows on this island, about 750,000-1 million storm petrels, and 300-400,000 Broad Billed Prions. The prions disrupt about 90% of Chatham Petrel breeding attempts. The Petrels benefit from intensive management, with artificial burrows reserved for them by being gated in winter then sealed off with neoprene shutters in summer, but such intensive management was not seen as a viable long term solution. Pycroft's Petrels were used as 'guinea pigs' to develop feeding and handling techniques for translocation. Chicks of Pycroft's Petrels were transferred to Cuvier Island in the 2001-3 seasons, the first birds returned in 2005 and breeding has been confirmed. Using these methods 200 Chatham Petrel chicks were transferred to a fenced area on Pitt Island in 2002-5. Adults returned in 2005 and breeding was confirmed this year. Chicks will be transferred to the Sweetwater site in 2008.

Finally Graeme showed us some results from a long-term monitoring project on two small islands off Bethell's Beach. Four species of seabird breed there: Grey-faced and Common Diving Petrels, and Sooty and Flesh-footed Shearwaters. Each species is showing different trends over time. These trends can be related to various factors affecting the birds on land and at sea. Such long-term monitoring of relatively common birds provides valuable baseline data, but is unusual in the current funding system. This was a fascinating talk about some of our lesser-known birds, where there is much work still to be done.

Our August speaker was David Houston of DoC. David's talk gave us a fascinating insight into the feeding ecology of three species of penguin: Blue, Snares Crested and Yellow-eyed Penguins. The three species have different feeding strategies. Blue Penguins are shallow inshore feeders, Snares Crested Penguins mid-water offshore feeders, and Yellow-eyed Penguins bottom inshore feeders. Studies on Blue Penguins investigated the causes of huge differences in breeding success between birds in Oamaru, which can raise 2.1 chicks per pair per year, and birds on Motuara Island in the Marlborough Sounds which struggle to rear 0.5 chicks/pair/year. Feeding trips are a mixture of lengths, some involving total travelling distances of 75 km. The difference is in the depth of water around the sites and as a result the depth of dives the birds must make to find their food. Around Oamaru there is a lot of relatively shallow (approximately 20 m deep) water, and most dives are to up to 10 m. Near Motuara the water is deeper and most dives are to around 20 m, taking up more energy.

Snares Crested Penguins show distinct differences in behaviour between male and female birds. Males head off east, to a convergence of currents over an undersea escarpment. When they return to relieve their mates the females head off north-north-east to a totally different part of the sea. Satellite imagery, which measures sea surface colours, shows how much chlorophyll there is in the ocean, which is a measure of how much phytoplankton is in the water. Phytoplankton feeds zooplankton which feeds fish which feed penguins. The penguins somehow know which area of the sea is best for feeding at different times of the season. This availability of two distinct food sources could account for why Snares Crested Penguins are holding their numbers whilst other crested penguins are in decline.

Yellow-eyed Penguins have been studied at two sites: Otago Peninsula and Stewart Island. The birds go out from Otago Peninsula around 25 km from shore, in trips totalling up to 75 km total travelling and 75% of dives are to the sea bottom. At first the trip paths look random, but then a series of remarkably straight parallel lines can be seen. Birds return to the same lines, within the limit of accuracy of the GPS loggers (about 5 m) on different days, and even in successive seasons. These lines average 3.4 km long and the longest was 9 km! It is known that Yellow-eyed Penguins use visual cues when returning to breeding sites, but just what they are following in the sea is a mystery. No known natural feature is that straight over such long distances. The most likely explanation is that the birds are following trawl and/or dredge lines. Such disturbances on the sea floor can cause local mini-ecosystems where fish can find shelter, and scavengers

## Regional Roundup



and opportunist feeders follow. The main problem with this theory is that the area hasn't been trawled for many years.

The estimated population of Yellow-eyed Penguins on Stewart Island was 4-600 pairs, but a recent census found only about 150 pairs, mostly on offshore islands. For once predators are not to blame. Studies showed that chicks on Stewart Island were starving to death. Paradoxically Stewart Island birds are on average 1 kg heavier than Codfish Island birds but about 60% of their chicks are starving to death. Comparison of feeding trips showed the Codfish birds going about 24 km offshore into Foveaux Strait, but the Stewart Island birds only about 11 km offshore. The Stewart Island birds are foraging to a large extent in oyster beds which have been dredged. The current theory is that the Stewart Island birds are finding plenty of food in the oyster beds but it isn't suitable for growing youngsters. It's as if the parents are bringing home burgers instead of milk.

David finished with some comments on our gaps in knowledge. As the GPS loggers cost about \$6,000 each, have limited battery life in the Southern Ocean, and are attached to the bird's feathers, all of these studies cover 2-3 week periods in the lives of breeding birds which return to shore allowing recovery of the loggers. Nothing is known of juvenile birds' movements and feeding after fledging, nor that of adults out of the breeding season.

The most notable bird sightings in the Wellington region in recent months have been the Shore Plovers from Mana Island, regularly turning up at a couple of mainland sites. We hope that they learn quickly how to avoid dogs, cats, stoats etc.

ANDY FALSHAW

## Nelson

The recent launch of the New Zealand Bird Atlas in Wellington was attended by some of our members, who described it as a wonderful event and a well-justified celebration.

In late May Steve Wood received a report of a possible Brown Falcon along the cliff tops between Cape Farewell and Wharariki Beach. The bird had been seen by a keen hunter and farmer familiar with the New Zealand Falcon but thought this bird was larger and browner, and seen in a good light. Steve spent a day in the locality but nothing further was seen.

Monthly meetings are well attended at our new venue. In June Rob Schuckard did a PowerPoint presentation on the amazing progress of the bar-tailed godwits Z0 and Z5, two of the birds from Golden Bay with satellite tracking devices. Also featured was a pictorial record of the capture sites and the people assisting in the Bar-tailed Godwit banding scheme from Awarua to Parengarenga.

In July, Rob did a workshop on the moult of Australasian Gannets. Six pairs of gannet wings from Farewell Spit found in the winter of 2006 were used to show the stepwise descendant/Staffelmauser moult.

At the August meeting David Melville gave a much awaited account of his field work in Alaska during May. The sheer scale and size of the breeding grounds of the Bar-tailed Godwit creates a huge logistical challenge to observe them nesting. Along with some stunning pictures of Arctic migrants, he also captured the facial expressions of team members during successful and failed searches. We look forward to part two of his Alaskan work.

In early August some Nelson and Golden Bay OSNZ members were part of a team helping DoC with the annual tree planting programme on Stephens Island. Eleven days were spent on the island, a rare opportunity and privilege to visit this unique and historic spot. Pauline Samways described the island as a wonderful place with many rare plants and animals of interest, not least Tuatara and weta, the latter turning up in unwelcome places indoors!

There was time available to do some observations on the Fairy Prions which were returning to sort out nesting burrows and socialise. Stormy nights with north-west winds are ideal for these birds, and this type of weather occurred during our stay, prompting the resident ranger to organise a capture of individuals of this species to check for any banded in a relocation study. A sweep up the hillside nesting site with people spaced two metres apart recovered 81 Fairy Prions in four sweeps. Birds on grassy areas were easy to pick up but those under a bush or flax plant often proved difficult. Nineteen banded birds were recorded; one bird of particular interest had been translocated to Mana Island and had not been seen for a while.

Some Fairy Prion chicks had been hand-fed until fledged then transferred to Mana Island in the hope that they would return there to breed. It is early days yet to determine if many of them are going to make Mana Island home, or return to the island of their birth.

The accommodation in an ex-lighthouse keeper's home proved a noisy experience with Fairy Prions making raucous screeching calls to each



# Regional Roundup



other, plus crash-landing on the roof or into a widow or wall. Burrows under the house that were occupied by Tuatara and Fairy Prions added to the noise, making sleep difficult at times. At least the noises in the night were not possums or other vermin.

Wrybill numbers increased in early August as the southern migration began. At Bells Island shellbank Willie Cook recorded two flocks totalling about 95 birds at high tide on 11th August. A few days later close to this site he saw a group of 200 Spur-winged Plovers, an unusually large number at this time of the year.

David Melville recorded 37 Black-fronted Terns in Nelson Haven on 3rd August. Recently seen on a pond bordering the coastal highway into Motueka near the Moutere Inlet were 27 New Zealand Scaup, a pair of Australasian Shovelers and a single White Heron.

Alec Milne in Golden Bay reported that the local bird rescue team have recently successfully released a New Zealand Falcon that suffered nerve damage following impact with a window. The bird was shocked and unable to perch and was nursed in this state for over a week before it began to perch and became able to feed itself. It was with great pleasure when it was released a week later and watched flying onto a large Rata tree below the Pohara cliffs. It is the first falcon the bird rescue team have received in several years of bird-rescue work.

Peter Gaze advises that opportunities are coming up for OSNZ members to work with DoC in a study of Black-fronted Terns on the Wairau River. First a river survey will be organised by the Marlborough region of OSNZ in early October, and later a chance to help with direct observations on nesting birds to better identify the food being fed to the chicks.

DON COOPER

## Canterbury

Winter was short and sharp in Canterbury. Very cold and wet for a few weeks near the coast and just very cold inland with a return to the hoar frosts that used to be the norm here. Spring set in halfway through August and migratory waders started appearing very early in September. Nesting is well underway for many species.

There have only been six Cattle Egrets regularly reported this season, though it is getting hard to keep watch around dairy herds as they become omnipresent in the Canterbury landscape. Australasian Crested Grebe numbers at Lake Forsyth this winter were lower than previous years, only 140 or so, compared to over 200 a couple of years ago. However, pairs at Lake Ellesmere continue to show interest in permanent habitation, so perhaps many birds over-wintered on that lake too, where they are much harder to count.

Counting at the Ashburton Lakes was in magical winter weather with 'singing ice' at some of the lakes and 31 Australasian Crested Grebes on Lake Heron. Coot numbers were down at only 181, but numbers of this species seem to fluctuate widely on the lakes from year to year.

The Winter Wader Count produced little out of the ordinary, apart from a Marsh Sandpiper at Embankment Road and an Australasian Bittern at Ataahua on the North side of Kaituna Lagoon. The Marsh Sandpiper then disappeared all through winter to reappear in August at Jarvis Road, where it is currently happily residing with Pied Stilts.

An August trip to survey some bush reserves on Banks Peninsula, part of an ongoing regional project, gave us a great day out with scarcely an 'alien' species at the tree farm, 'Kotare Vale' in the Puaha Valley near Little River. Mount Fitzgerald Reserve was harder to access and we need another day to search out its best features.

Evening meetings have been well attended, producing turn-outs of 20-30, and ranged from talks about Haiti/Dominican Republic (Paul Scofield) and Sabah (Tony Crocker), both nice warm places to dream about in our winter temperatures, to an evil quiz night devised and compered by Nick Allen. This was a walk-over for the Presidents 11, no actually nine but you get my drift....

A New Zealand Falcon has taken up residence in the Christchurch suburbs, eating feral pigeons from the Redcliffs and Heathcote areas and has been seen elsewhere around the hills at Governors Bay. One regular visitor at Travis Swamp, the Glossy Ibis, is still present now decked out in breeding tackle and looking quite magnificent. It has been joined by an early summer migrant, a Pectoral Sandpiper. This site is becoming quite exceptional for waders and water birds.

JAN WALKER

## Otago

Everyone here is very pleased that Bruce McKinlay has been co-opted onto the OSNZ Council; he has years of experience with bird conservation and has actively contributed to many projects with the Otago Branch over the years.

The topics of our Indoor Meetings over the winter months have been great draw-cards as there have been record attendances despite the frosty nights. At the May meeting we were entranced by hearing of the travels and exploits of Graeme Loh, who this time had been to Svalbard, which is near the Arctic Circle. Graeme felt that there was much evidence of global warming with the huge glaciers having retreated several kilometres and marked reductions in the depth of ice. Black-legged Kittiwakes had had an unsuccessful breeding season, and this seems to be due to a lack of food because of the absence of a warm/cold stratification of the seawater. The sea cliffs harbour hundreds of thousands of Guillemots and Kittiwakes, and thousands of Atlantic Puffins and Little Auks. Graeme's jobs were to locate the burrows of Little Auks and Puffins, count the Kittiwakes and to capture and band young Guillemots by abseiling the cliffs and capturing them with a noose on the end of a pole. The talk was illustrated with fantastic shots of the birds and scenery and a tape of the sounds from these breeding birds.

The next topic was Fernbirds, with Bruce McKinlay reporting on his studies of them in the Dunedin area. Bruce is obviously a keen observer and gave us insight into the habitat that is preferred by these birds, which is dense and damp with emergent vegetation, and can be from sea level to 1,000 m. The South Island Fernbird has not recently been seen much further north than Dunedin so is one of our special birds, although recently Bruce has had reports of birds near Herbert. It will be interesting to see what the new Atlas shows. Members added their own sightings of Fernbirds and highlighted the natural establishment of nine pairs at Okia Reserve on the Otago Peninsula. This prompted some lively discussion of how these supposedly poor fliers could get there.

Our August meeting gave us new insights into the birds we all know around Dunedin. Yolanda van Heezik, an urban ecologist, has studied what factors of the urban environment determine relative abundance and variety of native bush birds. Not surprisingly older residential areas with larger gardens and trees had 25-30 species and the highest number of native bush birds with six species dominating: Silvereye, Bellbird, New Zealand Pigeon, Tui, Fantail and Brown creeper. Much discussion ensued about whether current town planning, which seems to eliminate gardens and trees, might lead to Dunedin losing its title of 'Wildlife capital of New Zealand'. Yolanda also presented some startling estimates of cat predation by extrapolating from data obtained from the prey caught by 180 cats in her study to all the cats in Dunedin: 18,000 Silvereyes caught per year!

The predator-proof fence around the Orokonui Ecosanctuary has now been completed, encompassing about 300 ha of regenerating bush, mainly kanaka at present, and some pines and eucalyptus. Derek Onley coordinated a huge effort to survey the numbers of birds present in the reserve before the fence; this will provide data to compare with numbers after the predators have been removed. Derek reported on this study at the July meeting. Volunteers, including some OSNZ members, did five minute counts, with most birds identified by call, along several transects (15-20 stations/transect every two weeks for nearly a year making 479 counts in all!). Native birds currently in the reserve are Brown Creeper, Bellbird, Grey Warbler, Tui, New Zealand Pigeon, Rifleman, Silvereye and South Island Tomtit.

The winter wader count was completed on a perfect, sunny, calm winter morning with good views of South Island Pied Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Banded Dotterels, Pied Stilts and Paradise Shelducks. A juvenile Australasian Crested Grebe was seen for several days in July at the Kaikorai Estuary, possibly a first for the area, and was photographed by Paul Davey before snow started falling. Also in July there was a Leopard Seal in the Otago Harbour for two weeks. It was seen dining on shags and interestingly they were all the black morph of both Little and Stewart Island Shags. A Royal Spoonbill was seen at the Hawkesbury Lagoon, just north of Dunedin in August. It has been decided that our next Otago Regional Project will be a seasonal survey of this lagoon.

MARY THOMPSON

## Personnel

- Murray Jeffries has stepped down as Hawke's Bay RR after many years of being in charge there. The new RR for the region is Helen Andrews, 254 Mangatahi Rd, RD1, Hastings 4171. Her phone number is (06) 874 9426 and email helenandrews@xtra.co.nz. Many thanks to Murray for his long service to the Society and to Helen for taking up the reins.
- The Atlas Convenor, Chris Robertson has a new email address: [cjrr@wildpress.org](mailto:cjrr@wildpress.org)
- Please note other minor changes by referring to the list of office-holders printed elsewhere in this issue of *Southern Bird*.



# Regional Reps and 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, mobile 021 271 2527. Email aucklandosnz@gmail.com

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

Dai Morgan, 78 Grey Street, Cambridge. Ph (07) 823 1990. Email d.k.morgan@massey.ac.nz

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

Beach Patrols and Cambridge Lake census, Hugh Clifford ph (07) 855 3751. Hamilton Lake Census, Barry Friend ph (07) 843 6729. Forest Lake Census, Brian Challinor ph (07) 855 2561. Kakepuku Bird Counts and West Coast Harbour Censuses, Laurie Hoverd ph (07) 871 8071. Bird Sightings, Dai Morgan

## Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Tim Barnard, 23 Tennyson Drive, Owata, Rotorua. Ph (07) 345 3433. Email tim.barnard@xtra.co.nz

## Gisborne/Wairoa

RR's position vacant.

## Hawke's Bay

Helen Andrews, 254 Mangatahi Rd, RD1, Hastings 4171. Ph (06) 874 9426. Email helenandrews@xtra.co.nz

Indoor meetings are held on an irregular basis, but field trips are organised regularly. Please contact Helen Andrews 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 4500. Ph (06) 343 9992. Email teasdale.family@clear.net.nz

Evening meetings – on hold at present.

## 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

Barbara Lovatt, 4 Clara Anne Grove, Greytown. Ph (06) 304 9948. Email barbara.lovatt@slingshot.co.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, Head Office of DoC, 18-32 Manners Street, Wellington, meet 7.30 pm for a 7:45 pm start, ph. Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470.

East Harbour Regional Park bird survey, Reg Cotter (04) 568 6960. Fluttering Shearwater chick transfers, Colin Miskelly (04) 479 1662. Beach patrols, Sharon Alderson (04) 298 3707. Mana Island robins & sooty shearwaters, Geoff de Lisle (04) 527 0929. Mist-netting and passerine banding, Peter Reese (04) 387 7387. Rock pigeon nesting project, Ralph Powlesland (04) 386 3323.

## 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 Solander/Aurora Fisheries Board Room. The Solander/Aurora building is on the right hand side of Cross Street, just beyond Dickson's Boat Repair and more or less opposite the 'red shed' - the Tasman Bay Cruising Club, 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

Jan Walker, 305 Kennedys Bush Road, Halswell, Christchurch. Ph (03) 322 7187. Email shesagreen@gmail.com

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 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.



