



Southern *Bird*

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Another Chance for
Hutton's Shearwater

Hihi - A Success in
Mainland Forests?



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QUOTATION

*Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.*

*Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest...*

To a Skylark by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

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COVER PHOTOS

*Front cover: Black-fronted Tern
Back cover: Pied Oystercatcher
Both photographs by Rebecca Bowater FPSNZ,
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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.

Publisher

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Email: osnzeo@slingshot.co.nz • Website: www.osnz.org.nz
Edited by Nick Allen, 11 Seagrave Place, Ilam, Christchurch 8041 • Tel (03) 358 5994 • Fax (03) 358 5997 • Email nick_allen@extra.co.nz

FREE ATLAS FOR NEW MEMBERS!!!

The Society is extending the presentation of a free copy of the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004* to each new member joining OSNZ while stocks last. In addition, all new members will receive a copy of the index to *Notornis, Fifty Years of Bird Study in New Zealand 1939-1989*. Pass the word to people who maybe haven't got around to joining the Society yet that now is a very good time to do so. Not only do they obtain membership of the premier society for those with an interest in birds and ornithology in New Zealand and the South Pacific but they will also receive these two essential books on New Zealand ornithology. The atlas is an impressive and weighty book that which will be a delight for anyone with even a small interest in New Zealand's birds.

For details of how to join the OSNZ:

- Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz and download a membership form.
- Contact the Society's membership secretary, Yvonne Mackenzie at P.O. Box 29-532, Fendalton, Christchurch 8540, New Zealand. Email yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com
- Contact your local regional representative – contact details are on the inside back cover of this issue of *Southern Bird*.



25TH IOC – BRAZIL 2010

The 25th International Ornithological Congress (25th IOC) will take place in Campos do Jordão, Brazil from the 22nd to 28th of August 2010. This is the first time that the IOC is being held in a Latin

American country. More than 1,500 participants are expected to come from all over the world and the congress will present an ideal opportunity to meet fellow ornithologists and visit a mega-diverse country. The deadline for submitting proposals for Plenary speakers and Symposia is June 1st. More details can be found at www.i-o-c.org. The Local Committee looks forward to seeing many of our New Zealand colleagues in Campos do Jordão!



AOC 2009

The fifth biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held at Armidale, New South Wales from 30th November to 4th December 2009 inclusive. The Conference will consist of four days of spoken and written presentations with Wednesday 2nd December given over to local tours. The Conference is presented jointly by Birds Australia and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Contact Andrew Ley: aley@northnet.com.au

BOOK DONATIONS

Over the past few months the Society has been fortunate to receive two donations of members' book collections. Some of the books received have gone into the Society library holding at Auckland Museum (from which members are able to borrow them). Others, where the Society already possesses a copy, will be auctioned off, and some items will be sold or given away. The Society is very grateful for such donations, and wishes to thank Alan MacDonald and the family of the late Jim Moore. Jim's Pacific Island records and research reports will be integrated into the Society archive.

ANNUAL REPORT ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2008-2009

This report was presented on behalf of the Council to the 70th Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand held in Orewa on 30th May 2009.

PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION

The elected president of the Society, Richard Holdaway, tendered his resignation at the end of the Council meeting in October. Richard's decision to resign was based on the strain that the Society's activities were placing on him and his family. His circumstances had substantially changed from the time when he was elected to the position and the increased work load was affecting his health and his family life.

The work load also meant that he was not able to provide the outcomes for the Society at the levels for which he strives in his pursuits.

It is therefore with some regret that I am presenting the report today as I believe that Richard still had a lot to offer Council and the Society.

COUNCIL

Council met formally twice in the year under review, with the first meeting being in Kaikoura on the 30th May 2008 and secondly in Christchurch on the 18th October 2008. A further meeting will be held on the 29th May 2009 and I can give a verbal update of that meeting if required.

Much of the day to day business of Council is run via email exchanges and this means that Council can react relatively quickly to issues as they arise but major items are kept for meetings where a full debate can be held and the various points of views can be discussed.

COUNCIL ELECTION

With the resignation of the president during this current year and with several positions due for re-election there has been a reshuffling of roles. Unfortunately, again there were not sufficient nominations to warrant an election, but as advised in the March Southern Bird the following positions have been filled unopposed. The only nomination for President was David Lawrie, with the nomination for Vice President being Bruce McKinlay. The Treasurers position has been filled by Paul Garner-Richards. Keith Owen from Rotorua has also been elected to fill one of the vacancies on Council. Because of the reshuffling above there is still a vacancy on Council. It is Council's desire to co-opt someone to fill this position during the year.

We welcome Paul and Keith to the Council and look forward to their input over the coming years.

MARK NEE'S RETIREMENT

Mark was co-opted onto Council in 1991 to fill the position of Treasurer, a position which he has held ever since. At the time that Mark accepted the role there had been a series of difficult times for the Society as a string of treasurer's had been utilised with mixed results and systems had become rather disorganised.

Mark with his qualifications was able to quickly re-establish order from the chaos and laid the base for the Society to expand and build its capabilities through the 18 year period that he held that position.

The Society owes a great debt to Mark and we hope that he is now able to finally enjoy his retirement.

MEMBERSHIP

This past year has seen a further growth in membership, which has now reached 1,200 and is heading towards the strategic plan goal of 1,400 members. However, this growth is no reason for complacency as it is essential that these new members are made welcome and that the Society's activities provide sufficient stimulus to retain them into the future. With the membership database that has been established by previous Membership Secretary Roger Sharp and maintained by Yvonne Mackenzie it is now possible for Regional Representatives to be kept informed of changing membership in each region.

I would request that members take any opportunity to promote the Society, either by displays or distributing brochures at suitable events.

NOTORNIS

Jim Briskie has now settled into his role as editor. At the October 2008 Council meeting a schedule was agreed with the editors to enable the delayed issues to be distributed as quickly as possible to members. This schedule would see the last two missing copies posted to members at about the time of the Annual General Meeting, which would then see the publications up to date.

We acknowledge the efforts that Jim has provided in producing editions at twice the normal rate at a time when he was settling into the role. Richard's efforts in providing training and assistance was a great help at the time. It should also be noted that Richard introduced desk-top publishing technology so that the editor now produces the journal ready to print. This has resulted in significant time and cost savings for each issue.

The Council apologises for allowing the situation of this back log to occur. Hopefully the procedures that we have now in place will ensure that this level of delay does not occur in the future. However, the membership also needs to be aware that the editor's role is a voluntary position and that it is still a very time consuming process, particularly when very high standards are expected and desired.

While the editor has advised that he has sufficient copy for several more issues I would urge members to submit articles, as I am aware that there are many projects and interesting research being done that would benefit from publication. If members require assistance in preparing papers they should contact the Secretary, who is able to provide useful contacts for mentoring and guidance.

SOUTHERN BIRD

During the difficulties with the Notornis schedule *Southern Bird* has continued to be distributed in close proximity to the standard delivery dates. This is due to the work of Nick Allen and Council expresses their appreciation for the excellent publication that Nick produces on a regular basis. However, I am sure that Nick would appreciate members providing copy and photographs that can be utilised in future

editions to reduce the amount of time that it takes to produce each edition.

NEW ZEALAND BIRD REPORT

The first edition of the *New Zealand Bird Report* covering the 2007 year is in its final stages of preparation. Unfortunately Ian Saville, who was undertaking the preliminary work on this copy as reported at the last Annual General Meeting, had to withdraw from the project for family reasons. Derek Onley kindly offered his services to compile this document subject to assistance from Council. Bruce McKinlay and David Melville have been assisting Derek in obtaining the necessary copy.

What has been discovered, however, is that several regions have not been retaining their regional records and the quality of the material from some other regions is of a variable standard. Council is producing new guidelines to assist regional recorders, as the material to be provided for *New Zealand Bird Report* is of a slightly different format to that utilised for classified summarised notes. In many ways the role of regional recorder now assumes a great deal more importance, as they are expected to not only collect and compile the regional records but also place them in some context to give them meaning to people from other regions.

Each *New Zealand Bird Report* will, in the future, become an important document, as it is the repository of sightings from individual members and will be useful as a historical account. It will also contain the annual reports from Society scheme convenors.

CHECK LIST

The compiling of the new check list has been completed, and Council has now entered into a contract for printing with Te Papa Press in Wellington. This has been a monumental task completed by convenor Brian Gill and the check list committee, and the Society thanks him and his team for their efforts over a number of years.

The contract negotiated with Te Papa Press by Bruce McKinlay on behalf of the Council contains provisions for a discounted price to members, and the current schedule is that the document will be available early in 2010.

STATE OF NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS 2008

This document has now been printed with the intention that it will be launched during the Annual General Meeting weekend and distributed to members with the June mailout. This document is based around the conservation of birds on the mainland and has a number of papers describing research and on-the-ground activities undertaken to protect existing bird populations, in either fenced or unfenced areas of the mainland.

Many of the papers in this document have been written by officers of the Department of Conservation, various universities and

ANNUAL REPORT

Landcare Research. The document provides a snapshot of the tools and techniques that are being utilised, but in all the case studies it highlights the work that is being done by very dedicated individuals and organisations.

As in the past this document has been brought together by Kerry-Jane Wilson who arranged for all the various individuals to prepare the papers. This in itself is a major task and we thank Kerry-Jane for her efforts. The final document was then edited by Richard Holdaway to turn the individual papers into a single readable document.

This document is a means of the Society fulfilling its constitutional mandate to provide scientifically sound information relating to New Zealand birds. It will be provided to Members of Parliament and other agencies that have an interest in birds and their management.

EBIRD

While many members are now utilising the eBird recording scheme it is clear that many others are not yet availing themselves of the opportunity to have their records permanently archived.

Council is arranging for further training opportunities to be available to assist people to enter data, because the more data that is in the system the better the quality of the information that it provides.

If regions require assistance in training members do not hesitate to contact the Secretary so that help can be arranged.

Council is also mindful that not all members have access to computers, but there is still the opportunity for members to provide their sightings to regional recorders, because it is important that all sightings are collated to build into the bigger picture.

SOCIETY'S SCHEMES

I would like to remind members that the Society runs a number of schemes that provide opportunities for members to provide information that can then be amalgamated with other members' sightings to provide useful outputs.

BEACH PATROL

The most utilised scheme at the present time is the beach patrol scheme with Lloyd Esler as the convenor. We thank Lloyd for undertaking this project and organising beach patrollers around the country to have their cards submitted to him in a timely fashion. The preliminary total for the year is 355 cards, covering 2,235 km with 3,798 birds.

Ian Armitage from Wellington is undertaking an analysis of previous years records, and this is due for release some time in the next year.

MOULT SCHEME

Ben Bell, in providing the report on the moult scheme, has commented that members should be more active in providing moult scores on birds, either live or dead. Much can be learnt from a study of moult, but to be worthwhile any study needs to use large sample sizes and this is where an accumulation scheme such as this has its greatest benefit. Almost all the records in the

past year have come from Wellington members, which clearly creates a challenge to the rest of the country.

RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE

This year the committee received 62 submissions and had two rounds of voting making rulings on 41 records. A report on all records ruled upon by the committee for the two years to 31st July 2008 was published in September 2008 issue of *Southern Bird*. There have been some issues raised about the workings of this Committee, and Council is currently reviewing the way the committee is structured and organised. Members also need to be aware that to achieve any consensus in a group of experts who have very busy schedules takes time.

WADER DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

This project covering national wader counts and distribution over the five year period of 2003 to 2009 has finished its fieldwork phase. The final report is currently being prepared ready to submit to the Department of Conservation. This project was completed to satisfy a contract with the Department.

This involved a huge commitment of time from wader counters all over New Zealand. Our thanks also to Andrew Crossland and Adrian Riegen who acted as convenors, and to Adrian for presenting the consolidated data each year.

The Society now needs to consider the future of national wader counts as the time commitment in some regions is unsustainable.

NEST RECORDING SCHEME

Roger Sharp is the convenor of this scheme, which over the past year only had 18 new records. This appears to be a very poor return for a membership of 1,200, all of whom must come across nesting birds during any one year.

LIBRARY REPORT

Kathy Barrow is the honorary librarian for the collection which is housed at the Auckland Museum. The Ornithological Society books are incorporated into the Museum collection but are easily accessible.

Kathy has made a special plea for any unwanted field guides as she is attempting to gather a collection which members can utilise for future trips.

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

One of Council's disappointments during the year is that the projects and activity committee was not able to be instigated. This committee is to be introduced to provide guidance to regions for the promotion of activities and field courses to stimulate members' interests. This was considered to be a reasonably high priority by members in the membership survey undertaken two years ago.

Despite several calls for volunteers interest was minimal from the membership, and with the change of presidency during the year this matter was left to languish. However, Council now considers this to be one of the priority areas for

the coming year, and unless there are volunteers by the end of the Annual General Meeting weekend it is intended to actively conscript members. The work that Detlef and Carol Davies have completed in the Far North shows the value of having an organised programme of activities, and membership in that region has quadrupled in the past 12 months. Those initiatives now need to be promoted on a national basis and we are determined to make that happen during this current financial year.

APPRECIATION

Council wishes to acknowledge the valuable work that Regional Representatives undertake in promoting the work of the Society at a local level. These representatives are often the first point of contact for intending members and a good impression at that stage can make the difference between that person joining the Society or not. Regional Representatives also have the task of organising regional meetings, which is where the bulk of the Society's activities take place at a membership level. It would be impossible to run a national organisation without this regional input and I record here my appreciation of their efforts.

Ingrid Hutzler, the Society's Executive Officer, who has been the link between Council and Regional Representatives has clearly provided much assistance in helping them fulfil their role. Ingrid has carefully walked the fine line between taking over the work that is undertaken by volunteers while at the same time providing the assistance that makes their tasks easier. She has also been able to provide support and follow-ups of deadlines essential to scheme convenors, regional recorders and all the other parts of the organisation required for the efficient running of the Society.

The Society is also grateful to the members of the Rare Birds Committee, the Scientific Committee and the Check List Committee who provide countless hours of private time to enable the Society to meet its objectives and outcomes. I urge any members who have skills that could assist the Society in meeting any of its many functions to make themselves known, as it is only by sharing the workload that a voluntary organisation can survive and grow. Too often members are quick to criticise non-performing sections of their Society, while at the same time not offering to ease the tremendous workloads that some individuals carry.

As Acting President, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Council, who have melded into a team providing the support that has enabled me to take on the president's role, something which would not otherwise have been possible. The president's role is not something to which I have aspired, but is one that I take seriously as I am aware of the 70 years of history that precedes, and the very strong foundations that have been built in the past. However, I can do very little without the support of all the members and the various people that have been mentioned in this report. I also acknowledge the families of those involved as they also make sacrifices in lost family time.

I look forward to a positive future for the Society as we foster the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds.

DAVID LAWRIE

Acting President on behalf of Council



NOMINATIONS FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES 2010

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

Nominations for the RR of each region close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) on 31st July 2009.

The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society

from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must also be a member of the Society.

If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2010 year.

CHANGES IN COUNCIL

David Lawrie, President

David joined the Society in the mid 1960s after Ross McKenzie (a former president of the Society) discovered him stalking a flock of



oystercatchers with a pair of binoculars. Ross was at the time taking part in a Manukau Harbour census and, following permission from David's parents, took him for the rest of the day and nurtured his interest in birds for several years.

Ever since this encounter David has realised the value of nurturing people with an interest in birds and often gets as much enjoyment from showing birds to people as he does with actual observations.

David is a team player and has the desire to encourage others around him to all work for the common cause. This not only makes the tasks more enjoyable but it means that the work load is more evenly spread and much more can be achieved.

Unfortunately David's busy schedule, and running a mid sized business, means that he will not be able to travel around the regions as much as previous presidents have been able. However he is always contactable to provide advice and suggestions whenever possible.

Bruce McKinlay, Vice President

Bruce has been a member of the Ornithological Society since the 1980's and, while not always an active member, has participated in Harbour Studies on Otago Harbour and led an Atlas mapping project for Dunedin City.



Since joining Council in 2007 Bruce has focused on arranging a contract with Te Papa Press for a revised *Checklist of New Zealand Birds*; leading a scoping exercise to examine options and priorities for our web presence; and providing a context for ongoing Council discussions about wader counting and frameworks to pursue this.

As Vice President he sees his priorities as seeking to build capacity in the regions to undertake more bird studies, working with the Activities and Developments Committee to provide training opportunities for members, and continuing to be opinionated during Council email exchanges.

In his day job Bruce works in the Otago Conservancy of the Department of Conservation where he provides contributions

to Weka, skink, Yellow-eyed Penguin, albatross and insect conservation programmes.

Paul Garner-Richards, Treasurer

Paul has been a member of OSNZ since 2004, when he arrived in New Zealand from the UK. Having married into the Bell family he had little choice in joining the Society!

Paul has always had an interest in birds and conservation. He has worked with his wife Biz on several projects around the world, including a couple of rat eradication and the monitoring of black petrels on Great Barrier Island. He now hopes to take a more active role in Society activities.

He lives in Blenheim and works for Interislander as second mate aboard the *M.V. Kaitaki*.

Keith Owen, new Council member

Keith has been a member of OSNZ for about 40 years, a past regional rep of the former Volcanic Plateau Region, and is a current member of the Bay of Plenty Region. He co-ordinated the recent Bay of Plenty shorebird surveys and co-ordinated the five-yearly water bird census of the Rotorua Lakes (18 lakes) over the last 20 years.

Keith is employed as a technical support officer specialising in fauna and habitats, working out of the Department of Conservation's Bay of Plenty Conservancy Office in Rotorua. He has experience in a wide range of species conservation and management programmes, both nationally and more recently regionally. Keith hopes his experience and background will be of assistance to the society in achieving its objectives over the next period of its development.



Paul Garner-Richards with Black Petrel chick

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

Meritorious Service Awards were awarded to the following members at the AGM held at Orewa on 30th May 2009. The citations for which they were awarded are reproduced below.

RON NILSSON

Ron has been a stalwart of OSNZ Canterbury for well over a decade. A former Wildlife Service employee, Ron worked with many endangered species such as Kakapo, Black Stilt, and South Island Saddleback, helping develop methods to save these species when this was in its infancy in New Zealand. Today he still uses his skills to question/advise students and other speakers at indoor meetings. Ron has also taught bush birding skills to other Canterbury OSNZ members, especially on trips to search for the extinct South Island Kokako. With others Ron has responded to and elicited possible sightings and reports of calls/songs that may be from this species over a great many years, spending sometimes extended periods of his own time in remote bush. In addition to work directly with birds, Ron has also safely stored the Canterbury region's audiovisual equipment, bringing it to indoor meetings for about ten years.

SHEILA PETCH

We ask that this award be presented to Sheila Petch for her many years of utterly unflinching support and encouragement of new OSNZ members, young people, visitors and other birders, whose experience is often considerably less than her own. Through this support and encouragement she has, in selfless and unobtrusive ways, substantially furthered the aims of the Society in a manner that defies quantification.

Sheila has been a major contributor to regional and national projects/schemes, field trips and other activities from the 1980s to date. In the 1990s she was instrumental in establishing and running banding programmes in Canterbury, and guiding many fledgling banders.

From 1993 to 1996 she was Regional Representative for Canterbury. She also gave talks on WEA courses, washed oiled ducks, had her phone number as the regional contact for the Society, resurrected beach patrolling in Canterbury, and took birders into her home as unexpected visitors.

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, Peter Gaze, PO Box 834, Nelson 7040 or gaze@slingshot.co.nz

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR HUTTON'S SHEARWATER

My involvement with Hutton's Shearwater began with a chance conversation with a Kaikoura deerstalker, Ivan Hislop during Christmas 1964. On autumn deer shooting expeditions before World War II he had come across masses of burrows with muttonbird carcasses lying about at over 1,800 metres above sea level. I was intrigued by Hislop's story. I was an experienced mountaineer and deerstalker and I thought I should follow this up. I had hoped that these birds might be the mysterious, elusive Hutton's Shearwater, about which little was known. Expert ornithologists seemed to be unaware that shearwaters bred at such high altitudes in the Seaward Kaikoura mountains.

Two months later I swagged up the Kowhai River and confirmed the Hislop story. This huge colony was the long-sought breeding ground of Hutton's Shearwater. Over the next 10 years I found a further seven colonies in widely scattered, remote sites in the Kaikoura Ranges. The furthest colony sometimes took up to 15 hours of difficult climbing to reach. The nearest could be gained in just four hours, but was menaced by occasional rock falls.

Research found that stoats were having a significant effect on Hutton's Shearwater breeding success; killing adults, and eating eggs and chicks. Despite this predation shearwaters were surviving.

It is fortunate for the Hutton's Shearwater that their last two colonies are so high in the mountains. It is too cold a climate up there for rats to survive. Rats would be a disaster for the shearwaters. Years later when I revisited some of the breeding colonies, it was found that pigs had totally destroyed six of the eight breeding sites I had earlier described. This was alarming. It became apparent that the only reason the last two breeding sites remained was that they were guarded by a series of massive waterfalls that pigs were unable to penetrate. As these were the only remaining breeding sites in the world, action was urgently required. The Department of Conservation (DoC) and the University of Otago commissioned Richard Cuthbert to do a doctoral thesis and come up with a management plan to save the now endangered species. It was to be a critical point for the fate of the shearwaters.

Cuthbert recommended intensive control of pigs on all approaches to the breeding colonies. He also made a strong plea for a third colony to be established near the township of Kaikoura by translocating chicks to artificial burrows and feeding them until they fledged with the aim that they would 'imprint' on the site and thus think it was home when they returned to New Zealand from Australia to breed a few years later. Creating an artificial colony meant Hutton's Shearwater could be managed safely behind a predator-proof fence. DoC advised that they would finance four years of translocation of half-grown chicks from the mountain colony to man-made burrows built on land generously provided by Whale Watch on Kaikoura Peninsula. DoC appealed for help from volunteers to assist in feeding the chicks for several weeks; a massive undertaking. Unpaid conservationists came to Kaikoura from throughout New Zealand and overseas to successfully complete this project each March between 2005 and 2008.

There was some scepticism surrounding whether or not the translocated chicks would imprint on the artificial burrows and return to Kaikoura Peninsula. To the great joy, excitement and relief of all the scores of volunteers and DoC staff who toiled long hours on chick-feeding, between seven and 12 young translocated Hutton's Shearwaters returned to the artificial burrows in December 2008 proving that the translocations had succeeded.

DoC has been unable to finance the \$250,000 fence needed to protect the new colony. Therefore, last August at a DoC Hutton's Shearwater Recovery Group meeting, I offered to establish and settle a 'Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust'. Its purpose is to raise sufficient funds to pay for a full predator-proof fence around the new colony, and to fund other vital research to help protect the remaining two natural colonies in the Kaikoura Mountains. The Trust was duly incorporated in February 2009. Since then it has raised \$98,000 of the estimated \$250,000 needed for the fence and other related research projects, and it is optimistic that it can raise the remaining funding needed to ensure that a fence is in place prior to the arrival of birds back to the peninsula colony in November 2009. The Trust of 10 includes representation from Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, Whale Watch, DoC, the landowner of Hutton's Shearwater Stream (where one of the colonies is located), individuals with a passion for seeing this project succeed and myself.

In future years the Trust plans to raise money for satellite-tracking transmitters to be placed on a number of shearwaters. This will enable monitoring of the birds' movements around the Australian coastline during the winter months when the birds migrate there.

Funds are also required to assist with research into the breeding success of the two mountain colonies, and to make sure that stoats, pigs, goats, chamois and deer are controlled to avoid damage to the breeding colonies.

Hutton's Shearwater is an amazing species. In the dark they can fly at 45 km/h, steeply gaining altitude to reach their mountain burrows while carrying a heavy load of semi-digested fish for their chicks. On leaving their burrows to head back out to sea, about two hours before dawn, they have been tracked at speeds of up to 150 km/h. The birds gather food for their chicks as far south as Otago peninsula and often fish around Banks Peninsula bays. Kapiti Island and Cook Strait are common feeding areas in the north and they have been recorded near the Chatham Islands.

Research into feeding patterns using pressure gauges attached to the legs of these birds has shown they often dive 25 metres beneath the surface of the sea, and one shearwater has been recorded as deep as 36.6 m seeking fish.

These shearwaters have often become entangled and drowned in set nets along the Kaikoura coastline, with sometimes as many as 80 having perished in a single net. With the banning of set nets to protect Hector's Dolphins this hazard has now reduced.

Historically before the arrival of man in New Zealand, Hutton's Shearwaters would have nested in their millions. Their burrows may have been from sea level to the mountains, over a widespread area of the eastern South Island. Scientists have studied marine elements in South Island soils that could only have been brought onto the land by seabirds such as

Hutton's Shearwater. It would appear that they had been 'top-dressing' the eastern South Island for thousands of years, building up the fertility of our soils. The introduction of the Polynesian rat (kiore) would have wiped out any low altitude shearwater colonies.

Ngai Tahu has had a very close relationship with Hutton's Shearwater. Old diaries written in Maori describe muttonbirding expeditions into the Kowhai Valley. The survey vessel Acheron under the command of Captain John Lort Stokes with Mr J W Hamilton as surveyor undertook survey work along the east coast of the South Island between Wellington and Lyttelton in 1849. In Hamilton's diary entry of Tuesday 13th November he gave an account of the first ascent of Mt Tapuaeunuku by his party, and gives the following account of Maori taking muttonbirds; "I was afterwards informed at Kaikoura Peninsula by the Natives that Titi (muttonbird) breeds in large numbers on the Mountain (Tapuaeunuku), and that many persons have been killed hunting for them".

Follow-up investigations I have made in the last 45 years suggest that these muttonbirds were Hutton's Shearwaters. It was a lucky chance conversation in 1964 that saved Hutton's Shearwater from likely extinction. The combined efforts of enthusiastic volunteers and management agencies, firstly the former New Zealand Wildlife Service (Department of Internal Affairs), and later wonderful work by DoC, have given this iconic species a better future.

Anyone wanting to donate to this worthy cause to ensure the future of this endangered species can send a cheque to: Lindsay Rowe, Treasurer, Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust, PO Box 58, Kaikoura.

GEOFF HARROW

TUI AS MAGPIE

On Saturday 31st January 2009, at about 9 am on the Hokowhitu Golf Course in Palmerston North,



I and three others heard what appeared to be Australian Magpies producing the call they use when confronting an Australasian Harrier. We then observed a low-flying Harrier flying in and out of a small line of large pine trees. It was being challenged, not by Magpies, but a pair of Tui. The Tui were mimicking Magpies not just in their call but in their behaviour, flying at the hawk and darting away. The Harrier wasn't seemingly bothered, apart from an initial evasive turn, and just continued to fly through and around the line of pines. The pines were trimmed from their bases up to a considerable height up their trunks so that there was plenty of room at the base of the canopy.

The two Tui continued for three or four minutes making occasional seemingly ineffective forays and persisting with their Magpie-like calls before the Harrier went in one direction and they in another.

We were intrigued by the fact that the two Tui were mimicking Magpies both in call and in behaviour.

GUY BROADLEY

NATIONWIDE REQUEST FOR BITTERN SIGHTINGS

I am compiling a nationwide database of Bittern sightings for DoC and am keen to hear from anyone who has sightings. Both recent and historical records are important.

The basic information required is date, place (as exact as possible), number of birds, any habitat or behavioural observations, and time. If anyone has a large number of sightings that they would like to contribute, then I can email out an Excel spreadsheet for direct entry. Conversely if anyone has an Excel spreadsheet with Bittern sightings I am keen to merge it with the one I am working on.

Already people have sent in Google Earth images of locations where they have seen Bitterns. These images have proved useful and will be an important resource when analysing the habitats that Bitterns are using. If people have photographs of the habitats where they have seen Bitterns and would like to send these along with the sighting record, they will also be very valuable. In addition if anyone has a good photograph of an Australasian Bittern in its natural habitat to use for publicity for sighting requests, then please email it to me at full file size.

At present I have 1,200 records spanning the last 50 years and am working on a draft report which will be made available to OSNZ. All sightings are valuable as Bitterns are nationally and globally endangered. Their current status and threats to their survival are outlined below.

PETER LANGLANDS

Please email sightings to: planglands@doc.govt.nz

Or send to:

Peter Langlands
Bittern Project
PO Box 2819
Christchurch 8140
New Zealand

STATUS

The Australasian Bittern (*matuku*, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*) is a specialist swamp bird species present only in New Zealand, New Caledonia and southern Australia. It is classed as globally endangered by the IUCN and nationally endangered in New Zealand. The total population is thought to number less than 2,500 birds, with a significant proportion in New Zealand. Estimates here vary, and the likely number is less than 1,000 birds. In Australia, regional declines in reporting rates of >90% are thought to represent genuine population declines and in New Caledonia there have been just two recent records of booming males.

DECLINES

Australasian Bitterns still occur widely within New Zealand. However, declines of some wetland birds continued steadily following European settlement and are thought to be continuing. Declines in their range, including disappearance from the Chatham Islands (along with other wetland birds) were noted by many early authors. The pattern of decline is difficult to reconstruct because the bird is so secretive. However, it was clearly common in many places last century. Generally, it was described as abundant in the 1800s. Specific references include being, 'very common' about Christchurch, 'numerous' in the Marlborough district, 'not uncommon' in the Lake Brunner district in the 1880s, 'very common' in coastal swamps in the Wanganui area and 'remarkably numerous' in the Hawkes Bay. They appear to be rare or absent in these places today, and, at least in the Hawkes Bay, were becoming rare by 1900.

Over the last 40 years at least, Australasian Bitterns have become patchily distributed. Most reports come from Northland and the Waikato. Otherwise they appear to be thinly distributed in some coastal areas in the North and South Islands,



Stand up and be counted! Photo by William Abbott.

inland Southland, around the central North Island lakes and in the Canterbury high country.

THREATS

Australasian Bitterns are threatened by habitat clearance and drainage, continued habitat modification and predation by introduced mammals. Shooting was common in the 1880s. Road-kills and flying into power lines are additional causes of deaths.

Over 90% of freshwater wetlands have been drained and cleared since Europeans settled New Zealand. However, declines in wetland bird species have occurred in areas where habitat has been little modified. Degradation of the remaining wetlands continues, with fragmentation, grazing, water abstraction, pest invasion and modification being major threats. Along with habitat loss, increasing frequency of droughts is thought to be contributing significantly to declines in Australia over the last 10-20 years.

COLIN O'DONNELL

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Brian Adam (Auckland); Tim Allen (Wairarapa); Beth Andrews (Canterbury); Shauna Baillie (Wellington); Garry Ball (Bay of Plenty); Sue Battley (Manawatu); Udo Benecke (Canterbury); Pip Boleyn (Canterbury); Annetjie Botha (Bay of Plenty); Lindsay Botha (Canterbury); David Bradley (Waikato); Gary Bramley (Auckland); Rod Brown (Far North); Andres Sebastian Torres Calderon (Wellington); Christchurch City Libraries (Canterbury); Sally Cleary (Northland); Eric De Leeuw (Otago); Lorna Deppe (Canterbury); Ian Douglass (Otago); Leanne Drummond (Auckland); Peggy Duncan (Wellington); Ken George (Wellington); Graham Gillett (Far North); Lynn Gillett (Far North); Bridgid Glass (Auckland); Kane Glass (Auckland); David Hill (Far North); Mavis Hill (Far North); Kathie Irvine (Canterbury); Vicki Jackson (Marlborough); Charlene James (Wairarapa); John Jenkins (Southland); Marie Kospartov (Canterbury); Sevena Koziarski (Canterbury); Landcare Research (Canterbury); Lyn Melrose (Auckland); Kay Milton (Auckland); James Mortimer (Canterbury); Christopher Moses

(Auckland); Joanne Moses (Auckland); Mehdi Ouni (U.S.A.); Ben Paris (Waikato); Norah C Peachman (Bay of Plenty); Georgina Pickerell (Otago); Jocelyn Reilly (Canterbury); Benjamin Rodriguez (Canterbury); Bernadine Russell (Auckland); Graham Saunders (Waikato); Janet Simes (Wellington); Roger Simms (Canada); John Stewart (Auckland); Sara Thompson (Auckland); Gwynneth Tinkler (Canterbury); John Paul Tracey (Australia); University of Minnesota Libraries (U.S.A.); Stuart Vogel (Auckland); Marie Louise Ward (Auckland); Noel Ward (Auckland); Emily Weeks (Manawatu); Karen Woodley (Wairarapa); Zeitschriftenabteilung Dfg (Germany).

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

Sharon Alderson; Patrick Aldwell; Neil J. Andrews; Richard Arlidge; Jane Ashby; David Bell; Della Bennet; Matu Booth; James V. Briskie; Mike Bryan; Mr A Bushell; Patrick Buxton; Chris Bycroft; Mr J Campbell; Clinton Care; Mr R S Carmichael; Mia Colberts; William A. Cook; Don Cooper; James B Cunningham; Tui De Roy; Jared M Diamond; John Flux; Chris Foreman; Florence Gaud; Murray Gavin; Richard Gillies; Anthea Goodwin; Ron Goudswaard; Helge R Grastveit; Glenys Hansen; Neil Hayes Q.S.M.

F.R.S.A.; Henk F. Heinekamp; Alexander Henshaw; Peter Howden; Janet Houston; Mike J. Imber; Malcolm Ives; Jim Jolly; Patrick Kavanagh; Geraldine King; Ted Kirk; Elaine Lagnaz; James Lambie; Paddy Latham; Hayley Lawrence; Nick Ledgard; Manukau Lewis; Peter McClelland; Mary McEwen; Sharon McGavin; Peggy Mallalieu; Bill Messenger; Alan Miller; Frank Minehan; Peter Moore; Harro H. Mueller; James Murray; Mark Nee; Lloyd Nielsen; Mrs G Norman; Keith Owen; Caroline Parker; Kevin Parker; Mr L J Paul; Peter F Penny; Alison Perfect; Lance Pickett; Kara Pranker; Moira Pryde; David Pye; Lyn Reid; Elizabeth Revell; Mr L. S. Rickard; Anne Ringer; Diana Robertson; Paul Sagar; Betty H. Seddon; Gary L Sefton; Ray Sheldrake; Ann Sherlock; Shona Smith; Heather Smithers; Joy M Soper; John Staniland; Elizabeth Stephens; Barry Stevens; Ian Sutherland; Graeme Taylor; Michael J. Taylor; Penny Taylor; Wayne Taylor; Ormond Torr; Spencer Unthank; Gillian Vaughan; Carlo Violani; Kerry Walsh; John Warham; Mr W. A. Watters; Susan Waugh; Jill West; Ian Williams; David Wilson; Keith Woodley; Steve Wratten; Mr D. J. Wright.

HIHI A SUCCESS IN MAINLAND FORESTS?

By JOHN SUMICH

Making a rapid low-level flight, the Hihi (Stitchbird) weaves around undergrowth and the massive trunks of centuries-old Kauri. Branch tips clipped off by the wings of her partner in hot pursuit, fall to the ground. At an apogee she turns and reverses her path, looping again and again through the same cluster of canopy tree trunks and old growth emergent Kauri with the male ardently following. The Kauri are unmoved, they have seen it all before – in some cases for nearly a millennium, although perhaps they might wonder where the Hihi have been in the last little while...

Anthropomorphosis aside, that little interval is possibly closer to 140 years than 120 years ago when the last Hihi on the mainland was reported in the Wairarapa. Noted to have gone from the Bay of Islands by the 1840s, we might take it that the spread of deforestation and the introduction of predators accompanying our European forebears as they developed the Auckland province led to the local extirpation of Hihi in the 1860s. Now they are back, translocated to the Cascades Kauri Park in the Waitakere Ranges west of Auckland as part of Forest and Bird's Ark in the Park restoration project run in partnership with the Auckland Regional Council.

From a casual query in 2003 from Richard Griffiths, the then head of the Hihi Recovery Group (Department of Conservation), as to whether we had ever considered translocating Hihi to the new Ark in the Park site, the seed was planted. We knew our forest satisfied a criterion of sufficient flowering species through

all months of the year from some initial surveys on transects undertaken by Unitec. A separate study replicating one on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island and on Kapiti Island showed the complexity of the forest in terms of species and vertical structure at the Ark was greater than on those two islands. A second requirement in the Recovery Plan that any mainland site should have effective predator control over a sufficient size was easily met by mid-2004 when we had grown to over 600 hectares with a strict 100 m x 50 m grid of bait stations and mustelid traps. Three-monthly rodent monitoring initiated almost a year before baiting began, showed rat numbers significantly lowered while bird and invertebrate surveys showed corresponding increases.

Elation at the early approval for a transfer of Hihi from Tiritiri Matangi and scheduled for February 2006 turned to disappointment when a strain of Salmonella killed several Hihi halting all transfers on and off the island. However, by the summer of 2007 we were ready again. By now the predator-controlled area was over 1,000 hectares and replicating aspects of the Hihi transfer to Karori of 2005 a two-stage release was planned: approximately 30 birds for February and a second similar cohort for April. Each group was to have half the birds hard released and half held in an aviary acting as a possible sound focus to minimise dispersal. In the event 30 birds were transported in February and 29 in June.

Post-release monitoring carried out by Master's student Kate Richardson (Massey University), assisted by contracted and volunteer observers, showed some of the radio transmitter-carrying Hihi dispersing readily beyond the Ark boundaries. Beyond the lifespan of the transmitter batteries however, efforts to find the birds were restricted primarily to within the Ark. Its dense undergrowth, high canopy and steep terrain posed quite a challenge, yet over the first breeding season nine birds were being seen with the first successful known breeding



Two recently-fledged young. Photo by Laurence Béchet.

of Hihi occurring in November. A family group found later, and another nesting attempt by different birds that produced chicks closed the first season.

Encouraged by this, the Recovery Group approved a second cohort to be taken from Tiritiri Matangi and in May 2008, 50 more birds were released. From the experience gained the year before, monitoring for breeding started in September, a month earlier.

With a greater knowledge of Hihi breeding behaviour, and knowledge of what seemed their preferred habitat in our Kauri forest, our sole contractor Andy Warneford and a group of keen volunteers steadily found territories. These territories were centred on mature kauri often on slopes above small streams with numerous mature Rewarewa, Tawa, Puriri, Kowhai and podocarps surrounding. The use of handheld radios by two or three observers allowed for tracking and triangulation so that nests were more readily found. As in the first year, all nests were found in cavities formed at the end of broken limbs of mature kauri 20-30 metres above the ground. Interestingly this has not been recorded at Hauturu/Little Barrier Island where Tawa, and other canopy trees are used. None of the 60 nest boxes placed prior to the first release were ever used and some have been 'translocated' to Tiri. By season's end eleven nest sites had been found with seven being successful in producing chicks. Several individuals had two nesting attempts and one female had three successful nests. In addition a further two families were observed without their nest sites having been found.



Recently-fledged chick on ground under Kauri litter. Photo by Andy Warneford

BEACH PATROL SCHEME

2007 PRELIMINARY REPORT

This report is based on 403 cards received as at 16th February 2009 (compared to 379 for 2006). In 2007, 2,307 km were walked (2,223 km in 2006). Dead seabirds found in 2007 totalled 3,786 (3,117 in 2006). Thus there were a few more recoveries, and a few more cards with a few more kilometres covered were received.

Three sections had no patrols done: East Coast North Island, Fiordland and Wairarapa. Southland had the highest rate of recovery at 5.8 birds per kilometre, largely the result of a single beach patrol on Mason Bay on 13th May 2007 when 526 juvenile Sooty shearwaters were counted in 16 km. The average recovery rate for the whole country was around 1.6 birds per kilometre. The best recovery rate for an individual patrol came from one on the Wellington coast where one bird was found in zero kilometres, which gives a rate of an infinite number of birds per kilometre. Do beach patrollers dream of this or dread it? The most enigmatic patrol was one that recorded no birds in no kilometres as the beach patroller didn't actually go out on that day.

Cause of death was recorded for a few birds. Some waterfowl were obvious victims of the shooting season and an Australasian Gannet and Black-backed Gull were entangled in fishing lines.

There were two significant seabird wrecks during the year. These were Blue Penguins on Bream Bay in January and juvenile Sooty Shearwaters in Southland in May.

Interesting recoveries included a Wrybill, Arctic Tern, Kerguelen Petrel, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Gould's Petrel, Brown Teal, two Bar-tailed Godwits, two Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, a Chatham Island Shag and a goat skull.

Six band recoveries were recorded during the year. Three of these were locally banded Red-billed Gulls recovered at Kaikoura. A Black-backed Gull at Ruapuke (AW) on 14th February 2007 had been banded at Kawhia (AW) on 13th December 1981. A Sooty Shearwater at Muriwai (AW) on 14th April 2007 had been banded on Kauwhaia Island (AW) on 7th December 2000 and a Wandering Albatross on Muriwai (AW) on 11th August 2007 had been banded as a chick on South Georgia on 16th October 2001.

The usual assortment of land birds was noted. These were: Australian Magpie (20), Rock Pigeon (6), New Zealand Pigeon (5), Blackbird (4), Myna (4), Pheasant (3), Pukeko (3), Goldfinch (3), Australasian Harrier (2), Starling (2), chicken (2) and individuals of Song Thrush, Tui, Silvereye and Yellowhammer.

LLOYD ESLER

Above and below: Recently-fledged chick on ground. Photo by Andy Warneford.



Nesting interference by Eastern Rosellas, Common Mynas and Starlings was recorded and in some cases plumbic treatment was given to assist the Hihi efforts.

Sugar water feeders maintained by a dedicated band of volunteers were not used to a great degree although peaks of use were noted at peaks of nesting activity in a dry December. Feeder watching involved yet another group of volunteers, their efforts being supplemented by infra-red triggered cameras at three feeders where visiting Hihi recorded their own presence.

Are Hihi a mainland success? Can Hihi become established in a non-fenced 'mainland island'? After two years we know that the Waitakere ranges site of the Ark in the Park has sufficient natural food sources. We know that the birds can breed and with an unbanded bird from last year producing her own chicks this season and other birds from the 2007 release still breeding in the 2008/09 season we know that the birds have survived more than one year. Other birds have been reported beyond the Ark boundaries this year with one being induced to feed on delicacies such as cut apple or orange on a house deck railing! Some 25 to 30 fledglings left their Kauri limb cavity nests this season often spending their first days on the ground nestling under the kauri bark litter surrounding the natal tree and truly testing the integrity of our predator control.

A success? With qualification, yes. The next season and beyond when unbanded birds will add a complexity to monitoring, will be interesting. With no further guaranteed funds for monitoring, the task will fall primarily to the overseas student volunteers who intern at the Ark assisted by local volunteers. A monitoring system is being developed by Doug Armstrong (Massey University) to get meaningful results in the possible presence of un-banded birds and it may be that another cohort in one to three years time will be released. However, for those of us involved in the Ark in the Park project, the arresting call of Hihi as we go about our work in this wonderful forest setting is indeed sweet music.

Reference: *Hihi Breeding Season Report 2008-2009*. A.Warneford. www.arkintheark.org.nz

Section of Coast	No. of Cards	No. of Birds	Km covered
Auckland East AE	11	25	30
Auckland West AW	67	383	586
Bay of Plenty BP	13	60	26
Canterbury North CN	31	361	193
Canterbury South CS	4	71	10
East Coast NI EC	-	-	-
Fiordland FD	-	-	-
North Coast SI NC	2	4	4
Northland East NE	32	940	289
Northland West NW	24	510	552
Outlying Islands OI (Chatham)	6	13	12
Otago OT	1	3	3
Southland SD	38	832	142
Taranaki TA	60	232	174
Wairarapa WA	-	-	-
Westland WD	2	1	4
Wellington South WS	13	43	43
Wellington West WW	99	318	239
Totals	403	3,786	2,307





Tully, Rosemary. *Tea for the Tui, Fun recipes to entice birds to your garden.* Illustrated by Rachel Lockwood and Deborah Hinde. 2007. New Holland, Auckland. ISBN 978 1 86966 167 0, 96pp, soft cover, \$19.99

This is the first book by Rosemary Tully, a very well known bird rescue worker based in Whakatane who assists DoC and local vets by tending sick and orphaned birds. Her extensive background in this area has enabled her to produce a comprehensive collection of bird-enticing recipes for people wishing to add life, movement and colour to their back yards.

The book is aimed at families and people with time to prepare the recipes and watch the birds that are subsequently attracted to their gardens. The material is organised and presented clearly and simply, with a useful index and suggested list of further reading. Illustrations lend colour to the text which is kept simple and uncluttered, providing an easy to follow guide.

The start of the book outlines the importance of feeding, when to feed and a list of 'good and bad' foods. While it is true that our 'urban spread' has

greatly reduced habitat and feeding opportunities for many birds, I believe care should be taken to ensure birds are not solely reliant on these recipes for survival as circumstances can change for many people, thus ending the commitment necessary for ongoing care of the birds.

I would have liked to have seen more detail regarding hygiene of the food preparation and feeding areas. The book does mention in some individual recipes the need to clean dishes, however this is a key consideration in feeding animals and needs some further instruction at the beginning. There is a risk of disease being spread to birds from people, and vice versa. Hygiene is very important. Consideration should also be given to the safe presentation of the food, ensuring that birds are free from predation by cats and dogs.

The recipes themselves are well presented and in fact are similar to those used by many institutes in the production of bird food. I prefer to balance these types of recipes with natural food as well, such as flowering and fruiting plants found naturally in the surrounding areas,

or by planting bird-attracting plants and feeding the artificial diet until the plants become established. The one recipe that I was concerned with was the sugar water for Tui. The presentation of sugar water should be done very carefully, and in fact I would suggest using raw sugar as an alternative. This aside, I found the recipes well presented and researched with an explanation of what species would be likely to eat each of them.

Overall, I found the book to be a useful resource for the backyard bird enthusiast with a great selection of recipes. I would have liked to see more discussion on the hygiene, predator-proof presentation of food and a bit more detail on the pros and cons associated with feeding birds, however I realise that was not the intended scope of the book (and in fact there is probably enough material in that topic alone for another book!).

BRYAN WELCH

Aviculturalist and captive-rearing expert

NEST WATCH 2010

YOU have a great opportunity to contribute to the Society's Nest Record Scheme by participating in NEST WATCH 2010.

NEST WATCH 2010 aims to collect 2010 Nest Record Cards for Blackbirds and Song Thrushes during the 2009/10 breeding season. Both species occur throughout the country (see *Atlas* maps on pages 254-257) so **every member** should be able to contribute - you shouldn't need to go further than your garden or local park. If every member contributes just 2 cards we can reach our target!

Why study Blackbirds and Song Thrushes?

We want to collect sufficient records to allow us to compare aspects of breeding biology throughout the country. Earlier studies (in the 1940s and 1960s) indicated that Blackbirds started breeding later at St Arnaud, Nelson than those in Auckland, but that there was very little difference in Song Thrushes. Does the same hold true today?

Global climate change is already impacting the timing of breeding of some species in the northern hemisphere, but at present there is little information available for New Zealand, apart from a long-term study of Starlings at Lower Hutt which suggested that 'laying dates varied with food availability which fluctuated according to climatic events'

Separating the nests

Both Blackbirds and Song Thrushes build relatively large, bulky nests, that of the Blackbird being the larger. Nests usually are made of grass, plant stems, dead leaves, thin twigs and roots. Song Thrush nests may also contain moss and lichen. The Song Thrush nest is lined with a smooth layer of mud or rotten wood pulp, whereas the Blackbird usually incorporates some mud in the nest cup, but lines the nest with fine grass, pine needles and dead leaves.

Separating the eggs

Blackbird: light blue covered with fine reddish-brown speckling and mottling.

Song Thrush: bright, light blue with a small number of black or purple-brown spots, speckles or small blotches.

NEST RECORD CARDS are available from your RR or can be downloaded from the OSNZ website: http://www.osnz.org.nz/Media/nest_record_card.pdf. Please send completed cards for Nestwatch 2010 to your Regional Representative and not directly to the Nest Record Scheme convenor.

Further reading

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Marples, B.J. & Gurr, L. 1943. *Emu* 43: 67-71.

*McKenzie, H.R. 1945. A Blackbird nesting story. *NZ Bird Notes* 1: 110-112.

*Tily, I. 1946. The nesting activities of a pair of Blackbirds. *NZ Bird Notes* 1: 117-120.

Tryjanowski et al. 2006. Date of breeding of the starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in New Zealand is related to El Niño Southern Oscillation. *Austral Ecology* 31: 634-637.

*Papers can be downloaded from the Notornis website: <http://www.notornis.org.nz> FREE of charge!

REPORT OF THE CHECKLIST COMMITTEE TO 31ST MAY 2009

The Committee finished the Checklist manuscript in 2008. The Society is fortunate that Te Papa Press, a leading publisher of natural history works, had expressed interest in publishing the Checklist. Their involvement will ensure professional publishing standards and wide distribution, in the tradition of Reed and Random Century who published previous editions.

The new checklist project began in October 2001, and the length of time to completion reflects the magnitude of the task. It is a very difficult time to be writing a checklist, with fast-changing views being published regularly on the taxonomy and relationships of birds, most studies relying on recent advances in DNA technology. With publication in 2010, there will have been an exact 20-year interval between the three most recent editions (2nd edition, 1970; 3rd edition, 1990).

The new Checklist will provide an up-to-date listing of New Zealand birds and be a primary reference for their taxonomic and distributional status. Some things will be new and different in the sequence of birds and in their Latin and common names. However, the changes have been conservative, relying on multiple lines of evidence, and an attempt has been made to harmonise where possible with the usage in recent Australian publications. Only one common name is given in the species headings, so that users are given one clear preference. Alternative names are given in the species text, and alternative Maori names in an appendix.

For the first time, the Checklist will give complete synonymies (lists of disused former Latin names) for the native birds. Readers of dated and historical works should find every New Zealand bird name listed in the Checklist under the species by which it is currently known.

As the project draws to a close I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my seven colleagues on the Committee, and thank them and others for their support of our goal.

BRIAN GILL, Convener



Far North

Coastal and seabirds feature prominently in the report of interesting sightings listed in the latest regional newsletter *Apteryx* which at the time of writing is about to be printed and of which recent reports cover four and a half pages. This is a result of some excellent coverage of the seas around the Far North. Wrybill Tours ran their third annual four-day pelagic from Houhora in early April, and the Regional Rep was on board Heritage Expeditions' West Pacific Odyssey, which passed through New Zealand waters en route to Japan. Among an exciting selection of species, the four-day pelagic recorded six species of albatross, Kermadec, White-necked, Black-winged and Cook's Petrels (although in smaller numbers than last year), two New Zealand Storm Petrels, two South Polar Skuas and a White-capped Noddy on two successive days off Cape Maria van Diemen. Amazingly, the White-capped Noddy was also seen from the nearby beach by a visiting birder on the second day.

The West Pacific Odyssey had similar success. While passing Far North waters, it was encouraging to see Campbell Albatross, many Black Petrels, a few Grey Ternlets and Wilson's Storm Petrels not far off Cape Brett, making the idea of pelagics from the Bay of Islands an attractive proposition. Further north a Red-tailed Tropicbird and a dark phase Collared Petrel were seen at around 33.5° south. The latter is thought to be a first for New Zealand waters, although views were distant.

So far this year the region has recorded eight species of tern. Apart from Caspian and White-fronted, and the White-capped Noddy and Grey Ternlet mentioned above, Little Terns were seen on the February wader count (as they often are), both White-winged Black and Common Terns were at Awanui and a Black-fronted Tern on the beach at Takou Bay was well out of its usual range.

Three out of a flock of at least six Plumed Whistling Ducks in paddocks near Kaitaia were shot by a duck-shooter who then had them identified. Two of these are preserved and will hopefully be displayed in Te Papa Museum. It is concerning that despite legislation our less common and vagrant species of waterfowl continue to be unnecessarily shot.

New Zealand Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers both had a good breeding season in the region. Apart from being included in our wader counts, members have sent in many sightings of good flocks and of chicks from far and wide.

The Guardians of the Bay, set up by local member Lynette Smith for the purpose of eradicating predators from several of the larger islands in the Bay of Islands, are about to achieve a major goal as an extensive poison drop is planned to take place in early June. Some members will be assisting with the job of monitoring New Zealand Dotterels, which are well represented on the islands, and by 'sweeping' the beaches to try to reduce the likelihood of the birds eating the poisoned sandflies. Introduction of more native passerines will no doubt follow in due course and make these islands more attractive destinations for bird enthusiasts.

DETLEF DAVIES

Waikato

The region continues to have a range of speakers at monthly meetings that present varied and interesting research. In February Dai Morgan talked about a recent mammal inventory that took a 'snap shot' of all pest mammals in Hamilton, a national first for a New Zealand city. It appears that in comparison to other types of habitats, such as native forests, Hamilton has very manageable pest mammal populations that are largely confined to gully systems.

In March we held our AGM, where plans were announced to have a lot more fieldtrips throughout the year, something that has been sadly lacking over recent years. These started with the usual Kawhia/Aotea Harbour census in February, a visit to the falcons at Kakepuku in March, and a rather wet autumn picnic at the Taitua Arboretum in April.

Also in April, David Bradley, a PhD student from the University of Waikato, gave an excellent talk on the birds of Costa Rica. David has recently arrived in New Zealand to study and is a keen birder who has travelled far and wide looking at our feathered friends. Luckily for us, he is also a keen photographer and has a strong interest in bird acoustics, so we were treated to a number of fantastic pictures of what seemed like the entire inventory of Costa Rican birds, many of which were accompanied by recording of their calls. In May we look forward to another new PhD student, Sandra Valderrama, talking on her work helping to save the endangered Niceforo's Wren in Columbia.

In other news, Stitcbirds have now been translocated to Maungatautari. In the first week of March a team of 11 people caught 64 Stitcbirds in less than 48 hours on Tiritiri Matangi, and kept them in aviaries on the island for a further four days awaiting disease screening results. They were given the 'all clear' and 59 were chosen for translocation (the other five were released back on Tiri). On Saturday 7th March those 59 made the one-hour helicopter flight to Maungatautari where they were successfully released into the Southern Enclosure. It does not really need us to mention again what a jewel Maungatautari is in Waikato's crown!

Some recent bird sightings include two Red-legged Partridges at Pirongia on 28th December (Bev and Bryan Woolley). David Lawrie reports these may be from a local who has been breeding and releasing these birds. Twenty or

more Arctic Skuas were off the beach beyond Port Waikato on 5th January in association with several hundred Australasian Gannets, Fluttering Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters. Also five Maui's Dolphins including one immature were seen (Dan Brown). A New Zealand Falcon was heard at Lake Rotopounamu on 16th January (David Riddell). Nine Brown Teal were at Coromandel Wastewater Treatment Ponds on 23-24th March (David Riddell). Jason Roxburgh reports there were large numbers of Brown Teal at Port Charles, Waikawau Bay, and Big Bay (where the road splits north of Colville) between January and April, with the largest recorded flock being 228 at Waikawau Bay. A Spotted Dove was at the Coromandel Wastewater Treatment Ponds on 24th March (David Riddell). A Cook's Petrel was found, at the front door of Information Technology Services at the University of Waikato on 24th March. It was sent to Bill Smith of Bird Rescue, and seemed healthy, vigorously biting at fingers. Its tail feathers were well worn yet its primaries were in good shape (David Bradley).

DAI MORGAN, DAVID RIDDELL, CHRIS SMUTS-KENNEDY and GEMMA GREEN

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Anyone watching the evening news on May 11th would have sworn we were under a blanket of snow the hail was so heavy. The weather at this time of the year sends us all barrelling indoors to pray to the heat gods. However, the birds themselves still like to make their presence known, namely the Kaka! Now a Kaka in a Pear Tree sounds more interesting than a Partridge doesn't it? Well, an excited phone message on my answer machine from a resident of Holden's Bay, Rotorua in early May thought all his Christmases had come at once. The bird was indeed in a pear tree! Unfortunately he failed to find five golden rings, which would have set him up for life... Other Kaka were reported from downtown Mt Maunganui about one week later. Although it was not noted what trees the birds were feeding on, they usually chow down on Banksia there.

Another rare occurrence from the seabird department this past month has been a Light-Mantled Sooty Albatross. This was handed in to Whakatane Bird Rescue's Rosemary Tully in the first week of May, after being picked up at Bryan's Beach, near Ohiwa, looking pretty sad. Two nights later, and after some emergency squid rations were obtained from Tauranga, the beautiful brown albatross succumbed to its ailment, presumably starvation. The last records of this species in the Bay were two in 1997, again at Whakatane. Both were released. In this case it was not third time lucky.

The Grey-faced Petrel team is beavering away into its 20th season on Mauao/Mt Maunganui. This year we are facilitating capture detail records by GPS through a Bay of Plenty Polytechnic student, for his degree. A Tauranga Intermediate student, Ben Richards, is also helping with the project, whilst we provide him with data for his Science Fair project, his second on the petrels. In early May 20 Kiwi Conservation Club members and their parents visited Mauao at night to see the petrels and penguins, and to bring another generation of future environmentalists up to speed on what is on the mountain when the sun goes down. We are also attempting to return to Motuotau/Rabbit Island, although two trips already have been thwarted by rain, wind and waves.

Our Autumn evening meeting was held at Otumoetai Church Hall. Organising it, I thought I had it all under control, yet little did I know Otumoetai had four church halls. After 'rounding up the flock' from those other halls, we settled in to a fantastic talk by Ria Brejaart on Kea. Ria delved into many of the aspects of the birds as we know them, plus many other useful pieces of information that we didn't.

Tim Barnard sent in a March record of a White Heron which had been gracing the Ohau channel, Rotoiti side, Rotorua. Speaking of big white feathered animals, Maketu member Julian Fitter has been busy spotting all sorts in his patch, 60 Royal Spoonbills being the highlight for April. May's highlight was a Reef Heron on the harbours 'diving platform'. He had previously seen two there in March. This species is still thinly spread around our Bay of Plenty harbours. Julian's seabird records continue to be the highlight of the Bay's coastal scene: 50 Black Petrels, 10 Buller's Mollymawks and one each of Salvin's and Campbell Mollymawk and Antipodean Wandering Albatross were seen during a recent trip. It was during this recent trip they also saw two 'sea eagles', unconfirmed as yet.

A black Fantail has recently been spotted at Whakamarama, in the Kaimai Range foothills, and two were reported in December 2008 from Whangamarino Swamp, North Waikato. Chris Gaskin sent in some good Pipit records from his Easter in Tongariro National Park, along with two New Zealand Falcons at the head of the Mangatepopo Valley. An interesting find were bones from a White-faced Heron found on the slopes of Ngauruhoe. Also from Chris was a great New Zealand Dabchick record, with around 30 at Tokaanu.

DoC staff doing a bat survey in February by the Mangorewa River (on the Tauranga Direct Road between Tauranga and Rotorua) uncovered a Blue Duck in the forest away from the river, a great record from there as the species was previously not thought to be present.

Murray Smith can scope the harbour from his yard, so has an enviable 'yard list'. His observations of Pacific Golden Plovers are always informative, and the last to go back to their breeding grounds this year were spectacularly coloured up.



Omokoroa members Norah and Robert Peachman continue to feed quality records my way, with March Fernbirds, and Spotless Crane being seen during their regular forays into the wilds of the local golf course and surrounds. Anthea Goodwin and Norah saw 40 Grey Teal there in May.

The March harbour census produced the highest number of Bar-tailed Godwits, Lesser Knots and Wrybills, New Zealand Dotterels and Pied Oystercatchers since records began, with over 12,000 Bar-tailed Godwits and 425 Lesser Knots. Paddy Latham's count of 303 Wrybills was the highest number ever recorded, the previous record being Paddy's 190 in 1982. Other high counts include John Groom's Ohiwa New Zealand Dotterel count. He exceeded his record autumn flock count for the species at Ohiwa, with 95 being seen, the previous record being 86. In previous weeks Tim Barnard had seen 37 at Maketu.

PAUL CUMING

Taranaki

A newspaper article about a recent localised die-off of House Sparrows in central New Plymouth sparked some discussion at the March meeting. No positive conclusion as to the cause of death was reached despite the article arriving at its own outcome. Carol Keight gave us an account of her eight day tour around Melbourne and Southern Victoria, including areas later devastated by the bushfires. She visited many National Parks and travelled the Great Ocean Road seeing much wildlife including King Parrot, Wood Duck, Gang-gang Cockatoo, a Kookaburra stealing meat from a barbeque, Rufous Bristlebird (at Port Campbell National Park), and Red Wattlebird (she thought these very Tui like in their behaviour), to name just a few highlights.

Beach patrols turned up little of note: one White-capped Mollmawk and three Australasian Gannets. Amongst members reports Californian Quail have been seen in good numbers and a cat that caught a female Blackbird was mobbed by Mynas until

the bird was released. The Little Shag colony at Pukekura Park has had an excellent breeding season, David Medway estimates the colony produced upwards of 60 youngsters I wonder where they all go on leaving the park. For the first time in this correspondent's memory a field trip was cancelled due to a lack of participants.

At April's meeting four members gave a review of their recent trip to Mana Island. Many Shore Plovers were seen as well as Takahe, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Brown Teal and Common Gecko. Altogether 20 species of bird were recorded. Whilst on their southern sojourn the Messengers visited other Wellington hotspots. The Waikanae Estuary produced 30 bird species of which 20 were native and Otaki Forks had Bellbird and Silvereye feeding on Tutu, which was in full fruit.

Kahikatea are fruiting heavily throughout Taranaki at present with many birds enjoying the abundance. Despite being surrounded by houses on the western outskirts of New Plymouth a pair of Pukeko produced three/four chicks. Four New Zealand Dabchicks were seen at the Inglewood oxidation ponds, and one at Waiongana was only the second record there.

May's field trip to the Awahou Reserve at the top of the Whangamomona Saddle was held in fine warm conditions. An enjoyable day was had by all despite the steep terrain. Birds were quite vocal and visible, a Harrier passing overhead caused ten to twelve New Zealand Pigeons in a beech tree to explode into flight, and a large flock of Greenfinches coming and going from one particular patch of bush caused much head-scratching as to what they were doing.

After two or three years of investigation we finally discovered at the May meeting that there is an oil spill recovery plan. Barry Hartley attended a two-day course at Massey University meeting with all those in the know, so he is now the local expert on what, where and how to go about implementing the plan should the need arise. It was implied that we would be included and a training day may be held sometime.

Sixty-four Banded Dotterels were seen at Sandy Bay in South Taranaki, a very high number for this spot. Two Cattle Egrets were also seen in the area. Carol Keight watched as 16 Pheasants, of which nine were male, worked over her neighbour's newly-sewn lawn and a Pukeko was observed up in a *Cornus capitata* (Himalayan Strawberry Tree/Evergreen Dogwood) eating the fruit. A dozen New Zealand Scaup on the lagoon at Waiongana was an all time record. The five Pacific Golden Plovers that spent summer on the beach there have headed north.

Confusion surrounding the postponement of the field trip around David Medway's home patch, Pukekura Park, saw three members having an enjoyable walk around in autumn sunshine with many birds present and numerous Tui in *Cornus capitata*. Part two of the trip will be held at a later date.

PETER FRYER

Hawkes Bay

Planned as a farewell to the waders, our field outing to the Ahuriri Estuary on 10th March was well attended. A pleasant afternoon was spent exploring the lagoon area and the southern marsh, but the waders proved rather

elusive. The Bar-tailed Godwit flock was located in an area where good views were impossible, and the sandpipers and Pacific Golden Plovers, which had previously been present, weren't showing themselves at all.

At least 12 Pacific Golden Plovers were, however, present at the above site throughout March and into the first week of April, with a maximum count of 23 on 21st March. They were in varying degrees of breeding plumage. A Grey-tailed Tattler was also seen on a number of occasions during March.

In April we did our quarterly five-minute bird count at Blowhard Bush, a project we have undertaken for Forest and Bird. This has been an interesting learning experience, with a number of us finding the need to brush up on our bird call identification skills!

April saw the usual build-up of Royal Spoonbills at Ahuriri, with maximum numbers of 75 on 18th April. A White Heron was seen on several occasions around the Waitangi Wetlands. New Zealand Dabchick numbers built up at Ahuriri, with 18 seen in the northern pond on 4th May.

On 10th May nine members visited Horseshoe Lake where good numbers of ducks were present: about 45 New Zealand Scaup; over 200 Grey Teal; about 100 Australasian Shovelers; three New Zealand Dabchicks; and four Black-fronted Dotterels. One Mute Swan remains after its long-time mate died. Greg Hart, the landowner of Mangarara Station, where the lake is situated, generously took the time to talk to us about the Air New Zealand Environment Trust that he is involved with, which has seen extensive tree planting carried out on the property. He also guided us to a protected native bush area. We were accompanied on our wander through the area by many very vocal Fantails.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Wanganui

The past few months have been quiet, with key members engaged in other activities or doing their own thing. We have had three meetings, supported by the same few stalwarts. In March, Colin and Robyn Ogle talked about the birds, other animals and habitats seen during their travels last year in eastern and northern Australia. In April, we viewed some footage of seabird colonies around the world, including some of Nankeen Night Heron and other species feeding at night on hatching sea turtles in northern Queensland. In May, Peter Frost presented the results of his surveys of waders and waterbirds recorded on the Whanganui Estuary over the past three years.

From the field, we have had more records and some confirmations of earlier reports of Eastern Rosella around Wanganui. The Atlas shows scattered records from the northern half of the district, but few from the coastal region, so these records may reflect a gradual spread southwards. Records of that other Australian import, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, continue to filter in. Keith Beutrais reported a flock of 20-30 birds just west of Wanganui, and Ormond Torr provided a photograph of 27 birds in the same area, taken in mid 2006. The species is seen regularly around Bushy Park, our local 'mainland island'.

We presume that these birds are all descendants of four birds that escaped from their cage at Turakina 102 years ago, bolstered possibly by subsequent escapees. Whether any birds have arrived here naturally from Australia as vagrants is an open question. The species is classed as a 'Non-Statutory Problem Animal' in Horizons Regional Council's Animal Pest Management Strategy, meaning that it is considered undesirable but does not yet meet all the criteria to be considered a pest species. Horizons' policy is to control the Cockatoos where they threaten the values of High Value Conservation Areas, such as at Bushy Park, where efforts are being made to restore and protect some of the last remnants of lowland rainforest found in the lower North Island.

A number of visits were made to the Nankeen Night Heron roost on private land near the junction of the Kauarapaoa Stream and Whanganui River. Peter Frost recorded at least five birds leaving the roost in mid April. He and Derek Onley, who was visiting from Otago, recorded and photographed at least three birds there a couple of days later. Paul Gibson then went out and got some superb photographs, but sadly subsequent visits by Paul and Bruce Shanks from Auckland failed to see any birds, although they could be heard squabbling inside the dense canopy.

Bruce faced even greater frustration when he visited Jerusalem on a Photographic Society of New Zealand outing. For some months, we have received records of Nankeen Night Herons being seen there close to the convent. This includes a report from one of the sisters of three probable recent fledglings. During the PSNZ outing, Bruce was told by one of the ladies helping with catering that 13 Nankeen Night Herons were roosting on their property nearby, and that their cat had brought in a dead young bird the previous day. Unfortunately, Bruce was not able to confirm the sighting, but the details correspond with information coming from other sources. All of this has prompted the Wairarapa region of OSNZ to plan a field trip in early June to the Whanganui River, among other things to search for Nankeen Night Herons between Pipiriki and Jerusalem. At least one member of the Wanganui region will join them. The field trip is being undertaken with Ranana School as part of the school's week of Education Outside the Classroom, aimed at exploring the river and its natural history with the children and their whanau. The night herons have cultural significance for the local iwi, reportedly arriving in the mid 1990s at the same time as the body of warrior, who had been exiled to and had died in Tasmania in the 1800s, was brought home for burial at Jerusalem.

On the Whanganui Estuary, Lynne Douglas reported a flock of 30-40 Banded Dotterels present one afternoon in mid May. Last year, also in May, Peter Frost recorded a flock of 89 passing through. In both instances, the



birds moved on rapidly, presumably heading for warmer and more sheltered estuaries further north. Their appearance in both years coincided with the first major winter storm moving up the South Island, suggesting that the dotterels were moving en masse ahead of the severe weather front. Other species moving through include Royal Spoonbill, Pied Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt, Black-billed Gull, and Red-billed Gull (over 220 one day, 4 the next). Numbers of Caspian Tern are slowly building up in the estuary, including a colour-banded bird also recorded here throughout most of the autumn and winter last year.

Perhaps the most unusual visitor was a White-chinned Petrel, recovered 30 km inland along SH4 in the Paraparas in the last week of May. Presumably this bird had been blown off course during the southerly gales blowing onshore at the time. The bird was alive but a bit thin, with an apparently injured wing. Paul Gibson identified the bird for Dawne Morton (Bird Rescue), who will look after it until it is well enough to be set free. Paul also took some photographs for the record. The Atlas shows no recent records of this species on the North Island.

PETER FROST

Wairarapa

One of our newer members, Emile Smieg, gave a presentation in March entitled 'Why Kill a Jay?' Emile gave an insightful background to his interest in the birdlife of his native Germany. He grew up in a farming community in the south of that country in a village consisting of 10 homes. The closest large town was Munich. Initially (as a young boy) he was fascinated by the many mounted birds, such as owls, he saw in the homes of neighbours, and persuaded the local taxidermist to mount a Song Thrush for him; no mean feat, one would imagine, handling such a relatively small bird.

As his observations on live birds grew, he noted Chaffinch, Blackbird, Sparrowhawk, Goshawk, Wood Pigeon and crows. During winter, with a paucity of leaf cover, it was much easier for him to observe other bird life and he saw Dunnock, Wren, Great Grey Shrike and woodpeckers etc. He found that identifying these birds was easier when they were on the ground and he was able to differentiate species by the way they moved, ie. walking, hopping, or a combination of both, as well as the shape of the bird.

A big breakthrough in his increasing interest in birdlife was when he began to go on guided tours led by knowledgeable amateur birdwatchers who became ornithological 'mentors' for young people like Emile, and many excursions by bike occupied long weekends. One such trip was 52 km!

After a suitable apprenticeship Emile was deemed eligible to band and catch birds using mist nets. He recalled banding a Jay. He had always had a particular fondness for this bird. It has beautiful plumage, boldly patterned with blue feathers in the wings and did not lose these striking colours in the winter. At one time, their feathers were trophies for hunters to be put in their hat bands. This beautiful bird of the crow family, unlike the Raven, was afforded no official protection, so the title of his presentation was 'Why Kill a Jay?' because, sadly, one could!

In April, Narena Olliver, another of our members, presented a scholarly talk and circulated background notes on 'Ornithological Writing and Writers'. The historical voyages of exploration in the South Pacific also provided time-honoured writings and illustrations of flora and fauna. Captain Cook, Banks, Solander, Hooker, William Hodges, d'Urville, Darwin, Dieffenbach, Richard Henry, and in the present people like Chris Robertson; their names have become not only part of our literary landscape, but also of our ecological landscape. We have, indeed, a rich heritage.

March's field trip was participation in DoC's Sea Week, with a work party at Onoko Spit eradicating weeds smothering native plants. Twelve Banded Dotterels were observed.

The April field trip was a return visit to the Rewanui Reserve, on the road to Castlepoint. The Trimble Foundation, in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, has set aside this retired forest block for a three-year monitoring of carbon levels. Related aspects are not only the plant life, but also wildlife, small mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. On our visit we noted an increase in tree seedlings along the tracks. Fantails, Silvereyes and Grey Warblers were present and Tui chorused in the canopy.

At the end of March, Brian Boeson stayed with a friend on Wairangi Station, up-country from Wanganui. The property is a mix of pine forest, native bush and open farmland. They were visited most days by Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos, which fed on two old walnut trees near the stables. Each morning, they were entertained by their raucous calls to one another as they squabbled amongst themselves.

In March, notable bird sightings were 30-40 Royal Spoonbills at Boggy Pond, Lake Wairarapa, over 300 Black-billed Gulls at the Pahaoa River Mouth, and a New Zealand Falcon near the Waiohine Gorge. Mynas were reported in Martinborough and Te Ore Ore. In April two Caspian Terns were seen at Henley Lake, and one morning 3-400 Canada Geese flew in.

BARBARA LOVATT

Wellington

The AGM of the Wellington region was held in March. Ian Armitage agreed to serve for another year as our RR. The guest speaker following the AGM was David Melville who gave a fascinating talk on avian influenza. The latest epidemic of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Asia (H5N1) has raised a number of important questions regarding the role of wildlife in influenza pandemics. Furthermore, the H5N1 virus has spread from poultry to humans on a small number of occasions with fatal consequences. The major concern is that

the H5N1 virus may mutate so that it not only causes severe disease in humans but can also spread from human to human. While avian influenza has caused major losses in domestic poultry it has also been isolated from a number of wild species, principally ducks and geese. The role of wildlife in the spread of avian influenza is still not fully understood and there is a need for more research to better define its role in the emergence of new influenza pandemics.

Recent reports of members birding activities include a summary of passerine banding by Peter Reese. During the last nine years Peter has been mist-nesting and banding at the Wellington Zoo, training over 100 people in the art of catching, handling and marking birds. Silvereyes have been the most commonly caught bird, with large numbers of House Sparrows, Greenfinches and Blackbirds also being banded. A growing number of Tui have also been banded. This should provide a valuable resource to investigate the increase over the last few years in the number of Tui in Wellington.

Colin Miskelly was the guest speaker for the June meeting and his talk, 'Southern Ocean Sojourns' was a pictorial summary of his Antarctic travels as ornithologist on board the cruise ship *Discovery*. His travels included visits to Valparaiso, the southern tip of South America, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, the Antarctic Peninsula, the South Shetlands, Tristan da Cunha and Cape Town. Colin showed lots of pictures of the birds he saw, including some which occur in the seas round New Zealand. An interesting aspect to this talk was Colin's comments about the need for Antarctic tour ships to follow strict procedures to minimise any potential adverse effects to the environment and its wildlife.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

Pauline Samways gave a PowerPoint presentation in Motueka about the birds of the Motueka Sandspit to the local New-Comers Group. Great interest was shown in the great diversity of bird life in the area, and the group followed the talk with a walk along the sandspit. They were grateful for the assistance of Ornithological Society members Don Cooper and Peter Field, who accompanied them with telescopes and keen eyes to help identify the birds. The New-Comers were especially pleased to see the over-wintering Bar-tailed Godwits feeding. Don and Peter had an added bonus when they spotted a hybrid stilt on their way home.

In Golden Bay Chris Petyt reported 90 Canada Geese in early April on the sea at high tide near the base of Farewell Spit, and also a similar number at Rata Creek south of the Anatori River. Twelve New Zealand Scaup were on the Wharariki Lakes. Numbers appear to be dropping from a peak of 30 a few years ago. Coots and the Australian Little Grebe previously seen here were absent. Other records included 31 Royal Spoonbills at Collingwood and 30 Little Black Shags at Milnthorpe.

Chris also reports that Forest & Bird members were carrying out surveys of Spotted Shags on Tata Beach, and their habit of regurgitating small stones. These counts take place at first light and on one occasion over 1,100 birds were observed puking in unison; some sight! Still in Golden Bay Ingrid Hutzler reported recent Weka sightings on a property where they had been absent for over decade.

Weka population growth has been noted by Peter Gaze with reports of birds around houses in the Richmond foothills and also resident in the Brook Catchment, Nelson. Recently two were rescued from a swimming pool in Brightwater and, while being good swimmers, Peter states that in these situations pools are death traps.

A team from the Department of Conservation fitted transmitters to 19 Kea on the Mount Arthur Range. These birds will be monitored through the Animal Health Board aerial drop of 1080 to detect any related mortality, and through the following breeding season to determine whether fewer predators leads to improved breeding success.

Peter Field noted a family of Scaup on a Lower Moutere farm pond in late March. These birds appear to be making use of many small ponds used for irrigation or landscape purposes in the district. Nelson Haven, Peter's favourite haunt, rewards him with many notable sightings. A single Whimbrel is still present at the time of writing in May and would appear to be wintering over. The sight of 160 Little Black Shags flying low over the water in a rough V formation from the Boulder Bank towards the city was, as he puts it, a bonus. The most significant recent sighting is a juvenile Variable Oystercatcher with very fresh-looking colour bands. From the combination it was not a local bird, and on further investigation via David Melville we learnt the bird is one of a number banded by Lindsay Rowe in Kaikoura.

Pauline Samways recorded 10 Wrybills on the Motueka Sandspit following Willie Cook's account of 46 Wrybills on the Bells Island shellbank on 10th May. Notable among this group was 'matriarch' GM/OB back for her twelfth year. The Waimea Estuary and its surrounds have produced a few surprises over the past few weeks. Willie heard a Fernbird calling in the lower Pearl Creek area and two birds were seen. A week later a Fernbird was seen at another location on the estuary edge. The last previous sighting of these birds is unknown, but a local farmer claims it is five years since he last heard a call.



Don Cooper, while walking through swampy ground to a trap line, disturbed a Bittern at very close quarters. Who got the biggest surprise is debatable. Following this six Cattle Egrets were seen among a herd of cows in a nearby paddock. The last recorded sighting at the same spot was nearly three years ago.

At May's meeting Rob Schuckard gave a PowerPoint presentation of his study of the King Shags in the Marlborough Sounds. For most of the members present this was their first opportunity to learn first hand about this rare endemic bird and its taxonomic relationship with the more frequently seen species in its family. The work was carried out in the early 1990s and featured in three papers published in *Notornis*. Rob divided the research into directional feeding and daily rhythms, status of the King Shag (colony surveys and biannual counts), and distribution of feeding King Shags in Admiralty Bay.

The fascinating data and excellent images were greatly enhanced with the latest screen and projector technology made available to us courtesy of Charles Hufflet at the Solander office.

At the beginning of April Willie Cook spent a week on Maud Island assisting members of the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust capture Tui for their re-introduction to Banks Peninsula. They were successful in obtaining 30 birds and transmitters were attached to suitable birds. The birds were transported by helicopter to their release site on the peninsula. Willie was pleased to learn that the release was successful.

DON COOPER

Canterbury

There were not quite enough people to do the February wader count at Lake Ellesmere and some parts of the shoreline had to be surveyed during the following days. The count found good numbers of some species but others were missed completely. For example no Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were seen, surprisingly, as good numbers were around previously. However, there were nearly 200 Bar-tailed Godwits. Analysis of the results showed that the lake had 41% of waders surveyed during that week in Canterbury, spread through 20 species. Only the Avon-Heathcote Estuary had more individual waders at 44%, but comprised of only seven species, the most numerous being Pied Oystercatcher. This is no doubt due to the differing substrates at the two sites producing different food for the birds.

In late February, Great Crested Grebes were counted for the George Chance Census. An article in the March *Southern Bird* covered the Otago branch's adventures over this weekend. The Canterbury contribution was again organised by Rosalie Snoyink. Grebe volunteers were able to count most of the high country lakes in Canterbury. In addition, Nick Allen did the Canterbury side of the Waitaki Lakes and those in the MacKenzie Country, like Lake Alexandrina. We Christchurch folk were left with the daunting task of covering the huge shores of Lake Ellesmere and Lake Forsyth. With only 10 people available we visited most of the accessible parts where birds had bred the previous year, but all to no avail. Seemingly they had finished breeding and moved over to Lake Forsyth where Andrew Crossland counted 39. An additional two were seen at Coopers Lagoon, perhaps having nested there, a new location for them. Their total population is now nearly 600. There is something advantageous for them in places where they were not found before, like Forsyth, Ellesmere and Coopers Lagoon and they have increased greatly at Lake Alexandrina, while decreasing in some other high country lakes.

In March the fieldtrip was again to Lake Ellesmere, this time to farewell the migrant waders before they departed for sunny northern breeding grounds. An amazing 15 people attended this morning, cut short by a howling southerly at about 11am. A few Red-necked Stints were the only migrants seen, but on later occasions it was obvious that other species were still present. Everyone spent a long time comparing telescopes and talking about optics etc.

In April nine members went to the Wonderful West Coast, staying at the University of Canterbury's Harihari Field Station where we rattled around, with a bunkroom each.

Lots of survey work was carried out, masterminded by Nick Allen, who at the last moment was unable to come. The weather was beautiful, hot and sunny, with only the day of return being wet and miserable. The Okarito Brown Kiwi seen by means of a tour with Ian Cooper were perhaps the highlight. We saw four birds and heard perhaps five; atmospheric calling with a dazzling full moon overhead.

The May trip should have been up the Hawdon River in Arthurs Pass National Park, to find Orange-Fronted Parakeets. John Kearvell has returned from England to work with them again and had nest sites ear-marked for us to go close to. Unfortunately proper winter weather set in a few days before and a raging Nor-West wind and pouring rain put paid to any trip inland. A few of us compensated with a walk around the settling ponds at the Christchurch Sewage Works with Niall Muga, a keen young Irish ornithologist who was running a trip for Forest and Bird. Here the weather was hot and windy and the tide was full, so birdlife was scarce. However, we were able to see where Little Black Shags had their first breeding success in Canterbury and perhaps even the South Island.

Indoor meetings in the new venue, the DoC Area Office meeting room, have been very popular and the comfort and good acoustics are very welcome. February's members evening was crowded with items, mainly on waders, from breeding Wrybill to mystery birds in Alaska. Fortunately there was time to fit in Nick's account of his visit to Korea (with birds) during a trip to meet his wife's family. We look forward to his honeymoon talk (with birds) which he spent in the Bay of Islands.

In early April Sheila Petch, Tina Troup, Nick and I helped with a Bioblitz at Lincoln Domain. This event was stuffed with experts, mainly from Lincoln University, but also including Ruud Kleinpaste who really drew the crowds. The public came in hordes and the event was very successful. Bioblitzes are supposed to find every single species of living thing, down to algae, that are present in a defined area. We only managed 21 of the avian kind in the desert of a domain in the middle of a suburb in the Canterbury Plains. But the domain, being near Lake Ellesmere, actually produced a White Heron and an overflying Royal Spoonbill. The importance of Lake Ellesmere becomes ever clearer.

JAN WALKER

Otago

Most Bar-tailed Godwits seemed to vacate Otago between 13th and 15th March. Although the total number of the species in the Dunedin area was a modest 1,154 all of them were checked for bands and flags by Peter Schweigman. He saw five birds that were banded at Awarua Bay and one at Christchurch. Amazingly, he saw 18 of the 39 birds that were banded back in 2006 at Warrington Beach, which supports the finding that most birds return to the same area each year.

Indoor meetings have been well attended. In March, Bruce McKinlay gave us a very informative overview of how to use eBird and convinced us of the value of getting our observations transferred from our notebooks to the eBird database so that they can all contribute to knowledge about birds in NZ. A disc containing the PowerPoint slides used in his presentation is available from Ingrid Hutzler, the Society's EO.

Steve Lawrence was our speaker in April. He held us captivated with his tales of his 25 years' experience with New Zealand Falcons, especially in the Wellington area and the Hutt Valley. He provided very interesting details of nesting habits, rehabilitation of injured birds, captive breeding and methods of trapping and banding. Members commented that New Zealand Falcons seem to be being seen more often these days in coastal Otago.

There have been exciting developments at the Orokonui Ecosanctuary near Dunedin with the successful breeding of Kaka, and the release of South Island Saddleback (the taxon's first re-introduction to the mainland). There was also a 'first' for Central Otago and New Zealand (if accepted): a Straw-necked Ibis was present during February and March near Tarras.

MARY THOMPSON

Southland

On a recent visit to Stewart Island four Americans and I were heading back from Mason's Bay heading to Freshwater Hut. We had stopped for lunch not long after the Chocolate Swamp boardwalk when one of the party produced a small cardboard-cut-out doll which has traveled with them around the world. They take photos of it during their trips and send them back via the internet. It did have a name (which escapes me now) but the idea is that the doll has a caption saying something like "here I am on Stewart Island"

We had been joined for lunch by a friendly male Robin and when the doll was placed on the ground about a foot away it proceeded to attack the doll as if it were a predator. This happened each time the doll was placed on the ground anywhere in the vicinity of the Robin. The Americans were quite intrigued.

Lloyd Esler received a report of a White-winged Black Tern from Sutton's Lagoon on the New River Estuary in Invercargill. This species was also recorded there some years ago by Roger Sutton. We received no further reports of the possible Brolga sighting near Mossburn, which is a shame as it would have been nice to have one for our Southland list.

Other interesting snippets from March/April were a juvenile Wandering Albatross found well inland in a paddock at Waimatuku on March 13 (a photo appeared in *The Southland Times*) and a New Zealand Dotterel at the main entrance to Oreti Beach. This bird was standing close to a parked car and was quite unperturbed by human activity, as are most of the southern population. Lloyd Esler saw and photographed a Morepork at Seaward Bush on the outskirts of Invercargill. Moreporks are uncommon around Invercargill and are only reported occasionally.

Southland's Cattle Egret population continues to dwindle with the biggest flock being 31 in a paddock next to the Waipango River on April 3rd. This total included six juveniles. The only other reports were of a single bird on Stewart Island on April 21st and one other reported from Southland. Our usual White Heron winter visitor was joined by another, although both birds were feeding on separate sides of the New River Estuary.

After all the hard work of catching and banding a few of Southland's elusive wader population we have received reports from Rob Schuckard of 'our' birds having been spotted in Japan (Okinawa) and Korea. The latter was nicely photographed wearing its Southland bling. Reports like this make it all worthwhile.

PHIL RHODES

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) 436 2129. 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) 437 6470. Whangarei
Harbour wader count Ph. Tony Beauchamp (09) 436 2661.
North Kaipara wader count Ph. David Crockett (09) 435 0954.

Auckland

Mel Galbraith, 62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead, Auckland. Ph (09) 480 1958.
Email melgar62@slingshot.co.nz
Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except January) at
7.45pm at Natural Science Building 23, Unitec, Point Chevalier.

South Auckland

Simon Fordham, P.O. Box 64 042, Botany Town Centre, Manukau 1730.
Ph (09) 274 1828. Email simonf@clear.net.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

Eila Lawton, 449 Lund Road, RD2 Katikati 3178. Ph (07) 549 3646
Email elawton@actrix.co.nz
Evening meetings – second Wednesdays of Feb, April, June, Aug, Oct
and Dec, 7pm.

Gisborne/Wairoa

Steve Sawyer, 369 Wharerata Road, RD1 Gisborne 4071. Ph (06) 867 2888,
Mobile 027 209 6049. Email ecoworksnz@xtra.co.nz

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

Peter Frost, 87 Ikitara Road, Wanganui East, Wanganui 4500. Ph: 06 343 1648.
Email: birds.wanganui@xtra.co.nz. Evening meetings – last Monday of every
month except December, 7.30pm (unless the day is a public holiday),
St Joseph's Hall, 1 Campbell Street. For more details contact Peter Frost.

Manawatu

Ian Saville, 24 Puketiro Avenue, Feilding 4702. Ph (06) 323 1441.
Email sav@wrybill-tours.com
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 Barbara Lovatt for further details.

Wellington

Ian Armitage, 50 Ranui Terrace, Tawa, Wellington 5028. 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

Stuart Wood, 24 Olympus Way, Richmond 7020. Ph (03) 544 3932.
Email stuartwood38@yahoo.co.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.
Phone Stuart Wood (03) 544 3932 or Don Cooper (03) 544 8109.

Marlborough

Mike Bell, 42 Vickerman Street, Grovetown, Blenheim 7202. Phone
(03) 577 9818 or 021 734 602. Email mike.bell@marlborough.govt.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 8205.
Ph (03) 322 7187. Email shesagreen@gmail.com
Evening meetings last Monday of the month (Feb-Nov), Mahaanui
Area DoC Office, 31 Nga Mahi Road (off Blenheim Road), Sockburn,
Christchurch. Monthly field trips – dates vary, contact Jan Walker.

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.

Southland

Lloyd Esler, 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara, RD9 Invercargill 9879.
Ph (03) 213 0404. Email esler@southnet.co.nz
Evening meetings (in conjunction with Field Club) held second Thursday
of the month at 7.30 pm. Please phone Lloyd Esler for venue and further
information, field trip usually on Saturday following. Beach Patrols on a
casual basis, phone Phil Rhodes (03) 214 4936 or Lloyd Esler.

