



# Southern *Bird*

No. 40 December 2009 • ISSN 1175-1916

Vagrant Gull becomes  
birding sensation

Migration in New Zealand

Engraved Wader Flags



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## QUOTATION

*...And above, in the light  
Of the star-lit night,  
Swift birds of passage wing their flight  
Through the dewy atmosphere.*

*I hear the beat  
Of their pinions fleet,  
As from the land of snow and sleet  
They seek a southern lea.*

*I hear the cry  
Of their voices high  
Falling dreamily through the sky,  
But their forms I cannot see...*

Birds of Passage by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
(1807-1882)

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## COVER PHOTOS

### Cover Photos

Front cover: The Franklin's Gull that was recently seen in various parts of southern Auckland.

Photo by Bruce Shanks.

Back cover: A female Wrybill on the upper Rangitata River, Canterbury. Photo by Peter Langlands.

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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. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc.

## MARLBOROUGH BIRD BANDING COURSE

Over the past five years Marlborough OSNZ has been banding birds at Jack Taylor's farm at Ward. We have banded over 4,000 birds of 14 species at this site, including both native bush birds and introduced finches, and are looking forward to this summer's programme. On a typical day we usually catch between 100 and 400 birds, with nets operating from dawn until dusk.

Our first weekend will be January 23/24th which will be a bird banding training course open to all OSNZ members and family. Anybody with an interest in learning how to capture, handle, band, measure and score the moult of passerine birds can attend. No prior experience is needed. The aim of the weekend is to offer a variety of levels of training, from beginners who would like an introduction to bird banding, to people who wish to enhance their skills by learning new and refining old methods. An introduction on how to record the moult of birds will be a key feature of the weekend.

We will camp at the banding site where there are basic facilities: running cold water, long drop toilet, BBQ, gas cooker, picnic table and bench. You will need to bring your own tent, food, and plate, knife and fork, but cooking gear will be supplied. Usually we pool all the food and eat together. Our team will arrive on the Friday afternoon and will be staying until Tuesday afternoon. People can join us for as long or short a time as they like; children are welcome to attend with parents. For more information, further details and directions to the site please contact Mike Bell via email at skua44@yahoo.co.nz or phone 03 577 9818 (evenings). We hope that this is the first of new round of OSNZ field courses, and that other groups will be stimulated to offer similar courses in their regions.

Come and enjoy a weekend learning a new birding skill in a fantastic location.

MIKE BELL

## UNUSUAL GROUP TERRESTRIAL BEHAVIOUR BY NEW ZEALAND FANTAILS

On 25th August 2008, from 17:10 to 17:30, whilst driving between Okiwi Bay and Elaine Bay in the Marlborough Sounds, we observed behaviour from Fantails we had not seen previously. Sunset was in full swing and light conditions were declining very quickly. During three occasions we saw a few Fantails (black as well as regularly-coloured forms) sitting on the sealed road, with no intentions to fly away from our approaching car. After braking the car, bringing the birds to within a few metres from us, they were joined by multiple individuals flying from the bush, growing to a flock of about 25. They were flying fanatically around the car, exhibiting behaviour that could easily have resulted in multiple casualties. A few kilometres down the road, the same happened again with similar numbers, and a third time with only a few birds. In total, we counted about 70 fantails. I am not sure how many are still alive after encounters with other cars but I have never seen such concentrations, or the described behaviour of this species.

After posting a report of this interesting behaviour on the Birding-NZ email group replies suggested that the birds may have been frantically looking for food before the arrival of bad weather (such weather arrived a few days later), or as the potential result of intoxication after eating berries (however berries were not evident in the surrounding bush).

ROB and ANNEKE SCHUCKARD

## Publisher

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## JOINING THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

If you are reading this but are not a member of the Ornithological Society you would be very welcome to join us. Our membership consists of the whole spectrum of people interested in New Zealand/South Pacific birds from beginners with just an interest through keen birdwatchers and amateur ornithologists to professional ornithologists, so you should find others of a similar level to you, or find resources that are of interest to you.

For our very reasonable subscription fee of \$57.50 (students pay just \$30.00 and overseas/corporate rates etc are also available) you will receive a quarterly issue of this magazine *Southern Bird*, which is the Society's main mouthpiece to members, has articles of bird/ornithological interest and both national and local news; a quarterly issue of *Notornis*, the Society's scientific journal; an annual issue of *The State of New Zealand's Birds*, reporting on the status of a group of species or those species using a particular habitat type; and from time to time either free or discounted major Society publications – for example a copy of the latest *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* is currently provided free to new members while stocks last. This atlas gives a thorough overview of the distribution of every bird on mainland New Zealand and some offshore islands in its 533 pages.

In addition to reading material and, with time, a useful collection of reference books, members have access to meetings, both indoor and in the field, on a national and regional basis providing opportunities to gain knowledge on birds/ornithology and learning practical skills whilst networking with knowledgeable people. Our extensive library of books and journals is open for members to borrow and view items. Members are also encouraged to provide data to the Society's schemes, and supply sightings to the annual New Zealand Bird Report and the eBird online reporting tool. These data provide information on which research may be conducted, often with conclusions relevant to decision-making processes on the conservation of birds.

For further details and/or a membership form you should take one of three actions:

Visit the Society's website [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz).

Contact the Society's membership secretary, Yvonne Mackenzie, by writing to P.O. Box 29-532 Fendalton, Christchurch 8540, or phone 03 351 3660 or email [yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com](mailto:yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com).

Contact your nearest regional representative, contact details for which can be found on the back page of this magazine.



## 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](http://www.i-o-c.org). The Local Committee looks forward to seeing many of our New Zealand colleagues in Campos do Jordão!

## ONLINE ACCESS TO NOTORNIS AND SOUTHERN BIRD

All published *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* issues are now available online at [www.notornis.org.nz](http://www.notornis.org.nz)

Newer issues less than three years old are password protected and only accessible to OSNZ members. Your log-in consists of a **username** (the email address that you provided OSNZ with) and a **password** (the letter "N" in front of your 4 digit membership number, which is printed on your renewal form, for example N1234).

## NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2010 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2010 and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2010 Annual General Meeting will be held in the Tahuna Conference Centre, Nelson on Saturday 5th June 2010 at 8.30pm.  
Peter Gaze, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson

## OSNZ AGM AND CONFERENCE 2010

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held in Tahunanui (Nelson) during Queen's Birthday weekend 2010.

All events and meals will take place in the Conference Centre at Tahuna Beach Holiday Park, 70 Beach Road, Tahunanui.

**4th June 2010** (Friday)  
3pm-6pm Registration

**5th June 2010** (Saturday)  
7.30am-9am Registration  
9am-5pm Scientific day  
5.30pm Happy hour  
6.30pm Informal dinner (numbers limited)  
8.30pm AGM

**6th June 2010** (Sunday)  
8am / 9am Field trips  
6.30pm Conference dinner

**7th June 2010** (Monday)  
Car-sharing local trips

Please refer to the registration form enclosed with this issue of *Southern Bird* for more details, or download a copy from [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The three year Council terms held by Paul Scofield and Philip Battley expire at the next AGM. In addition, the vacant position on Council, to which Peter Frost has been temporarily co-opted, must be filled by an elected member. Nominations are called for these three positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand for these positions.

Nominations will close with the Secretary on **28th February 2010**. Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include brief *curriculum vitae* of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

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

If you have misplaced your renewal form, a blank version is now available online at [www.osnz.org.nz/join.htm](http://www.osnz.org.nz/join.htm), or otherwise please contact the Membership Secretary, Yvonne Mackenzie, P.O. Box 29-532, Fendalton, Christchurch 8540. Phone (03) 351 3660, email [yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com](mailto:yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com)

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## THE STATE OF NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS 2008

This report, which was launched at the Annual General Meeting, has now been widely distributed. A copy has been sent to all of the Parliamentarians, the Director General of the Department of Conservation, the President of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and Regional Council Chairpersons and Chief Executives. This publication has been acknowledged as being a valuable resource and is already being widely utilised for information purposes.

The Society is grateful to Kerry-Jayne Wilson for her work in compiling the report and to all of those authors who provided papers. I also thank Richard Holdaway for the editing of the final document. I am also grateful to Ingrid Hutzler and Yvonne Mackenzie who compiled the posting list and undertook the posting itself.

This publication has achieved the dual benefits of placing information about birds in the public sector and also raising the profile of the Society. There are additional copies in stock. If you would like an extra copy or two contact Roger Sharp, or download it from the OSNZ website.

## PUBLICATION UPDATE

There are continuing delays in achieving the catch up for Society publications. The post-out in October contained the March 2009 issue of *Notornis* along with the September issue of *Southern Bird*. It is intended that a forthcoming post-out will contain the June and September issues of *Notornis*. The December post-out is then intended to include the December issues of *Southern Bird* and *Notornis*, although that is dependent on Jim Briskie receiving the final sign-off for papers/notes from authors.

The 2007 *New Zealand Bird Report* is currently being finalised by editor Derek Onley. Derek attended the recent Council meeting to discuss several issues associated with content and he is now proceeding towards finalising the content. Derek has been struggling (heroically) with a paucity of records from some regions and also the difficulty that some regional recorders are having in placing sightings into a context that means something on a national basis. Council's view is that the 2007 *New Zealand Bird Report* will be an example of where we wish to head, rather than a comprehensive report.

Council is exploring options to enable an easier extraction of information from eBird and from Birding-NZ to assist regional recorders in the future.

## FINANCIAL SITUATION

At this stage Council has still not received the audited accounts for the 2008 year as they are currently with the auditor. However, it is clear that the economic downturn and the reduction of income from interest means that the Society will have diminished financial resources in 2010.

At the recent Annual General Meeting

the outgoing treasurer Mark Nee warned the membership that it was likely that the subscriptions would need to be raised at the 2010 Annual General Meeting. Council is therefore preparing the necessary notice of motion that will be published in the March issue of *Southern Bird*.

Council has decided to extend the Executive Officer's contract for a further 12 month period from September 2009. However, the position will be reviewed depending on the financial situation at the June 2010 Council meeting.

## ELECTIONS 2010

It appears that there will be at least two vacancies for election onto Council in 2010. There is therefore scope for new members to be nominated for Council. The full notice calling for nominations will be in *Southern Bird* in due course, but this is an early warning for people to consider putting their names forward at the appropriate time.

## REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Council has agreed to re-appoint Regional Representatives as nominated by the regions, or where no nominations were received to reappoint the incumbent.

Council wishes to record their gratitude for the work that is undertaken by Regional Representatives, who are the effective interface between the Society and the membership.

## CHECKLIST

The checklist is currently at the printers with all final proofing completed. In association with Te Papa Press the checklist will be launched at the Annual General Meeting in Nelson in 2010. Already there is much interest in the contents. I can confirm that this is a very substantial volume of approximately 480 pages, and I am sure that there will be some debate about the findings of the committee. However, Council is confident that the committee has fully analysed the information available at the time and that the checklist will be a reference document suitable for many years to come.

## WADER COUNT REPORT

Over the past five years there has been a concerted effort to achieve national wader counts in November, February and June as part of a contract the Society entered into with the Department of Conservation. This project was completed in February 2009 and the final report has now been prepared and presented to the Department of Conservation.

Council will now reconvene the working group looking into the future of wader counts, including the timing and frequency of counting into the future. It is also intended to investigate options for co-ordinating with the Australian 2020 wader project to achieve efficiencies. In the meantime Council confirmed that no further subsidies will be paid for wader count expenses until the review has been completed.

## SOCIETY WEBSITE

Bruce McKinlay provided a report to the Council on proposals to totally reconfigure the Society websites and this was considered by the Council. It was decided, however, that further information needed to be obtained before a contract could be entered into with suppliers.

The Society wishes to upgrade the website to make it more efficient, particularly for members wishing to update their membership records or providing payments for subscriptions directly through the site. However, there are major cost implications and at the present time the Society is taking a cautious approach to funding the upgrades. We would request any members who have experience in these matters to provide their comments on possibilities for the upgrade and revamping of the website to Bruce, to ensure that we have the best possible information when the decision is made.

As this is the final publication before the festive season I wish all members a happy holiday period and do not forget to keep making observations and report them through the eBird site so that your information is available to the long term database.

DAVID LAWRIE

## 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](http://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](mailto:yvonnemackenzie@hotmail.com)

Contact your local regional representative – contact details are on the inside back cover of this issue of *Southern Bird*.

## OSNZ WADER COUNTS

At its meeting on 17th October Council confirmed that regions should continue with OSNZ Wader Counts on a national basis.

The purpose of the counts is to track changes in populations of endemic species and contribute to monitoring changes in the populations of northern hemisphere breeding waders on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (particularly Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot and Turnstone). Council intends to work with Birds Australia to investigate ways of developing common census and monitoring methods applicable to both countries.

DoC financial support to the wader counts ended with the February 2009 count, however regions are encouraged to continue with counts in November, February and June, wherever resources permit. The Society will be investigating possible sources of funding to assist in the future.

A report on the latest series of counts (2003-2009) is near finalisation. It is expected that this will be published by DoC in the near future.

Council and the Scientific Committee are investigating how best to maximise the value of the counts in future. We will keep you posted on developments.

I would like to thank all members who have taken part in the counts and look forward to your continued support. As many wader populations plummet across the globe OSNZ has a major contribution to make through the provision of information, particularly as we are the country at the end of the flyway where the populations can best be monitored. The data has many uses and will assume greater significance in the future as pressure on estuarine areas increases.

Happy counting (and fine weather!)

DAVID LAWRIE  
President



Photo by David Lawrie



Photo by Ingrid Hutzler

## RED-FLAGGED GODWITS

Please be advised that a new flag and band combination is now being used on Bar-tailed Godwits in New Zealand - the flags are red, rather than white which has been used up to this time. The colours used for the bands remain the same (red, white, blue and yellow).

The red flags are only being used as part of a colour band / flag combination. No Bar-tailed Godwits have been or are going to be marked with just red flags in New Zealand or elsewhere in the East Asia-Australasia Flyway.

Please note that single 'red' flags, which several have observers have reported, are most likely orange flags (attached in Victoria, Australia), which can look red in some light conditions, including in photos! This has been a longstanding issue with respect to reports of 'red' flags, all of which have been processed by the Banding Office as being orange flags.

The choice of red for the new New Zealand colour band combination was made in full consultation with our Australian colleagues and those co-ordinating colour marking of waders in the Flyway.

Please keep submitting records of all individually colour-banded birds to Phil Battley P.Battley@massey.ac.nz and Rob Schuckard rschckrd@xtra.co.nz .

Thank you, and happy spotting!

DAVID MELVILLE

## NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

R Alexander (Canterbury); Johnson Anthony (Auckland); Julia Baer (Northland); Steph Behrens (Auckland); Christopher Betts (Southland); Mr Q Bourke (Manawatu); Rebecca Bowater (Nelson); Jasmine Braidwood (Nelson); Kimball Chen (Southland); Chi Yeung Jimmy Choi (Manawatu); Yvette Cottam (Manawatu); Emma Louise Crawford (Wanganui); Mark Davison (Auckland); Andrew Digby (Wellington); Sue Dinkelacker (Northland); Gordon Ell (Auckland); Ian Fraser (Auckland); Josie Galbraith (Auckland); Grace Glick (Wellington); Otto Gruebl (Gisborne/Wairoa); David Hallett (Canterbury); Anneke Hermans (Volcanic Plateau); Mark Hornby (Waikato); Noel Hyde (Volcanic Plateau); Kate James (Bay of Plenty); Ian Johnson (Auckland); Carol Kliem (Wellington); Grace Kroos (Nelson); Tom Kroos (Nelson); Gary Little (Far North); David Loubser (Wellington); John McKie (Nelson); Dva Morle (Hawkes Bay); Iain Morle (Hawkes Bay); Niall Mugaun (Canterbury); Philip Palmer (Otago); Kiri Pullen (Southland); Gareth Rapley (Wellington); Justin Rasmussen (Canterbury); Mahuru Robb (Waikato); Sharon Roberts (Otago); Emily Roper (Auckland); Gary Setterfield (Auckland); Zuni Margaret Anne Steer (Canterbury); Ian Taylor (Bay of Plenty); Kay Taylor (Bay of Plenty); David Thomas (Waikato); Stephen Totterman (Australia); Duncan Watson (Wellington); Asta Wistrand (Far North); Sarah Withers (Auckland).

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

Johnson Anthony; Paul Asquith; David Baker-Gabb; Elizabeth Bell; Phil Bradfield; Julia Brooke White; Mr J Campbell; Chris Challies; Mrs N H Clark; Paul Cuming; Lisa Daglish; Mark Davison; Lorna Deppe; Jared Diamond; Ian Farrell; Diane Fraser; Murray Gavin; Helge Grastveit; Otto Gruebl; Mark Hanger; Ailsa Harrison; Geoff Harrow; Neil Hayes QSM FRSA; Henk Heinekamp; James Hunter; Martyn Kennedy; Rob Lawrence; Antje Leseberg; Wayne Linklater; Peter McClelland; Mary McEwen; Miss N. Macdonald; Bruce McKinlay; Ian McLean; Alan Miller; Colin Miskelly; Gregory Moorcroft; Philip Moors; Les Moran; Katherine Morris; Dr P. L. Munns; Lloyd Nielsen; Alfreda Nielson; Viola Palmer; Ben Paris; Lance Pickett; Bruce Postill; Lyn Reid; Diana Robertson; Paul Sagar; Richard Seaton; Ann Sherlock; Roger Simms; Bindi Thomas; Kerry Walshe; David Wilson; Sarah Withers; Jamie Wood; Steve Wratten.

## 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, P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040 or gaze@slingshot.co.nz

# TIPS ON SOUND RECORDING IN THE FIELD

The first requirement when recording sounds anywhere with a microphone is to get as close as possible without causing undue stress to your subject or distortion in the resulting audio recording. With birds and most other animal sounds the problem is being able to get close enough to your target species to be able to record the songs or calls to an acceptable volume and quality. There are a number of ways of achieving the desired results. One is placing a microphone (usually connected to the recording device via a long lead) at a regular singing post, and observing your target from a hide or similar structure. This technique is very time consuming but, with a little practice, can produce exceptional results.

A variation on this theme using equipment that is rather more expensive is the use of a radio microphone. This can be placed near the singing post in the normal manner without the use of cables, as the microphone has a built in radio transmitter that sends the audio to a special receiver that can be connected to your recording device. The downside of this method is the relatively short transmission range of these microphones, which is usually, depending on atmospheric conditions, a couple of hundred metres, but less in heavy bush or built-up areas. Radio microphones tend to work best in line-of-sight situations.

The most popular and effective microphone technique for outdoor recording involves the use of a piece of apparatus known as a parabolic reflector, which works by concentrating the incoming signal to a predetermined point. This is where the head of the microphone is placed. Satellite TV dishes work on the same principal. Parabolic reflectors are very directional, which can be useful when recording in noisy conditions. If your target sound is in front of you, with other sounds of the same intensity to the side of you or even behind you, the parabola, if adjusted correctly, will accentuate the signal coming from ahead of you. The larger the reflector the greater is the gain in signal strength. A 60 cm reflector will give a gain of 30 to 40 dB over a similar microphone without a reflector at the same distance from your target species.

Two disadvantages of parabolic reflectors are that they can be difficult to carry over rough terrain and that they can cut the low frequency end of the audio range. In recent times a Scandinavian company (Telinga) has produced a plastic parabola, with and without a microphone, that can be rolled up and carried in a day pack.

A more recent innovation in microphones has seen the introduction of the stick or shotgun type that is extremely directional, but is susceptible to excessive wind noise. Several models are now available, some of which have been redesigned to reduce their wind noise difficulties. Disadvantages with these microphones are their price and the effective range over which they will work efficiently

outdoors. Advantages that outweigh the disadvantages for this type are the high gain that they produce and the very quiet circuit noise.

One would not consider the lapel microphone, at first glance, to be suitable for outdoor recordings. This is actually far from the case, although this type does have restrictions on how it can be used. These microphones, being so small, can be mounted on the end of a flexible rod and inserted into a petrel burrow or into a bat box, or the nest of a small passerine as required. Although very small these types usually have very high gain and can be noisy as a result.

To obtain the best results when recording outdoors the sound recordist needs to have a good robust microphone that can stand up to the hard knocks that inevitably happen in this environment. For many years I used a dynamic variety that you could run over without doing much harm. More recently I switched to a condenser type that requires a power supply for it to operate as designed. The condenser has a better frequency range but has a slightly lower gain than the old dynamic types that I used to use.

When recording outdoors a good windsock for your microphone is essential to reduce wind noise. Most of the better microphones on the market today come with either a foam rubber windcap or a metal mesh one. The foam rubber one is the more effective of the two in most outdoor situations. If you wish to reduce wind sounds when using a parabola an old nylon stocking stretched over the reflector is very effective.

A sound recordist needs to become very familiar with the equipment they are using so that they know what the recorder and associated equipment will do and what it won't do in various conditions. One common problem is that many people either under record or over record the incoming signal, both of which can cause major difficulties later on playback. Low level recording will increase background noise on playback whilst recording at too high a level can give rise to distortion on playback. Most recorders today have recording level meters or LED indicators to show at what level the signal is being captured. Many also have provision for a set of headphones. If your equipment allows the use of headphones it is a good idea to use these while recording as this way you can get a good idea of the quality of the incoming signal.

With the advent of digital recording equipment and its miniaturisation it is now possible to carry what used to be the heaviest part of a recording setup in one's back pocket. Both the frequency response and the dynamic range of the audio have also improved tremendously with this new technology, of which I hope to write more in the near future.

LES MCPHERSON

## 'SHOWCASE' PENGUIN BURROW FOUND ON MOUNT MAUNGANUI/MAUAO



*Ben and Blue Penguin in rock burrow.  
Photo by Paul Cuming*

Blue Penguins have been studied on Mauao/ Mt Maunganui by students an Environmental Studies course for many years. Occasionally one gets picked up as part of the haul during Grey-faced Petrel work at night. I've been privileged enough to find a penguin nest recently on the seaward side of the mountain, and on Labour Day showed Ben, Dave and Marcus Richards an adult in a rock burrow. The burrow is unique in that it has two quite accessible entrances. The adult bird in the photograph shows how close to nature you can get, and is a wonderful way of showing youngsters some hands-on real birds without resorting to computers and books. It certainly has Ben and Marcus raving about the birds! I believe if you can show a young person real live birds, and handle them, they come away with a lifetime memory that becomes respect for the birds around them for life.

PAUL CUMING

## OSNZ SALES TABLE

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

*Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ 1999-2004* - \$98  
(within NZ only - overseas purchasers should enquire below for a quote)  
*Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ (1985)* - \$14  
*Chatham Islands Ornithology* - \$19  
*Fifty Years of Bird Study in New Zealand (Index to Notornis 1939-1989)* - \$14  
*Wader Studies in New Zealand* - \$24  
*Birds of Hawke's Bay* - \$10  
*A Flying Start* - \$14  
Stickers - Pied Stilt (specify outside glass/bumper or inside glass only) - \$3, Notornis - \$3  
Ticklist - \$1  
Checklist (1990 edition) - \$9

Send orders to:  
Paul Cuming, OSNZ Sales, 2/7 Robins Road,  
Judea, Tauranga  
Tel. (07) 571 5125, fax (07) 571 5126, email  
birdeo@post.com

# ENGRAVED WADER FLAGS – A BRIEF UPDATE

With arctic migrant waders back in New Zealand for the summer this is a great opportunity to get out there and look for colour bands and leg flags, and help a variety of studies relating to these birds.

The New Zealand Wader Study Group (NZWSG) started using plain white flags in December 1991, which brought almost immediate success when, in April 1992 a white-flagged godwit was seen in southern Japan. As the bird probably didn't leave New Zealand until sometime in March 1992, this sighting, just a month after expected departure was the first indication that godwits might be flying to Asia direct and not stopping to refuel in Australia or elsewhere, which was commonly suspected. As the years went by more white flags were seen along the flyway, adding to the migration picture but with each passing year the data became less valuable as a sighting could be of a bird flagged a month earlier or 10 years earlier.

A simple way of identifying individual waders was needed, other than the usual colour-banding methods. Enter the engraved flag era. Finding a way to put letters on flags was eventually solved when letters could be laser etched onto the 0.5 mm thick DARVIC and these engravings could then be inked. In 2005 Dick Veitch, who had been working with these flags in Delaware Bay, started producing white engraved flags for use in New Zealand. Each engraved flag used by NZWSG has three black letters on the white flag. Only 21 letters of the alphabet are used, so that similar looking letters are not confused, e.g. 'D' is used 'O' isn't, 'E' is but 'F' isn't. These 21 letters still allow over 9,000 combinations to be created. Each bird can now be identified in the field if the letters can be read, although the observer needs to be closer to the bird to read letters rather than colour bands. The advantage is the simplicity of attaching one flag rather than a flag and up to four colour bands. Colour bands also have their drawbacks: birds standing in water, bands covered in mud etc. Engraved flags have proved to be a very valuable tool to monitor godwit and knot movements both nationally and internationally.

There are now two colour banding schemes and an engraved flag scheme operating in New Zealand, and at some point in time it will be worth comparing the results but for now we shall just look at the engraved flag results, bearing in mind this is a constantly changing story.

## BAR-TAILED GODWIT

Between February 2005 and October 2009, 446 Bar-tailed Godwits were fitted with white engraved flags at three sites:

Miranda, Firth of Thames 387  
Foxton, Manawatu Estuary 51  
Karako, Manukau Harbour 8

## SUMMARY OF SIGHTINGS

Of the 446 birds flagged there have been 1,189 reported sightings of 353 (79%) individual birds.

Of the 353, 266 (75%) have been seen only at the original banding sites. Only 21 (6%) have moved from Miranda or Karako to other sites

within the Auckland region but seven have since returned to their banding sites.

One moved away from the Auckland region but then returned to the banding site after spending a short time in the Bay of Plenty and one has moved to Bell's Island, Nelson and as yet has not returned.

Four have been seen overseas, with three in South Korea and one on the North Slope of Alaska, whilst one bird from Victoria is now carrying a New Zealand engraved flag.

From so many sightings it is clear that the majority of godwits are pretty site faithful in New Zealand, particularly the adults, and although a small number did leave their banding sites some returned. Of course, this data relies on observers looking at many sites and we are very fortunate to have several keen observers around the country, including Tony Habraken who works the Firth of Thames and the south Manukau Harbour regularly. If more godwits move between these sites, they should be detected.



*A Bar-tailed Godwit banded with engraved flag AMV photographed by Phil Battley at the Manawatu Estuary*

Of the 51 godwits flagged at Foxton in late October 2008, 33 were juveniles and 18 were adults. 20 of the juveniles have been re-sighted, with 12 of those seen away from Foxton, from The Kaipara to Otago. 14 of the adults have been re-sighted but only three of them away from Foxton, and all were seen just up the coast at the Whanganui Rivermouth. This is another example of adults being pretty site faithful while juveniles go walkabout.

Of the four seen overseas, the most impressive was AEN, seen by Jesse Conklin close to the Colville River on the North Slope of Alaska, 12,178 km from Miranda, on 3rd July 2009 and near where the satellite tagged bird D8 was detected in 2008.

Three birds: APB, ATJ and BLE were seen at one site in South Korea between 28th March and 12th April 2009.

There are also black-flagged godwits with white numbers and letters. Originally these were only fitted to birds with satellite transmitters, but these flags are also used now for other godwits in Alaska, usually on breeding birds, so any records of these are particularly interesting and several pairs of godwits were flagged on Alaska's Seward Peninsula in June 2009 by a crew from New Zealand.

## LESSER KNOT

Between February 2005 and October 2009, 893 knots were fitted with white engraved flags, all but a handful at Miranda.

## SUMMARY OF SIGHTINGS

Of these 893 flagged birds, 518 (58%) have been re-sighted at least once and there has been a total of 1,335 reported sightings. As knot flags and so the letters are smaller than those on godwits they are a little harder to read. Quite a few birds are detected with engraved flags but the letters remain unread.

Of the 518 seen, 224 (43%) have been re-sighted only at the banding site or close by. 192 (37%) have moved to other sites in the Auckland region, a very different picture to the stay-at-home godwits. A further 47 have returned to the banding sites and some of these have since moved again.

Only nine have been seen away from the Auckland region and four of those have since returned. A further four were originally banded overseas. An impressive 38 have been seen overseas, predominantly at Chongming Dao in China where several thousand waders are caught each year during northward migration and in the Bohai Sea where Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle spent several weeks during the 2009 northward migration, specifically looking for marked knots.

Of the 38 overseas sightings 29 were at Chongming Dao and the Bohai Sea in China, one each were from Chukotka and Taiwan, and two from Japan, all on northward migration. During southward migration three were seen in New South Wales, one in south-east Queensland and one near Broome in north-west Australia.

## OVERSEAS BANDING

Banding groups in Chongming Dao, Broome, south-east Queensland and Victoria are now using engraved flags usually using two digits, a combination of letters and numbers and on those regions' usual coloured flags.

One godwit from Chongming Dao, three from south-east Queensland and two from Victoria have been seen in New Zealand. One knot from Chongming Dao was caught at Miranda but as the ink was already fading and the metal band was badly corroded, the bands were changed to a New Zealand combination, but in honour of its first capture site the flag with CMD was used.

Other knots from overseas have been sighted but from only two banding sites; 48 from Chongming Dao, China and 10 from Roebuck Bay, north-west Australia.

Finally, seven knots (three adults and four chicks) were banded on the breeding grounds of Chukotka in eastern Siberia in 2009. They carry a white engraved flag with three letters and a pale green flag on the same leg.

I wish to encourage everyone with a telescope to please have a close look for engraved flags; hopefully the colour-banded birds won't block your view!

Any records can be sent direct to me at [riegen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:riegen@xtra.co.nz).

ADRIAN RIEGEN

# VAGRANT GULL BECOMES BIRDING SENSATION

Keen bird-watchers from around New Zealand flocked to Takanini in October to see an unusual arrival from North America.

The Franklin's Gull that arrived at a small beach on the Manukau Harbour in early September had probably travelled at least 20,000 kilometres from its breeding grounds in the prairie marshes of central North America.

It appears to have over-reached the species' expected winter migration down the west coast of South America and had a wild ride in the 'Roaring Forties' to reach Auckland.

Nick-named Frank or Frankie by watchers, its online and on-the-ground following is probably the largest for any vagrant arrival in New Zealand. The new forum BirdingNZ.net website's entries alone for the gull were at eight pages of updates and photographs by the end of October, and more than 1,000 people had viewed the entries.

This is the first record of a Franklin's Gull in the Auckland region and only the second record of a Franklin's Gull in New Zealand; the first was in Dunedin in 2002.

Since it was first noticed at Kidd's Beach on the Manukau Harbour on September 5th, (by Ian Southey and Tony Habraken), the Gull has gained quite a following, being seen by scores of bird watchers.

Regular reports of the gull's location have been made by birders on BirdingNZ.net with photographs and often daily updates.

Almost as soon as Ian and Tony got their first sighting of the Gull in September, it took off and flew east towards Weymouth. It took two weeks of searching before it was found again.

As chance would have it, this time the gull found another Tony! On Friday September 18th, Tony Woodroffe spotted the gull at Ardmore Airfield where he works and lives. He alerted Whitford birders Simon and Morag Fordham, who arrived at the airfield just after lunch, only to have missed it by five minutes. The gull had flown.

Simon contacted another keen birder, Phil Hammond, who joined him and Morag for the search. After all of them had scoured nearby roadside fields without a sighting, Simon and Morag headed back to the office. Phil stayed on to search and soon spotted Frankie at the netball courts on Bruce Pulman Park in Walters Road, Takanini; about three kilometres west of the airfield.

Since then, the gull has been seen most often at the park, sometimes at the airfield and is believed to make occasional return flights to the coast near Weymouth. At the park, it is usually seen near the Walters Road entrance, either on the rugby fields, the netball courts, or the park's roadside ponds.

Although many people have found this gull an incredibly easy 'twitch' as they sight it within seconds of arriving at the park, others have not been so lucky. Simon and Morag's experience is typical of the timing difficulties some birders have experienced in their quest to see the bird.

Back in September, when Simon got the call from Phil at Bruce Pulman Park to say the Gull was there, he and Morag returned quickly, but not in time for a sighting of Frankie resting on the netball court. The Gull had flown back to Ardmore Airfield where Tony reported its arrival, and where they eventually caught sight of it late that afternoon.

Waikato bird watcher, Graham Saunders also dipped out on first attempts to view Frankie, and had to persist for more than two weeks, before he finally connected with the Gull.

Others, like OSNZ president David Lawrie, have had instant success. David was busy at work on the afternoon when Phil, Simon and Morag were searching. After work, he raced over for a look and was delighted to see it back at the ponds on Walters Road.

"I raced off picking up my bins on the way and got to the spot at 5.50pm, and there it was, sitting on an island in the pond, about 20 metres from the road, conveniently by a stone wall the right height to sit on! Good views for about 10 minutes, before it stretched its wings a couple of times, heading west, towards the Manukau Harbour, and climbing into the setting sun", he said on the website.

Since it was first found on the Manukau, the gull has undergone a seasonal moult of its breeding plumage during October, replacing

*Frankie having a stretch and showing his/her active wing moult off.*

primary wing feathers and losing many of the black hood feathers on its head.

Franklin's Gulls are one of the few birds that moult twice a year, so it is expected to moult back into breeding plumage, regaining the distinctive black hood sometime early next year.

The gull, at 32-36 cm in length, is slightly smaller than our endemic Black-billed Gull (37cm) and is a darker, slaty grey on the back. It has long black legs and in breeding plumage the white eye-ring contrasts strongly with the black hood.

On the list of endangered species, the International Union for Conservation of Nature rates Franklin's Gull as of 'least concern'. It says that Franklin's Gull depends on extensive prairie marshes for breeding, and entire colonies may shift sites from year to year depending on water levels. "Once threatened by habitat loss due to large-scale drainage projects and the 'dust bowl years' of the 1930s, this species has regained numbers with the creation of large wetlands, mainly on protected national wildlife refuges. Colony shifts continue to occur, influenced by drought and fluctuating water levels, although populations appear to be increasing."

written and photos by SUZI PHILLIPS



*Frankie on the netball courts at Bruce Pulham Park showing that rare birds can use what may appear to be the most unfruitful of habitats.*





# MIGRATION IN NEW ZEALAND

*This image: Pied Oystercatchers migrating in a rough V formation skein.*

Given the number of Pied Oystercatchers that annually move up and down New Zealand remarkably little is known about the routes they take. The harbours they choose to spend the non-breeding season in are well known and so are the times they arrive and depart each year. There have been consistent records of migrating flocks passing along the Taranaki coast for some decades and a number of records from the beaches west of Hamilton as well. There are a few other records from the east and west coasts of the South Island as well and reports of birds going into or coming out of the hills between Nelson and Abel Tasman National Park. In addition to this there are a small number of tantalising records from well inland. This could be regarded as the bare bones of a map describing these migrations but it isn't really good for much.

Intensive study of few sites where wind farms have been proposed has already revealed a lot of new information, but they are just tiny fragments of the bigger picture. For the last year or two I have been requesting information to try to map out the routes migrating waders take, paying particular attention to Pied Oystercatchers because they are large, loud and common, and it seems reasonable to expect people to notice them. While I have learned quite a bit from this, there always seem to be more questions. The maps presented here reflect information gathered to date, but also show some possible yet unsubstantiated routes.

After breeding it seems that most Pied Oystercatchers drift down to estuaries along the eastern coast of the South Island and some birds remain in these places until next spring when it is time to breed again. Most of them, however, begin to move north and it seems that migration may start from mid-December. However, it becomes more noticeable about the end of that month with peak movements through January, tailing off during February, with a few still moving until at least March. I am not sure whether or not there also flocks leaving from inland sites. Records of oystercatchers over Christchurch City suggest that departures start in the later afternoon and continue into the night. Departures for the southward migration, which is better known, start from late June and also occur through a similar time period, starting at about two or three o'clock in the afternoon and continuing after dark.

Before oystercatchers leave the whole flock may be a bit nervous and flighty for an hour or more before departures, and often call more than usual. Departing birds have a distinctive call of short, evenly-pitched notes given quickly so that they almost run together. The numbers in departing flocks are usually not spectacular, often up to about 20 birds, although a few may be larger, with more than 100 possible. They may circle a little but gain height steadily, quickly move to the direction they are heading and form up into an untidy skein. As they leave other birds may try to join them and it is not uncommon to see stragglers powering along behind trying to catch up. Other birds may change their minds and drop back to the ground. If the whole



*Migrating flock of Pied Oystercatchers carrying migrating Mallards.*

lot settles back down, they will often gather resolve and leave later that evening. Birds do not seem to be ready to leave all at once and often only one or a few flocks will depart on any one day. These notes come from birds leaving northern sites in winter. I have had no reports of departures seen from the South Island. Departures of Banded Dotterel and Wrybill seem similar with characteristic calls that are short, fast and evenly-toned versions of their normal flight calls. Departing birds seem to choose calm weather or tail winds for departure, but may travel into a light head wind. A calculated average flight speed for Pied Oystercatchers is 52km/hour, and this could be used to estimate when they might pass a given point, but it would be a pretty loose indication.

In terms of migration routes, Andrew Crossland has been paying attention to their paths around the South Island in summer. He suspects that many of the birds leaving Christchurch set off via Pegasus Bay and travel up the coast just off shore, reporting them from several places as far north as Kaikoura. He also records many oystercatchers heading out from the hills in the Abel Tasman National Park, Motueka area, and Graeme Taylor has heard them once over the Hutton's Shearwater colony in the Seaward Kaikouras. This suggests that there may be many oystercatchers flying directly over the mountains to the Nelson region. Some birds may pause here, as there are some reports of unexpected oystercatcher flocks from the Nelson Boulder Bank to Farewell Spit at this time.

It is surprising that oystercatchers do not seem to have been recorded from the Cook Strait Ferry. While many could travel from the Nelson region across the Taranaki Bight towards Mount Taranaki this has not been reported yet. Mike Bell has observed large numbers flying north up the coast at Cape Campbell and heading out to sea. It seems reasonable to expect that they would reach the North Island about Cape Terawhiti and continue up the Wellington coast. While a few flocks do pause at the Manawatu Estuary there are no records of flying birds until Taranaki, where it seems as if they are seen coming around the outside of the mountain. Observations from the Sugarloaf Islands show them heading anywhere from north to east, indicating that while many may hug the coast they sometimes take a very direct route. From a boat just outside the Kawhia Harbour entrance and at Taharoa birds have been seen making landfall from well out at sea in calm conditions. From Taranaki north to Port Waikato there are many coastal observations. At Taharoa during January 2008 20,750 oystercatchers were counted on migration, but taking into account flocks detected by radar it was estimated that 39,728 birds, or 57% of the migrating population, passed the site. If this is a reasonable estimate of the birds that did pass the site some birds migrated outside this time period or through other places.

At Taharoa a sizeable minority of oystercatchers cut inland of Albatross Point

and took a heading toward the Kawhia Harbour entrance. This would place them back on the coastline by the shortest route, but some of these birds may have turned inland. In 2007 OSNZ observers stationed at the Kawhia Harbour entrance watched some birds heading up the inside of the harbour towards Kawhia. There is also a report of calls heard over Te Uku at the south-east corner of Raglan Harbour and an Atlas record from near Rangiriri in summer. If you join these dots you get to the Firth of Thames on a plausibly direct route from Taranaki. There is another summer Atlas record from near Hamilton which would be too far south to be part of this hypothetical route. It would also make sense for birds to cut across country and pass inside Mt Taranaki, but there is no evidence that they do so.

A really interesting summer report is one in Classified Summarised Notes from Hatepe, on Lake Taupo, in January 1976 which suggests the possibility of extensive inland routes, but the only possible corroborating evidence is from Derek Onley who heard calls at night about 15 km inland from Wanganui that indicated northward movement. These may have been birds embarking on an overland crossing.

For the southward migration less is known. It starts in late June but it is clear that there are many migrants trickling through after the main periods of passage. With birds leaving the harbours late in the day, most of them will cross the North Island at night but some do get seen and heard. At Taharoa during the winter of 2008 2,240 birds were seen in just 67 flocks, but from other information it was estimated that 63,627 birds, or 91% of the migrating population, came past. There are many observations of Pied Oystercatchers leaving the northern harbours. From the Manukau, and presumably the Kaipara Harbours, they head straight to the west coast. There are two reports from Auckland that suggest birds fly over the city, presumably crossing from the east to west coasts. They pass the monitored windfarm sites in roughly the reverse of the direction they took on the northward migration and there are firm records of birds flying along the coast to Mt Taranaki, and one more from Otaki. Perhaps some birds cross directly toward Nelson from here.

From Miranda they head overland with departure directions ranging from WSW to south and the majority head off at about SSW. While there is ample time for course correction, following these lines they could strike the coast anywhere between about Raglan and Wellington. There is an Atlas record from near Te Awamutu in winter and a flock heard by Paul Guiniven at dusk from the hills near Porirua seemed to be coming from inland. In the South Island there is a record in OSNZ News of birds heading inland near Nelson and several reports of flocks heading south just south of Westport. Some flocks have been seen pausing in the Wairau Lagoons and near Christchurch so there may also be migration along the east coast, but the birds may be heading fairly directly for their inland breeding grounds. Most records come from the coast but even that is not entirely

covered and the information from inland is pretty sparse, so conclusions are very weak and speculative.

Flocks of oystercatchers seem to move through much of the year, and I am not certain yet what constitutes a seasonal migration and what is a local movement. I speak of migration routes as they do seem to follow definite lines along the coast with most birds located by observers or radar within a band a few kilometres wide that may move a bit with time of day and weather. It is equally possible that migration occurs along a broader front and that these are localised constrictions of the flight path forced by topographic constraints. So far there is no real indication of how oystercatchers get to or from the Bay of Plenty. Buller told of a 19th century report from Rotorua that suggests overland flights from the Taranaki Bight, or Hawkes Bay if there are Pied Oystercatchers travelling up the east coast.

Casual records may just reveal the tip of the iceberg, assuming the birds are not genuinely lost. Even on a good migration route, most flocks are not seen without actively hunting for them with binoculars. It also requires commitment, as a good rate of passage for one observer is several flocks each hour. They are often seen at the top of a single binocular diameter above the horizon or in the second one but not often higher than a third unless they are close to you. They are reasonably easily seen out to about 3 km, looking like a collection of dust specks. Birds may rise quite high when heading inland, but can often be found between about 50 and 200 m above the sea, although they may be higher or lower. Even at a distance they are easy to identify. They tend to hold an altitude and to maintain a formation of sorts, usually in a line or a straggly V, but they may bunch up and string out as you watch them. Peak passage doesn't often last for more than a few hours in a day and birds do not travel every day. However, on some days more than a thousand will pass by on the west coast of the Waikato, and it can be very exciting if you have been waiting a while for it to happen.

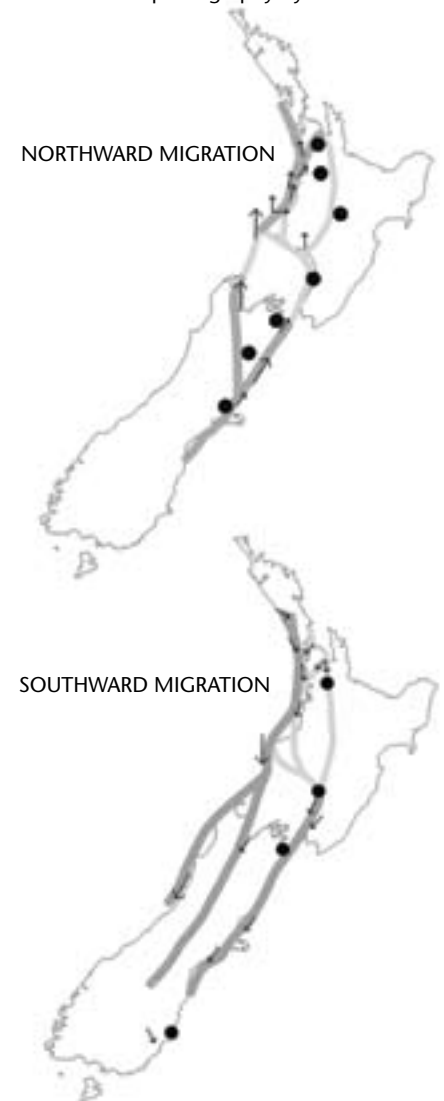
Pied Oystercatchers may call as they pass. Sometimes there is a lot of chatter, sometimes just a peep or two. This is how they are recorded at night. Smaller birds such as Wrybills and Banded Dotterels can also be heard at night, although they are seldom seen in the day. Even on a good night near a well-used route it would be a rare night when an observer finishes their shift with more than half a dozen records. Be aware that it is entirely possible that an unexpected call inland or a flock seen over the surf or resting on the beach could easily be on passage.

Pied Oystercatchers breed in one region, with most moving to another at predictable times in what is fairly obviously a migration. Red-billed Gulls breed widely around the New Zealand coast and inland at Rotorua, but most birds may breed in a few big colonies at the Three Kings, Kaikoura and the Mokohinaus. They certainly come and go from the northern harbours like the oystercatchers do but must head in different directions to their various breeding sites,

and obviously migrating flocks have been reported heading both north and south, but they are not usually regarded in the same way. Southern populations of Pied Stilts migrate like the oystercatchers, but the more northerly populations have more complex movements from breeding sites to closer estuaries or seasonal wetlands. While watching for migrating waders we have seen Variable Oystercatchers, godwits and various ducks, either embedded in the Pied Oystercatcher formations or in their own flocks heading somewhere with purpose, as well as the odd White-faced Heron moving steadily offshore, but where they come from or go to is a mystery at present.

I am particularly interested in gathering together any reports of migrating waders, not just Pied Oystercatchers. At this stage it doesn't matter how old they are, if they are not first hand, or if the dates are not known. I am keen to fill in gaps on my map and would value any reports, even if they seemed to be of passing interest when they were made. There must be quite a big network of flight paths up there over New Zealand and its adjacent seas just so that birds can accomplish the movements we know about, let alone the ones that we don't.

Written and photography by IAN SOUTHEY



# BIRD NEWS

Several Little Spotted Kiwi were released on Motuihe Island in March. This pest-free island is only a short ferry ride from downtown Auckland and is also home to Saddleback and Red-crowned Parakeet released there last year. The kiwi were sourced from the significant population on Kapiti Island and the transfer was sponsored by Mobil. Four juvenile Great Spotted Kiwi, meanwhile, from a captive rearing project at Willowbank were released to winter over in predator-proof fenced Riccarton Bush in Christchurch's inner suburbs in July.

Forty-four Chatham Petrel chicks and 13 Chatham Island Taiko chicks were translocated to the predator-proof-fenced Sweetwater Conservation Covenant (Chatham I) this autumn.

The first Fiji Petrel to be seen at sea was recorded off Gau Island in May. Up to eight birds were seen over eleven days in an area about 25 nautical miles south of Gau. The species' flight and behaviour were recorded for the first time, and comparisons made to other species.

The Chatham Island Pigeon/Parea population has increased dramatically from a low of 40 in the late 1980s to around 500 this year according to a population survey conducted by DoC. Fencing of areas of bush to prevent stock browsing on the bush and pest/predator-trapping are thought to have been the main factors in the increase in numbers.

The last five of the Kakapo chicks hatched and reared this year after an impressive breeding season were released onto Codfish Island/Whenua Hou in late August. The Kakapo population currently stands at 124 birds.

Orange-fronted Parakeets had a good breeding season in the Canterbury high country with 26 nests found (13 in the Hawdon and 9 in the Poulter valleys, and four in the South Branch of the Hurunui) formed by 18 breeding pairs of birds. Eight of these pairs had also laid a second clutch of eggs. A clutch of nine eggs from the Poulter Valley was found to be used for the captive breeding programme at Isaacs Wildlife Trust. This is a significant milestone for the long-term survival of the critically endangered parakeet. Up until now only a handful of these birds from the Hawdon and adjoining Hurunui valleys have been involved in the captive breeding programme at Peacock Springs. The new birds from the Poulter Valley will enhance genetic diversity to avoid the captive-bred birds becoming too inbred.

Thirty Tui were transferred to the Hinewai Reserve on Banks Peninsula on 9/4 in an attempt to return the species to part of its former range. Fourteen closely related Chatham Island Tui were released into the Awatotara Conservation Covenant (Chatham I) on 14/3, with 12 still present in the release area two months later.

## SHORT NOTES

A Cook's Petrel was found well off course on 24/3, being picked up outside a door at the University of Waikato (Hamilton). The weather had been good the previous night, so didn't seem to be a factor. A Collared Petrel found at sea off the Far North on 19/3 will be a first for New Zealand if accepted. A Red-tailed Tropicbird was reported from Oneroa Beach, Waiheke Island, Auckland in September. A well north of usual Stewart Island Shag was at Ataahua, Lake Ellesmere (Canterbury) on 26/5 after over a week of southerly weather.

The semi-regular Napier Little Egret was at Haumoana Lagoon on 14/9 and 3/10. The much more regular Wairau Lagoons (Blenheim) Glossy Ibis returned for another winter, being seen on many dates between mid-June and mid-August. It then seemed to stay on for the spring, being seen in late October. The other regular Glossy Ibis at Travis Wetland (Christchurch) was also present during the winter, and another was seen on the edge of the Waimea Inlet (Nelson) for a couple of days. A probable new duo of the species turned up together at the Manawatu Estuary on 26/9, staying until mid-November at least. The Tarras Straw-necked Ibis stayed until early April.

Two Chestnut-breasted Shelducks were at Tupare Wetlands (South Kaipara Peninsula) on 10/4, with another at Lake Forsyth (Canterbury) on 14/4.

A probable male Chestnut Teal was at the Otaki Oxidation Pools from mid-June to late September, though it showed unusual plumage characteristics and moult which pointed to the possibility of hybridisation with another duck species. An out-of-range Brown Teal was at the Tuakau Sewage Ponds (South Auckland) on the 11/8. Two or three more were on the Kaukapakapa River in the environs of the Kaukapakapa Estuary Scientific Reserve on 15/11. They had been reported from this general location before about one year ago. A flock of at least six Plumed Whistling Ducks were present near Kaitaia (Far North) until three were shot by a shooter in May. The Renwick (Blenheim) Black Kite was present, probably throughout the autumn, winter and spring. An English birder reported a Crane on 8th March from Mossburn, Manapouri (Southland).

The South Manukau Harbour held a wintering Large Sand Dotterel on 28/6. A Mongolian Dotterel was among the Banded Dotterels on the Awarua Bay (Southland) roost on 24/3. Farewell Spit played host to a Grey Plover on 7/11. A male Black-tailed Godwit in full breeding attire was on the Whangarei Harbour on 27/5, with another of the species off-and-on at Miranda (South Auckland) in autumn and winter. Continuing the theme and maybe confusing the picture on occasion a Hudsonian Godwit which slowly moulted out of full breeding plumage was found on the stilt ponds at Miranda (South Auckland) on 17/5 staying until at least 8/11. Seemingly another was at nearby Waitakaruru on 13/6, and two (or even three) of the species were in the Miranda area simultaneously, with two seen together at Miranda on one day. The semi-regular Grey-tailed Tattler was seen on the Ahuriri Estuary, Napier on 21/3 and 3/10, with another on the Ashley Estuary (Canterbury) on 13/5-17/5.

Long Bay Beach (Auckland) was visited briefly by a Pomarine Skua flying north on 28/9. A Franklin's Gull was on the South Manukau Harbour on 5/9. This will be New Zealand's second record of the species if accepted. It was re-found at Ardmore Aerodrome on 18/9, and stayed in the area of the aerodrome, Bruce Pulman Park and Takanini/Papakura/Conifer Grove in general until at least 25/10. During this time it was replacing flight feathers and the amount of black in its hood decreased as it moulted its head and body feathers. A Whiskered Tern was on Raripo Beach near Dargaville (Northland) on 1/10. Unahi (Far North) had a long-staying White-winged Black Tern in March and to 21/4. The environs of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary (Christchurch) had a fleeting possible Gull-billed Tern on 16/6. An Arctic Tern was on the Ashley Estuary (Canterbury) on 16 and 17/5, with another off Raripo Beach near Dargaville (Northland) feeding with about 1,300 White-fronted Terns on 1/10. About 20-30 were in the deep south of Riverton (Southland) and Stewart Island on 12 and 13/11, including one flock of 15. The 'strange tern capital' of Unahi (Far North) hosted a Common Tern from 7/4 to 21/4, and another was at Maketu (Bay of Plenty) on 6/9. A White-capped Noddy was off Cape Maria van Diemen on 3-4/4. The long staying Kaitaia Barn Owls remained present, probably throughout autumn, winter and spring. A Spine-tailed Swift flew over North Cape Scientific Reserve (Far North) in the company of a couple of Welcome Swallows on 19/10.

Thirty New Zealand Robins were translocated to the Puketia Forest (Far North) from Mangatutu (Waikato) on 14/6. Two Kokako were released into the Ark in the Park (Waitakere Ranges, Auckland) on 8/9 to the accompaniment of a Robin flypast and a singing Stitchbird.

Sources: @DoC Canterbury Conservancy electronic newsletter. Birding-NZ email group. Birding NZ internet chat group. What's Up DoC? electronic newsletter, Detlef Davies, Nature in Action Forest & Bird electronic newsletter, John Sumich, BirdLife News Alert electronic newsletter.

# REVIEWS

Galbreath, Ross (introduction). *Paintings of the Birds of New Zealand – The Art of J G Keulemans*. 2006. Random House, Auckland. ISBN 13-978 1 86941 846 5/10:1 89641 846 8. 119p, 152x177 mm, \$35.

This small book celebrates the bird art of the relatively unrecognised Johannes Gerardus Keulemans. Dutch born, Keulemans moved to London, anglicising his name to John Gerrard. In New Zealand Keulemans's bird art is more often recognised as 'Buller's Birds' for it was printed as the illustrations to Sir Walter Buller's book *A History of the Birds of New Zealand*.

The book starts with an introduction by Ross Galbreath, a biographer of Buller, giving short biographic details of the artist, short details on how the illustrations were done, and how the finished illustrations were laboriously transferred to print via lithography. Keulemans's pictures are then shown opposite excerpts from Buller's book giving often useful insights into the bird's behaviour. An index finishes the book, useful as the species are grouped according to habitat.

The pictures are rich in colour, and given the age in which they were drawn amazingly lifelike in most instances, especially since Keulemans

never saw the birds in the wild, but drew from stuffed specimens or maybe sometimes zoo exhibits. Suitable vegetation or background is also included in the pictures, though in some instances there is a reasonable degree of artistic licence, for example the Brown Kiwi illustration where the birds are shown in open mountainous vegetation in seemingly broad daylight. In only a few species would the average birdwatcher have difficulty identifying the bird using the illustrations.

Small size is perhaps the only problem with the book. The illustrations would be so much more impressive in the larger format they were painted for. However, size seems to have been traded for affordability, and at \$35 the book is fairly affordable to the general population. For that price the book is well-printed on good quality paper and with sturdy bindings which should stand up to many flickings through, if not for the art which glows from each pair of pages usually with the life spirit of the bird also springing forth, but also the behaviour notes both of the birds today and over a century ago.

NICK ALLEN



## Far North

The coldest October for 64 years (so we hear and in effect considerably extending winter) has had its effect on Far North birding activity. It has also been very wet, and attempts to get to the Waimea Forest to help with Kokako monitoring have had to be put off until early next year.

Among interesting sightings recently Shining Cuckoos were around Kerikeri from mid-September, often being seen in deciduous trees before the leaves had sprouted. One Kaka was seen in Kerikeri in September and a Black-billed Gull was with a group of Red-billed Gulls on the beach at Te Haumi near Paihia recently.

Anne Rimmer gave the group a very informative presentation at the September evening meeting. Her subject was Tiritiri Matangi Island, where she has played a major part in the development of the island from the early days of tree-planting. She explained the history of the island with lots of old illustrations, and the transformation to the wonderful reserve it is today. Her book on Tiri won her the Montana Book Award in the environment section. Our indoor meetings continue to be well attended with around 20 members and guests, but our field trips seem to need a greater injection of enthusiasm.

On the shorebird front, we had a passing visit by Alaskan ornithologist, Brian McCaffery who gave presentations firstly to one of the most northerly schools in New Zealand at Te Hapua, close to Parengarenga Harbour and then at the marae at Ngataki. Both were well received and we hope that this will have inspired at least a few schoolchildren to take an interest in their local avian visitors from the high Arctic. A possible liaison with an Eskimo school was discussed, and one of the teachers at the school has been offered a place at the January field course at Miranda.

On the only warm sunny day amidst a succession of cool wet days at the end of September, four members spent the day on a yacht which took them out beyond the Bay of Islands. With the commoner regional shearwaters (Fluttering, Buller's and Flesh-footed) were several Sooty Shearwaters and White-faced Storm Petrels and an immature White-capped Mollymawk. It is hoped in future to offer regular day pelagics on faster cruise boats from the east coast, and to report on the first of these in the next roundup.

DETLEF DAVIES

## Waikato

Matt Cook, from DoC Waikato, talked in August about his long career in conservation, which started back in the 'olden days' as a Conservation Cadet in the Wildlife Service! In September, Ornithological Society President David Lawrie made the trip down to our Region and gave a very insightful talk to the group about his trip to North Korea counting migratory waders. Some of the challenges that David and his team faced during their trip were incredible and something that many of us could not comprehend. As a change of scenery, Pricilla Wehi came and talked to the group in October about her research on tree weta in the Waikato Region. This work was done as part of a post doc at the University of Waikato, and even though it was not a bird-related topic the group thoroughly enjoyed hearing about some of the finer points of the ecology of this unique invertebrate. We thank all the speakers that gave up their time to come and share their research with the group during the year.

Some recent bird sightings from the region include an Australasian Bittern that was heard booming at Howarth Wetland, Te Aroha, on 27th August. This is the earliest that they have been heard in the area by long-time observers, Geoff and Raewynn Foreman. Tui continue to be seen regularly in the Waikato too; although, they appear to be getting into a bit of trouble in Morrinsville, as the Foremans report that they saw one being chased away from a Banksia tree by a flock of approximately 20 Silvereyes! In Cambridge Tui have been regularly seen foraging in nectar trees, like the Kowhai in Betty Seddon's garden all through the month of September. Even the University in Hamilton is getting visitations, with several often seen there; Neil Fitzgerald saw no less than five fly past his office window on 16th July. In other sightings, a Shining Cuckoo was heard at Ngaruawahia on the weekend of the 5th and 6th of September by Bev Woolley, which is quite early for this species. Bev also spotted an Australasian Bittern on 29th August about 20 m from the road in a field at the turnoff to Matarangi Beach on the Coromandel. She observed it for about 15 minutes as it struggled to adjust an approx 400 mm long eel into position prior to swallowing it. This is not quite in the Waikato Region, but very interesting none-the-less! Finally, four Kaka have been regularly seen throughout the winter at a property on Old Reservoir Road in Paeroa (Geoff and Raewynn Foreman).

In September, eight members braved chilly and damp conditions for an overnight fieldtrip to Pureora Forest Park. This was a successful trip where no less than 31 different bird species were seen or heard. Some of the highlights included Kokako, Fernbird, Robin, Morepork, Kaka, Whitehead and Bellbird. In November, the Kawhia and Aotea Harbours will be counted once again, and in December we look forward to the

annual Christmas dinner. The Waikato Region wishes all other OSNZ members a very Merry Christmas, and we hope that you have great birding over the summer.

DAI MORGAN, STELLA ROWE and DAVID RIDDELL

## Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

New Zealand Dotterels continue to amaze us with their selection of location for their nests. After a report of some dotterels within the city boundaries, I assigned junior member Marcus Richards to regularly observe a pair nesting behind the Tauranga Hospital on a grassy section of open land. These birds are some distance away from the sandy beaches that we think dotterels prefer. Watch this space.

In other New Zealand Dotterel news, John Groom has been busy around the Matata area monitoring dotterel numbers. Three nests, three eggs and three chicks with three territorial pairs were the most memorable statistics that came to mind over the last few weeks. If the birds only did things by halves it would have been more difficult!

Maketu Spit has a regular birdwatcher in the form of author Julian Fitter, who has been keenly observing the antics of the 250 pairs of nesting Red-billed Gulls there for some months now. There is a possibility of White-fronted Terns nesting there also. We await further good news at this site. Julian has been setting up a care group for the Spit, and we hope the dividends will be forthcoming for him. Julian also plies the briny offshore, and on the 25th of October spotted a white morph Southern Giant Petrel, a Diving Petrel and a Cape Pigeon.

A recent evening meeting was an all-round success, with Keith Woodley plying us with his customary dry-as-a-bone humour and sharp wit to detail the current story of the Bar-tailed Godwit. Keith has become well acquainted over the last few decades with the birds that offer incredible stories and feats that no human being could emulate, as he is – and will always be known as – that Miranda Guy: i.e. Miranda Shorebird Centre Manager. Keith has amassed his frequent flier miles chasing down migrating Godwits on the paths that lead to and from the breeding grounds up in the vast open areas of the tundra in the Yukon Delta, Alaska. Amongst his achievements up in the Old Chevak area was the observance of the first instance of re-nesting by a Bar-tailed Godwit – not too bad for a fellow from little old New Zealand. Read all about these experiences in his latest book, available now in all good bookstores!

There has been the usual flurry of cuckoo records in the last month, with one of a Long-tailed Cuckoo being the icing on the cuckoo cake: downtown Ohakune, as seen by Kerry Oates on the 28th September. Eleven Royal Spoonbills presented themselves at Beach Road Coastal Walk, Katikati in late October, whilst freshly local member Tony Crocker reported Barbary Doves around the Omokoroa and Bethlehem areas. These areas already have Spotted Doves.

Tim Barnard, our man in the field at Maketu and Little Waihi, has been spotting the usual suite of species, with the Maketu highlight being 40 juvenile Bar-tailed Godwits amongst a flock of 493 on 11th October. One had a white flag with AUC written on it, and another had an orange and white flag. Little Waihi matched the godwit numbers almost to a tee; 42 juveniles in the 472 flock, which included one bird with an orange flag and one with a white. Other Godwits seen in the Bay of Plenty included around 1,000 seen by Eila Lawton in late September.

Three Kokako were seen and (probably) four heard when the Richards family and I stepped out into the darklands of Kaharoa Forest early the first morning of daylight savings. Good views were obtained of birds feeding and that song has to be heard to be believed!

The Whakatane Kiwi Trust has recently received their 100th Kiwi chick from Operation Nest Egg. Apparently it is not uncommon for Kiwi to be found in the town's back yards, and the town is being re-branded Kiwi Capital of The World.

PAUL CUMING

## Taranaki

This year's winners of the 'Heard the first Shining Cuckoo' competition were Marie Mitchell and Helen Elder. A bird heard at 1.20pm on 29th August had them way out in front of the second report.

Carol Keight visited the UK in June and told the September meeting that there are concerns about the diminishing numbers of common birds, while some threatened species like Peregrine Falcon were on the increase. Maybe we could start repatriating some of our introduced species. Dave Bell gave a presentation of his Falcon research, from 2006 onwards. Those members who have magnolias in their gardens told of being visited by New Zealand Pigeons which set about consuming the new flower buds. David Medway informed us that the Little Shag colony in Pukekura Park was showing signs of activity for the new breeding season, and the Messengers have been watching a pair of White-faced Heron building a nest in a Lawsoniana tree close to their house. New Zealand Dotterels are still present on South Taranaki beaches, with a pair each at Sandy Bay and Pungareere. Meanwhile there were 47 Banded Dotterels on the beach at Waiongana, with giant petrels and albatrosses out at sea.

Tui was the bird of the month at the October meeting, with many seen around town and country feeding at Kowhai flowers, which were in full bloom. On one North Taranaki road a flock of in excess of thirty were feeding on roadside trees. The birds were very vocal and the air was full of their melodious warbling and chortling. Despite news reports of a shortage



of Silvereyes around the country this was not the case in Taranaki, with many around urban gardens.

The Little Shag colony in Pukekura Park had chicks hatching in September/October and a Spotted Shag was seen at Ngamotu Beach on the western side of New Plymouth. Barry Hartley counted 55 Banded Dotterels on Pungaereere beach and three Pied Shags were seen at Mokau. A few migratory waders were seen at Waiongana throughout September, mainly Bar-tailed Godwits and Turnstones, but also Pacific Golden Plovers, which are returning to take up summer residence. A single Cattle Egret has stayed around with the local White-faced Heron and was still in paddocks at Waiongana in late October, showing breeding plumage in neck and chest.

David Medway gave us a more in-depth report on how the yet-to-be-released checklist of the birds of New Zealand was compiled; a long and time consuming process for the eight compilers. This 430-page book with 71 pages of references will also include Norfolk Island for the first time and also a section on failed introductions, which in itself will make very interesting reading.

October's field trip had us heading out around our usual South Taranaki haunts, starting at Nowell's Lakes, entering from the southern end for the first time. There has been a lot of tidying up done and local schools are landscaping and planting out a long gully which will improve the area as years roll by. Twenty-seven bird species were seen on or around the lakes including a New Zealand Dabchick and an Australasian Bittern. Onward to the local oxidation ponds where fewer birds than usual were seen owing to a large pond being under construction. An afternoon tea stop at Rotokare on the way home was a fitting end to the day, with Shining Cuckoo and Fernbird heard and a juvenile Black Shag seen on a nest.



Curlew Sandpiper.  
Photo by Peter Fryer

At Waiongana twelve Pied Oystercatchers made a brief stopover on their journey north or south on October 10th, the earliest ever seen. The species is rarely seen in the area until late December or early January, when lots of them call in or fly by. A new species of migratory wader was also added to my Waiongana list in the form of a Curlew Sandpiper.

PETER FRYER

## Hawkes Bay

Field trips have been well attended with a large group enjoying the September outing to Cape Kidnappers Reserve. Tamsin Ward-Smith met us at the golf course entrance and took us into the wetland area inside the predator-proof fence. The first small pond we came to had a pair of Brown Teal with four small ducklings, confirming the success of the Brown Teal programme there. We later saw five more adults and Tamsin told us that there were other pairs with nests being monitored. We were interested to hear of plans to release Banded Rail there shortly.

Shines Falls in the Boundary Stream Mainland Island was the destination for October's trip. Nine members enjoyed the walk to the falls. Many Kowhai were flowering with large numbers of Tui present. One tree had at least 25 Tui feeding in it; a spectacular sight. Some of the group continued on to Lake Opouahi in the hope of finding Fernbird there. While several were heard calling none were seen. Shining Cuckoos were heard, and some of those present managed a fleeting glimpse of one.

Sightings around the region include three Cattle Egrets, which have been around State Highway 50 near Maraekakaho all winter; a single White Heron around the Clive wetland areas; and regular reports of Australasian Bittern, also from around the Clive/Waitangi area. A Little Egret was seen at Haumoana Lagoon on 14th September in full breeding plumage. Jim Hamilton made an interesting sighting at his property in Kereru Road on 17th September. First alerted by their calls he spotted two Eastern Rosellas, a species not previously recorded in our region.

MARGARET TWYDLE

## Wanganui

The poor weather experienced during winter continued into spring, curtailing some field activities and postponing others. Nevertheless, many members contributed sightings of birds, all of which is helping to build a clearer picture of the status of some of the less commonly recorded species in the district. Andy Jones and Phil Thomsen reported seeing Redpoll in Wanganui (in July and September respectively), on both occasions in Silver Birch, an association noted previously by Colin Ogle. The species is uncommon locally. Jim Campbell (DoC) passed on a report of a Kaka in one of Wanganui's outer suburbs, but it has not been confirmed. Last year, there was a spate of sightings around the city, also in late winter. New Zealand Pigeons have also been prominent: Paul Gibson reported 100-200 birds at Bushy Park in early September, and others have noted smaller numbers elsewhere. It is present throughout much of the region but large aggregations are unusual. Colin Ogle and members of the Wanganui Museum Botanical Group heard Fernbird in the Weraroa wetlands on private land west of Maxwell at the end of October. Paul Gibson and Peter Frost called up at least one bird on the Matatara Stream, north-west of Wanganui, in early September, at a site where Paul had photographed

the species two years previously. They also saw and photographed one pair of Spotless Crake, and heard two others, at the same locality. On the downside, Ormond Torr failed to get any response to playback of Spotless Crake calls at Christies Lake, a site where at least three birds were present last year. Both Fernbird and Spotless Crake are probably more widespread than we commonly assume, but their presence cannot always be assumed. Monitoring will continue.

Tui and Bellbirds were particularly prominent in winter and spring, with a number of members reporting greater-than-normal numbers of Tui. In early September, Ian Bell reported more than 20 feeding together in flowering gum, *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, with more in a nearby *Buckinghamia celsissima*. Later that month, Paul Gibson recorded and photographed 50-60 birds feeding in a Kowhai stand just north of Upokongaro. He also saw about 50 birds in flowering gum at Virginia Lake in late October. Tui have also been attracting attention for various other reasons. Ian Bell noted them foraging for insects on the ground beneath bushes in late winter. In mid September, Ormond Torr and Paul Gibson photographed a pastel-coloured (leucistic) Tui in Wanganui, and subsequent observations show that the bird forages in gardens on both sides of the river, at sites almost 800 m apart. Paul Gibson photographed a Tui that was giving a presumed courtship display. The bird opened its wings and held them slightly forward, while bowing down and fanning its tail. Bowing down emphasised the filamentous silvery plumes on the back of the bird's neck. W.L. Buller, in his *A History of the Birds of New Zealand*, describes similar behaviour but does not provide a context. Most other texts refer only to the species' aerial displays. Overall, remarkably little seems to have been published on the courtship behaviour of Tui. This is surely a research topic for someone.

Bird numbers and composition on the Whanganui River Estuary continue to fluctuate, partly the result of seasonal movements, partly in response to weather conditions. For much of the period, we have had an average of four Royal Spoonbills present (range 0-10), but on 7th October there were 28, most of them in breeding plumage. This coincided with severe southerly gales and freezing weather experienced across the country. Were these birds displaced from a breeding site further south, or were they being held up on their southward migration (much of which should have been completed by then)? The first Lesser Knot returned to the estuary on 11th September, followed a few days later by seven Bar-tailed Godwits. Most of these birds moved on, with others following on behind. Among these was a Turnstone, an uncommon bird at Wanganui. It did not stay either, although Ormond Torr photographed a Turnstone five weeks later at the beginning of November on the rocks of the South Mole at the mouth of the Whanganui River. Could it be the same bird? Probably not. At present there are 39 Bar-tailed Godwits on the estuary, including two white-flagged males that were banded at Foxton a year ago, but which spent most of last summer on the Whanganui estuary. The number of godwits is almost double the numbers recorded here in recent years, but over 75% of them are juveniles, perhaps a reflection of a good breeding season in Alaska this year.

In early October, following a tip-off from the ground staff at Wanganui Airport, Paul Gibson found and photographed Banded Dotterel nesting on a grass verge alongside the runway. According to the airport manager, there are 30-50 birds present, but we have not been able to confirm such numbers. Colin Ogle, Ormond Torr and Peter Frost all separately reported Banded Dotterel on the estuary around the same time, observations that follow the relatively large numbers reported there earlier in the year. Lynne Douglas's trusty camera continues to record some other interesting species: 23 Black Swans flying east along the coast in late October; transient Pied Oystercatchers, presumably en route to their southern breeding grounds; banded Red-billed Gulls, and the occasional Black-billed Gull.

The success that we had with running our first pelagic seabird trip out of Wanganui (August 2009) prompted us to organise a second one. We had hoped to intercept the migration of Sooty Shearwaters through the South Tasman Bight, but the poor weather experienced countrywide in early October, forced us to postpone the trip until mid October, when conditions eased marginally for a day. Ten hardy souls, including Sav Saville (Manawatu), Ian Smith (Hawkes Bay), a small contingent from Massey University, organised by Phil Battley, together with three local birders, set out on the fishing charter vessel, *MS Vagabond*, on 13th October. We sailed up to 21 km offshore, south-west of Wanganui, in much the same area covered previously. Conditions were good for seabirds, but not ideal for watching them because of the disorganised sea which caused the boat to pitch and roll, sometimes simultaneously. None the less, 15 species were recorded, including four species of albatross (Southern Royal, White-capped, Salvin's, and Buller's sp.), Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Common Diving Petrel, Fairy Prion (including one flock of thousands of birds), and four species of shearwater (Flesh-footed, Sooty, Hutton's and Fluttering). Sooty Shearwater was the least common of the four species seen, which was surprising. We also saw one Risso's Dolphin, which caused great excitement because of its size, pale colour, and speed of movement through the water. Despite the



choppy conditions, which caused most people to feel sick at one stage or another, everyone agreed that it had been a great success. We plan to repeat the venture, probably in late summer.

Monthly talks and slide shows continue. In September, Sav Saville gave us a most interesting and well-illustrated talk on the rediscovery of the New Zealand Storm Petrel. It complemented well our growing interest in the status of seabirds offshore. In October, seven members of the Wanganui Camera Club provided a selection of photographs of mostly New Zealand and Australian birds from their portfolios. Although only a few members came to the show, those who did appreciated a fine exhibition. Clearly, there is a lot of talent locally with whom we can engage. We hope this is not the last occasion.

PETER FROST

## Wairarapa

At the annual August Big Bird Cup Quiz night the cup went yet again to the Masterton Team, even though they were well outnumbered by the Greytown Team. As usual, the event combined new learning with a good measure of fun and conviviality.

Colin Miskelly gave an illustrated presentation at our September meeting on the birds and wildlife he encountered working as a resource lecturer aboard the expedition cruise ship *Discovery*, sailing in the South Atlantic, Antarctica and South America.

At a combined dinner and October meeting at his home, Glen Holland gave a presentation of his recent work eradicating rats on an off-shore island in Samoa, and then outlined his prospective work as Director of Operations with the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia. It was a time to say farewell to Glen and his wife, Natalie, who had been very much part of regional activities for the past few years.

Field trips have included a visit to Lake Wairarapa Reserve and Barton's Lagoon, where the highlight was the observation of an Australasian Bittern. This sighting prompted a member of the public to share with Wairarapa OSNZ her sighting of a Bittern in the same locality. This information was reported to Peter Langlands (see *Southern Bird* June 2009, page 7) who had requested nationwide reporting of Bittern sightings.

October's field trip was to the Mount Holdsworth loop track. Here, participants were concerned by the apparent paucity of bird life. A combined Forest and Bird, DoC and OSNZ fact-finding day in that area in November may provide some answers to this situation.

In October one of our life members, Jack Luttrell, reported sighting a pair of Banded Rails while he was whitebaiting at the north end of Lake Onoke. On the seaward side of Paul's Bank there is a big patch of mingimangi and rushes. It was here that the first bird was seen crossing a drain, and was soon followed by a second bird. They were only about 20 feet from Jack. According to *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* by Heather and Robertson "Some are probably overlooked in inland swamps such as those around Lake Wairarapa, where, after 60 years without sightings, one was killed by a cat in 1992."

In October long-standing member Colin Scadden officially retired from the Pukaha/Mount Bruce Wildlife Trust and the Board, to which he had given years of devoted and innovative service. He pioneered the volunteers scheme, which also brought many now-familiar faces into the membership of OSNZ. Colin truly led by example, and will continue to do so.

BARBARA LOVATT

## Wellington

'Restoring burrow-nesting seabirds to Mana Island' was the title of the talk given by Colin Miskelly at our September meeting. Seabird translocations are being developed with the twin objectives of improving the translocated species' conservation status and to restore ecological processes. The latter objective is particularly important for Mana Island given that is being transformed from a farm back to its original state. Colin gave an update on the three seabird translocations to Mana: Common Diving Petrel (1997 to 1999); Fairy Prion (2003-2004); and Fluttering Shearwater (2007-2008). Translocation methods are now well developed with high fledging rates of transferred birds. While these translocations are work in progress, current returns of all three species indicate a high likelihood that they will all establish on Mana. Colin made special mention of the important role volunteers, including OSNZ members, played in these translocations.

While the New Zealand Robin is regarded as the friendliest bird in the forest, few would be aware of their mathematical skills. Kevin Burns from Victoria University gave a fascinating talk at our October meeting on his research into the adaptive numerical competency of the New Zealand Robin. These studies have been carried out over the last five to six years at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. Behavioural characteristics of Robins, especially the caching of food, make them an ideal subject for these studies. Kevin described a number of different experiments, such as where different numbers of mealworms were presented sequentially to Robins in a pair of artificial cache sites, which were then obscured from view. Robins frequently chose the site containing more prey, and the accuracy of their

number discriminations declined with increasing numbers of concealed prey. Overall results of his research indicate that Robins use a sophisticated numerical sense to retrieve and pilfer stored food.

GEOFF DE LISLE

## Nelson

Paul Fisher gave an account of his time studying Ospreys on the Farasan Islands in the Red Sea at the September meeting. Paul was a member of the University of Manchester Farasan Osprey Team and spent the Northern Hemisphere winter months of 1993-5 on this group of islands near the border of Saudi Arabia and North Yemen. About 20 pairs of Ospreys were living in what appeared to be a harsh environment, but a plentiful supply of fish resulted in good survival rates for chicks. More amazing was how Paul and a fellow team member survived in a shack and swam between the islands in shark infested waters to check nests.

Godwits returning to the Waimea estuary in September were a welcome reminder of approaching summer. Peter Field recorded 268 at roost on the Nelson Haven. Since then numbers have increased and now at the end of October about 1,500 are present. Willie Cook also noted three Pacific Golden Plover. Caspian Terns were forming pairs about this time on the Bells Island shellbank and on the 25th October Willie reported that the first nests contained eggs. A single Whimbrel and Eastern Curlew have been present during the winter. The Whimbrel associates quite freely with Bar-tailed Godwits, but the Curlew appears to have an aversion to them.

Pauline Samways once again organised a successful public welcome to the godwits near the Old Wharf at Motueka. Local OSNZ members took along their scopes to allow the gathering of 60 people to obtain some close up views of the feeding birds. Some birds had white/green flags used in October 2000 on the Motueka Sandspit, the first South Island waders to be colour-flagged.

During Conservation Week a team of members took part in a DoC and regional bodies programme for primary school children. It highlighted awareness on a wide range of bush topics. The venue was the Brook Waimarama Bird Sanctuary, sound was our topic and we were fortunate to have the use of the information centre with access to bird recordings. Nearly 600 children took part in the three-day event with perfect weather conditions throughout.

A newly-formed sandbar in the Waimea Estuary is becoming a favoured roost site for wader species, access by boat being required for accurate census counts. A banding team including David Melville and Rob Schuckard recently went out there and made a successful catch of godwits. Another catch, of eight Variable Oystercatchers, was made on the beach at Ruby Bay where these birds have a regular roost site right alongside SH60. During data collection on these birds, four were noted to have some form of deformity.

Some other sightings: Peter Field located 18 Pied Stilt nests on the new wetland area at the Nelson City sewage works at Atawhai, but many have been abandoned and so far only one chick has been seen. A Weka in the Brook Sanctuary is the first noted for the last 10 years in that area. Shining Cuckoos have been seen and heard on a number of occasions in the past few weeks. On a recent trip by Willie Cook along the Mount Arthur track he noted a large flock of 20-plus Rifleman, family groups of Brown Creeper, a Kea, a Weka, and Robins were heard but none seen. On 27th October Chris Petyt reported that a Blue Duck with five ducklings was present on the Takaka River just below the Cobb Power House.

DON COOPER

## Otago

With the coming of spring Bar-tailed Godwit numbers started to increase, starting mid September, and by mid October about 600 birds were present at Hooper's Inlet on the Otago Peninsula. More cannon-netting to colour band waders summering in Otago is scheduled. The first Sooty Shearwaters for the season were seen off Taiaroa Head on 1st October and Royal Spoonbills were first sighted in Otago on 29th August, about two weeks earlier than usual. Some of the more unusual sightings included a White Heron and Black Stilt at Brighton Lagoon on 27th September, Gannets fishing in the Otago Harbour and a group of Yellow-eyed Penguins off Nugget Point, resting and preening on the sea surface.

John Barkla and Dave Bell have been recent speakers at indoor meetings. John told of his experiences on Macauley Island in the Kermadecs doing a census of Kermadec Red-crowned Parakeets prior to pest eradication. An estimate of 3,500 birds was made using a distance mapping technique. Dave, of the Raptor Association, gave a presentation, illustrated with beautiful photographs, on the results of the National Falcon Survey; 296 records had been returned from Otago Branch.

Current monitoring projects are progressing well. The third month of the Otago Harbour Survey has been completed as has the third year of the Hawksbury Lagoon Survey. Keen observation at Ross Creek has uncovered interesting breeding activity: nest building by a pair of Fantails; active feeding at the nests of a Grey-warbler and a Rifleman; feeding of fledged Tui and Bellbird; a Silvereye incubating; and a young New Zealand Pigeon on its nest. The first New Zealand Falcon pairs have been located at Akatore Forest using call playback.

Correction: the Southern Royal Albatrosses at Taiaroa Head referred to in the last Otago Regional Roundup were of course Northern Royals. Only very rarely does a Southern Royal show up there.

MARY THOMPSON

# Regional Reps and What's On



## Far North

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

## Northland

Katrina Hansen, 3 Harbour View Road, 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, 20a Walsh Street, Forest Lake, Hamilton 3200. Email magpiemorgan@gmail.com

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 and 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 skua44@yahoo.co.nz. Lake Grassmere count – third Sunday of month. Ph Brian Bell (03) 570 2230. Passerine banding, each weekend during February and March, at Jack Taylor's farm, Ward, contact Mike Bell Ph (03) 577 9818.

## Canterbury/West Coast

Jan Walker, 305 Kennedys Bush Road, Halswell, Christchurch 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 (C3) 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.

