



Southern *Bird*

No. 56 December 2013 • ISSN 1175-1916

*The Magazine of the Ornithological
Society of New Zealand*

BIRDS OF
**PAUATAHANUI
INLET**

**PREVENTING
BIRD STRIKES** AT
AUCKLAND AIRPORT

HANZAB IS NOW
ON NEW ZEALAND
BIRDS ONLINE

**TWITCHING
TRICKY TERNS**



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Daisy Abraham (Wellington), David Bryden (Auckland), Nathan Burkepile (Northland), Amber Calman (Nelson), Marie Dickson (West Coast), Connor Dowling (Bay of Plenty), Andrew Duncanson (Bay of Plenty), Ryan Greenwood (Canterbury), Wray Grimaldi (Otago), Joy Hinton (Bay of Plenty), Grant Humphries (Otago), Anne Kim (Auckland), Shaun Lee (Auckland), Anna MacNaughton (South Auckland), Claudia Mischler (Marlborough), Claire Pullon (Wellington), Michelle Roper (Auckland), Thailia Sachtleben (Northland), Rachael Sagar (Canterbury), Helen Taylor (Wellington), Paul Vandenberg (Manawatu), Sandra Wallace (Canterbury).

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

Paul Asquith, Sue Bell, Marie Buchler, Brian Darlow, Graham Don, Florence Gaud, Susanne Govella, Richard Holdaway, Peter Howden, Ted Kirk, Mary McEwen, Gregory Moorcroft, Andrew Nikkel, Sioux Plowman, Marianne Power, C. John Ralph, Elizabeth Revell, Benjamin Rodriguez, Rachael Sagar, Ian Sutherland, Bice Tennyson, Janet Thorp, Barbara White.

VISIT THE OSNZ WEBSITE
www.osnz.org.nz

The Society's website is a great source of information and resources:

- Read the latest news about your Society
- Join or manage your subscription
- Learn about the Society's schemes and studies
- Download scheme reporting forms, and check out reports from scheme convenors
- Find contact details for all those involved in helping run the Society
- Keep up to date with conferences available both here and abroad
- Check out the publications the Society produces or has produced
- Download and read newsletters from the Society's regions

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Subscriptions are due on 1st January. 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.

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QUOTATION

*It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues;
And, as her mother's name was Tears,
So runs it in my blood to choose
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
In company with trees that weep.*

The Kingfisher by William Henry Davies
1871-1940

CONTENTS

President's Report	3
NZ Bird Conference and OSNZ AGM 2014	4
Tribute to David George Medway	6
HANZAB is now on NZ Birds Online	7
Preventing Bird Strikes at Auckland Airport	9
Twitching Tricky Terns	10
White Heron Activity Time Budget Study	12
Regional Round-up	15
Birds of Pauatahanui Inlet	18

COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover:

Arctic Tern west of the Chatham Islands by Ian Southey

Back Cover:

Arctic (top) and Common Terns by Ian Southey. See article on page 10

Publisher

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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.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Recently the Society has lost two long serving and influential members, in John Kendrick and David Medway.

John died earlier in the year while I was overseas and I did not catch up with the news for some time after my return. There were brief reports on John's background in the September issue of *Southern Bird*. I believe that one of John's great influences was on the provision of the sound recordings that are played on National Radio each day. This helped to bring birds into everyone's daily activities and I am sure that this influenced many people to become members of the Society and further bird study.

More recently Past President, David Medway, died at his home in Taranaki just prior to moving to Wellington to be closer to his family. A fuller obituary for David will be forthcoming but he had been a member of the Society for nearly 60 years and during that time he had filled many roles from Regional Representative for a very large number of years in Taranaki to serving on Council and also as President. David's greatest attribute, however, was his enthusiasm and willingness to pass on his knowledge to anyone that showed an interest.

The funeral notice for David requested that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the Society. We have just been advised that over \$1,400 was donated and I am now seeking advice from the family how they believe that David would have liked this used. It was a very large service and the Society was mentioned several times, showing how important it was in David's life.

Council Meeting

Early in November Council met for its regular end of year meeting. At this meeting the co-option of Stefanie Grosser onto Council was confirmed. Stefanie is a relatively new member and is a student at Otago University. She is highly qualified in genetics and brings a different dimension to Council's deliberations as well as the enthusiasm of youth.

Among the reports that were considered was one from Nick Allen relating to *Southern Bird*. It will be seen that Nick has made adjustments to the layout and content based on discussions at the annual meeting with the regional representatives. Nick would like to increase the size of the magazine but that is not possible under the current financial restraints without increased sponsorship or advertising. Nick has advised the Council that he does not have time to undertake that additional task.

I would therefore request that if there is a member who has skills or interest in marketing or would like to assist in arranging advertisers please contact me at your earliest opportunity. This is a chance to work from home and put something back into the organisation to enable us to hold costs as long as possible.

Another initiative that Council is investigating is running an electronic newsletter whenever there is something of interest to report. Clearly that will only be able to go to those members for whom we hold email addresses but it will provide a very efficient means of communicating with the membership. Sarah Jamieson has agreed to coordinate this in

the New Year, but if any other members wish to be involved I am sure that Sarah would appreciate assistance.

Another suggestion was that the Society should investigate the re-introduction of a photo competition, particularly now that we have very skilled photographers within the membership. This would not only raise interest but would also give the Society and Editors a pool of photos that would be available for publications. This will be further investigated in the coming year.

Brand Name

The implementation of the brand name that was agreed at the annual meeting has been slower than anticipated. Council decided that we should look at all aspects of branding across the whole organisation to ensure that there is coordination and consistency of use. Ian Armitage has agreed to undertake this investigation and Council looks forward to his recommendations in the near future so that the changes can be implemented early in the New Year.

New Field Guide

The revision of the field guide is well advanced with Hugh Robertson having written about 75% of the text. A contract has now been entered into with Derek Onley to prepare the new plates and these should be completed by the middle of next year. Publication is expected towards the end of 2014.

Visiting Other Regions

Recently my wife took me on a holiday for a week in Mount Maunganui to get me away from work during the day, and bird-related activities in the evenings. However, before I travelled I made contact with Paul Cuming from the Bay of Plenty Region to see if there were any activities being undertaken that week.

Paul advised that on the Wednesday night a team was going to be catching Little Penguins for monitoring to check on their health following the *Rena* experience. I spent a very pleasant evening with a sizeable team from the region, although for several of the participants it was their first experience at handling birds. We split into two teams and combed the rocky foreshore of Leisure Island which adjoins the main beach at Mt Maunganui. Each of the teams caught 17 birds, which we weighed, checked their microchips and released to go about their domestic duties. My congratulations go to Julia and her team for a well organised evening and the care which was shown to the birds.

The point of this comment is to encourage members when visiting different regions to make contact with local members to either find out the likely spots to visit to see local birds or to assist in local activities. This gives much greater meaning to your birding experience, while at the same time allowing for the sharing of ideas and meeting new people.

Jim Holdaway Awards

The Hauraki Gulf Forum in Auckland recently introduced a programme to commemorate the conservation work of Jim Holdaway in the

Auckland Region. This consists of the issuing on an annual basis, awards to people who are showing leadership in conservation within the Hauraki Gulf catchment area.

In this inaugural year I am pleased to see that two out of three awards were made to members of the Society:

The first of these is Chris Gaskin for his contribution to seabird research and conservation around the Hauraki Gulf. This recently culminated in the discovery of the breeding ground of the New Zealand Storm Petrel on Little Barrier Island.

The second is to Keith Woodley, the manager of the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre on the Firth of Thames. This award was for his leadership in protecting shore and wetland environments around the Gulf, particularly for shorebirds.

It is a wonderful achievement to have two of our members honoured in this way, and from my personal contacts with the late Jim Holdaway I know that he would have been proud of the work that has been achieved within this environment.

Annual General Meeting Weekend 2015

The AGM weekend in 2015 is also the 75th annual meeting of the Society.

The Marlborough Region has agreed that they will host this event and make it an event worthy of a 75th anniversary.

While planning is only in its very early stages it is intended that much of the weekend will focus on the people that have been associated with the Society over its 75 years and what the Society has achieved over that period. The preliminary theme that has been chosen is "*The people and the birds*".

This sounds like a really interesting event because to my way of thinking the people are our greatest asset and they deserve to receive the recognition that they have earned.

To make this event a success, however, it will require older members to provide their experiences, so I am therefore asking if people could note any comments that they believe should be considered and forward those to Mike Bell in Marlborough. We will also need people to make the presentations, so if you are asked I hope that you can respond positively.

Conclusion

This will be my last official message for this year so I would like to wish all members a happy holiday season and safe travels if you are moving away from home.

Remember also to complete your eBird survey forms if you are travelling to a new area or even if you are around home. It should be noted that the Society has recently printed a number of eBird note pads that will be available if you attend the upcoming training courses.

As mentioned above if you are travelling to different regions make contact with the local people and share experiences.

Above all enjoy your birding but safely.

DAVID LAWRIE
President

NEW ZEALAND BIRD CONFERENCE AND OSNZ AGM 2014

Call for registrations and abstracts.

Following on from an outstanding conference in Dunedin this year, Palmerston North is looking forward to hosting the second New Zealand Bird Conference and Society AGM over Queen's Birthday Weekend, Saturday 31st May to Monday 2nd June 2014. Home to Massey University, Palmerston North is an exciting hub of avian research and we look forward having a number of local speakers sharing some of the latest research knowledge with you. Alongside this we look forward to bringing together researchers and bird enthusiasts across the country to share their knowledge and findings to make for a dynamic and informative event.

The venue for the conference will be the centrally-located Kingsgate Hotel. There will be discounted accommodation available onsite or visitors may choose from a range of alternative accommodation close to the conference facility, which is just a couple of minutes' walk from the square.

The conference again aims to continue the fine work of previous conferences in making this the premier New Zealand event for the communication of new research findings on New Zealand birds while providing opportunity for discussion, networking and workshops for bird researchers and birders in New Zealand.

The format of the conference will be similar to the most recent conferences, with the first two days largely being devoted to scientific presentations. A variety of workshops are planned for the Sunday morning. Abstracts for oral presentations are being called for now and Society members are encouraged to submit abstracts.

There will be lots of opportunities for socialising over the weekend with an informal dinner on Saturday night and the conference dinner on Sunday evening at the Kingsgate Hotel. In addition, on Monday a variety of exciting field trips will be available:

1. Bushy Park, Wanganui: Only an hour away, Bushy Park is home to Robin, Saddleback, and recently-released Stitchbird as well as other forest birds.
2. Pukaha Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre: A behind the scenes tour where you will get the chance to see the white North Island Brown Kiwi, Kokako and other species up close.
3. Manawatu Estuary and surrounds: well known for its waders the Manawatu Estuary is a popular local spot, but close by is an area well known for Fernbird. This trip will enable visits to both areas and will have the option of an early return for those with late afternoon flights.

This conference will again use online registration as the main method of registration. A printed registration form will not be included in Southern Bird. The registration form and further information about the programme, field trips, workshops and accommodation options will be available on the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz.

For those without internet access, a printed registration form and information pack can be obtained by contacting your Regional Representative or by writing to Craig Steed, 9 Petersens Road, RD1, Palmerston North, 4471.

Early registration is encouraged and Society members are advised to make early airline bookings to Palmerston North to take advantage of cheaper fares.

We look forward to hosting you in Palmerston North over Queen's Birthday weekend in 2014.

Key dates:

Deadline for Early Registration: 31st March 2014

Deadline for Abstract Submission: 31st March 2014

PERSONNEL MATTERS

OSNZ has a new Scientific Committee Chair, Ralph Powlesland and Council member, Stefanie Grosser

Ralph Powlesland - Chairperson of Scientific Committee

Ralph has had a keen interest in birds since childhood that was encouraged by his parents. On attending university and joining OSNZ in the 70s, this interest developed into documenting observations, especially as a result of taking part in beach patrols along the Manawatu coastline with OSNZ members, and studying birds for an MSc (impacts of blood-sucking mites on nesting Starlings) and PhD (time budgets of South Island Robins).

While employed as an ornithologist (1982-2009) by the Wildlife Service and subsequently by the Department of Conservation, Ralph enjoyed the opportunity to carry out research on some fascinating bird species at amazing locations, including Kokako in Puketi Forest, Kakapo on Stewart, Little Barrier and Codfish Islands, Parea on Chatham Island, a variety of bird species in Pureora and Whirinaki Forests, and the birdlife of Niue Island. During this period, Ralph often spent time at weekends taking part in OSNZ national and regional studies about Wellington, including nesting of Black, Little and Pied Shags and Feral Pigeons.

In addition, contributions were made to the operations of the Society, such as a stint on the Council, membership of the Scientific Advisory Committee, and convener of the Beach Patrol Scheme. Since becoming an independent consultant and resident of the Marlborough Sounds, Ralph has continued his interest in studying birds, documenting the monthly birdlife of Manaroa and the ecology of Weka.



Stefanie Grosser

Stefanie completed her undergraduate and M.Sc. in Molecular and Cellular Biology at University of Potsdam, Germany. Her main research interests have been evolution and population and conservation genetics. After a short detour into evolution and development (EvoDevo) research and bioinformatics in Oxford, England and a job as lab technician for Landcare Research in Auckland she joined Jon Waters' lab group at the University of Otago (Department of Zoology) for her PhD. Jon is looking at the impacts of human arrival on New Zealand's iconic coastal vertebrate species. As part of this project she is investigating the population structure of prehistoric and contemporary Little Penguins, *Eudyptula minor*. Living in New Zealand and working in the Zoology Department in Otago have sparked her interest in birds and she finds herself with binoculars around her neck all the time these days (she shamefully admits that she has not always been a bird nerd). Stefanie hopes she can make some valuable contributions to conserve New Zealand's amazing and unique bird life with her appointment onto OSNZ Council.



SUPPLEMENTARY FILES FOR NOTORNIS

Changes to the website mean that supplementary files can now be held for the online version of *Notornis*. This means that extra data, sound files, videos, etc can be viewed or heard alongside journal articles.

NATIVE BIRDS POSTER OFFER

Te Papa Press is offering OSNZ members the opportunity to purchase a poster of New Zealand Birds freight free. The magnificent illustration from the 1900s by William Shaw Diedrich Schmidt has been lovingly reproduced by Te Papa Press in celebration of their book *Buller's Birds of New Zealand* (published last year).

The order form is available via the news section of the OSNZ website www.osnz.org.nz or through your Regional Representative.



NATIVE BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2014 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2014 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 2014 Annual General Meeting will be held at the Kingsgate Hotel, 110 Fitzherbert Avenue, Palmerston North commencing at 4 pm, **Saturday 31st May 2014.**

A page on the OSNZ website will give conference details. The registration form will be available for download soon.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The three year Council terms of Secretary (Peter Gaze) and David Melville expire at the next AGM. In addition, there are two Council positions which are currently vacant. Stephanie Grosser has been temporarily co-opted into one of these. Nominations are therefore called for all four vacancies. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again.

Nominations close with the Secretary on **28th February 2014.** Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the nominee, who must also be a financial member. Would nominators please include brief *curriculum vitae* of the nominee if that person is not already a member of Council.

Peter Gaze
Secretary
P.O. Box 834
Nelson

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 birdo@post.com

DAVID GEORGE MEDWAY (1939-2013)

The following was delivered as a eulogy by the author at David's funeral.

I first met David Medway 40 years ago this very year when I returned to Taranaki and joined the Ornithological Society's Taranaki Branch.

David had become the Regional Representative of the local Society in 1965 after his return from six years working for the Supreme Court in Wellington while studying for a law degree at Victoria University. He had actually joined the Society as a schoolboy in 1955.

David's day-job at the time was as a partner in the legal firm of Billing and Co., New Plymouth. So here, indeed, was a very strange lawyer; a lawyer who could speak the language of my previous employment as an animal ecologist, and with an encyclopaedic knowledge, even then, of birds and especially those of James Cook's voyages.

He, Carole and the girls became close family friends for many years until, as often happens, family dynamics change and close friendships wane. However, in those heady days of our youth, weekend OSNZ field trips were to intensely interesting and often out-of-the-way places: the mountain, lakes tucked away in the hills, river mouths from the Waitotara to the Mokau, and one glorious one to Tahora to awaken in the bush to the dawn chimes of the last surviving Taranaki Kokako.

Few locals were fully aware of David's standing in the ornithological field but he was granted a Fellowship of the Linnaean Society in 1979; a singular honour for what he described at the time as "a leisure-time occupation". His work on the ornithology of Cook's voyages was of international standing and he presented to a number of conferences overseas.

A list of his over 30 published papers runs to four pages, and that's without his books on *Sea and Shore Birds*, *The Birds of Pukeiti* and his contribution to the OSNZ's recently-published *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*. He also contributed the avian annotations for Michael Hoare's massive work of George Forster's journal from Cook's second voyage to the Pacific.

He made several trips overseas to sources of Cook material, working on archives in Australia as well as Britain, Sweden and France in 1974 and Tahiti in 1977.

David's other guises were many and varied:

He was, from 1968 to 1981, a valued member of the National Parks and Reserves Authority, a member of the Fauna Protection Advisory Council, an executive member and councillor of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society as well as its Taranaki branch president.

He was a member of the Taranaki Alpine Club and of the Taranaki Caving Club, which was instrumental in obtaining a Bush Moa skeleton from Skyline Cave

at Mahoenui for Taranaki Museum. David then became the President of the re-constituted Friends of Taranaki Museum from 1977 to 1980.

The Ornithological Society was, of course, his major focus. He was Regional Representative in Taranaki from 1965 to 1973 and then from 1981 to 2000 when he became National President of the Society until 2006.

David retired from practice in 1998 after 41 years to "pursue his other passion - birds". In this way he became a scientist in the mould of the very 18th and 19th century naturalists he so keenly admired and researched.

As he and Carole lived within spitting distance of Pukekura Park, in recent years he has been fully involved with the Friends of Pukekura Park, becoming its President in 2009. He edited the totally outstanding Friends Newsletter which has grown to be a remarkable record of his meticulous research into all aspects of Park history. It is here that he will be sadly missed.

And I've just mentioned the word 'meticulous'. This was the David Medway that everyone knew. He could, at times, be exasperatingly long-winded but you realised later, after you'd stopped muttering 'Bloody Medway!' in several languages, that you had just been treated to a masterly and accurate summary, plus a bit of all the knowledge known on the subject, and all without any previous study or 'boning-up'. Remarkable indeed!

Only recently David and Carole had made the difficult decision to move to Wellington to be closer to family. Dave took a while, but he had come to terms with the move and was beginning to look positively at the advantages the Wellington area and the nearby Wairarapa had to offer.

For many years now I have compiled the minutes for our local OSNZ branch. The discovery of any mistakes in those minutes became a light-hearted war between David and I. Try as I might I have not yet produced a set, except by complete serendipity, in which he was unable to find a typo, missed comma or mis-spelling.

Goodbye Old Friend - there is no-one to replace you.

DAVID MEDWAY ON AN OSNZ CONFERENCE TRIP TO KARORI SANCTUARY IN 2006. PHOTO BY NICK ALLEN

RON LAMBERT
October 2013

HAVE YOU SEEN A COLOUR-BANDED BLACK-BILLED GULL?

It is hard to convince people that a seagull is an endangered species, but for the Black-billed Gull this is certainly the case. Over the past 30 years the Black-billed Gull population has declined by over 80%. The direct cause of this is unknown, but it is likely a combination of land use change, introduced predators and changes to braided rivers from water extraction and hydro power stations.

In order to learn more about this endemic species over the past two years Marlborough OSNZ members have been colour-banding Black-billed Gull chicks. Our study is focusing on two major areas; winter dispersal and juvenile and adult annual survival. Black-billed Gull chicks crèche up, and banding involves herding all the chicks into a pen, then banding them as quickly as possible.

The colonies on the Wairau River are highly accessible and this provides a unique opportunity to look at juvenile survival and recruitment rates. Over the next ten years observations will be carried out during the breeding season at the colony to look for banded birds, where we will get an idea of juvenile survival and recruitment into the breeding population. Obviously we will need to search other colonies to get a handle on immigration rates as well. As the chicks mature and start breeding within the colony yearly monitoring will give us an understanding of annual adult survival.

As with all colour-banding studies, one of the main interests is learning where your birds move. Black-billed Gulls migrate out of the braided rivers where they breed and head to coastal areas for the winter. This banding study is looking into where the wintering grounds of Marlborough's Black-billed Gulls are. To date birds banded on the Wairau River have only been recorded in the South Island (from Kaikoura through to Nelson), but we suspect that they are travelling much further. It is likely that these results are highly biased, as almost all records have been from those involved in the banding who live in Marlborough and Nelson.

So a plea for help: please carefully check any black-billed gull for colour

bands and report these sightings along with the letter and numbers engraved into the band (all bands have one letter and two numbers e.g. A41, who has overwintered at Picton foreshore this year). Other information needed is date and location of sighting. Please send your sightings to mike@wmil.co.nz or to the DOC banding office.

MIKE BELL

MAP OF SIGHTINGS OF WAIRAU RIVER BANDED BLACK-BILLED GULLS; SQUARE DOT BANDING LOCATION, ROUND DOTS SIGHTING LOCATIONS. MAP CREDIT KELVIN FLOYD.

BANDED BLACK-BILLED GULL PHOTOGRAPHED AT PICTON FORESHORE. PHOTO BY KEES SCHURRINGA.

HANZAB IS NOW ON NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE

HANZAB is the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, and is the most comprehensive compilation of information on birds of this part of the world ever produced. The seven volumes were published between 1990 and 2006, and occupy 47 cm of bookshelf – if you are among the few bird enthusiasts with access to a full set.

New Zealand Birds Online – The digital encyclopaedia of New Zealand birds – is a collaboration between Te Papa, Birds New Zealand (the Ornithological Society of New Zealand), and the Department of Conservation. Launched in June 2013, the website contains a wealth of information, images and sound files and features all New Zealand bird species, including ancient fossils and the most recent wind-blown vagrants (e.g. Straw-necked Ibis and Streaked Shearwater).

One of the novel features of New Zealand Birds Online is the presentation of existing published information from a selection of books about New Zealand birds. These are presented as a series of book-cover icons at the lower right of each species page. Clicking on any book cover opens a pdf of information and images about the focal species, extracted from the book. For example, on the Chatham Island Snipe page, six such book-cover icons can be seen, and are portals to much more detailed information than the approximately 1,000 words of text on the main webpage.

The books selected for presentation on New Zealand Birds Online contain complementary information on New Zealand birds, presented species by species – and have been reproduced with the permission of the publishers and copyright holders. From the outset of the project in 2010, I had my eye on HANZAB to join the stable of book titles. Not only does it contain more detailed information on the birds of our region than any other publication, but few birdwatchers possess their own full set of volumes. New Zealand Birds Online was an ideal platform to make relevant parts of HANZAB more accessible to people who seek to learn more about New Zealand

birds – provided that the copyright holders were supportive of the idea. An added bonus from the scanning process is that the 354 pdfs produced can be searched digitally using OCR (optical character recognition), if there is a particular piece of information that you seek.

Production of HANZAB was a massive two-decade-long project for the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union (RAOU, now BirdLife Australia). Its statistics are superlative, including 9,600 pages of text, 413 colour plates, six main editors, eleven artists, and many hundreds of contributing authors and sponsors. The seven volumes were all published by Oxford University Press, Melbourne, in association with RAOU. Copyright for the HANZAB text, maps and line drawings is held by BirdLife Australia, and the individual artists retain copyright for the colour plates that they produced. The New Zealand birding community owes a great debt of gratitude to BirdLife Australia, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Nicolas Day, Kim Franklin, Derek Onley, Frank Knight, Peter Slater, Mike Bamford, Brett Jarrett and James Luck for their permission to reproduce extracts from HANZAB on New Zealand Birds Online.

SCANNING

But getting permission to reproduce extracts from HANZAB was only one step – and there were many steps in the process of producing the species-by-species extracts as they appear on New Zealand Birds Online. Every page and colour plate had to be scanned to create a tif file, then each species extract was compiled from (typically) four different sections of the original, combining information on the relevant bird order, family and species, plus one to three colour plates illustrating the species. Each extract had its own citation header explaining where the information was copied from (see sample screen shot below), plus one to four embedded hyperlinks leading to the 'About HANZAB' page on New Zealand Birds Online.

Be warned that most of the HANZAB extracts are big – and some are very big. New Zealand Birds Online alerts you to the size of the file that you are about to download. If you want to test the speed of your broadband connection, try the 121 MB Australian Magpie HANZAB extract.

All these steps required funding that was beyond the original New Zealand Birds Online budget. The scanning quote didn't sound too bad at \$2 a page, but try multiplying by 9,600! And that was only the start of the digitisation process. Many thanks to TFBIS and the Birds New Zealand Research Fund for providing the funding that allowed the concept and goodwill to become a reality.

COLIN MISKELLY

NOTICE OF NATIONAL SURVEY OF AUSTRALASIAN CRESTED GREBE/KĀMANA

A national Crested Grebe census is being planned for **Saturday 25 January 2014**, ten years after the last national survey. The census is being organised as a volunteer project by Leslie Jensen and Rosalie Snoyink.

We are again seeking the assistance of members of the Ornithological Society, the Department of Conservation, Forest and Bird, Federated Mountain Clubs, Fish and Game, various tramping clubs and enthusiastic individuals. We are hoping observers will volunteer to help count all the South Island lakes listed, and possibly some that were missed in the last survey.

If you are able to help please contact us, or OSNZ Regional Reps.
Rosalie Snoyink, rsnoyink@xtra.co.nz Phone 03 318 2632
Leslie Jensen, LAJ@xtra.co.nz

AUSTRALASIAN CRESTED GREBE
BY ANDRE KONTER

A WEEK IN THE STACKS AT AUCKLAND MUSEUM

Over one week in August 2013, I spent a week in the library stacks of Auckland Museum going through the archived OSNZ Records Appraisal Committee (RAC, formerly Rare Birds Committee) historic submissions and correspondence. The aim is to create an electronic searchable database of all submissions and final decisions for the OSNZ RAC.

BIZ SURROUNDED BY
OSNZ RAC FILES AT
AUCKLAND MUSEUM,
AUGUST 2013

This will enable all members to have access to earlier submissions for scientific investigation or resubmission without having to access Auckland Museum. It will also allow the RAC Convenor, Checklist Committee or any OSNZ member to determine the number of unusual sightings and range of species that have reached New Zealand (or specifically their regions).

I picked the perfect week to be hiding away in the corner of the Library – cold and wet in Auckland (the coldest day since weather records began supposedly) and even missed the large crane toppling over in Parnell (just across from where I was staying) in the gale force winds. Amazing what you miss when you have no windows where you are working!

Martin Collett (Manuscripts Librarian, Auckland Museum) supported the task by providing security clearance and a perfect space in amongst the most amazing books (did you know there is a book on a single petrochemical – who would have thought you could write an entire book on that!). Being tucked in a corner meant I was not disturbing all the other important projects that were progressing at the Museum or the staff completing their work. Martin checked in with me several times a day (when it fitted into his busy schedule) to make sure I wasn't going mad and that the work was progressing well.

It was fascinating going through the old records and seeing who saw what and when. Several observers' names kept coming up and it is fantastic to see those names still popping up in the current submissions. There have been some amazing sightings: Common Terns, Laysan Albatross, Tree Martin, Black Falcon, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Ruff, Hudsonian Godwit,

BUSH WREN SUBMISSION

Lesser Frigatebirds and penguins of all shapes and sizes. And some that caused great debate within the various Committees since the late 1960's and continue to do so today (Bush Wren, South Island Kokako, Piopio).

Michael Taylor has worked tirelessly with the OSNZ archives and his carefully cataloguing of the relevant RAC boxes certainly made my job easier. It was great to see him when he popped in to see how I was going and whether his system all made sense. Paul Garner-Richards also helped with the scanning process for two days. I would also like to thank the excellent work of past Rare Birds (RAC) Committee members, convenors and secretaries for their work, and in a few cases their excellent filing systems of the records. Deciphering some of the hand-writing was interesting, but entertaining (especially when it related to those famous names like Kinsky, Falla and Brathwaite).

The job is not quite finished (one out of five boxes left to process, plus another 13 folders with more recent submissions), so I will need another week back at the end of the corridor in the Museum. But in the end there should be a fantastic database for the membership to be able to check up on all those weird and wonderful birds that various observers have been reporting around New Zealand since 1967.

ELIZABETH (BIZ) BELL
RAC Secretary

PREVENTING BIRD STRIKES AT AUCKLAND AIRPORT

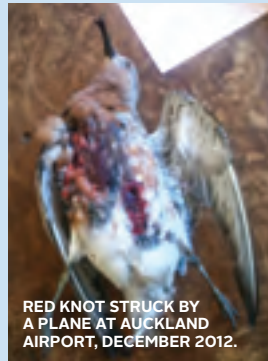
Bird strikes are a commonly-occurring event, caused when birds are ingested into jet engines, or collide with an aircraft, most commonly during take-off or landing. Bird strikes are a threat to aviation safety, and also cause billions of dollars worth of damage to aircraft each year.

The energy of strike impact depends on the weight of the bird species, but for example, if a 5 kg bird collided with a Boeing 737 on take-off (85.4 m/sec) the energy of impact, would be just over 20 kilojoules. That is more impact than a Holden Commodore car hitting a brick wall travelling 15 kph (about 14.8 kilojoules).

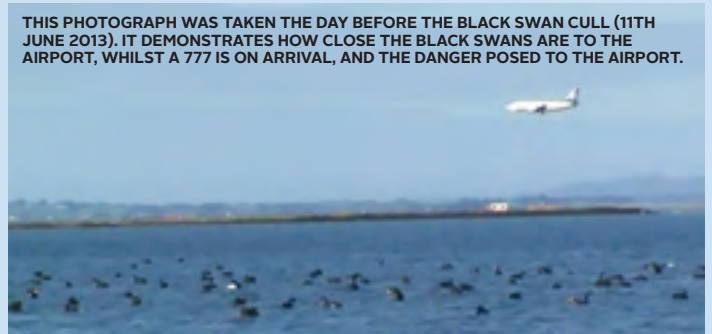
Bird strikes are a common issue for airports worldwide. This is because birds regularly live in the environment surrounding airports. Airports often fringe on large urban centres, and consist of large areas of undeveloped land acting as a noise buffer. Airports are also commonly surrounded by water. All these variables attract a large variety of birds such as marsh, sea and terrestrial.

Airports have wildlife control initiatives in place to minimise the interaction between birds and aircraft. These range from monitoring techniques; modifying habitats (removing food sources, keeping grass at certain lengths etc); and controlling the birds' behaviour, with the use of pyrotechnics, cannons, predator calls, etc, and live ammunition. Education is an important tool, playing a key role in eliminating bird strikes. Pilots, operators and cabin staff should be knowledgeable on bird hazards, and use standard operating procedures to reduce the potential for and consequences of bird strikes.

Auckland Airport has been built on land reclaimed from an estuary; therefore we have a large number and variety of marsh and sea birds around our perimeter. Bird species encountered in and around the airport include: Black Swan, Canada Goose, White-faced and



RED KNOT STRUCK BY A PLANE AT AUCKLAND AIRPORT, DECEMBER 2012.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN THE DAY BEFORE THE BLACK SWAN CULL (11TH JUNE 2013). IT DEMONSTRATES HOW CLOSE THE BLACK SWANS ARE TO THE AIRPORT, WHILST A 777 IS ON ARRIVAL, AND THE DANGER POSED TO THE AIRPORT.



GAS CANNON. THIS IS USED ON GRASS AREAS TO FRIGHTEN BIRDS, AS IT LETS OF CONSECUTIVE LOAD BANGS. IT CAN BE SET ON A TIMER OR USED BY REMOTE CONTROL. IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE FOR THE CONTROL OF SEED EATING BIRDS (FINCHES, YELLOWHAMMERS AND SKYLARKS IN SUMMER). IT IS ALSO VERY SUCCESSFUL FOR THE CONTROL OF SPUR-WINGED PLOVERS AND HERONS FEEDING ON THE WET GRASS AREAS IN WINTER MONTHS.



SCREAMER AND BANGER GUN. THIS GUN IS VERY EFFECTIVE TO CONTROL BIRDS IN FLIGHT FROM 0-100 M AWAY. IT CAN BE LOADED WITH A SCREAMER, WHICH SETS OF A LOUD, LONG SCREAM WHEN FIRED. IT CALL ALSO BE LOADED WITH A BANGER, WHICH LETS OFF ONE LOAD BANG WHEN REACHED ITS MAXIMUM DISTANCE. THIS GUN IS PREDOMINANTLY EFFECTIVE FOR SCARING HARRIERS, GULLS AND OTHER BIRDS THAT ARE MOST COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED IN FLIGHT.

White Herons, Australasian Bittern, Royal Spoonbill, Little Black, Black and Pied Shags, Banded Rail, Pied Stilt, Pied and Variable Oystercatchers, New Zealand and Banded Dotterels, Wrybill, Lesser Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls, Caspian Tern and some petrels. Occasional sightings have been made of albatross, Australasian Gannet and an Australian Pelican.

Here at Auckland Airport we value our native New Zealand birds and believe that by modifying the habitat in specific ways, we will not just reduce bird strike but we will also contribute to saving our native endemic species. We have created artificial roosting sites (made of shell) on airport land. This supplies birds with a place to roost at high tide. These roosting sites are also used for breeding by species such as the New Zealand Dotterel.

In the future with increased flight movements and alternative habitats continuing to decrease due to land development, the vacant land around airports will become more attractive to birds. This will in turn cause bird strikes to become more and more of an issue, worldwide. However, advances in technology and management will continue to allow us control of bird incidents.

It is important to keep in mind that the sky belonged to avian species long before technological advancements allowed us the opportunity to enter their realm. Birds have always, and will always occupy the airspace. Continuing to reduce bird strikes the best we can will allow both avian and human species to aviate, and co-exist as one.

LIZZIE MCGREGOR

Grounds and Wildlife Hazard Management Planner, Auckland Airport



NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL



PIED SHAG



< HOVPOD. THIS PIECE OF EQUIPMENT IS USED TO SCARE OFF BLACK SWANS THAT ARE CONGREGATING IN THE BAY WEST OF THE AIRPORT AND 200 M NORTH OF THE ACTIVE RUNWAY. OUR AIM IS TO USE THIS DAILY SO THAT THE SWANS DO NOT ASSOCIATE THE BAY AS A SAFE HAVEN.



WHITE-FACED STORM PETREL



WHITE-FRONTED TERN

TWITCHING TRICKY TERNS

(The Identification of Middle-sized Terns in New Zealand - Part Two)

Looking for a Common Tern or an Arctic Tern is an uneasy business - if you saw one how would you know? Either species could be found in any White-fronted Tern flock, often around the edges. They usually turn up without warning, preen, rest and move on so you have to take your chances when you can. They look easy in field guides, at least in breeding plumage, but we don't often see them like that: non-breeding plumage, wear and moult make them more difficult here.

In such a flock Common or Arctic Terns should be a little darker in colour, with a moderately- or well-defined carpal bar, even as adults, a bit smaller and more slender with shorter bills and longer wings. These differences can be subtle to the point where you may not actually be able to discern them. Either the fine dark stripes along the full length of the outer tail feather or the dark hook-like pattern on the tips of the primaries will confirm that a bird is not a White-fronted Tern, but these features are pretty hard to see too. There are other marks that help identify the bird to species. While these may not be particularly easy to appreciate either, if you take the time and care between them you may learn enough to know what you are looking at.

Most White-fronted Terns will be adults and should be easily recognised, being in breeding plumage while the migrant species are not. Younger birds may cause confusion as they are often in similar stages of moult to the rarer terns. These young birds may also seem a little small and slim with slightly shorter and less down-curved bills. The white on the forehead extends up to about the mid-crown, which is often speckled with black, and the worn primaries look blackish, perhaps even on the upper edges, due to more wear and abrasion on the white parts of the inner webs. They will have a carpal bar and should have dark marks on the tertials. The outer edges of the tail are dark grey at the tip, but the distinctive paler grey base can be hard to see. These are, however, the kind of birds that should be drawing attention as Common Terns in particular are very similar.



COMMON TERN, TAPORA, KAIPARA HARBOUR 31-12-08.

Common Tern

Common Terns are more often recorded from the North Island, and between September and April. They may stand tall on long, sometimes slender-looking legs often holding their heads up on a longer neck, or they may slouch. Compared to White-fronted Terns they are slim-bodied, especially the breast and behind the legs. The bill is typically shorter and may appear a little stout at the base with a curve along the top. In some birds the bill may be even deeper at the base. The head is typically smaller and curved over the crown. It looks white-faced with a small black spot in front of the eye. It is very white below the eye but some have a larger black patch in front of the eye and may be smudgy below it. There is a fairly clean-cut transition between the black and white on the mid-crown above the eye. Some may have traces of breeding plumage, occasionally into November, with dark



COMMON TERN, MANAWATU RIVER MOUTH, FOXTON BEACH 22-1-13.

speckles and smudges down to the base of the bill. Here the carpal bar (1) is mainly hidden by body feathers and it is present but not always visible. Wing moult is active on this bird and the exposed old primary (2) shows a very broad dark stripe and an extensively black tip with a little hook. This black stripe along the outer primary feather is at least as wide on the inner web as it is on the outer but immature White-fronted Terns may have a similar stripe. The black stripe on the outer tail feathers is not easy to see but the visible parts of the new wing feathers (3) are entirely dark with a paler frosting. When all the primaries are grown they will appear blackish on the folded wing, particularly along the top due to the extensive black outer edge and tips of the feathers entirely obscuring the white on the inner edges. This can be a good identification feature.

Not all Common Terns are so easy. At first sight the bird (left) photographed at Tapora resembles a slim White-fronted Tern: nondescript in size and colour with a long but slender bill for a Common Tern. Obvious speckling below the eye (which may be even darker on some birds) does not radically alter the white-faced appearance due to the clear white mid-crown. The appearance of a white upper edge to the folded wing is due to posture, some abrasion and the white inner web of the feather exposed by moult. A closer look for key details shows the black hook on the first primary past the tertials (4) and black sides to the tail (5) not found on a White-fronted Tern while the long legs are enough to identify it as a Common Tern.

In flight Common Terns in non-breeding plumage have dark primaries with a heavy dark trailing edge (6). The older secondaries have worn to create a darker band on the trailing edge (7) which is not always this obvious. The rump and tail are paler than the back but there is no sharp border (8). The blackish carpal bar (9) is actually present but has been burnt out by strong light in this picture. A paler grey middle section of the inner wing should show.



COMMON TERN, MANAWATU RIVER MOUTH, FOXTON BEACH 27-11-13

ARCTIC TERN, MANAWATU RIVER MOUTH, FOXTON BEACH 25-3-10 PHIL BATTLE.



Antarctic Tern

Antarctic Terns are the wild card in this group. Not yet seen on the main islands of New Zealand (although they breed as close as Stewart Island), they have been seen in Bass Strait during winter and should occur here at times.

In build they are bulky-bodied with short wings and large-headed with a heavy bill and legs, with strong similarities in plumage to the low-slung and slender Arctic Tern. Adults in non-breeding plumage are distinctive: they retain a red tinge to the blackish bill and dull red legs, while immatures have a black bill and dark legs. Adults usually retain traces of grey feathering on the breast and belly. Immature and non-breeding birds have a white forehead and crown, but the edge above the eye is not a straight edge and the top of the crown has more prominent black speckling.

Arctic Tern

Arctic Terns seem to appear more often in the south. They complete their amazing migration with little moult, so adults and juveniles transit here from October to December in very worn plumage with no wing or body moult, although their heads may be changing to, or fully in, non-breeding plumage when they arrive. When adults return north in March and April they are already in breeding plumage. Younger birds stay in the south so Arctic Terns may be seen here in any month, especially winter.

Arctic Terns are the smallest of the three species compared here, with remarkably short legs. Proportionately they have the longest wings, making the legs seem well forward, and a long tail that will project beyond them when fully grown. The body is small but solid with a small rounded head and a short thick neck, so they seldom stand tall and may tilt forward. Their bill is short and thorn-like, more or less straight along the top and bottom. In breeding plumage adults are easily recognised by a black cap that reaches the bill, which is becoming red. On southward migration these features are worn and beginning to change but traces of the cap reaching the bill and grey underparts could remain.

In non-breeding plumage the head pattern is distinctive. Front-on there is a neat white oval from the forehead to the top of the crown in young birds (10), extending to the rear of the crown in adults. Side-on the straight edge between the black and white from the crown to in front of the eye then extending well below the eye forms almost half of a triangle (11). This bird is a very worn juvenile retaining patterned back feathers.



ARCTIC TERN, AT SEA SOUTH OF THE CHATHAM ISLANDS 24-11-09.

In flight this Arctic Tern shows the distinctive head pattern, a slightly darker carpal bar (12), a neat darker trailing edge to the primaries (13), and, for a medium-sized tern in non-breeding plumage, the contrast between the white rump and the grey back (14) is diagnostic. Wing moult is very rapid with up to three primaries and some secondaries growing or missing at once so gaps in the wing are large. It usually takes place around the Antarctic coast during January, so most birds seen in New Zealand have intact wings.



ARCTIC TERN, AT SEA WEST OF THE CHATHAM ISLANDS 1-12-09.



ADULT NON-BREEDING ANTARCTIC TERN, THE SNARES, 19-4-07

Although I usually look for odd terns I still do not find them easy and I know I still miss some Common Terns. So far Arctic Terns seem easier. A camera can be a helpful aid if you manage to capture key features, and parts of this article may help, but in the end it comes down to experience; patiently checking all terns with a critical eye. Fortunately some of them are easier than others and can afford a start. See the back cover of this issue of *Southern Bird* for such examples.

IAN SOUTHEY



FIRST SUMMER ANTARCTIC TERN, CAMPBELL ISLAND 21-12-11, KYLE MORRISON.

WHITE HERON ACTIVITY TIME BUDGET STUDY

Since the 4th May when five White Herons were first seen at Tomahawk Lagoon, Dunedin, Otago OSNZ members have been keeping a close watch. Between 7th and 25th July seven herons were present and since then usually five. As of 8th November at least three herons are still in residence. Mostly the herons were seen roosting on a fallen tree, but in late afternoon they would often be seen fishing near the outlet by the road. We wondered how much of their time needed to be spent foraging, so we decided to carry out an activity time budget survey of our herons as a regional project.

Eighteen OSNZ members helped with this by watching in two-hour stints from 7 am to 7 pm on two Sundays – 1st and 8th September. Every five minutes observers recorded the number of White Herons undertaking feeding, preening, roosting, flying or other activity, and every 15 minutes marking the location of herons on maps of the area. In all 675 observations were made, so there was not much time for relaxing even though weather was absolutely fantastic for day one, with observers lounging on picnic chairs in the warm sun. Up to five herons were seen at any one time, but mostly there were only three or four. We discovered that the herons were feeding among the reeds so unfortunately were often out of sight.

From the information collected a daily activity time budget was determined (Figure 1) as well as how the activities changed every two hours throughout the day (Figure 2). The herons spent most of their time either feeding or roosting. The percentage of time spent feeding was lowest at midday and

increased during the afternoon to highest in the evening, 5–7 pm. Preening was only observed in the morning between nine o'clock and noon. Although a cursory glance may give the impression that the herons are not moving around very much, up to 8% of their time was spent flying. Figure 3 shows a map of the movements of four herons (A, B, C, D) observed by Philip Pointon during his watch from 7 to 9 am on 1st September; it is clear that the herons don't stay in the same place for long. One heron that had flown off in the morning was tracked down a few km further along Tomahawk Road in a stream, so it appears that they had got to know their surroundings well by then and were moving further afield.

Several people have witnessed all the roosting herons fly up and circle around in response to an Australasian Harrier flying overhead. Red-billed Gulls have also been seen harassing the White Herons when they came to feed in the shallower water near their bathing area; in response to the aerial attacks by the gulls the heron fully extends its neck straight up with bill also pointing directly skywards and calling. If the attack continues the heron flies off.

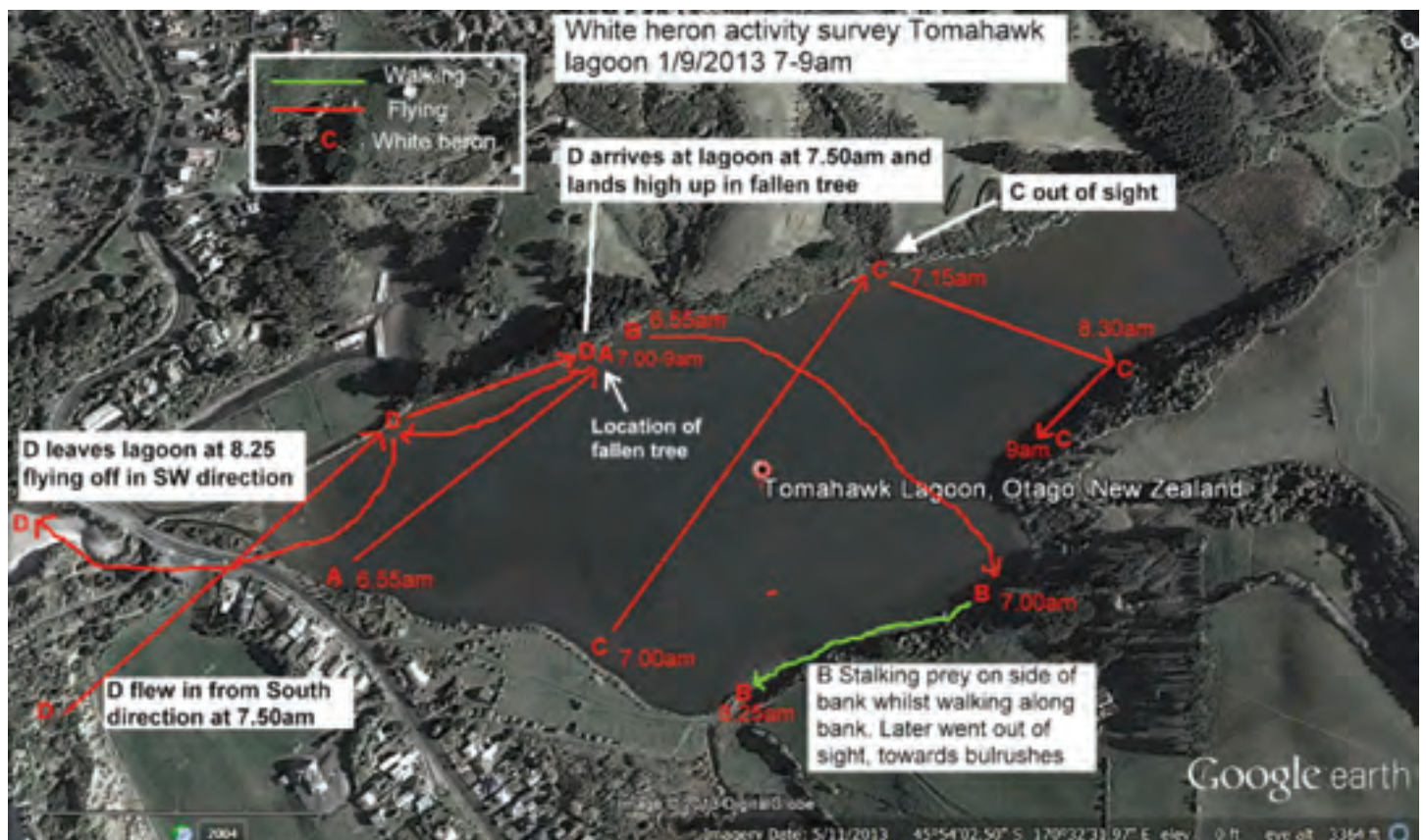
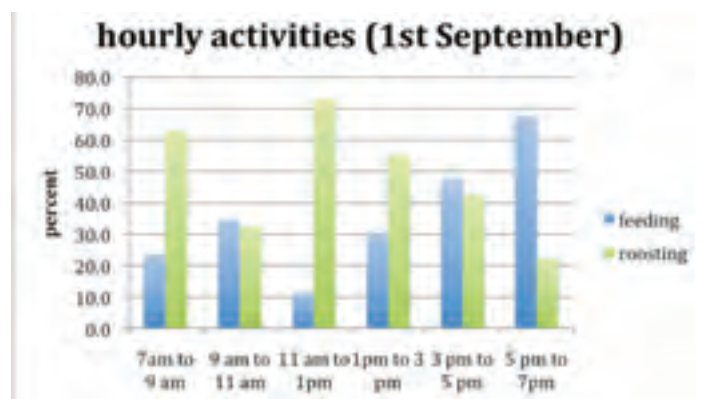
Other birds regularly seen at the lagoon are Variable Oystercatcher, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Spur-winged Plover, Pied Stilt, Black Shag, Little Shag, White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Mallard, Paradise Duck, and Pukeko. Kingfisher, Australasian Shoveler, Australian Coot and New Zealand Scaup have also turned up. So there is always plenty of interest.

MARY THOMPSON

Figure 1. Percentage of time spent on various activities.



Figure 1. Percentage of time spent feeding and roosting during the day.



A STUDY OF CATTLE EGRETS IN NEW ZEALAND

In 1999 Colin Clunie, an OSNZ member, spent months watching a flock of Cattle Egrets near Carterton in the Wairarapa. He made extensive notes, took dozens of wonderful photographs and made some interesting drawings. Unfortunately Colin died about nine years ago. The following article is constructed from his notes provided by Colin Scadden and other Wairarapa OSNZ members. ED

This was quite an intensive study from May to November in 1999 of a flock of 23 Cattle Egrets that overwintered in the Carterton District, south of, and later in the year, close by the eastern boundary of the town of Carterton. There was a gradual build up of numbers from two or three to 23 birds over a period of two weeks. The areas the birds used varied between an elevation of 60 and 70 metres above sea level. The close proximity to the town where I live allowed close monitoring of their stay. 130 hours of observing, plus some unrecorded time was involved between June 11th and November 22nd 1999. The study was always interesting because of the continuous activity. 'As free as the birds of the air' would be a gross misnomer as far as Cattle Egrets are concerned; the flock's very survival is dependant on order and discipline.

When a Harrier flew over and put the flock to flight they broke into a series of small groups to eventually combine together in one flock and return to feeding. After the Harrier had left a dominant bird occupied and aggressively guarded an area of drain, keeping the other Cattle Egrets away. When a White-faced Heron walked near the Cattle Egret it would raise its filoplumes and neck feathers in aggression, and looked rather fearsome, but still gave way to the Cattle Egret. This happened on more than one occasion. One day when the Cattle Egrets were spread out, a flock of 20 White-faced Herons moved among the cows. As the Cattle Egrets moved the last bird in the flock would fly over the others ahead to feed. This cycle would continue until the new feeding area was covered. On this occasion the Cattle Egrets took up positions among a nearby flock of sheep. The sheep were unperturbed and allowed the birds to walk amongst them.

Herd association was nearly always Friesian cows two years or older, perhaps one reason being the camouflage of Friesians; it was often difficult to confirm a Cattle Egret from a cow's white leg when standing, or rump if she was lying down. The Cattle Egrets foraged among the cattle, feeding as close as a metre from cows' noses. Once the flock had moved from an area or herd any return was usually only temporary, if at all. Brief associations with other animals were sheep (the longest), horses, Highland cattle and a herd of Friesian bulls.

A Cattle Egret in winter plumage was all white with bill a yellowish-bone colour and darkish-green legs. Early in the season the feathering was white with a tinge or a smudge of colour on the heads of some birds. After two months the beginning of plumage change could be detected. An orange colour began to develop at the base of the upper mandible on some birds. It extended a little way up to the forehead. The bill was darkening a little. A blackish line turns down slightly at the gape of the bill below the eye. The bills are longer than the head, robust and horny at the base with a slight downward curve to the tip. The neck is long compared to the body and can be stretched lengthwise in a posture that is extensively used when stalking prey. When stalking the head stays still while the neck sways from side-to-side. The birds see prey from four metres or more away. They concentrate on one spot, then quickly dash forward to stab at their prey, neck stretched at full reach. The neck sway wasn't just used for fast-moving insects, a reflex that significantly sped up the strike. The prey was worms, flies, beetles, grubs and skinks. White-faced Herons joined in to feed in the same way, with head still while the neck swayed from side-to-side before stabbing at prey.

Flight was stable and positive with shallow wing beats when moving from one area to another compared to the White-faced Heron's up-and-down bouncy movement with each flap. The neck was folded on a tight loop, neatly formed, with the head and bill tucked on it, giving good aerodynamics. Not at all very fast flying, Magpies can easily out-fly them for speed and manoeuvrability. When flying from the night roost to feed they rarely flew higher than three metres. Calling was a kind of mewing sound of four or five ascending notes, then descending again. Mid-pitch and higher guttural sounds also accompanied the higher-pitched calls.

The uncertainty when the predictable suddenly becomes unpredictable, a mysterious facet of their behaviour that added to their survival technique, sometimes led to frustration to me. For example, a flight pattern suddenly changes, with me waiting at a strategic place to observe the birds' usual flypast, but for some reason they just stay where they are or fly a new route. And then there is the predictable; for example associating only with a certain herd in a certain place, when not even a herd in the next paddock

is adopted, or any of the number of similar herds and conditions in the region, selected. An example of this was when a flock of White-faced Herons arrived and intermingled with the Cattle Egret cow herd. The Cattle Egrets then separated themselves away from all the herds to forage the pastures and drains.

Of note was the flight display with the Cattle Egret in an erratic, violent, tumbling and twisting manoeuvre as they came in to land, breaking their flight to tumble then turn sharply to swoop onto land. A display of aggression was seen when two birds flew at each other with wings outspread and jumped at each other claws spread and extended. It was a full-frontal confrontation, but didn't last very long.

The sleeping posture of the birds looked peculiar in that the birds assumed a 'pinecone' shape with only one leg protruding. The head and beak were rubbed from side to side across the breast, parting the feathering of the breast, then the bill and head were tucked on the breast, folding the neck. Then the surrounding feathers from each side were brought over the head, bill and neck, completely concealing any sign of them.

One of the highlights personally was the change from the extreme wariness to progressive confidence, then the close relationship the Cattle Egrets developed with the van from where I carried out my observing. At the start 150 m was the closest distance allowed. After some weeks the distance progressively reduced as the birds' confidence grew, but it wasn't until October, when the van became a protection from aggressive Australian Magpies, that the flock readily accepted the van at close quarters. Indeed, it was gratifying to see the birds fly towards the van and approach as close as 10 m after I had stopped near them. I was able to photograph and show myself outside the van without them flying away.

Residents of the Carterton area told me it was not the first time Cattle Egrets had overwintered in these parts. Indeed a local resident of Taumata Island, about three kilometres east, told me of a small flock two years before that had resided on farms near his property. Because of this study record, plus post and previous sightings, there must be some kind of phenomenon in this locality that attracts the Cattle Egrets here. Regular sightings have been made around Lake Wairarapa, and a flock (possibly two) was recorded there in 1999. I followed up these other reports, but didn't find any interaction between these groups of birds. The flocks at the northern and eastern side of the lake were of smaller numbers; 10 birds in one and possibly 15 in the other.

The favoured habitats were alluvial terraced river flats typical of the Wairarapa Plains that have many man-made drains, canals, rivers and other water-courses flowing through and across them, supporting high intensity dairy farming with cow herds of 150 to 400, mostly Friesians. An important observation of the Cattle Egret was their dependency on water. It was critical to their survival, for drinking and food supply. Whether it was from wet farmland, cattle troughs, canals or drains, the birds were never far from it.

At the start of their day perhaps a tall pine or macrocarpa tree used for surveillance was the first stop of their flight from their night roost. However, on many occasions this stop was bypassed in favour of a direct flight to a focal point trough, which the flock stayed close by while others drank or fed from it.

The birds left the area in November 1999, with four being reported from the area in May 2000 and again in 2001. In 2002 there was only one bird, while in 2003 no birds were noticed at all.

I found this study incredibly interesting, although on solving some questions it seemed a hundred more would crop up. Other points of interest were:

- Their interactions with each other (dominance)
- The reaction to a common enemy
- The sentries on duty
- Their uncanny ability to discern human danger and non-danger
- Their close association with man-made things
- Posture as indicators
- The sounds and calls heard
- Varied colour phases
- Their association with selected animals
- Where they roost and what happens
- How weather conditions affect them

And a multitude of questions:

- Why only selected herds?
- Why were the favoured areas selected?
- What confined the birds to the adopted area boundary?
- Why did the White-faced Herons impose themselves and adopt the same feeding structure and association to the herds that Cattle Egrets were associated with, even though the White-faced Herons were non-selective between herds one and two and intermingled freely among both herds?
- Had the White-faced Herons also flown in from Australia?
- What prompted the migrating departure of the Cattle Egrets or other changes of locality?

Acknowledgements and appreciation:

To those members of the Ornithological Society who were helpful with the observation. The owners and residents of the properties whose enthusiasm and encouragement, information and permission to go on their properties, in particular Christine Denbee, Lesley Leckie (for her contact), the Colley family, Mr Hutchley, Michael and Mrs O'Hara, and in particular Jenny Henson for the information and contact she kept supplying while the flock was on or near her property.

The white Toyota van continuously travelling and parking around their places may not always have been convenient to them.

COLIN CLUNIE

SOUTHERN BIRD'S YOUNGEST READER?

To The Editor

I took this photo recently when cousins Anthea and Declan were staying with us in Waihi. I was reading to Declan when five-year-old Anthea came into the lounge, picked up the latest Southern Bird and started to read. "I love birds Nana" was her comment. Anthea lives in Katikati and her house borders onto a wetland area. Mum, Dad and Anthea love watching the Pukeko families move around the wetland and recently they saw an early morning Bittern feeding on the stream edge. They have counted nine Tui at one time in their Prunus campanulata tree this spring and Anthea's Dad has made a nesting box for the Starlings.

When the children visit, there is usually a request "Can we go on a bush walk?" One school holiday we took them to Whiritoa and walked over the headland to the next bay. On our way back we saw two New Zealand Pigeons sitting in a tree looking down at us. When we carried on walking Declan said, "That was magic Poppa".

KRISHNA BUCKMAN

**FREE ATLAS FOR
NEW MEMBERS!!!**

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

For details of how to join the OSNZ:

- Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz and download a membership form.
- Contact the Society's Membership Secretary.
- Contact your local regional representative.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

FAR NORTH

It has been quite a productive spring so far with Shining Cuckoos arriving early and still very vocal in many places. At a time when Far North Royal Spoonbills usually head southwards, nearly 300 are still present at the roost at Unahi Road, Awanui. It has been a good season for herons with two Cattle Egrets at Waipapa, five White Herons with the Spoonbills at Awanui and two Little Egrets present for some time near Rawene. With a White-necked Heron being found further south near Wellsford in September, we wonder whether some of these birds are recent arrivals from Australia.

Regular visits to Skudders Beach Reserve near Kerikeri have produced a booming Bittern on several occasions but just two sightings – two in flight one day in September and one photographed peering up out of the marsh by visiting Spanish birders.

With the news of a major wreck of seabirds along the west coast in the Auckland area a Far North beach patrol was arranged at short notice on 15th October and four of us walked a 16 km stretch between us. We found a total of 277 birds including 239 Short-tailed Shearwaters; also a White-headed Petrel and another 12 tubenose species. Two of us visited the west coast a few days earlier and watched two giant petrels battling against the strong west winds off South Head.

November seems to bring a large number of birders to New Zealand from abroad and demand has been high for assistance in the Far North. As a result, two pelagic trips were arranged from Whangaroa Harbour on successive dates and those on board were not disappointed. Cape Barren Geese were seen on the hillsides on Stephenson Island from the boat on both dates and a total of 15 species of tubenose birds was recorded. Masses of fish close to the surface of the sea not far offshore attracted enormous numbers of Fluttering Shearwaters and among them were quite a number of Hutton's and a few Short-tailed Shearwaters. Wandering and White-capped Albatrosses were at the chum but no New Zealand Storm Petrels were seen for the first time since 2011. Cook's and Pycroft's Petrels both showed well, particularly on the second trip.

Two recent sightings of Australian Pelicans have been reported from the Doubtless Bay area, one of two birds and one of six. The Brown Teal introduced a few years ago to a private area on Purerua have spread to nearby valleys and are now being seen regularly from public footpaths.

DETLEF DAVIES

NORTHLAND

The recent mild winter has apparently been kind to our northern birds as we have seen reasonable numbers of a range of species, mainly on the eastern coastline. While checking a shag colony at Waipu at the end of August, Janet Snell saw 26 Royal Spoonbills, which were still in the area in mid-September. A visit to Johnson Point Road on the Waipu Estuary on 15th September produced sightings of seven Australian Pelicans and a pair of Fairy Terns. The latter have been seen at the same spot for three months now; could this indicate an intention to nest there? Several of our members

are assisting the DOC Ranger to mark-off and protect nesting areas favoured by the few Fairy Terns that use beaches in our area.

Near the end of September, some 600+ Red-billed Gulls were attracted to a cultivated area at Mata and a few days later we counted 26 New Zealand Dotterels and 48 Bar-tailed Godwits at Johnson Point. On October 2nd 66 Brown Teal were congregating at Whananaki South. Our diminishing band of beach patrollers has noticed a considerable reduction in the numbers of birds recovered over the past four years or so. Does anyone know why this would be?

A local community newspaper, the *Whangarei Leader*, reported this week that the Northpower-sponsored Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre Inc., which is led by stalwarts Robert and Robyn Webb, has acquired a new skill. They say "A field that was being ploughed ready for a crop of maize turned out to be the wrong place for a group of Pied Stilts to make their nests in. We were sent 20 of their eggs which we have not tried before. We have hatched Little Penguin and Spur-winged Plover eggs at the Bayer incubation unit before this, so resolved to give the Pied Stilts a go. At the time of writing my column we have hatched nine with the others getting very close to hatching." As Robert says, "I wonder if we should try a golf ball next."

JANET SNELL

AUCKLAND

Auckland OSNZ members are supporting the Mangawhai Harbour Restoration Society in an attempt to reduce a massive rabbit population on the Mangawhai Sandspit at the northern limit of the Auckland region. This is an important breeding site for seabirds and shorebirds for the region, and the rabbits are not only decimating the native vegetation of the sandspit, but are also attracting predatory Australasian Harriers and feral cats. A pindone operation commenced on 24th June, with members monitoring impacts on the breeding success of the New Zealand Dotterel, in particular, over the July to November period.

Our monthly beach patrol on 12th October recorded 36 birds over 10 km of Muriwai Beach, 29 of which were Short-tailed Shearwaters. A number of shearwaters were observed flying along the sand dunes, following the beach northwards, obviously fighting the wind to prevent being taken inland. Sadly, some were coming ashore still alive, though in such an exhausted state that they were not surviving long. The conditions at the time were very stormy, with strong westerly winds, and more Short-tailed Shearwaters could be seen at sea. We assume many more would have succumbed to the conditions.

The Albany Mega Centre continues to offer interesting birding in an urban setting. The lakes in a park there held five Little Black Shags on 19th September, foraging, then roosting on street lights, and a pair of Australasian Shovelers on 21st September.

MEL GALBRAITH

SOUTH AUCKLAND

After a bit of a hiccup changing RRs the South Auckland branch is up and more or less running again.

The winter census on the Firth of Thames and the Manukau Harbour went well with good weather and a better turnout than some years. There was an interesting crop of less common overstayees on the Firth with a Pacific Golden Plover, a Greater Sand Plover and a Marsh Sandpiper.

Monthly beach patrols have resumed, eventually giving good rewards after a poor start, the highlights so far being a fresh Grey-backed Storm Petrel on July 14th from Kariotahi and a Gould's Petrel on October 13th at Port Waikato. Since mid-October large numbers of Short-tailed Shearwaters have been washing up.

There have been a few big white birds around this winter with particularly large numbers of Royal Spoonbills. There have been a number of reports of a flock of up to eight White Herons among the swampy islands in the lower Waikato River seen by eel fishermen, whitebaiters and duck shooters but not, so far, by birders. Two Little Egrets seen at Mangere were joined by a third, all now in breeding plumage. There was also a flock of up to 64 Cattle Egrets at Otatau that seem to have used farmland on both sides of the Waikato River, and another 35 near Thames.

On a field trip to Port Waikato on August 25th we helped Karen Opie and other locals to fence in the site where New Zealand Dotterels have recently reappeared there to breed, and the keen eyes of Gwen Pulham spotted a pair of Banded Dotterels acting as if they have a nest; a very rare breeding bird on our patch now. This took most of the fine weather on the day and little further birding was done, but it was ideal for appreciating the excellent thank you cake and a cup of tea.

The first newly arrived Godwits and Knots were seen on September 8th and then increased rapidly in number. So far nothing out of the ordinary has appeared on the main harbours but Port Waikato was graced by an Oriental Dotterel found by Karen Opie on September 29th (last seen on October 14th) and a Sanderling was roosting there with Godwits on October 26th. There have been scattered reports of Gull-billed Terns from the south-western Manukau Harbour with a maximum of four seen in breeding plumage at Clark's Bay in September by Tony Habraken. A Shore Plover seen last year returned to Miranda in early November.

Scattered reports of up to four Kaka have come in from all around the region over the winter and they seem very regular in the Orere Point/Kawakawa Bay area. Not noted for a couple of years, up to 22 Galahs have been seen at Mangatawhiri, but a bigger surprise was a pair of New Zealand Dotterels seen on a puddle on the same paddock 17 km from the coast on August 14th and subsequently, although they seem to have left without breeding. There has been another pair at Ardmore, four on the Pukekohe Racetrack and two in Papakura but they only seem to have nested at Pukekohe where Tony Habraken, Gwen Pulham and David Lawrie found a brood of chicks on September 29th.

IAN SOUTHEY

TARANAKI

Taranaki enjoyed a mild winter and the August field trip was held on a fine mild day. A quick stop off at the Inglewood oxidation ponds turned up two Pied Stilt, two New Zealand Dabchicks and a nesting pair of Black Swan amongst the waterfowl. Then it was on to Tarata Scenic Reserve, where three quarters of the group headed into the reserve, with the other one quarter meandering down the road. As always Grey Warbler were numerous and vocal along with Bellbird and Tomtit. Australasian Harriers were flying and calling. Unfortunately another quarter of the party became geographically challenged and headed off to parts unknown before reuniting with the remaining half but he did see Eastern Rosella in an adjoining pine forest.

When David Medway told us all that he and Carole would be moving to Wellington it was decided that September's trip would be a victory lap around Pukekura/Brooklands Park. David's encyclopaedic knowledge of the Park had us delving into places the public don't often visit. A light shower didn't deter us or the many Tui feeding at Kowhai flowers and various other food sources. In all twenty-five species of bird were noted including nesting Little Shag at their colony.

Ian Dudding was pipped at the post when I was the first to report a Shining Cuckoo this year, calling close to my work site in central New Plymouth.

Once again there are very few Arctic waders around the Taranaki coast, Barry Hartley has seen eight Bar-tailed Godwits on south coast beaches and it wasn't until last weekend that I saw a Godwit at Waiongana.

The Messengers returned from walkabout in Australia, being based at Alice Springs and going as far north as Newcastle Waters, east to Mount Isa and west to MacDonnell National Park. Birds seen included Wedge-tailed Eagle, honeyeaters, Emu, Grey-crowned Babbler, Pink-eared Duck and feral cats dead and alive.

Beach patrols have been quiet, the main interest being a Snares Cape Petrel.

October's field trip a walk around Lake Rotokare was as enjoyable as ever, with Fernbirds being numerous and vocal; at one stage six were around us and others calling. Spotless Crakes were heard in two areas, a pair of Robins were very noisy but wouldn't show themselves and a Black Fantail wouldn't come down from the trees to have its photo taken.

Members were shocked and dismayed when October brought with it the unexpected and untimely death of David Medway. It was David who introduced me to the Society and reawakened my interest in the flora and avifauna of New Zealand, and Taranaki in particular. A trip one stunning August night with David and Barry Hartley to Rapanui to see Grey-faced Petrels come ashore has seen me become increasingly involved with that project. David was my friend and mentor and will be sorely missed.

PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

A well-attended field outing to the Maraetotara stream area and on to Mohi Bush was held in August. Riflemen are present in this small reserve

and are always a highlight. Following the bush walk we had a meeting over lunch and planned the activities for the remainder of the year. Bernie Kelly reported on the AGM in Dunedin which he attended. Bad weather forced the cancellation of the planned September outing where we had hoped to go out in kayaks at Lake Hatuma in search of Bitterns. In October a small group of members travelled to Manawatu and enjoyed the close views of godwits and knots there. We searched for the recently reported Hardhead without success.

A Little Egret was frequently encountered over October, most often at Ahuriri rather than its usual spots at Clive. Another interesting sighting from Ahuriri was a male New Zealand Scaup on the Westshore Lagoon for several days in late October. There have been no records from this site since 1979. Royal Spoonbills are also often spotted in the lagoon; at least 11 are still present.

Barbara Taylor, one of our members for many years, passed away on 23rd October 2013. Until poor health prevented it, Barbara was an active participant in local activities, always enjoying outings and contributing to local bird records and classified summarised notes. She also participated in the Beach Patrol Scheme, never missing the monthly beat on her patch of coastline which she did with her faithful canine companion Molly. She will be missed.

MARGARET TWYDLE

MANAWATU

We are again enjoying the arrival of the migrant waders back to the Foxton Estuary and amongst the godwits and knots always looking out for surprise visitors. The most recent is a likely American Golden Plover, this time looking like a more certain record than the December 2011 bird. Other excitement was generated locally by the presence of a Hardhead for a few weeks on the Palmer Road ponds at Foxton Beach. A New Zealand Dotterel has again been sighted at the Ohau Estuary and the Little Egret that has been at Lake Horowhenua still seems to be hanging around.

We recently enjoyed hosting UK birders Rick and Elis Simpson and enjoyed hearing about the work they are doing with Wader Quest, raising awareness of the threats to waders internationally. Locally we are busy getting organised for The New Zealand Bird Conference, 2014 and look forward to having many of you here Queen's Birthday 2014.

CRAIG STEEDMAN

WELLINGTON

In October, a Red-crowned Parakeet was seen by Michael Szabo heading west in Island Bay, a suburb of Wellington on the south coast, approximately a 4 km direct flight from Zealandia (Karori Wildlife Sanctuary). This is just the latest of a series of observations of parakeets in the Wellington Region. They raise a number of interesting questions, especially those related to changes in distribution of bird species in our region. Over the last 10 years there have been ongoing programmes to control pests in multiple areas within the Wellington region, led by the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC)

and the Department of Conservation. A major initiative of the GWRC has been the establishment of the 1,200 ha Wainuiomata Mainland Island. Furthermore, the GWRC has collaborated on important community initiatives such as the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust kiwi project and the East Harbour MIRO initiative.

Regional pest control has provided new areas for species such as parakeets to successfully establish breeding populations. Potential sources of parakeets are the predator-free areas including the long-established population on Kapiti Island. New populations in predator-free areas have been established following the very successful transfers of Red-crowned Parakeets to Matiu/Somes Island in 2003/4 and Yellow-crowned Parakeets to Mana Island in 2004. More recently in 2010/11 there were transfers of Red-crowned Parakeets to Zealandia, a possible source for the bird seen in Island Bay.

eBird entries document the establishment of parakeets outside the predator-free islands and Zealandia. Interestingly, both Red-crowned and Yellow-crowned parakeets appear to have established in pest-controlled areas in the Wellington region. To plot the continued establishment of parakeets in Wellington it is important that OSNZ members have their observations recorded in eBird.

GEOFF DE LISLE

NELSON

Monthly meetings included Rebecca Bowater's sumptuous photographs of birding in Alaska. Rebecca's photos have also achieved fame introducing the weather on TV1 6pm news.

Lots of wader activity with the arrival of summer migrants and departure/passage of internal migrants. Wrybills headed south, with most passing through by mid-September, although stragglers were still being seen at the end of October. A couple of sightings of older colour-banded birds were a female banded as an adult in the lower Tasman River in October 2003 and a male banded as an adult, also in the lower Tasman River in September 1999. The latter bird hasn't been seen for some years and it is unknown where it spends its winter. A jump in godwit numbers in the Waimea was reported on 12th September with many in post-breeding plumage. Motueka celebrated the return of the godwits on 29th September, with Pauline Samways organising OSNZ members and their telescopes to help about 200 visitors see these amazing travellers. Pauline has organised this event for several years and her sterling work was recognised by the Motueka DOC office with a *Conservation Champion* award "in recognition of your valuable contribution to the conservation and advocacy of the Motueka Sandspit and its resident godwit population". For many years Rob Schuckard has organised OSNZ members in thrice-annual 'Top of the South' shorebird counts. He and David Melville have recently published a report *Shorebirds of Farewell Spit, Golden Bay and Tasman Bay*

<http://www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz/environment/biodiversity-2/nelsonbiodiversity-strategy-3/shorebirds-of-farewell-spit-golden-bay-and-tasman-bay/>) in which they analyse the counts between

November (spring) 2001 and June (winter) 2012. The average number of all Arctic-breeding migratory shorebirds in the Top of the South Island in spring (November) showed a decline of 26% between the periods 1983-2000 and 2001-2012 while populations of endemic shorebirds appear to be stable or slightly increasing.

A Little Tern was spotted in the Waimea estuary on 10th and 26th August, and again on 26th October. Occasional Great and Cattle Egrets were still being seen at the end of October. Two Black-fronted Dotterels were seen in the Eves Valley area back in July, an Eastern Curlew was in the Waimea Inlet in late August through to mid-September and two Gray-tailed Tattlers were reported from Bells Island in October (as also occurred last year).

Last season's last record for Shining Cuckoo was a bird sighted in Motueka on 15th April and the first of this spring was heard on 15th September in St Arnaud. To date there have been no reports of arriving Long-tailed Cuckoos.

ROBIN TOY

MARLBOROUGH

Apart from our regular monthly Grassmere counts and 'meetings' some of our members have been involved in various bird-related activities.

A few members spent a wonderful week on Maud Island checking on the Fluttering Shearwater colony and were pleased to record both birds of each breeding pair during our stay. We had 13 pairs with eggs. During some of our downtime we were able to visit Sirocco, the Kakapo, who was in quarantine after his recent tour to the mainland. We also met up with other locals like the Takahe, Weka, Maud Island Frogs, Cook Strait Giant Weta, Morepork, skinks and geckos.

Over Labour weekend we headed down to Kaikoura to survey the smaller braided rivers along the east coast. We managed to survey the middle to lower reaches of the Waima, Hapuka, Kowhai and Kuhutara Rivers over the three days. We were disappointed to find very few river birds breeding and to see the poor state of the habitat. The Waima was the most productive river and we were surprised and delighted to see a pair of Wrybills courting by the river's edge.

Some of our group are involved with Kaipupu Point Sounds Wildlife Sanctuary, Picton. We have been monitoring tracking tunnels and bait stations for several months and enjoy getting out for exercise and to enjoy the environment. By going out regularly we can see the subtle changes that are occurring. Two members have been involved in doing annual five minute bird counts over the last seven years and have just completed this year's count.

DIANNE JOHN

CANTERBURY

Groups of White Herons and Little Egret are still in the Lake Ellesmere area. Six White Herons were seen (with one Little Egret) at Kaituna in August, and six at Timberyards Road and three at Drains Road in September. In October there were two Little Egrets with White Herons at Kaituna. There was a possible first sighting at Lake Ellesmere of two Hoary-headed Grebes in September, and a Greenshank was seen at Jarvis

Road. In October, nine Pacific Golden Plovers were among the more common waders, and at Kaitorete Spit a Little Tern was seen roosting with White-fronted Terns. At least six Australasian Bitterns have been seen and were heard booming at Harts Creek. Several were observed flying in what looked like aerial courtship displays. 22 Australasian Crested Grebes were also seen in the same area, several displaying. Turnstones are being reported around the region; Colin Hill and Steve Wratten found 30 at Jarvis on 27th October, the 4th highest total they have found since they started recoding in March 2005.

At Ashley Estuary a Whimbrel has overwintered and two immature Black Stilts are being seen regularly. A Black-billed Gull has been seen which was banded near the Estuary in 1997. All but four of the 93 Wrybills in the Estuary on 22nd August had gone the following day on their way inland. Unfortunately rivers have flooded on many occasions recently and Nick Ledgard of BRaid Inc had to cancel the Upper Waimakariri River survey in early November. Other surveys have been affected. In the upper Rakaia just one Wrybill chick survived the last big flood from the 13 pairs being monitored with eggs and chicks. The birds have evolved with such events so can re-lay in two to three weeks, but if there is another flood in November the season could be a zero event for the Wrybill.

In Hagley Park in the city, Spur-winged Plovers cared for their four-week-old chick oblivious to human and canine disturbance. Three Little Owls have been heard in the park, and towards the end of September at least 135 Yellowhammers were counted as they dropped down from trees to feed in the grass. Two Australasian Crested Grebes were reported at Travis Wetland; a new species for this site.

Always an uplifting event, the first 250 Godwits were welcomed back on 12th September, and on the 21st of the same month the first Shining Cuckoo of the year was heard at Pigeon Bay.

In September Nick Allen was on Quail Island in Lyttelton Harbour conducting a census when he saw a small number of Black-billed Gulls passing, either singly or in groups of up to four birds, all heading up harbour at about 4 pm. He has been visiting the island for fourteen years and has never observed this behaviour before. He wasn't sure if it was a local movement to the head of Lyttelton Harbour or a more lengthy southwards migration taking a short cut over Gebbies Pass instead of following the coast around Banks Peninsula.

Severe storms and road closures led to the cancellation of our field trip in September. In October on a weekend trip to Akaroa, seventeen people, three of them teenagers, enjoyed a pelagic trip to about 2 nm out past the harbour entrance with Coast Up Close. They saw albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, Little Penguins, terns and other sea birds. Hutton's Shearwaters were seen close up diving for bait fish being chased by kahawai. A highlight at the bach they stayed at was sitting on the balcony in the evening and seeing a Tui fly over.

ANN SHERLOCK

OTAGO

Several White Herons are still in residence at Tomahawk lagoon and others have been seen further afield at Hoopers Inlet, Waikouaiti and Wainono Lagoon. We carried out an activity time budget survey of the herons by watching all they did throughout the day. Royal Spoonbills have returned to the estuaries and lagoons around Dunedin. There have been several reports of Cattle Egrets in the Waikouaiti area over late winter. The seasonal count at Hawksbury lagoon continues and this will be of interest as the Restoration Group does plantings in the area. A single Black-fronted Dotterel was spotted at Hawksbury in October, the first since 2008. Godwits have returned to the Otago estuaries and will be counted in the up-coming Summer Wader Count. Four Wrybills were seen in October at Blueskin Bay, the first in Otago in nine years. We listened for Moreporks in the Dunedin Town Belt for five nights in mid-November and heard one bird calling.

Plans are underway for the Royal Spoonbill colony and nest count in our region. We have reports of at least 12 possible colonies in Otago and Southland. Most of these are difficult to access but we are fortunate to have members willing to offer help with boats and OSNZ Council has granted funds to pay for transport.

MARY THOMPSON

SOUTHLAND

It's been fairly quiet on the birding front recently but we hope things pick up as the weather improves and we get out a bit more.

Congratulations to Glenda Rees who has won a South Island photographic award for her photo of a Southern New Zealand Dotterel bathing in Awarua Bay.

Australasian Bitterns were reported from Grant Road, Otatara (September 30th) by Lloyd Esler and one was on Tiwai Road near the Seaward Moss reserve (October 5th).

Lloyd reports a California Quail from Tahakopa in The Catlins on October 13th possibly a first for this location. We were also told that there have been California Quail in the Dipton area for many years.

While looking for Yellow-eyed Penguins at the viewing platform at Curio Bay on September 6th, Lloyd found tourists taking photographs of what they thought was a Yellow-eyed but actually turned out to be an Erect Crested Penguin.

Australian Coots at the Mandeville ponds near Gore were seen by Shawn Herron on September 30th. They have been reported from these ponds for a number of years now and just seem to hang on there in small numbers.

First Shining Cuckoo calls were heard at Otatara Reserve on October 2nd and on the same day by Lloyd Esler in Dunedin. Furhana Ahmad heard her first on Stewart Island on October 16th in Oban.

Members are looking forward to the upcoming Australasian Crested Grebe and Royal Spoonbill colony counts and not forgetting the annual November wader counts.

PHIL RHODES

BIRDS OF PAUATAHANUI INLET: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM OBSERVATIONS OVER 40 YEARS?

Pauatahanui Inlet has long been recognised by ornithologists as a valuable habitat for many species of wetland birds. It is a shallow and picturesque arm of Porirua Harbour 23 km from Wellington and has several wide mudflats at low tide. The inlet is a relatively unmodified and important estuarine area in the south-western part of the North Island and is a stopping off point for some wader species that migrate north and south, especially the Pied Oystercatcher. Being part of a sheltered and shallow harbour the inlet has always been an important fishing and seafood collection area for local Maori.

It was a far sighted move over 40 years ago when several Wellington Region members decided that it would be helpful to monitor changes in the species and populations of birds in Pauatahanui Inlet because of considerable land use changes that were taking place, with more planned, including new suburban housing on formerly farmed hills. These developments could cause sedimentation that might affect the occupation of the tidal mudflats and shorelines by birds. The inlet is surrounded by two busy highways, several large suburbs of Porirua City, and is popular for sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, waterskiing, some fishing and bird watching. A new shoreline pathway beside Grays Road provides easy access for walking and running. The scenically-attractive Pauatahanui Wildlife Management Reserve and three smaller conservation reserves occupy parts of the inlet and provide important protection for several wetland bird species.

Members of the society commenced bird counts in Pauatahanui Inlet in July 1982. The method adopted involves counting all birds observed on one day each month for two years, pausing for eight years, and resuming for two years. Counts have been completed for three two-year cycles; 1982-84, 1992-94 and 2002-04. The fourth cycle started in July 2012 and will finish in mid-2014 thereby providing a 40 year data set. The field procedure involves simultaneous counting of birds in each of six sections on a Sunday morning, usually by two or more members working in each section, and as far as possible counts are made on an incoming tide. Data are summarised and analysed using spreadsheets.

Counts made over the last 40 years confirm the importance of Pauatahanui Inlet for many species of birds. Although the present count cycle is incomplete several trends are emerging that illustrate changes in the occurrence, distribution and numbers of several bird species, both resident and migratory, that primarily depend on the water, rocks and mudflats as their primary feeding habitats.

What has been learned from the counting efforts of Wellington members since the survey commenced 40 years ago?

Thirty-six wetland, estuarine and oceanic bird species have been recorded, as follows.

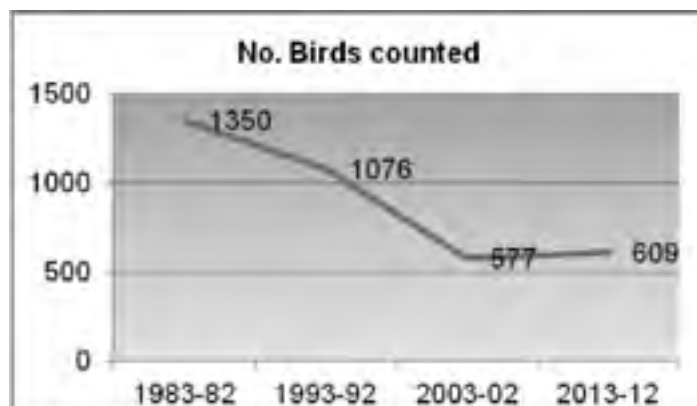
COOT, Australian	PUKEKO
DABCHICK, New Zealand	PLOVER, Spur-winged
DOTTEREL, Banded	SHAG, Black
DUCK, Grey	SHAG, Little
GANNET, Australasian	SHAG, Little black
GODWIT, Bar-tailed	SHAG, Spotted
GOOSE, domestic	SHAG, Pied
GOOSE, Canada	SHELDUCK, Paradise
GULL, Black-backed	SHOVELER, Australasian
GULL, Red-billed	SPOONBILL, Royal
GULL, Black-billed	STILT, Pied
HARRIER, Swamp	SWAN, Black
HERON, Reef	TEAL, Grey
HERON, White-faced	TERN, Black-fronted
KINGFISHER, Sacred	TERN, White-fronted
MALLARD x Grey Duck hybrid	TERN, Caspian
OYSTERCATCHER, Variable	TERN, Crested
OYSTERCATCHER, Pied	TERN, Little

The number has not varied much between 10-yearly surveys, a maximum of 36 species and not less than an average of 31 for each two-year survey. Most species are regularly seen in the Wellington Region and are always present in the inlet, but seven are uncommon or rare visitors to Pauatahanui: New Zealand Dabchick, Australian Coot, Grey Duck, Black-billed Gull and Black-fronted Tern. Crested Tern and Little Tern are vagrants to the area. Three other species that have been observed periodically in the inlet over the past 40 years but were not present during the surveys are White Heron, Shore Plover and Wrybill.

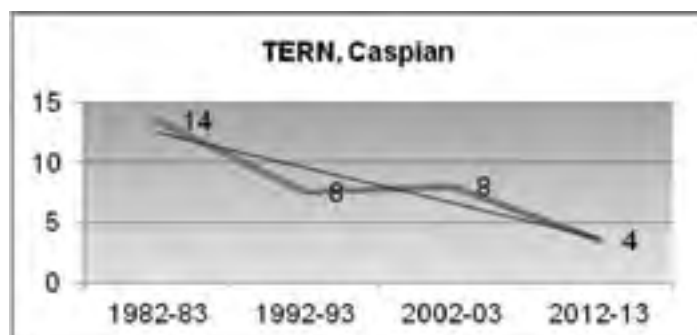
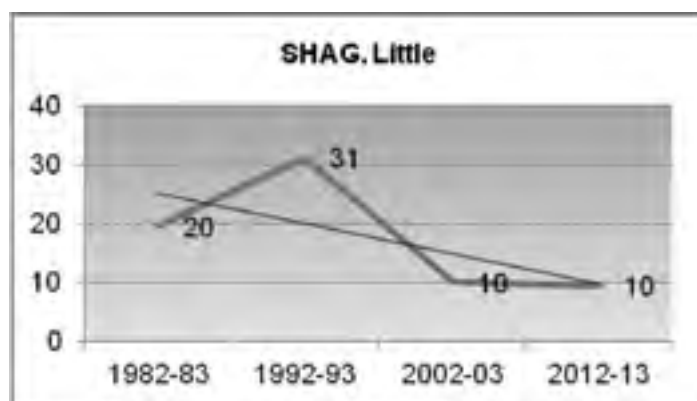
Two species that are regularly counted now but were not recorded when surveys commenced in 1982 are Royal Spoonbill and Pied Shag. Pied shags are now breeding at Paremata and are common.

Twenty-two bird species that predominantly inhabit land habitats have been recorded, mostly being passerines. Bellbirds are now being counted; a new species here that is now established in several places in Porirua City, and Redpolls seem to be more numerous than in the past.

It is the changes in the numbers of birds counted and the occurrence of several species having conservation threat rankings that is striking. In general, the total number of birds being counted has declined by more than half since 1982, as shown in the following graph for September records, and is thought to be caused by increased disturbance and modification of the estuarine habitat:



Little Shag, Black Shag and Caspian Tern seem to be slowly declining, or at best their numbers are steady. The following graphs based on September data shows trends for Little Shag and Caspian Tern:



It is pleasing to learn that counts for some other species are increasing, notably both Variable and Pied Oystercatchers, Royal Spoonbill and Banded Dotterel. Using June data the following graphs show upward trends for Banded Dotterel and Pied Oystercatcher, although the counts for both species are quite low:



A summary of information collected was used in 2011 as the basis of a submission by the Society to the Porirua Harbour Strategy and Action Plan that aims to secure improved long-term management of the harbour and adjacent catchments.

Our submission was consistent with one of the Society's objectives, "To assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information from which sound management decisions can be derived", and is a good example of how long term data collected by members can be used constructively to help achieve better conservation of birds and their habitats. We highlighted the fact that 18 out of 36 wetland bird species recorded (50%) have conservation threat rankings of 'threatened' and 'at Risk', and accordingly they deserve special recognition in conservation planning of Porirua Harbour as a whole ("Conservation Status of New Zealand Birds, 2008". C.M. Miskelly *et al.* *Notornis* 2008, Vol. 55: 117-135).

Special thanks are due to the Wellington Region members who have helped collect data since 1982 and who continue to do so; these results could not have been achieved without your generous voluntary help.



IAN ARMITAGE





AVON-HEATHCOTE ESTUARY, CHRISTCHURCH 2-2-05

This is an obvious Arctic Tern, small in size with short legs and bill compared to the White-fronted Terns. Also notable are the short thick neck and the high rounded crown, the white area on the crown extending well back just past the eyes and the straight edge coming down to the eye. It has completed wing moult and has a tail projecting well beyond the wing tips and the black scaling on the top of the crown and the whitish area below the eye are the first signs of it gaining breeding plumage.



COMMON TERN, TAPORA, KAIPARA HARBOUR 13-12-08.

This Common Tern shows the classic jizz. The crown is low and rounded and the short, stout-based bill looks sharp. The body is relatively slim, the neck is long and obvious, and with the long slender legs this bird easily stands tall. The white on the crown extends well back and it is largely white below the eye, while the black patch in front of the eye is small. The primaries look entirely black on the upper surface, notably along the top edge, and the lower surface, seen on the far wing, has a broad black stripe above the wing quill. The edge of the tail is black right to the base. The patterned and heavily worn-wings contrast with the fresh grey back feathers, indicating a first winter plumage at the end of December.



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