

Southern *Bird*

No. 54 June 2013 • ISSN 1175-1916

The Magazine of the Ornithological
Society of New Zealand

**LITTLE PENGUINS
ON MATIU/SOMES
ISLAND**

**PURA VIDA:
COSTA RICA BIRDING**

**NEW ZEALAND
BIRDS ONLINE
IS ALIVE & KICKING**

**BIRDING IN
SOUTH WESTLAND**





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Southern Bird



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QUOTATION

Ggamagui nalja bae ddeorojinda.
 (As soon as the crow takes wing a pear falls)
 Korean proverb for coincidence.

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COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover:

Singing at the moment, Song Thrush
 by Ormond Torr

Back Cover:

An inquisitive Tomtit on the St James
 Walkway by Patrick Aldwell

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.

NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE IS ALIVE & KICKING

By the time you read this, New Zealand Birds Online, the digital encyclopaedia of New Zealand birds, will have been launched, and will be freely available to all at www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz. Please have a look if you haven't already.

The timing of the publication deadline for this issue of *Southern Bird* means that I am writing this two weeks before the launch, but everything appears on track from this far out. The last of the content should be loaded within a few days, and a busy team of testers (mainly OSNZ members) are helping the website design team to iron out bugs, and myself as editor, by proof-reading all the texts.

One of the great advantages of a website over a book is that it can be edited and updated after it is published. If you find anything that doesn't seem right, no matter how trivial, please let me know via the 'contact us' form on the website. OSNZ are co-partners in the website (with Te Papa and DOC), and I hope that you all, as members, take pride in the website, and are as keen as I am that the information presented be comprehensive, accurate and free of any annoying glitches.

It is easy to take for granted that the website is content-rich, with new text, photographs, sound files and book extracts covering all 457 bird species on the New Zealand list. But please do not forget the enormous generosity and goodwill that has produced all this content, all crowd-sourced, pro-bono, gifted, donated (choose your preferred term) and much of it from you, the members of OSNZ. The fully comprehensive scope of the content is because you, particularly the 110 authors and 254 photographers, supported the concept, and freely provided your time and stunning photographs. I hope that the way your images and text have been presented fully vindicates and appropriately acknowledges your support and contributions. And my heartfelt thanks once again to the contributors for largely complying with requested standards and deadlines, thereby allowing the website to be delivered 'complete' and on time.

A website is never complete, and use of this word in the last sentence is only in relation to

the original scope of the project, i.e. what we undertook to deliver on 2nd June 2013. Our eyes are already on the horizon, and there will be much more information and new features added to the website over time. Those of you who attended the launch in Dunedin will have had a taste of things to come.

The website has several features that I refer to as 'novel'. Some may be unique, but that is an over-used term, and there are a lot of websites out there to check before you can be confident that no-one has done it before. The novel features include:

1. IDENTIFY THAT BIRD

The website is easy to use if you know the name of the bird of interest, but what if you are a complete novice? Or have just seen something interesting, but have no idea what it is called? 'Identify that bird' should lead you to the correct page of the website within three easy steps: (1) select the habitat where you saw the bird; (2) select the image closest to what you saw (with each image representing a similar-looking group of birds); (3) select an image from among a cluster of images of similar species, leading you to the page for that species.

2. INTEGRATED SITE LISTS

Over 150 'location' site lists have been pre-loaded on the website. If a user selects a site (from the map, or by typing a site name in the search box), they get a list of bird species at that site, all with a thumbnail image and a link to their respective species pages. The default search settings return a list of species that breed at that site, or are regularly present (but not breeding), listed in 'standard species sequence'. i.e. the taxonomic order used in the 2010 *Checklist of the birds of New Zealand*. But you can re-order the



list alphabetically by common name or scientific name if you choose. And if you want to know what species have occurred at the site on rare occasions, or species formerly present, or extinct species that occurred at that site, you can select or de-select any combination of these, then click 'apply' to see your customised list.

3. CUSTOMISED SITE TICKLISTS

Once you have selected and ordered the bird-list for the site of interest (which can be as large as all of New Zealand, New Zealand excluding outlying island groups, North Island or South Island), you can print a ticklist based on your selection. For example, if you intend walking the Heaphy Track, you can print a ticklist of the birds you might see. Your list could just include the 'regular' species (i.e. the default settings), or could choose to print a list that includes Black Swan, White Heron, Cattle Egret, Bar-tailed Godwit, Banded Dotterel, Black-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Rock Wren, Skylark, Greenfinch and Goldfinch (i.e. species recorded from the Heaphy Track, but not regularly present).

4. SEARCH BY BIRD GROUP

In addition to searching by a bird name, we have included the option of searching by bird group name e.g. gamebirds, bush birds, raptors... Over 100 group names have been entered. This provides 'cleaner' searches than when search by a bird name. For example, if you search for 'moa' under 'name', you get the nine expected



TOMTIT BY TONY WHITEHEAD



YELLOW-EYED PENGUIN BY IAN ARMITAGE

moa species, plus White-faced Storm Petrel (takahikare-moana) and Reef Heron (matuku moana). If you search for 'moa' as a 'bird group' you get the nine expected moa species and no more.

5. INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION ON LIVING, EXTINCT AND FOSSIL SPECIES

Bird group searches return a default list of living species (not extinct or fossil), that are endemic plus native plus introduced (but not vagrant). All of these filters can be selected or de-selected in any combination, so if you want a list of all native waterfowl species, including 20 million-year-old St Bathans fossils, but excluding (introduced) Mute Swan, Cape Barren Goose, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose and Mallard, it is easy to do.

6. EASE OF SEARCHING BY CONSERVATION STATUS

The 'conservation status' search tab shows a hierarchical diagram of the New Zealand threat classification scheme, and allows users to select different levels within the hierarchy, e.g. all threatened species, or just those that are nationally critical. [Please note that this is at a species level (i.e. the website is based on having one page per species) whereas the DOC threat classification system is applied at the subspecies or even population level. This means that threatened subspecies may be concealed under the umbrella of a less-threatened subspecies of the same species. For example, the 'nationally critical' Campbell Island Snipe appears as a subspecies of the 'at risk/naturally uncommon' Subantarctic Snipe.]

7. BOOK-COVER ICONS AS PORTALS TO PUBLISHED INFORMATION

The website has been generously supported by several book publishers and authors, who have agreed to extracts from their publications being re-published on relevant species pages. In some cases this means over 450 extracts from a single book. The publishers are: Te Papa Press (*Checklist of the birds of New Zealand*), The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (*Checklist of the birds of New Zealand*, and *Webatlas* maps derived from the *Atlas of bird distribution in New Zealand*), Penguin Group (*The field guide to the birds of New Zealand*), Arun Books (*Birds of New Zealand – locality guide*, and *The discovery of New Zealand's birds*), and the Department of Conservation (*Birds of the Chatham Islands*). As announced at the launch, progress is well underway on adding extracts from further book titles and publishers; watch this space! The book extracts are all accessed by clicking on an icon based on the book's cover. This has been designed to be attractive and intuitive to use, and also explicitly acknowledges the generosity and intellectual property of the

publishers and authors, by promoting their 'product' on every page where an extract appears. Each book-cover icon has a link next to it that leads to a page where the publisher can provide details of how or where to purchase the book, and other bird titles in their stable.

I expect that one of the first things you will do when you visit the website is to type in your favourite birding site in the 'location search' tab. If it is there, but a few species are missing, please let me know via 'contact us', and I will update the list. If the location name is not there, it is because you and your birding friends never quite got round to responding to my numerous requests (including in *Southern Bird*) for members to submit bird lists. I am extremely grateful to those people who did submit lists, but the biased selection of locations entered reflect the fact that I have never lived south of Christchurch or Hokitika, plus the limitations of extracting distribution data from the *Atlas* (covering a six-year period only), the 2010 *Checklist* (for vagrant species) and 'site-based' *Notornis* papers (I did not have the time or enthusiasm to search through the entire history of Classified Summarised Notes!). I am profoundly grateful to Wellington OSNZ members Dallas Bishop, Geoff de Lisle and Ros and Derek Batcheler, who between them entered the 68,000 data points that allow these Location searches to work.

And yes, we can enter more locations at any time. What we need is a complete, comprehensive list for your favourite birding site, including all those common introduced species that you usually ignore. If Yellowhammers and Dunnocks are regularly present at Hawksbury Lagoon, we need to know, otherwise a beginner bird-watcher who prints a ticklist for Hawksbury Lagoon and visits the site for the first time will wonder what these mystery 'vagrant' birds are that are not on their list. It would also be great to upload lists for all cities or towns that have an international airport, so that birders who step off a plane already know what birds they might see from the taxi as they head to their hotel. Please use the 'contact us' form, and I will email you a list of bird names to add your data to.

My final request is a plaintive "Help!" The Ornithological Society has agreed to maintain and update the content of the website, while Te Papa hosts the website and provides information technology support. Ideally, I am seeking 6-10 people who between them can respond to enquiries, validate contributions, and upload or edit data. It is all easy to do, but takes time. For example, entering a bird species list for a new location takes about one minute per bird species. Can you afford one hour a week to upload a bird list on New Zealand Birds Online?

COLIN MISKELLY

Project Manager and Editor, New Zealand Birds Online • nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz

LONG DISTANCE MALLARD BAND RECOVERIES

85% of 40,000 Mallards banded in Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game region since 2002 have been recovered within a 50km radius of their banding site. Mallards in New Zealand are introduced and non-migratory in their new home, and this recovery pattern is regarded as typical of a sedentary species. However, in their native range, in Europe and North America, their migratory journeys span many hundreds and often thousands of kilometres each autumn. They then undertake the same journey to return each spring. Perhaps it shouldn't surprise us then if the odd mallard banded in New Zealand also strikes out on a similar long journey to their northern counterparts, even if for no obvious environmental reason. While it is exceptional for mallards banded in New Zealand to turn up outside this country, nonetheless some remarkable band returns are listed below:

27-79497

Banded at Opuatia, near Te Kauwhata, January 2005.

Found alive by a farmer in Noumea in August 2005.

27-83497

Banded at Pipiroa, January 2006.

Shot by a farmer in Paita, New Caledonia in October 2006.

27-72141

Banded at Pipiroa, January 2005.

Euthanised at Lord Howe Island, off New South Wales, Australia, in October 2006.

27-57598

Banded at Pipiroa, Hauraki Plains on 8th January 2010.

Its remains were found by a farm dam in the Byron Bay area, New South Wales, Australia, December 2012.

12-0024

Banded as a juvenile Grey Duck/Mallard cross at Turua, Hauraki Plains on 12th January 2013.

Caught alive at Tana Island, Vanuatu on 22nd March 2013.

We have also sighted the band of an Australian-banded Mallard that crossed the Tasman and was shot in the Waikato, in Gordonton area, some years ago.

JOHN DYER

NOMINATIONS FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES 2014

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

Nominations for the RR of each region close with the Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) on 31st July 2013.

The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must also be a member of the Society

If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2014 year.

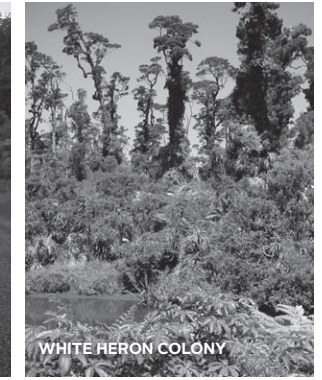




OKARITO LAGOON



KIWI SIGN OKARITO ROAD



WHITE HERON COLONY

BIRDING IN **SOUTH WESTLAND**

The part of the Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Area between Whataroa and Jackson Bay offers some great birding opportunities in often breathtaking scenery. Most of the area is in forest, with podocarps predominating at lower altitudes and beech or Southern Rata higher up. The Westland beech gap is evident north of about Lake Paringa – an anomalous lack of beech forest probably due to glaciation. In shape the area is long and thin, with the high Southern Alps to the east and the Tasman Sea to the west. This allows a variety of habitats from alpine to forest to marine in a short distance. A major highway, SH6, allows access to the length of almost the entire area, but few roads venture west off it towards the coast, and access east to the mountains is almost entirely on foot.

As befits the large area of cover the forest avifauna can be diverse, but is rather patchily so. Species such as Tomtit, Brown Creeper, Bellbird and Tui tend to be common and widespread, but Kaka is limited to the southern part of the area, especially about Haast, and Robins can only be found as a relict population around the Okarito area. Another relict population in the latter area is the Okarito Brown Kiwi (or Rowi). Forest roads through the Okarito Forest, reached from The Forks and the Pakihi Track, both off the road to Okarito township, offer good chances of a range of forest species. The kiwi is best looked for on a tour organised through Okarito

Kiwi Tours (okaritokiwitours.co.nz). In other areas the Monro Beach Walk near Lake Moeraki, Ship Creek north of Haast, and the Wharekai-Te Kou Walk at Jackson Bay are easy walks that offer a chance of the less common species. The more adventurous and experienced walker can enter areas of greater biodiversity such as the Landsborough Valley where Yellowheads, Yellow-crowned Parakeets and Kaka are in reasonable numbers, aided by pest control.

Alpine areas reached from South Westland tend to be the realm of experienced trampers and climbers. Rock Wrens are present, though high up and well away from easy access. Kea are also present, though easier to see in forested areas, especially near the glacier settlements and Haast (where they are commonly seen at sea level).

Given the area's immense rainfall wetlands and lakes are common. Lakes tend to be of the low nutrient type and hold few birds, usually a few New Zealand Scaup, with Mallard/Grey Duck hybrids around vegetated edges. A few lakes still hold an Australasian Crested Grebe or two. Swamps often have Fernbird, though sometimes Australasian Bittern and Marsh Crake can be found. The wetlands north of Okarito famously hold New Zealand's only breeding colony of White Herons, accessed by an organised tour (www.whiteherontours.co.nz). Royal Spoonbills and Little Shags also breed in the same area of swamp forest.

Coastal wetlands tend to be of limited extent and are relatively few in number. The main exception is the Okarito Lagoon, which attracts a few Bar-tailed Godwits and sometimes other waders, is a major feeding area for White Herons and has Bitterns and Marsh Crakes in its swampy margins. The lagoon can be kayaked or visited on a boat tour from Okarito Township. The one other estuary I recommend visiting is the estuary of three rivers, the Okuru, Turnbull and Hapuka, south of Haast. Here migratory waders sometimes join the more usual oystercatchers and Banded Dotterels.

Of the marine birds the one most visiting birders want to see is usually the Fiordland Crested Penguin. Colonies are scattered along the coast in the southernmost part of the area from just north of Haast. The best chance of seeing the species is to visit in mid- to late spring when adults are busy feeding chicks. A couple of good sites are the end of the Monro Beach Track (though disturbance from tourists may be affecting the birds here) and Jackson Bay, where they can be scoped from the wharf or spied on the rocky coast at the ocean beach end of the Wharekai-Te Kou Walk. A boat trip provided by Round About Haast (03 750 0890) offers the closest views without disturbing the birds. Pelagic species can also be seen off the coast from headlands like Knights Point between Haast and Lake Moeraki. White-capped and Buller's Albatross are the most likely of the large tubenoses, with smaller species represented by Sooty and Fluttering Shearwaters. Scarcer species are sometimes seen, such as Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, which was reported a few years ago.

Accommodation in the area is mostly in the larger settlements of Haast and Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers. Here there is a surprisingly full range from hotels to camp sites. Petrol stations are few and far between and it is best to keep topped up if travelling any distance. The glaciers offer the most non-birding opportunities for entertainment, with walking around on glaciers and scenic flights with snow/ice landings or skydiving. In Franz Josef there is an impressive new walk-through kiwi house, and a hot spa complex. In Haast there is an award-winning jetboat trip up the Haast River, and dolphin watching from Jackson Bay. In the season Haast is a major whitebaiting area. Other than that there are numerous walks in the whole area, both long and short, guided or not.

NICK ALLEN

ALL PHOTOS BY NICK ALLEN



**AUSTRALASIAN
ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
AUCKLAND 2013**

4 – 7 December 2013

Communications to aoc2013@unitec.ac.nz





DECEASED MEMBERS

It is with sadness that I record below the names of the members that I am aware of who have passed away during the previous 12 months.

Noelle MacDonald (South Auckland)
Margaret Molloy (Taranaki)
Alan Morris (South Auckland)
Ralph Skinner (Waikato)
Dave Panckhurst (Far North)
Alan Wright (Otago)

While I did not know all of them personally, I am aware that they all contributed within their own regions and the Society has lost a great pool of knowledge and experience.

Our thoughts go out to their families.

COUNCIL

There were two formal meetings of Council during the period of this report.

An interesting development that was started at the meeting held in Tauranga prior to the Annual General Meeting was an open discussion with Regional Representatives when items on our common agendas were discussed as a total group rather than individually and then comparing outcomes. This allowed for a much wider input into the decision making and also encouraged both Council and RRs to think more as working within the single organisation.

In the evening following the Council meeting an informal SWOT meeting was held under the direction of Susan Waugh. This identified some key issues raised by the combined Council and Regional Representatives that were present.

The Council meeting held in December undertook a continuation of the SWOT analysis incorporating the outcomes from that combined meeting to clarify issues that Council believes should be considered into the future. There are still several issues that require further in depth discussion within the Council and it is hoped that these can be dealt with during the coming year.

One outcome of that SWOT meeting was the notice of motion promoted by Council that will be considered at the Annual General Meeting relating to the adoption of a brand name.

This was an issue that was raised several years ago but the proposal was not accepted by the meeting. However the Council now believes that as part of the strategic analysis of the workings of the Society, the time is right to build on the momentum created by the NZ Bird Conference and the growing interest in birds within the general public, by adopting a common operating name.

Another outcome of the SWOT analysis was the need for projects to be developed that can be undertaken on a national basis by all members to stimulate interest. This is being promoted by Council to the Regional Representatives meeting to investigate options.

Two possible key areas that were considered relate to the distribution of birds and their relative abundance. The first part has largely been satisfied with the completion of the recent Atlas project which leaves the issue of how to devise a system to monitor abundance. The adoption of eBird as our Society scheme of choice to record bird observations is part of the next steps of the Society members as a whole being able to record distribution in birds in New Zealand, number and commonness and rarity. Council is looking for ideas and would appreciate any input from members, either directly to a Council member or through Regional Representatives. The next major requirement is the identification of a champion who can ensure that the project is continued and eventually reported on to the members so the outcomes can be clearly seen. Council has established that this is a cause of frustration to members who

undertake various bird studies but never get to see the final results.

However, this does require some dedicated members to be the driving forces and hence the need to adopt champions for these types of projects. This will require volunteers as it is not always possible to rely on Council members for this role.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

It will be noted that two existing Councillors, Peter Frost and Dr Murray Williams, have decided not to allow their names to be submitted for re-election and hence their term will expire following the Annual General Meeting.

Murray has been involved in Society affairs, either directly or indirectly, for many years, and he brings a wealth of knowledge of the scientific emphasis that should be applied to Council's business. Murray also served several years as the editor of *Notornis*.

Peter came to the Council with a great deal of overseas experience and was able to relate that knowledge to our deliberations. He also put a huge amount of effort into trying to stimulate activities for members through the Projects and Activities committee and any failings in that outcome were no fault of the strenuous efforts made by Peter.

On behalf of the members I thank them both for their input, and hope that they will continue to contribute in the future.

Following the Annual Meeting in 2012 Sarah Jamieson allowed her name to be submitted for co-option to one of the vacant positions. The Council subsequently co-opted Sarah for a one-year term which expires at the Annual Meeting this year.

The only nominations received for the four vacant positions were Colin Miskelly who wishes to continue for a further term and Sarah Jamieson who will now be elected for a full three-year term. As these were the only nominations they are automatically elected and there will be no need for a ballot.

The two vacancies will be considered by the Council during the year noting that there is only one woman on Council, and no representation from north of the Bombay Hills.

PUBLICATIONS

The publication of *Notornis* is now on schedule largely through the efforts of the editor Jim Briskie. Early in the year Jim reported that he was now confident that he was receiving sufficient manuscripts to produce four issues a year and that these could be produced to the agreed timetable. The practice of placing accepted manuscripts on the website even before they are included in the printed form has been implemented. This means that authors can have early exposure for their completed works and it is hoped that this will encourage more submissions.

The Translocation issue, Volume 60 part 1, has received several favourable comments. The preparation of this issue was assisted by Ralph Powlesland, and was an outcome of the excellent papers presented to the scientific day attendees in Lower Hutt, two years ago. We thank Ralph for his help, and I am sure that the Editor would appreciate anyone else assisting in special issues such as this in the future.

Nick Allen has continued to produce *Southern Bird* on the regular timetable with only some minor delays due to unforeseen circumstances. Members will have noticed the changes to the content and layout following discussions at meetings over the past two years. With the website now operating much of the standard Council business can be placed in that medium freeing the newsletter for topical articles and up-to-date sightings.

Nick has been completing sections based on identification features and also on articles of where to see birds in a regional context. He would however appreciate assistance in providing articles for the series, particularly on areas where he does not have local knowledge. This is an

ideal opportunity for each region to provide a short article on key birding areas in their region to Nick for inclusion. *Southern Bird* is the Society's magazine and I encourage all members to consider submitting copy of individual or group activities, or items of note for the wider membership to learn from.

Council would also encourage regions to provide reports of regional projects which are often only reported in regional newsletters but Council believes that many of these would have interest to members generally. Peter Gaze has volunteered to assist regions identify and prepare these for publication.

WEBSITE

The website is continually being upgraded with new information provided on a regular basis. The development of this website is being undertaken with the assistance of a grant from the T-Gear Charitable Trust and we thank them for their contribution to advancing the aims of the Society.

The portion of the website that enables members to upgrade their personal details and pay subscriptions is operational. There have been some issues but these are gradually being rectified and I would request that members show some tolerance during this settling in phase.

In particular I thank Julia White, our membership secretary, who often receives the wrath of members when there are issues. It must be remembered that Julia is a volunteer who completes work on the membership database in her spare time in the evenings and we should respect the time and effort she sacrifices. If there are complaints over the operation of the database then these should be directed to Council so that the necessary updating can take place.

We also thank Roger Sharp who provides assistance and advice to Julia. Roger has accepted the role of Web Support Officer and will oversee the operation of the database. We also thank Bruce McKinlay who is the driver of the website project, and has put in long hours in organizing the setup of the site.

ANNUAL GRANT

The society has recently been approached by a charitable trust asking if we would administer a process for providing annual grants to organisations for ornithological research. The fund should provide up to \$40,000 per year for the next five years. The tentative name for this fund is Birds NZ Research Fund. It will give priority to applications which are based on sound science, likely to provide beneficial outcomes for birds or their habitat, involve people learning as well as being involved, and have a commitment to publication.

The trust already had a number of applications on the table and these will be funded out of this year's fund. These will contribute towards the digitising of HANZAB for NZ Birds Online, preparation for the translocation of Chatham Island Albatross and continued research into the new colony of Hutton's Shearwater.

The results from this work and applications for further funding will be well advertised in *Southern Bird* in the middle of next year.

REGIONS

The Society is comprised of 19 regions, each with a regional representative to guide the members in those areas. The Society is reliant on the system of regional representatives because it is at the regional level that members are provided with direct contact, local projects are developed and meetings and activities organised.

Council thanks the representatives who step forward to fulfil that role. A trend that I have noticed from the regional reports submitted this year is that several regions are having difficulty in replacing retiring

representatives. This is clearly a concern and is something that will require attention.

The regional representative role should not be taxing as there should always be members within the region willing to share the load; I wish to urge members to consider providing that assistance. It is easy to expect others to undertake all the organisation and just turn up for the enjoyment at meetings and activities. However, a much greater sense of satisfaction is achieved if everyone works towards the common goal, and share experiences.

In reading the regional reports, however, I am amazed at the diversity of projects and activities that regions do undertake. It is clear from previous surveys that members wish to have activities organised but there is also a responsibility on those members to support activities and also their local representative.

FINANCIAL

The past financial year has seen the Society largely balance the books but there is still a need for further examination of the financial structure of the organisation.

This matter was raised at the annual meeting in Tauranga and was reinforced during the SWOT analysis during the year.

That issue is one of the priority items for the coming year but Council would appreciate any feedback from members on ways in which the financial affairs can be structured.

I would take this opportunity to thank Paul Garner-Richards for his work as treasurer and in having the accounts audited well in advance of the annual meeting. Paul quietly and efficiently goes about completing the financial affairs of the Society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have acknowledged the work of many people and parts of the organisation throughout this report. However, there are several other key parts of the organisation that I now wish to mention.

The first is the executive officer, Ingrid Hutzler, who provides support to Council, Regional Representatives, scheme conveners, editors and other office holders. Her work has been vital and effective in keeping the Society functioning well for its members. Ingrid has so easily slotted into that supporting role that it is now hard to remember the times when we had great difficulty in obtaining any support or basic information from part time personnel who spent much of their time in the field. It must be remembered however that Ingrid is only part time and therefore members should respect her time.

The other people that I wish to thank at this stage are the members of Council. It is a pleasure to lead a team that provides as much support as those currently elected. During the year each has had an input into various aspects of the organisation completing those tasks in a manner that eases the workload on the president. It is only by sharing of the load at this level that the president's role is able to be undertaken on a voluntary basis by someone presently fully employed.

I have much pleasure in presenting this report on the activities of the Society over the past year and look forward to further progress as we head towards the 75th anniversary of the organisation. I believe that we are still meeting the desires of our founders and providing for the enjoyment of birds while at the same time increasing the knowledge about them.

DAVID LAWRIE
President

OSNZ NATIONAL WADER CENSUS 2012/3

Winter Census 2012

A total of 124,741 waders of 21 species were counted during the June-July 2012 wader census, down from 132,371 in 2011. There was good national coverage with only the Far North, Gisborne/Wairoa, and the Kaikoura/Marlborough coastal regions not counted. The Far North was not counted in 2011 either. Numbers of Red Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits were considerably higher than in 2011 and about 9,000 fewer South Island Pied Oystercatchers were counted.

Rarities included a Marsh Sandpiper and a Terek Sandpiper.

Summer Census 2012

A total of 129,850 waders of 28 species were counted in the November-December 2012 wader census, down from 148,662 in 2011 and 159,111 in 2010. National coverage was again very good, with only the Far North and Gisborne/Wairoa not counted. The big difference was in the number of Bar-tailed Godwits, which have fluctuated widely over the past 10 years. The 2012 count was down to 77,103 from 88,949 in 2011 and 101,459 in 2010. The Red Knot count in 2012 was down to 27,594 from 32,208 in 2011. Turnstone numbers also continue to decline, down to 914 in 2012; possibly the lowest summer count.

Rarities this census included a Wandering Tattler, a Common Greenshank, a Marsh Sandpiper and three Grey Plovers.

January/February Census 2013

There was incomplete nationwide coverage in January - February 2013 but counts from Lake Wairarapa, Nelson, Canterbury, Otago and Southland were received.

Tables to accompany this summary report are available on the Birds New Zealand website www.osnz.org.nz

Summary compiled
by ADRIAN RIEGEN



Joining the Ornithological Society

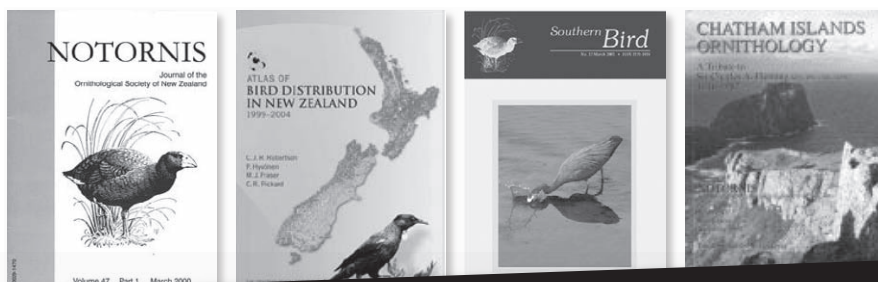
If you are reading this but are not a member of the Ornithological Society you would be very welcome to join us. Our membership consists of the whole spectrum of people interested in New Zealand/South Pacific birds from beginners with just an interest through keen birdwatchers and amateur ornithologists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

For our very reasonable subscription fee of \$70 (students pay just \$35.00 and overseas/corporate rates etc are also available) you will receive a quarterly issue of this magazine *Southern Bird*, which is the Society's main mouthpiece to members, has articles of bird/ornithological interest and both national and local news; a quarterly issue of *Notornis*, the Society's scientific journal; and from time to time either free or discounted major Society publications – for example a copy of the latest *Atlas of Bird Distribution* is currently provided free to new members while stocks last. This atlas gives a thorough overview of the distribution of every bird on mainland New Zealand and some offshore islands in its 533 pages.

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

For further details and/or a membership form you should :

- Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz
- Contact the Society's membership secretary.
- Contact your nearest regional representative.



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.





LITTLE PENGUIN STUDY ON MATIU/SOMES ISLAND

December 2011 brought the close of a five year study of Little Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) on Matiu/Somes Island, Wellington Harbour. The project was initiated and overseen by the Department of Conservation.

It was perceived that flipper-banding of penguins could be detrimental to their ability to swim efficiently, and could contribute to reduced ability to find food, thus less food for chicks resulting in higher mortality rates in some species. The study aimed to assess the impact of marking techniques on the survival rates over five consecutive years.

The outcome of the study will enable the Department of Conservation to make a decision on using flipper bands for future studies of penguins in New Zealand waters.

As birds were found it was planned to flipper-band one third, transponder one third and use both techniques on the final third. At a later date we also used web tags on a section of the population. Some resident penguins on the Island had been flipper banded in the past, and these were included in the study when found, but their marking was not changed.

The island was divided into 13 areas and named according to a key feature eg. North Point, Wharf Area. Natural nest sites and nest boxes were numbered sequentially within these areas, as sites were identified, or nest boxes installed. Mokopuna and Makaro/Ward Islands were included in the study. Some parts of the south and east coast of Matiu/Somes Island were too difficult to reach, being only accessible at low tide, so these were not included.

About 230 nest boxes were made with the help of various school groups and Kiwi Conservation Club and progressively introduced over the five years. These were installed in areas that looked likely to be used by penguins, or over an existing nest site. If they were not used after a couple of seasons they were moved. The 230 nest boxes and about 150 natural sites gave us in the order of 380 sites to check.

During the non-breeding period monthly trips of three days were undertaken, increasing to fortnightly in the breeding season. All areas were checked on every trip. Birds found already banded were weighed, and the site recorded. Unmarked birds were either flipper-banded or transpondered, or marked with both methods, weighed, and bill and flipper measurements taken. For the final two seasons web tags were used in place of flipper bands. The number of eggs and chicks were recorded.

In the evenings we captured birds as they came ashore near the wharf, and later installed a transponder-reader positioned where most of the birds left the water. This reader now records birds throughout the night. These birds were marked (if unmarked), weighed and measured.

By the time the project ended nearly 1,600 individual birds had been marked and weighed. A large number of these birds were also measured. In the final three years between 150 and 200 chicks were marked each year.

While the size of the colony varied between seasons the number of birds sighted and checked indicates the average annual count would be in the order of 300 nesting pairs.

A substantial amount of data has been collected and collated over the five years. For example, there are over 7,200 lines of data on individual captures. This massive volume of data collected is now being analysed, but it will be some time before we have a definitive assessment of the impact of flipper bands on penguins.

In 2012 permission was granted by DOC to proceed for a further three breeding seasons on a restricted area of Matiu/Somes Island to look specifically at the breeding success of birds nesting in these areas. The project started in September 2012, with monthly visits of two to three days being done. No adults are being marked, but all chicks were web tagged and weighed.

There is the potential for further studies to be done as there is a viable infrastructure now

in place on the island, and a large quantity of baseline data. This autumn all known nest sites will have their locations ascertained by GPS and maps developed for future use.

Making use of this valuable baseline data and infrastructure for a further study on this penguin population is a PhD student from Auckland University. She is attaching GPS recorders to parent birds who are still feeding their chicks, and gathering information about where these birds are feeding inside or outside Wellington Harbour. Preliminary results confirm there is sufficient food in the harbour area, and along the shoreline just outside the harbour entrance. Surveys over at least the next two years will provide an indication as to whether this is the norm.

For those directly involved and for any other interested parties we put out a Penguin Ponderings newsletter keeping people informed of what we did on each trip to the island.

A large number of volunteers took part over the years, with people from DOC, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Victoria University, Mount Bruce/Pukaha, OSNZ, Forest and Bird, Eastbourne Forest Rangers and Montessori School. Casual visitors staying overnight were always invited to join us at the wharf area in the evening, and many people, especially children were thrilled to see these Little Penguins up close.

We are looking forward to seeing the analysis and conclusions of the data from this extensive study. We would like to thank Graeme Taylor and Brent Tandy from the Department of Conservation and DOC staff on Matiu/Somes Island for their constant and ongoing support, interest and enthusiasm.

Thanks go to Reg Cotter and Vince Waanders for competently organising so many trips, and to Mike Rumble for the many, many hours he spent compiling the data base.

ROS BATCHELER

Photos taken by Vince Waanders

SUCCESS OF A RIFLEMAN NEST BOX PROJECT

Having seen the Rifleman nest boxes at Kowhai Bush during the Kaikoura OSNZ conference and AGM in 2008 I decided to try such nest boxes at the National Wildlife Centre, Mount Bruce.

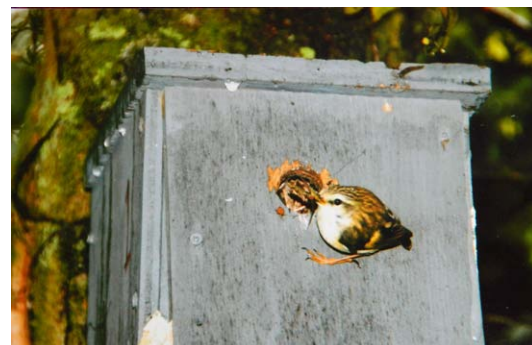
In the first season I put up three boxes in an area where Rifleman had been seen before, but the boxes were ignored. The boxes were taken down, improved, then put up again, with an additional three boxes. Over December and

January Riflemen were seen nearby. At first they were seen carrying nest material, then later food, and at this stage chicks could be heard. The chicks fledged during the first week of February but nobody saw them leave, so it is unsure if there were two or three chicks.

The project was a great success, creating a lot of interest for staff and visitors alike.

COLIN SCADDEN

Photo by Vince Waanders



Pura Vida: COSTA RICA BIRDING

RAY BUCKMASTER



The years pass, an urgency grows upon you. Time is slipping by. You would really enjoy something a bit different, expenses permitting; a small adventure in a faraway place. It should be warm, have a few beaches and provide a degree of comfort and security. Importantly it should have a lot of new stuff to see!

Costa Rica is a small but stable, sophisticated and egalitarian democracy in Central America. It does fit nicely with these prerequisites. Accommodation of good standard is widely available. The population is similar in size to that of New Zealand yet the country is only about 40% the size. The major roading infrastructure is good. Car ownership is not within the reach of most 'Ticos' so the roads are not too crowded. Lesser roads, are, consequently, not so well maintained. In steep terrain they can be problematic.

In 1948 events took Costa Rica on a different course to its neighbours. The military became involved on the wrong side of a disputed presidential election. Two thousand died. Since then there has been no army. The freed-up budget was redirected toward education. An army of teachers replaced an army of soldiers. Today Costa Rica boasts a well educated and digitally competent population with a similar life expectancy to North Americans and a superior health and social security system. Unemployment is around 7% but individual incomes are quite low. The economy is largely agrarian but with a strong tourism component.

Interestingly, economic development has not gone hand in hand with environmental degradation. There are financial and tax incentives for those that provide environmental services, including the enhancement of biodiversity. The result, 25% of the country is currently in reserves many of a private nature. Many authorities consider Costa Rica to be the greenest country in the Americas. Ticos certainly have a genuine pride in their environment and wildlife. The aim is to be carbon neutral by 2021 and recreational hunting was banned last year.

Tourism, particularly ecotourism, is a major earner. Costa Rica is a true biodiversity hotspot. Six percent of the world's species can be found here on 0.25% of the earth's land surface. Whilst you might visit with birds in mind you cannot escape the incredible range of other life forms: Sloths in the trees, butterflies and fierce, but harmless, reptiles eating the exotic vegetation. Everywhere there are the sounds of life; the roar of howler monkeys and the electric zing of cicadas.

The peaks of the massive Cordilleras, pushed up from the seas by tectonic activity, created the classic scenario for massive past speciation and adaptive radiation. Within the wrens alone there are 20 species! There are 894 bird species, roughly one third being migratory. A great guide and introduction to the birds, climate geology and ecology of Costa Rica is the 1989 Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica by Alexander Skutch (with Gary Stiles) illustrated by Dana Gardner. Published more recently, with less text but more illustrations and including distribution maps is The Birds of Costa Rica by Richard Garrigues and Robert Dean.

Costa Rica is a warm haven from a cold New Zealand winter, although the migrants are not present. This is the 'green season', birds are breeding and accommodation costs are significantly discounted.

During a three week stay, July into August, mostly in the Pacific coast region, we were little troubled by rain events. The electrical storms can be mind blowing, but they tended to be in late afternoon and overnight and usually of short duration.

The favourable exchange rate and the low wage economy make the hire of a birding guide an affordable option. Roy Orozco, a Birding Pal, was our guide. He was a personable character, a professional guide for fourteen years, with an impeccable reputation and a great enthusiasm for birding. The charge for his services was US\$900 (2012) to guide for eight days, which included driving, providing an itinerary and organising accommodation. Currently Roy is running nine-day tours; the price per couple, twin share is US\$4,000 all inclusive (except car hire / petrol costs). Roy takes a maximum of six birders and then the individual cost falls to US\$1,500.

For us it proved to be a magical, stress-free eight days. We were content to go with Roy's itinerary. There seemed little point in second guessing an expert when we had only a little book knowledge to guide us. There were two exceptions. We wanted to see some waders and we did locate these, in great variety, on a salinas (saltworks). Having enjoyed Australian Thick-knees we were keen to see the neotropical equivalent and, again succeeded.



ABOVE TOP: RUFIOUS-TAILED JACAMAR
ABOVE: BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKS
- BY RAY BUCKMASTER

There is a professional association of trained guides in Costa Rica. The national parks have their own accredited guides but, recently, non-trained guides are being allowed access. Not all guides are created equal. There is a real need to check out a guide in advance if you intend to spend any length of time with him. Fortunately the internet and TripAdvisor do provide good advice, including references from previous clients, along with their email addresses should you require further information.



ABOVE: MALE RESPLENDENT QUETZAL
— BY RAY OROZCO

TOP LEFT: SCARLET MACAW
TOP MIDDLE: MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD
TOP RIGHT: FIERY-BILLED ARACARI
LEFT: SALINAS BIRDS
— BY RAY BUCKMASTER

Bird identification and even bird location can be a bit of a problem. Within many taxa the species plumage differences are quite slight. Species identification by call can present difficulty. In a short visit you do become reliant on the acquired skills of your guide to both identify and locate birds. Smartphone apps are available for advance study but nothing will replace long term local experience.

Most birding locations are must see, but some stand out for various reasons. La Selva Biological Station is a private biological reserve. There is an entry fee as with most of the National Parks. It includes a rather nice lunch and as much coffee as you can manage. You eat with many students from various countries, all involved in some aspect of tropical ecology. Rare and quite secretive birds are easily seen, including tinamous, Crested Guan and Great Curassow. Around the station there are hummingbirds and a range of tanagers and grosbeaks.

Along the trails you will come across peccaries, armadillos and sizeable Boa Constrictors. It can distract from the bird watching! Snakes, some very venomous, are found in many locations. Roy's wife was hospitalised for some time from a Fer de Lance bite. "There are after effects" he tells us with a slight smile, "sometimes, even years after, she hisses at me!"

The heights of the Talamanca Range are covered in cloud forest. The Pan American Highway crosses this range at 3,451 m. The tropics maybe, but it is cold and you become short of breath. Stopping at Paraiso del Quetzal for a trout lunch you see the hummingbirds mobbing the feeders. No shortage of breath here. They move so fast they could almost be teleporting from one to the next! The bird we have come to see, the Resplendent Quetzal has gone. This is a must see bird for this part of the world but they do migrate altitudinally. We find it at the lower, less chilly altitude of 2200 m in the Savegre Valley, sitting in an avocado tree.

The Savegre Mountain Hotel is a birders dream and not just because of the many birds. The accommodation is good and the food superb. There is free transportation to remote birding spots high on the valley sides and you can wend your way back birding as you go. The oak woods found on the ridge are thick with moss, lichen and other epiphytes. Encountering a mixed flock here is all excitement. There are so many species to be seen, inevitably, you miss some. They disappear as quickly as they arrived. An avian flash mob!

On the Pacific slope we visit Los Cusingos, the local name for the Fiery-billed Aracari. It was also home to Costa Rica's most eminent ornithologist, Dr. Skutch, internationally known for his description of the 'helpers at the nest' phenomenon. It was a privilege to experience his home and the simple circumstances in which he lived. His library, work station and living space are open for all to see and experience. Perhaps these few words of his explain the man and also resonate with us all.

"FOR A LARGE AND GROWING NUMBER OF PEOPLE BIRDS ARE THE STRONGEST BOND WITH THE LIVING WORLD OF NATURE. THEY CHARM US WITH LOVELY PLUMAGE AND MELODIOUS SONGS: OUR QUEST OF THEM TAKES US TO THE FAIREST PLACES; TO FIND THEM AND UNCOVER SOME OF THEIR WELL GUARDED SECRETS WE EXERT OURSELVES GREATLY AND LIVE INTENSELY. IN THE MEASURE THAT WE APPRECIATE AND UNDERSTAND THEM AND ARE GRATEFUL FOR OUR CO-EXISTENCE WITH THEM, WE HELP TO BRING TO FRUITION THE AGE LONG TRAVAIL THAT MADE THEM AND US. THIS, I AM CONVINCED, IS THE HIGHEST SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH BIRDS"

CITIZEN SCIENCE

BIRD MONITORING IN AN ELECTRONIC AGE

You are a dedicated birder, perhaps good with computers and you also have lots of spare time (yeah right!) to help bird monitoring from the comfort of your own home so here's an offer for you!



KOKAKO. PHOTO G. CAPILL

In the Waitakere Ranges west of Auckland over the past 11 years volunteers have steadily established a sanctuary for native species. The sanctuary, The Ark in the Park, involves many people collectively volunteering many thousands of hours each year so that the existing native wild life: Tui, New Zealand Pigeons, Tomtits, Long-tailed Bats, Hochstetter's Frog, geckoes, etc can thrive by the continuing efforts of the volunteers to control predators. Using trapping and placing small quantities of anticoagulant bait in bait stations the volunteers control rats, stoats, weasels, ferrets, possums and feral cats over an area that now totals 2,200 ha. Over the years species that were once in these forests have

been returned, firstly Whiteheads, then Robins and most recently, Kokako.

With the Waitakeres being second only to Northland's Wharawhara Forest in density (a 'benefit' of there being no deer or goats), finding the Kokako, which most often utilise the canopy and sub-canopy layer, is extremely difficult. However, monitoring the released birds, finding pair territories and watching for breeding success is a necessary part of determining how the translocation is proceeding, and a vital part of that is by the use of the analysis of sound recordings.

Volunteer Eric Wilson has established sound recorders that are placed in likely sites with many recorders spaced out in an array. The recorders switch on at dawn and cease after 3-5 hours, as the first part of the day is when Kokako are most vocal. Recovering the memory cards after a week or two and analysing the spectrograms Eric can see if his test site has had any Kokako present during the test time. Sites with activity are then investigated by searchers on foot, again using technology to try and pick up the birds that had announced their presence



ERIC AT DESK IN FRONT OF COMPUTER SCREEN. PHOTO G. WADAMS

before. Calls recorded via the fixed recorders can be downloaded onto hand-held amplified MP3 players that the ground crew can use to try and draw in the birds, allowing positive identification. This technique has shown that the majority of the Kokako have chosen a particular part of the Ark area, and in fact drove efforts to expand the predator-controlled area by another couple of hundred hectares. This part of the forest is the most botanically diverse, and whether this was the attraction or whether with an initial pair settling and bringing up a chick they acted as a vocal lure for others cannot be decided. Eight pair territories have now been identified over the past season

Analysing each week's recording session for each recorder takes about two to three hours but now that up to 16 recorders are deployed in the forest, the total time required is building up. From Invercargill to Kaitia, if you have a computer, access to broadband, are able to download and install some specific software, and able to download 300-500MB per week, you could add your analysis and help locate the Kokako. Other birds of interest e.g. Kaka, Whitehead, Robins and Fernbirds can also be recognised with experience.

Visit our website to get fuller details of what is required to take part in monitoring this rare bird all in the comfort of your own home! www.arkinthepark.org.nz/being_a_volunteer/

JOHN SUMICH
Chair, Ark in the Park

ONE-EYED ALBATROSS

TONY CROCKER

On 23rd February 2013 I was working aboard the expedition ship *Caledonian Sky* at Stewart Island. A group of passengers and staff had elected to go for an afternoon fishing trip aboard a commercial charter boat several miles off Halfmoon Bay. While stationary, in very calm water, they were joined by the expected assemblage of albatrosses and other seabirds for the area, notably White-capped Albatrosses and a smaller number of Buller's Albatrosses.



ONE-EYED ALBATROSS
BY KIT VAN WAGNER

On their return, and upon checking photos she had taken, a colleague, Kit van Wagner, noted that one of the White-capped Albatrosses she had photographed was clearly missing its left eye. Assuming this was the result of misadventure rather than a genetic defect, it appeared that the injury had occurred some time ago, as there was no sign of scarring or other damage. The bird furthermore appeared to be in the same robust good health as the other birds, and apparently none the worse for wear due to having reduced visual abilities.

On my return home I contacted Paul Sagar, who told me that other reports have been published in the literature, but suggested it was unusual enough for a note in *Southern Bird*. Dennis Buurman, writing in the Albatross Encounter website update for January 2010 (albatrossencounter.co.nz), mentioned a visiting one-eyed Southern Royal Albatross, also seemingly in good condition, off Kaikoura.



VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER WITH AN ABERRANT BILL

While beach patrolling along Ruapuke Beach, Waikato on 9th June 2010 a Variable Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*) attracted our immediate attention due to its very large bill. From photographs the bill seems thicker than normal with a slight gap between the mandibles. The lower mandible is longer than the upper mandible and appears to be twisted around to the left and above it close to the tip. The whole bill appears to be just over twice the length of the head. At the base it is a pale orange-yellow, becoming bone-coloured for the rest of its length.

In other respects the bird appeared to be a normal mature adult, its iris red, orbital ring bright orange and legs pink. As we watched, it took an item of food from the sand and swallowed it. It then rested, lying down on the sand near the tide-line. Some time later it was one of three Variable Oystercatchers that flew down the beach to a dune area, where it landed while the other two flew off in different directions.

STELLA ROWE, JOHN ROWE and HUGH CLIFFORD

A NEW TOOL FOR GUIDING REINTRODUCTION

Introduced predators are, of course, the primary threat to native wildlife in New Zealand; and New Zealand's ecologists have led the world in developing methods to remove or reduce the threat posed by these predators. Unfortunately, most of these solutions involve using a few individuals (< 20) to establish relatively small populations (a few hundred or even a few dozen individuals) of native species, often isolated on offshore islands or discrete mainland reserves. This paves the way for genetic problems.

Small, isolated populations are vulnerable to two genetic problems: inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity. Inbreeding depression occurs when related individuals breed with each other and their offspring experience reduced fitness (survival or breeding success) compared to non-inbred individuals. This often has clear consequences that can immediately jeopardise the survival of the population. Loss of genetic diversity is much harder to detect, and may not become a problem until something changes in the future. If a new disease is introduced or the climate changes, and the population no longer contains the necessary genetic diversity, the population will be unable to adapt and may be wiped out. For example, if a species has lost the gene that protects against avian malaria, and that disease spreads to the population as a result of a warming climate, the population could be lost. This is clearly an undesirable outcome after so much time and effort has gone into establishing the population and protecting it from predators, and could affect conservation of the species as a whole if it involves a particularly important population. Once genetic diversity is lost from a species, it can only be regained by mutation. Mutations occur only rarely, and most are harmful or neutral; so it may be thousands of years before a useful mutation reappears in the population. Clearly this is too long to wait for a population that is subject to an immediate threat.

The best solution is therefore to prevent loss of genetic diversity in the first place. The rate of loss is strongly influenced by population size; smaller populations lose diversity much more quickly than larger populations. It is also much more difficult to retain genetic diversity than it is to prevent inbreeding; so a population large enough to minimise loss of genetic diversity will also be large enough to minimise inbreeding.

But how large is large enough? That depends on the life history traits (e.g. breeding system) and demography (e.g. survival rates) of the species in question. For reintroduced populations, it also depends on how many individuals were used to establish the population. Finally, any immigration into the population will help slow the loss of diversity. Balancing all of these factors can maximise the amount of diversity that is retained, thus maximising the population's chance of persisting long-term.

However, deciding how many founders, how large a population, and how much immigration is not a straightforward process. In the past, reintroduction projects have been simply advised to use "as many founders as possible" and allow the population to expand to "as large a size as possible." Advice on the amount of immigration needed has often followed an old rule (one migrant per generation) that, it turns out, was based on a series of highly restrictive assumptions so that it is not applicable to wild vertebrate populations (or many invertebrate populations).

But of course there is a limit as to how many individuals can feasibly be translocated to establish a new population; and on the size of the protected area to which they are introduced. Projects aiming to reintroduce native species need to know whether their patch will be able to support self-sustaining populations of those species, and if they may need to perform additional translocations in the future to enable immigration. These projects will be better able to gain additional funding accordingly if they can provide justification for why they need to translocate and support a given number of individuals.

Fortunately, computer models can be used to simulate a population's growth and demography over time. If this is done many times (e.g. 1,000) for the same population, the proportion of times in which a rare gene of interest was retained to the end of the simulation indicates the probability of that gene being retained in the real population. We have developed one such model and have used it to advise reintroductions of threatened birds in New Zealand. The model allows comparison of outcomes of different management scenarios; for example, the genetic difference between starting with 20 kiwi and starting with 40, or between a population that can grow to 200 individuals and one that can grow to 400. The results will be different for each species and even each population, but the model is easy to run for a wide variety of animals and can be tailored to each situation. We suggest that the genetic goal be set to retain 90% of rare genes (those that occur at a frequency of 5% in the source population), as this goal provides a balance between feasibility in moderately small populations and maximising the chances of the population persisting long-term.

This model is freely available as a package, called *AlleleRetain*, that is implemented in the statistics program R. We are currently working with the Department of Conservation to make this model and its recommendations more widely available to community groups working to reintroduce native species to their local area.

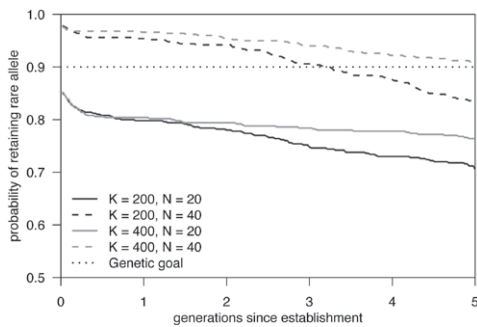
More information on our model is available from its website (sites.google.com/site/alleleretain/) and two papers that we have published (Weiser et al. *Molecular Ecology Resources* 12:1161-1167; Weiser et al. *Conservation Biology* 27:335-344).

EMILY WEISER

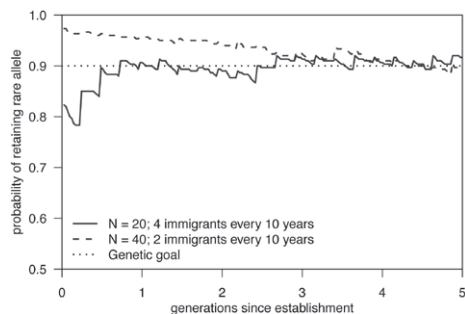
PhD student, Department of Zoology, University of Otago • Supervisors: Prof Ian Jamieson and Dr Catherine Grueber



BROWN KIWI AT WESTSHORE WILDLIFE RESERVE (NAPIER). PHOTO: EMILY WEISER.



The probability of retaining a rare gene in a population over time depends on a number of factors. Here we tested the probability for North Island brown kiwi, with the same demography (survival and breeding success) across all scenarios, and with different carrying capacities (K) and numbers of individuals translocated to establish the population (N). In all scenarios, the probability declines over time (5 generations shown here; one kiwi generation is about 40 years); but this happens more quickly for the smaller population (K = 200) than the larger population (K = 400). Releasing more individuals (N = 40) allows the population to start off with a higher probability of retaining the rare gene than releasing fewer individuals (N = 20). The only scenario that meets our goal of retaining 90% of rare genes over 5 generations is the one with K = 400 and N = 40.



If a planned population will not be large enough to minimise loss of genetic diversity, immigration can be used to regularly replenish genes that have been lost. Here we modelled the same brown kiwi population with K = 200 and N = 20 or 40 (blue lines in Figure 1); but we also simulated the periodic translocation of additional individuals (immigrants). We tested several scenarios until we found the level of immigration that would allow these populations to achieve our goal of retaining 90% of rare genes, as shown. Each upward jump in each line corresponds with an immigration event. Immigrants are more likely to breed and pass on their genes early on in the population establishment phase, before the population reaches carrying capacity.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Julia Alach (Auckland); Barbara Binney (Manawatu); Sandra Cowan (Far North); Diane Cowan (Far North); Toni de Lautour (Wairarapa); Denise Fastier (Hawke's Bay); Joan Fleming (Otago); Bethany Gibbs (Auckland); Paul Helliwell (Auckland); Ailsa Howard (Canterbury); Joerg Kaestner (Wellington); Patricia Latas (United States); Stuart Laurenson (Auckland); Adrian Lowe (Bay of Plenty); Andrew Marshall (Auckland); Ohara McLennan (South Auckland); Philip Pointon (Otago); Nic Rawlence (Otago); Sian Reynolds (Bay of Plenty); Graeme Richards (Manawatu); Geoffrey Roche (Wellington); Kevin Shakespeare (Canterbury); Ian Sharp (Far North); Craig Simpkins (Auckland); Nick Smith (West Coast); Prue Stringer (Canterbury); Lisa and Robert Stone (Northland); Linda and Paul Sutton (Far North); Kristin Ruwhiu Taylor (Marlborough); John Troost (Northland); Richard Wells (Nelson); Michael Wenham (Waikato); Peter Wilson (Canterbury).

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

Dorothy Alloo; Neil J. Andrews; Bernard Card; Philip Crutchley; Brian Darlow; Michael Fitzgerald; Chris Foreman; Mary McEwen; Colin Miskelly; Sioux Plowman; Benjamin Rodriguez; Shona Smith; Ian Williams.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Ian Southey has taken over from Simon Fordham as Regional Representative for the South Auckland region. Ian's contact details are 82 Red Hill Rd, Papakura, Red Hills, Auckland 2110. Phone: 09 298 2500.

Email iansouthey@yahoo.co.nz. Many thanks to Simon for the work he did in the region over four years in the post.

Murray Williams and Peter Frost elected not to stand again after the expiry of their three-year terms and have vacated their Council positions. Ralph Powlesland has taken over as chair of the Scientific Committee after the resignation of David Melville from that role. Trish Wells has taken over the role of Reviews Editor from Kevin Parker. Many thanks to those leaving their roles for the hard work they have contributed and also to those taking on roles valuable to the Society. Contact details can be found on the OSNZ website

www.osnz.org.nz

BOOK PUBLISHED ABOUT THE HEAPHY TRACK

Although many people walk the Heaphy Track, not many know much about its history. Of particular interest to ornithologists was the declaration of the Goulard Downs as a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1915 because of the healthy populations of Kiwi and Weka, and later, supposedly, Kakapo. But our knowledge of the bird-life extends even further back with a study by Trevor Worthy of bones



found in a Laughing Owl's nest in a cave on the Downs. Excavation of a Maori site at the mouth of the Heaphy River tells us what Maori were eating there about 1500. Early explorers often only told us what they managed to kill and eat, but Winfield Higgins in 1863 gave us rather more information about the birds he saw when walking over the track.

Robert Clouston, who 'discovered' the abundant bird-life on the Downs, and was employed as Ranger for many years, reported on the birds, and visits by the Wildlife Service in the 1950s brought our knowledge up to date. Even today studies continue on Great Spotted Kiwi and Blue Duck. So information about the birdlife of the area extends from very ancient times to the modern day.

My recently-published book, *The Heaphy Track*, is available from bookshops or the publisher, Nikau Press, at nikau@ts.co.nz or P.O. Box 602 Nelson.

CHRIS PETYT

REVIEW

Dennis, Roy. *A Life of Ospreys*.

Whittles Publishing.

ISBN 978 1904445 26 5

A well-presented book for both the general conservationally-minded person, as well as the keener student or mature birder or even for those birds of prey fanatics.

The earlier chapters carefully set out the history and the scene leading up to the first return of Ospreys to the Highlands of Scotland in the mid 1950's. Following these is a summary of the trials and tribulations, endured by both the birds and those earlier enthusiasts and professionals, who undertook their earlier observation and protection. The threats were both natural and climate related as well as human; particularly the latter in the form of dedicated egg thieves who would go to extreme measures to defeat the protective systems established around many of the nest sites. As a keen young UK birder at the time, I well remember the excitement and thrill when the news of the first arrivals at Loch Garten became public knowledge, watched the very grainy black and white TV coverage and then followed with some dismay the tales of raiding and destruction that often followed.

The main body of the book is perhaps for the more dedicated reader as it is a little harder to read. Containing a lengthy narrative of over 20 years of progress on protecting the Ospreys as they spread their wings across Scotland, it contains considerable comprehensive detail and can at times seem a bit repetitive.

The techniques developed over the years for catching, banding feeding, protecting, tracking and even artificial nest making, all often taking place up some very tall and exposed trees, are enlightening and are well supported by photographs, diary excerpts or data tables. They are a tribute to the challenges faced and perseverance of those involved.

The book ends with a comprehensive review of Osprey populations and their dispersion around the world as well as recommending some good watching sites for those in UK.

This is a well-presented book that makes a good read of just what it takes to try to rescue from local extinction a threatened bird of prey and return it to sustainable levels throughout the UK. "Thank goodness the Osprey is no longer viewed as vermin by the gillies and farmers, rather as a spectacular bird of prey that can be admired and appreciated by all who are fortunate to see them in their natural habitat"

PAUL ASQUITH

a life of ospreys



roy dennis



FAR NORTH

A two-day shorebird count took place at Parengarenga Harbour in early March with 10 people taking part, although two of these, Alison Stanes of Tawharanui fame and her twin sister Heather were 'rounded up' on site having been found holidaying there on our arrival. Kevin Matthews assisted with the boat and, although Bar-tailed Godwits were estimated at 2,500, the flock very soon took fright and gathered on a beach on the north side of the harbour entrance where they could not be approached. Apart from two Whimbrels there were no unusual species.

Just a couple of weeks later Detlef and Carol Davies travelled to the Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland, having been invited to take part in a three-week shorebird census there. This was a real bonanza, with 35 species of waders and ground counts exceeding 100,000 birds. Compared with our Far North waders, these were much more easily approached (Kevin also reported very frightened birds in the Rangaunu Harbour roosts). A narrative of the Australian census appears in the latest *Apteryx*.

Two more pelagic trips left Whangaroa in March and April, both very productive. The March trip enjoyed three species of *Pterodroma* including a White-naped Petrel. The April trip welcomed a return of some albatrosses (White-capped and Campbell) and two South Polar Skuas. New Zealand Storm Petrels were seen on both trips.

Recent unusual species include a Brown Booby seen and photographed by a scuba diver in the outer Bay of Islands, but not seen again despite alerting the ferry companies. One found some days later on an Auckland street may have been the same bird. Australian Pelicans are still being reported, including a flock of 11 in Parengarenga Harbour.

New Zealand Dotterels, which reached a peak of 47 in the Paihia/Waitangi area earlier in the year, are now reducing in number as birds return to breeding sites, but some of these are not far away. We hope that the recent removal of a nearby stray cat colony will not only assist the dotterels but also what remains of the Kiwi population in Opua Forest.

DETLEF DAVIES

NORTHLAND

New Zealand Dotterels continue to frequent the shelly sandspit in the Waipu River Mouth Wildlife Refuge at the end of Johnson Point Road, with a count of 25 or more on 21st January 2013 and 35 on 2nd March, with 41 Banded Dotterels, 136 Variable Oystercatchers and 30 Pied Stilts. On 10th April 2013, 21 Royal Spoonbills were counted across the river in that same area. At high tide it is a great place to see and to count birds.

Blackbirds seemed to have disappeared from many gardens in the Whangarei City area over the dry summer months, but 50 or more were seen roosting in a tree on Russell Road near the bush on Western Hills at the time. They are being seen again in our gardens since the recent welcome rains. A DOC staff member counted 30 New Zealand Pigeons eating acorns on the western side of Parua Bay in the Whangarei Harbour.

Of special interest to us, was an invitation for

four of our members to join the Environmental Team at Refining NZ for a conducted tour of the tank farm at the Marsden Point Oil Refinery, situated at the entrance to the Whangarei Harbour. There, we saw nesting New Zealand Dotterels, Pied Stilts, Red-billed Gulls and Variable Oystercatchers within the confines of a secure industrial complex, taking no notice of people and vehicle movements around them; something unique for this area.

We continue to have a good following of members for our meetings with interesting speakers. Recently we have welcomed some new members who are willing to take on some of the jobs within our region, which is great.

JANET SNELL

WAIKATO

2012 ended with the usual barbecue. The weather was pleasant and the occasion convivial! We were pleased to hear that Dai Morgan of Morepork fame was to pursue his career in Australia working on the recovery of Glossy Black Cockatoos, but saddened that we were to miss his company. We hear good news of his progress.

Our inaugural meeting was very well attended. Birding and photography go well together. John Greenwood, an enthusiastic speaker and photographer, provided advice on camera selection whilst demystifying the processes of image capture and subsequent treatment.

2013 in the Waikato has had much to do with wetland conservation. The World Wetlands Day was celebrated at Lake Serpentine in Waipa District. This is to be the site of the National Wetlands Centre and will shortly have the welcome addition of a pest-proof fence. In an encouraging sign David Lawrie flushed two Australasian Bitterns from the lake edge during an early morning stroll and a Fernbird was also heard.

More recently we have had the Bioblitz at the Miranda Shorebird Centre. This was a successful attempt to find 1,000 different species, from bacteria to birds, in a 24 hour period. Many Waikato members were in attendance, either feeding the troops or collecting specimens.

Still on the topic of wetlands we have recently heard from Matt Brady of DOC about a long running study of predator and native bird populations in the Whangamarino Wetland, a major Bittern stronghold. This is ground breaking research, the products of which may soon be coming to a wetland near you! It is a multi-pronged approach to estimating population sizes of both predator and prey species using tag and release of predators and trialling a variety of methods for studying elusive wetland birds. Releasing predators is distasteful but necessary to get accurate population estimates. Withdrawal of the 'get out of jail card' is close. The next stage is to target mustelids whilst continuing to monitor the population sizes of the native birds. The hopeful outcome: gaining reliable data on both predator impact and the effectiveness of predator control methods. This to be followed by extension of these tested techniques to other wetland locations in New Zealand.

Most recently we heard from John Gumbley, also of DOC concerning the Fonterra/DOC Partnership. This type of relationship is not new, but we are all hearing that DOC is putting

increasing emphasis on developing such relationships for the benefit of the environment. The initiative has been nationally funded to the tune of \$20 million over a ten-year period. There are many criteria, but most important are improvements in water quality and biodiversity in watersheds where Fonterra has a significant presence. These improvements are to be additional to those that Fonterra requires of its suppliers with regard to improving water quality. The beneficiaries of this in the Waikato are three small lakes and also the Miranda coastal strip.

Bill Smith, of the Avian Wildlife Rehabilitation Trust has noted an increase in injured Tui being received. He sees this as the inevitable downside of the success of the Halo Project in building Tui populations in the region.

Rooks are also appearing on the scene. Six figured in the census for the first time during a survey of Hamilton Lake. The same quantity has popped up in other locations in recent months. The suggestion is that this may be a bachelor grouping.

The Waikato now has its own Saddleback population. A considerable number were translocated from Tiritiri Matangi to Maungatautari and released in mid-May.

Each of three beach patrols, 13th-15th May, has turned up wrecked Short-tailed Shearwaters. These are not commonly found on Waikato beaches. Also on the Raglan coast, there is a local initiative to reinstate Mt Karioi as a seabird mountain.

RAY BUCKMASTER

BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

Change has come to the O5NZ region as Eila Lawton stepped down after seven years as RR. At the moment a collective is rostering the main duties out.

Life goes on much the same in the bird world, with Maketu and Little Waihi continuing to be the jewel in the region's crown, and Tim Barnard being the man on the spot, titivating us with regular records of rarity: a Common Sandpiper and Great Knot in March, a Sanderling all summer, a Black-fronted Tern in April and three Pectoral Sandpipers in April. Our next field trip will be to this area in May – we will see if we can track down any of the birds without having the 'Tim Eyes' on!

Tim makes good use of the Birding-NZ email alert web page. Other mutterings from the Birding-NZ Yahoo group have included two Blue Ducks in March on the Waihoek River, Opotiki district, and two Glossy Ibis on Ohiwa in April.

In April Andrew Thomas updated us on the Falcon research he did in the Kaingaroa Forest. Andrew's slides illustrated just how far one needs to go to study these birds of prey up close and personal. Compartments in pine forests may not be the first habitat you would think these birds use, but there are a surprisingly good numbers of finches that end up in a Falcon belly there.

Warwick and Krishna Buckman saw a Fernbird on the Waikareao Estuary boardwalk in Tauranga City in March, proving the species can hang on despite all urban pest culprits being present. Bitterns are also lurking in these areas, but are as hard to find as a New Zealand-based helpline operator. One was seen in a revegetating area in the Kopurerua Valley; part of a project

to plant out a huge wetland area between the Tauranga suburbs of Gate Pa and Otumoetai/Cambridge Heights.

Little Penguins have slowly been returning to their territories after a break post-breeding, and are maintaining reasonably healthy weights. The *Rena* recovery team led by Massey University student Karin Sievwright and local member Dave Richards continue to monitor the penguins, and the micro-chipping has helped enormously with regards to individual identification. Our biggest problem now does seem to be out-of-towners and their dogs off leashes around Moturiki/Leisure Island.

PAUL CUMING

HAWKE'S BAY

Our first activity for the year was a trip led by Jim Hamilton to the Cape Sanctuary. Sue McLennan, who works with the Kiwi project there, met the group and gave an overview of the re-introduction of Kiwi to the area. They then tracked a Kiwi fitted with a transmitter, discovering it burrowed beneath pine needles; a great opportunity for everyone to have a close look.

A small group travelled up to Mahia for a weekend of birding in March. This has become an annual trip and Dave and Margaret Fraser once again generously shared their local knowledge of the area. Highlights were close encounters with Fernbirds, 15 New Zealand Dotterels feeding on a rocky platform as we were eating our lunch, and coming across around 60 Banded Dotterels in a paddock beside the beach.

Hans Rook from DOC took us to the area where he has been working on a wetland restoration project in the upper reaches of the Ahuriri Estuary in April. He has been doing this in stages and has achieved very encouraging results. To end the afternoon he took us to another area where most of us were lucky enough to catch a fleeting glimpse of a Marsh Crake.

We are starting to see the return of the winter visitors with two Black-fronted Terns at Waitangi towards the end of April. A Little Egret has also been seen several times from late April with two being reported in early May. The first White Heron was spotted on 3rd March with up to five reported in early May. On 6th May four White Herons and one Little Egret were seen roosting together on the railway bridge over the Tutaekuri River. Our count of Royal Spoonbills was 53 on 23rd March, and 56 on 5th May. We haven't managed to find any colour-banded spoonbills this year.

MARGARET TWYDLE

TARANAKI

David Medway had a reliable report from an ex-member of a Fantail seen flying around an offshore drilling rig located some 80 km offshore from South Taranaki. Whether the bird was coming from or going to Australia we will never know.

Just prior to our field trip to Pukeiti in the Pouakai Ranges a report came in of a flying flock of seventeen New Zealand Pigeons. Our group spotted seven in flight along with numerous Bellbirds, Tui and Fantails. Another report from a non-member was a Shining Cuckoo that had

flown into a window and died, this report from the middle of March is one of many over the years of Shining Cuckoo doing this.

Bill Messenger and Ian Dudding punished their aging bodies by yet again tramping into the Ahukawakawa Swamp in Egmont National Park; an arduous twelve hour trip. They were rewarded with sightings of Fernbird in the swamp and managed to fit in a bit of botany, as Bill's hobby of divaricating coprosmas was the real reason for the trip. Three species were noted to be fruiting heavily.

The penguin found at Oakura west of New Plymouth mentioned in the previous regional roundup which was suffering an identity crisis has finally and positively been named as a Snares Crested Penguin.

At May's indoor meeting Barry Hartley had a Taranaki membership list showing our numbers falling. We had a brief discussion about how to remedy this but arrived at no solution. It seems in this province at least birding is a pastime of the grey-haired.

The month's field trip along the Kahui track on the west side of Mt Egmont had a good response from the birds despite the time of year. Four large flocks of Silvereye were seen, Tui were numerous with Bellbird, Whitehead, Tomtit and Fantail also seen. Most responded to a squeaky bottle sparking debate as to whether a cork or a piece of polystyrene produced a better noise. Opinion was divided.

Beach patrols over the summer months have turned up few birds and nothing surprising. David Medway noted that Kingfishers had departed from Pukekura Park and headed for the coast for autumn/winter but two or three Tui were at the bird bath daily. The Messengers have found Eastern Rosellas around their home and farm are becoming more prominent. Barry Hartley reported 15 Cattle Egrets around Opunake on the 20th May. Very few have been seen in North Taranaki over the last few years. Royal Spoonbills were around the northern rivers with 24 at Mokau, 12 at Tongaporutu and eight at Waitara, all within two days. All we need is for them to settle in and start breeding.

On a different note but still with wings it has been a good year for Yellow Admiral and Blue Moon butterflies around New Plymouth. To round off, a city resident has had a female Golden Orbweb Spider living on the side of his shed.

PETER FRYER

WAIRARAPA

The region has attracted new members, and we have a growing list of friends who are participating and showing an interest in bird watching. Many bring skills to the region and much needed enthusiasm.

In March John Cheyne gave a truly delightful and informative presentation on his survey work in selected wetland areas on the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa. He was able to verify, by mobile phone photography, the presence of Marsh and Spotless Crakes and record some sounds from them. Also evident were predators that were alerted to the calls from a recording that John played and they were waiting for a crake meal. One of the breeding pair of Royal Spoonbills produced one chick and we will keep a watchful eye in that area next breeding season.

Two or three White Herons are being seen on a regular basis at the barrage gates at the southern end of Lake Wairarapa. Our last field trip to the Pounui Lagoons gave us the opportunity to sight many varieties of birds including 12 to 14 New Zealand Pipits. We drove along the stop banks of the lagoons to see large numbers of Black Swans and other water birds, especially noting Caspian Tern successfully catching fish.

PEGGY DUNCAN

WELLINGTON

Wellington Harbour is not renowned for having prime real estate for waders and shorebirds, however the Hutt River Estuary each year does have an interesting mix of avian visitors. This year (March) the most notable visitor was an Eastern Curlew. More recently, a White Heron was present in the Hutt Estuary for a number of days. It appears as though a different White Heron was present at the same time at the Aotea Lagoon in Porirua Harbour.

Birders in the Wellington region will have noted a continuing increase in unrestrained dogs on beaches and walkways. This has been very evident in the latest series of OSNZ bird counts on the Pauatahanui Inlet where unrestrained dogs were very evident on the walkways round the shore.

In the 19th century the most remarkable bird of the Wellington region arguably was the Huia. While there has been considerable debate as to the relative importance of the different causes of the decline of the Huia, there is no doubt that collectors supplying the European market were a factor in its ultimate extinction. In the 21st century all that remains of Huia are a considerable number of mounted birds and preserved skins. These were the inspiration for the ceramicist, Kirsty Gardiner's recent exhibition in the Expressions Gallery in Upper Hutt. Included in the exhibition was an installation, entitled Barcode, which is 77 pieces depicting Huia skins. The exhibition, 'Portmanteau, a Cabinet of Curiosities' has now moved to the Te Manawa Museum in Palmerston North and continues to the 4th of August. For some dry weather, winter birding this exhibition comes highly recommended.

GEOFF DE LISLE

MARLBOROUGH

Three of our members joined Nelson members on 21st January banding Caspian Terns. We enjoyed the experience, especially chasing the chicks with nets; another new skill learned. It was so nice to work with a variety of people of all ages. The young ones were so enthusiastic, which is encouraging for the future.

In February two weekends were spent at Jack Taylor's farm at Ward banding passerines. During the first weekend we had two visitors from Christchurch but unfortunately we did not band many birds. However, we caught a large variety of birds, which was good for comparisons and refreshing our minds on the finer details of identification and moult scores. During the second weekend we banded a good number of birds but of less variety. This meant that we could compare similar birds to identify ages and differences between males and females.

During March several of our members spent varying amounts of time in Kaikoura helping with the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust translocation project. Everyone enjoyed this experience, especially as the weather was kind for most of the duration of the feeding programme.

While in Kaikoura we were on the lookout for colour-banded Black-billed Gulls. It was interesting to see a few birds from each of the three sites where birds were banded in December 2012, and that they were mainly roosting with Red-billed Gulls.

DIANNE JOHN

CANTERBURY

In March Bev Alexander organised a long weekend in Arthur's Pass, the main objective being to find Rock Wren and Orange-fronted Parakeet. Saturday's expedition in the Otira Valley failed to locate the Rock Wrens. It was agreed that even the stalwarts who climbed well past the bridge may not have gone far enough up the valley and in future more time was needed to explore, sit and observe. On Sunday the group were taken by John Kearvell, an excellent guide who knows his subject, across the Hawdon River and a number of kilometres up the valley in search of Orange-fronted Parakeet. This time patience and effort were rewarded and everyone had a good view of two parent birds feeding their young at a nest hole in a beech tree

Some of our most interesting recent sightings have been of Gull-billed Terns catching and eating small finches at Lake Ellesmere. This is probably a new undescribed behaviour for this species, vagrant to New Zealand. On 24th April Jan Waker and Sheila Petch saw a Gull-billed Tern washing a large food item in a pool before swallowing it. Later they spotted five terns hawking constantly over salt meadows, putting up clouds of small birds. Since then, a number of people have observed the terns and established that they do prey on birds. On one visit Bev Alexander scoped a tern catching a small bird almost at ground level in mid-flight and Jan saw one carrying a bird which it dropped and caught again as it fell. Both birds flew 0.5 km to a pool where they presumably washed/drowned the prey before swallowing. They regurgitate pellets of undigested bones and feathers, one of which has been examined at the Canterbury Museum by Paul Scofield and found to contain two skulls and Redpoll feathers. Observations have been made by Patrick Aldwell, Andrew Crossland, Niall Mugan, Tony Crocker Mark McFadden, Bev Alexander, Sheila Petch and Jan Walker.

Two Bitterns spent the summer in the Bexley / Avon River Mouth area; a new development. In February the south bank of the Waimakariri and Styx River Mouth area held at least two Bitterns and a Spotless Crake; the first confirmation of this latter species at this site for many decades. Bitterns were also seen at Brooklands Lagoon Spit and around the Lake Ellesmere shoreline.

An Erect-crested Penguin was reported from north-east Banks Peninsula in February, and at the end of the month a juvenile Fiordland Crested Penguin joined competitors at the Rakaia Fishing Competition. March saw two Chestnut-breasted Shelducks on Bromley Oxidation Ponds, and Kaiapoi Ponds held another White-eyed Duck,

possibly a female. In March and April two White Herons were seen together within the city. A rare sighting as late as March was a Shining Cuckoo, observed on Dyers Pass Road. At the end of the month Little Owls were calling in Spreydon Domain and by early April Cattle Egrets in small numbers were being seen in the Lake Ellesmere area.

ANN SHERLOCK

OTAGO

Expect the unexpected in Dunedin! A brief unscheduled trip for Dave York on 4th May to Tomahawk Lagoon (a shallow wetland of 30 hectares behind Smaill's Beach at the base of the Peninsula just 5 km from the city centre) turned out to be special. The usual complement of Pied Stilts, gulls, Black Swans, and Mallards were present in abundance along with a few Variable Oystercatchers and White-faced Herons. However, also perched on a dead log by the corner of the lagoon by the road were a White Heron and a Little Egret, side-by-side, so easy to compare sizes. So in one view, within metres of each other were three species of heron. Then four more White Herons came to the same corner of the lagoon. Two other OSNZ members braved the impending storm the next morning and also had a good look at all these birds and there was no mistaking the identity of the Little Egret. This Little Egret is the first to be seen in Otago for over 20 years and we will be submitting an Unusual Bird Report. Other rarities have turned up at Tomahawk Lagoon including Franklins Gull and Common Sandpiper.

Our acoustic monitoring last October for Bittern at Lake Tuakitoto near Balclutha did not record any booms. It may be that the water levels are too variable to support the species. However, Peter Langlands saw a Bittern on 18th March at a small wetland area near the Catlins River where it enters the Lake, so we plan to check there next season.

Bar-tailed Godwits left Otago in the first or second week of March. About 400 Godwits at Aramoana in February were checked for bands, and three birds, which had been banded at nearby Warrington Beach in 2007, were spotted as well as several others. We were asked to check for birds banded in The Catlins in January, but none turned up at Aramoana.

There were 848 Black-billed Gulls on the spit at Karitane on 24th February and thousands of White-fronted Terns at The Mole at Aramoana throughout February and March.

Some of us were lucky to witness the extraordinary sight of thousands of juvenile Spotted Shags crammed into Anderson's Bay, flying around and fishing in huge platoons, over the weekend of 16th February. Huge flocks were also seen up and down the harbour during this time. It is hard to believe that so many juveniles can be fledged from the nesting sites around the Otago coast.

The Morepork study group has started acoustic recording throughout the night at sites around the city known to have resident Moreporks. The aim is to assess seasonal frequency and type of calls and to determine whether listening for calls for one hour after sunset is the best time for monitoring for the presence of Morepork.

MARY THOMPSON

SOUTHLAND

Our local paper *The Southland Times* picked up on the Bar-tailed Godwit J9 story and we managed to get a few paragraphs and a photo published of the bird on its breeding ground in Nome, Alaska. It was nice to get some publicity for our local waders at last.

In early March we received a report from Peter Langlands of six Gull-billed Terns at Waikawa Harbour. This is the largest number we have of this species on record for Southland and is a continuation of what has been happening further north. Now if only they would breed...

Wynston Cooper and I headed to Awarua Bay for a last look at the waders before they headed north for the breeding season. We were rewarded with a brief view of a Terek Sandpiper and also finally found a few Pacific Golden Plovers. The resident Wrybill, along with a small flock of Red-necked Stints rounded off a nice afternoon in perfect conditions.

Matt Jones continues turning up some special birds on Stewart Island with a possible first record of an Eastern Curlew at Mill Creek and then a White Heron in the same location. He also reported a Snares Crested Penguin from Halfmoon Bay.

The strangest and most exciting find for a long time was a tropical visitor that landed in Te Anau township on March 17th. Identified as a Red-tailed Tropicbird it was taken to the local vets where unfortunately it succumbed. Rumour has it that Neil Robertson was racing to the vets to give it mouth to beak resuscitation so he could add a tick to his New Zealand list. This is the southernmost record of this species in New Zealand (so far).

Local members were invited to help DOC with a transfer of Mottled Petrels from Codfish Island to points further north. Unfortunately the young birds were in poor condition for the transfer and the trip was postponed until next year. Local muttonbirders informed us that Sooty Shearwaters were in similar poor condition.

PHIL RHODES

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

At its recent annual conference the Society adopted the brand of **Birds New Zealand** in the hope that this would improve the Society's public perception and relevancy. While a similar move has been proposed before, this only relates to our more popular activities and particularly those where we are interacting with the public. For instance, this will be the new name for **Southern Bird** from 2014 onward. **Notornis** will continue to be the scientific journal of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Council sees this as the first step in reviewing the Society's strategic plan. Members will be advised of further initiatives as they develop.



Survey Details

Physical address where you did the survey:

Number & Street

Suburb

Town/City

Postcode

Region

Description of survey area (please tick one)

Urban garden Urban Park Urban School

Rural garden Rural Park Rural School

Area searched for birds (except birds flying overhead)

Up to 100 m² (e.g. up to 10x10m)

100-200 m² (e.g. up to 10x20m)

200-400 m² (e.g. up to 20x20m)

400-600 m² (e.g. up to 20x30m)

More than 600 m²

Was search area

Lawn & flowerbeds

Lawn & shrubs <5m Lawn & trees >5m

Other Describe

How many took part?

Adults Children (<18)

Contact Details

Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss, Master (circle)

First name

Surname

Tel

Email

Please note: we will not give or sell your details to anyone else, we require them so we can contact you, if necessary to clarify your results. If you prefer us not to contact you again, please tick here

Please do the survey for 1 hour only, sometime between 29 Jun & 7 Jul 2013

Survey Date Start Time

For each species record the largest number seen (or heard) at the same time – NOT the total number over the hour – do not enter zeros

<input type="checkbox"/> Bellbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Magpie
<input type="checkbox"/> Blackbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Myna
<input type="checkbox"/> Black-backed Gull	<input type="checkbox"/> Red-billed Gull
<input type="checkbox"/> Chaffinch	<input type="checkbox"/> Rock Pigeon
<input type="checkbox"/> Dunnock	<input type="checkbox"/> Rosella (Eastern)
<input type="checkbox"/> Fantail	<input type="checkbox"/> Silvereye
<input type="checkbox"/> Goldfinch	<input type="checkbox"/> Song Thrush
<input type="checkbox"/> Greenfinch	<input type="checkbox"/> Starling
<input type="checkbox"/> Grey Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/> Tui
<input type="checkbox"/> House Sparrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome Swallow
<input type="checkbox"/> Kereru	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellowhammer

Other species counted during the hour (give number)

Do you feed birds? (please tick) No Yes

If yes, what? (please tick) Bread Fat Fruit

Seeds Sugar-water Other (please describe)

Did your survey area include the area where you feed birds? (please tick) No Yes N/A

Do you have a water-bath for birds? No Yes

Please re-fold leaflet and tape along edge before posting

Fix Stamp here

Eric Spurr
 New Zealand Garden Bird Survey
 47 Brixton Rd
 Manly
 Whangaparaoa 0930

Female house sparrow



©Andrea Lightfoot

Male house sparrow



©Andrea Lightfoot

Photographs by:
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www.istock.com

New Zealand Aotearoa **GARDEN BIRD** **SURVEY 2013**



29 June - 7 July

Landcare Research and the Ornithological Society are asking for the public's help again this year in spotting birds in New Zealand gardens. Taking part is easy – spend just 1 hour (that's 1 hour only) sometime between **29 June and 7 July** looking for birds in your garden, parks or school grounds. For each species you detect, record the largest number you see (or hear) at the same time. Please *count* not just tick the species you observe. The easy to follow guide below will help you identify most birds you are likely to see.

Then fill in and return the survey form opposite or enter your results online (which helps us to process the results faster and more easily) at:

[http://gardenbirdsurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz](http://gardenbirdssurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz)

Regularly updated survey results will be available on the same website, and will provide valuable information about bird populations, giving scientists an indication of which species may be in decline, helping guide conservation efforts for the future.

Bird Guide (not to scale)

Small birds 15cm or less



House Sparrow (m) House Sparrow (f) Yellowhammer (m) Yellowhammer (f)



Greenfinch (m) Greenfinch (f) Goldfinch Dunnock



Chaffinch (m) Chaffinch (f) Redpoll Fantail



Silvereye Welcome Swallow Grey Warbler

Medium-sized birds



Eastern Rosella Tui



Song Thrush Bellbird



Myna Starling

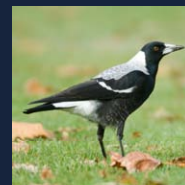


Blackbird (f) Blackbird (m)

Large birds



Kereru



Magpie



Red-billed Gull



Black-backed Gull



Warning Poison

Potassium cyanide

will be present on, or raised above, the ground
from : 28-4-12 - 30-9-12

THE BAITS ARE LAID
IN THE FORM OF A
SINGLE GREEN PEA
SIZED PASTE ON
THE GROUND

- DO NOT touch bait
- WATCH CHILDREN at all times
- Poison baits or carcasses are

DEADLY to DOGS

ST James conservation AREA

For more information contact:

CRAIG SIMPSON
03 523 9199 or 021 523 975

The unauthorised removal of signs or baits is an offence