



# Southern *Bird*

No. 50 June 2012 • ISSN 1175-1916

The Magazine of the Ornithological  
Society of New Zealand



**IDENTIFICATION OF  
SMALL GULLS**

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**ANNUAL REPORT 2011**



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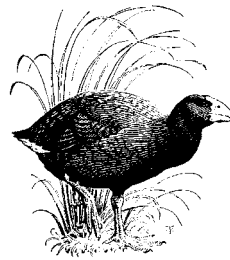
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# Southern Bird



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## QUOTATION

...Lauda, anima mea, Dominum!  
To weep with me, look that ye come,  
All manner of birdes in your kind;  
See none be left behind.  
To mourning looke that ye fall  
With dolorous songs funeral,  
Some to sing, and some to say,  
Some to weep, and some to pray,  
Every bird in his lay...

Romanza. Jane Scroop: Her lament for Philip Sparrow  
by John Skelton 1460-1529

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## COVER PHOTOS

**Front Cover:** Red-billed Gulls in flight at Makara Beach, Wellington

**Back Cover:** New Zealand Pigeon on Kapiti Island foreshore

Both photos by Fraser Crichton

## 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.

# FROM THE EDITOR

It seems almost yesterday that Tony Crocker transformed OSNZ News into *Southern Bird* in the year 2000. With this issue the magazine has reached its half century and I have included new features that will hopefully make a regular appearance. These are short articles on the identification of confusion groups of species and places to go birdwatching in this country. For this

issue I have written both myself, but, since there are people with much more expertise and knowledge on these subjects reading this magazine I would really welcome your contributions, so get writing and I look forward to being deluged.

With the upgrade of the OSNZ website scheme reports will generally be published there in full (with shorter versions/summaries in *Southern Bird*)

along with much of the Society's business. Check out [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz) regularly for these.

I would also welcome photos to accompany notes, rare/unusual bird news and regional reports. Please send me your photos, not just of birds, but fellow members out and about following the objects of the Society – studying, gaining or providing knowledge about, and enjoying birds.

## THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND, INC. **ANNUAL REPORT** ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2011

*This report was presented on behalf of the Council to the 73rd Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand held in Tauranga on 2nd June 2012.*

### GRAHAM TURBOTT

It has been brought to my attention that on 27th May, Graham Turbott, one of the Fellows of our Society celebrated his 98th birthday.

This is a remarkable achievement for one of the founding members, who has played an important part in the development of the Society. While Graham does not venture outdoors very often he is still very alert. I took the opportunity to send him a message on behalf of the Council and members to mark the occasion and we look forward to celebrating his century at the time of our 75th AGM.

### DECEASED MEMBERS

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

- Gordon Gorbey (Auckland)
- Allen Doig (Whanganui)
- L S Rickard (Canterbury)
- Barry Lawrence (Otago)
- Chris Pryor (Canterbury)
- Arthur Dixon (Canterbury)
- Marj Davis (Canterbury)

While I did not know most 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 the Council during the period of this report.

The first was in Lower Hutt on the 3rd June 2011 in conjunction with the conference weekend. The second was held at Dovedale near Nelson at the home of the Melville family on the 19th and 20th November 2011. Our thanks go to the Melville family, as this considerably reduces the cost of this meeting.

During the year there is frequent email contact between the Council members and many issues are debated via that medium. Much of the work of the Council is completed in this manner.

Council is hoping to move to a more pro-active phase in the coming year, rather than being largely reactive as it has in the past. This will require forward thinking and there are major issues that the Council needs to consider. Some of these are outlined below.

As will be seen from the financial report there is still some concern over the costs of running the Society. Ways need to be found to balance income and expenditure, while still retaining our ability to support projects that keep members active and informed.

### COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Keith Owen has decided not to allow his name to be considered for a further term of office. He will therefore retire from Council at the end of the Annual General Meeting. While Keith has only spent the past three years on Council he has made a thoughtful contribution and we know that his involvement with the Society will continue into the future. We wish him well as he charts his future in retirement, not only from the Society, but also from his employment with the Department of Conservation.

Nominations were called for the positions of president, vice-president and treasurer. All three incumbents were duly nominated, and there being no other nominations, are therefore re-elected.

The two vacancies on Council were also notified with the only nomination being that of Ian Armitage from Wellington and he also has been appointed to Council without the need for an election. We look forward to Ian's wisdom being applied to Council's deliberations.

There is still one vacancy on Council. Council is looking at options to co-opt someone to fill that position. It has been drawn to my attention that there is a lack of female intelligence on Council, to at least provide some balance to the deliberations of the aging male Councillors. Council would be grateful for names to be put forward, if there is anyone interested.

### PUBLICATIONS

Jim Briskie has continued his excellent work as editor of *Notornis* during the year. He has gradually reduced the backlog of issues, but was delayed

during this year because of a lack of manuscripts and that is disappointing. However, he has reported that these are now flowing again and Council has given him permission to combine issues if this assists in maintaining the flow of material.

Council also gave him permission to put onto the website papers as they are accepted, before they are released in printed form. This allows members to check the website for the latest papers, even before *Notornis* arrives through the post.

The thanks of the Council and I am sure all members go to Jim for his excellent work in continuing to turn out the journal under trying circumstances.

Nick Allen has continued to produce *Southern Bird* just about on schedule throughout the year. Following discussions at the annual meeting in 2011, and with the re-development of the website, there have been some changes to the content of the magazine.

The amount of Regional News has been reduced. This is now being placed on the website thereby giving Nick more space for reports on birding activities. Much of the work of Council is also now on the website rather than being published in the magazine.

This means, however, that Nick requires more articles. I would urge members to continue sending articles, short notes and observations to him for publication.

### BIRD NOTES

The ongoing problem of compiling and publishing members' observations has not yet been resolved. It seems that when we stopped publishing of Classified Summarised Notes, members also stopped making or recording their observations. Derek Onley tried to turn the meagre observations in 2007 into a worthwhile publication but the uneven quality of the material meant that it was not cost-effective to publish it separately. The intention is to put a copy on to the website.

Council still believes that there is a need to publish members' observations but these first have to be made and recorded, and put in context. We



OSNZ Council: Standing L-R Peter Frost, Colin Miskelly, Paul Garner-Richards (treasurer), David Melville, Keith Owen, Peter Gaze (secretary). Seated Ingrid Hutzler (executive officer), David Lawrie (president), Bruce McKinlay (vice-president).

also need a filtering process to ensure the quality of the final product. Council remains committed to the use of eBird as a key tool for members to collect and file observations. All members are encouraged to use this internationally recognised database for filing bird records and turning observations into data. Paul Scofield continues to provide leadership and liaison with Cornell Ornithological Lab to ensure continued access to eBird. Paul spends a large amount of time quality checking records and if any members wish to support him in this work they should make contact with him.

This is another issue that the Council will consider further in the coming year.

## WEBSITE

The first phase in redeveloping the main website has been largely completed. During the past year that part of the site which allows members to check their personal details and pay subscriptions online has become operational.

This appears to be working satisfactorily, although initially several minor bugs needed to be resolved. One remaining issue is allowing Regional Representatives to obtain lists of members in their respective regions. This tool will make it easier to contact members in each region but is still a work in progress.

I take this opportunity to thank Bruce McKinlay for his work in arranging for and guiding the development of the website. We also thank the T Gear Charitable Trust which provided a substantial grant to enable this work to be completed.

## RECORDS APPRAISAL COMMITTEE

This committee has worked smoothly and efficiently during the year. The backlog of reported sightings has now cleared and Colin Miskelly and his team are now urging members who have past sightings sitting in notebooks to submit them for verification. Knowledge about the incidence of

unusual birds within New Zealand only grows if sightings are verified. They certainly have no value just sitting in notebooks. A total of 79 records were received and processed during the year, of which 70 were accepted.

## PROJECT AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

During the year Peter Frost and his small committee endeavoured to assist regions to run activities in their local areas. As advised previously it is not the purpose of the committee to organize events as such, because local input is essential. The committee can provide assistance and advice to regions, however, so please contact it. Some funds are available through the Project Assistance Fund, and committee members can help with applications.

Carol Davies again ran a number of successful local activities in the far north region to raise awareness of the Society and its various projects. Carol arranges for library poster displays and also operates a stand at suitable events in the local area. It is no coincidence that the membership of the Far North region is growing faster than any other in New Zealand. I am sure Carol would welcome contact if anyone wants advice on how to undertake similar activities in their area.

During the past year the initial phase of the Caspian Tern breeding survey commenced. This is an activity to which members who have access to coastal areas can participate, especially in helping check remote beaches. Details are available from your Regional Representative, or from Mike Bell or Peter Frost.

Other opportunities for participation in national surveys are the proposed survey of Pied Shag being organised by Mike Bell, and the national census of Royal Spoonbill being organised by Mary Thompson. The latter is due to take place in August 2012. If you are interested in taking part, please contact your Regional Representative.

Members wanting to develop their skills can

take advantage of a number of organised events. The Marlborough Region arranges an annual bird-banding weekend at Ward, which provides an opportunity for people to gain experience in mist netting and handling small birds. Bird banding on weekends at Wellington Zoo by Peter Reese and his team provide similar opportunities. Contact the respective Regional Representatives of these regions for further details.

The Miranda Naturalists' Trust also run several courses annually on identifying and counting shorebirds, that would enable members to gain new skills. Contact the Miranda Shorebird Centre for details.

## BEACH PATROL SCHEME

Lloyd Esler continues to co-ordinate this scheme. During the past year it has produced some extraordinary results, due principally to the huge wreck of prions that occurred along the west coast in July 2011. By 1st April 2012, Lloyd had received 297 cards, which contained records of 44,278 birds recovered along 1,674 km of beach. These are exceptional numbers; 12 cards recorded over 1,000 birds, while one patrol recorded 8,296 birds.

Our thanks go to Lloyd for continuing to co-ordinate this scheme. It is one of the more active schemes and one in which many members participate.

## RENA WRECK AT TAURANGA

The wreck of the *Rena* at Tauranga involved a large number of members of the Society in various capacities. Many of the official oil response team are Society members who were able to use their years of experience to cope with the day-to-day issues and provide prompt advice on how to minimise the effects on birds.

The wreck disrupted the northern New Zealand Dotterel national census planned for the same week, particularly in the western part of the Bay of Plenty region.

Some Society members were also involved in identifying dead birds, a heartbreaking experience but one that provided some surprises on just what birds were present in the area.

A large number of volunteers helped to clean and care for captive birds. All of them worked long hours in difficult circumstances, and we applaud their efforts.

The Society can be proud of everyone involved. It shows the wide range of expertise present within our organisation. Nevertheless, we hope there won't be a repeat of this event.

## MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

During this current year Yvonne McKenzie retired from the position of Membership Secretary. We are most grateful for the time and effort she put in over the past three years to keeping members' records up to date. Julia White has kindly taken on the role of Membership Secretary, the changeover occurring just as the web-based membership records were being introduced. This resulted in a very steep learning curve for her. Roger Sharp has been of great assistance in guiding her and the Society through the implementation of this system. Roger has accepted the role to provide technical membership support in the future, for which we are very grateful.

Some refinements are still needed to make the system run more seamlessly. We hope to rectify this in the near future.



Birdwatching on the Daintree River at the AOC.  
Photo by David Lawrie.

I take this opportunity to thank Julia for undertaking this task at short notice. It is not a trivial one, occupying many hours, mostly in the evenings.

## AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

The sixth AOC meeting was held in Cairns in Australia in September 2011. There was a very good attendance of New Zealand members and it was heartening to see so many student presentations. Clearly there are many students at the universities working on birds, and we need to encourage them to join the Society and contribute to its future.

The Society provided travel assistance for Kat Manno and Jesse Conklin to attend the AOC and to present their work.

The Society has been involved in the co-ordinating committee, mainly through Kerry-Jayne Wilson and in recent years by Phil Battley. This representation ensures the Society's interests are catered for in what is a jointly organised event.

It was announced during the conference that the Society's bid for the 2013 event was successful. This will be held in Auckland over the period of 4th to 7th December 2013.

The organisation of this event has already commenced under the leadership of Mel Galbraith.

## QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY WADER PROJECT

This is a major project which has among its aims the desire to interpret the reasons for changes in the populations of migratory shorebirds visiting New Zealand and Australia annually from the northern hemisphere. It has been obvious for some time that there has been a steady decline in numbers but, although there are many theories as to why this is, none have been proven.

Two papers given at the AOC meeting in Cairns showed some interesting results, even at this early stage in data analysis. I am sure that more detailed findings will be presented at the meeting in Auckland in 2013.

For this project to be meaningful to New Zealand, the Society has provided its long-term shorebird census data sets to the researchers involved. Apart from helping to clarify trends here, this is something that is considered critical to the project producing a meaningful outcome overall.

## FINANCIAL

The treasurer has provided a report, including audited accounts for the past year, to this meeting for adoption. Unfortunately Paul is unable to attend this meeting, and Bruce McKinlay will be presenting the information on Paul's behalf.

I thank Paul Garner-Richards for his work as treasurer during the year.

## REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

I take this opportunity on behalf of Council to thank the Regional Representatives for their work in arranging activities and acting as your point of contact in your regions. These are key people in our organisation, serving as nodes in our regional network, from where they interface directly and regularly with members.

I am aware from the regional reports of the excellent work all of them undertake in arranging activities and organising meetings in each area.

I would urge all members to assist wherever they can to ease the work load on the representatives including, perhaps, leading some of the activities.

Each region has provided a report on their activities through the past year and I am amazed at the diversity of activities that are being undertaken. There is clearly much interesting work being done in all areas. I hope some of these activities get written into reports that can be more widely published.

There have been some changes with Andrew Styche replacing Dai Morgan in Waikato, Jim Hamilton replacing Helen Andrews in Hawke's Bay, Janet Snell replacing David Crockett in Northland, and Susan Waugh replacing Ian Armitage in Wellington.

We welcome the newcomers to their positions and thank those who are stepping down for a job well done.

## NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE

Colin Miskelly has been masterminding this major project, which is a collaboration between the Society and Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand. The intention is to develop an online database providing information on the full range of New Zealand birds, which will help raise the profile of the fauna while also highlighting the gaps in our knowledge so that future researchers can easily identify those areas.

Colin is receiving excellent support from the membership in providing information and photographs but there is always more information needed on a major project of the scale that he has initiated.

Authors are urgently needed for many vagrant bird species, plus a few breeding species. For many of the remaining species there are no New Zealand experts, and we seek people willing and able to compile information from existing sources. If you think that you can help, please contact Colin as soon as possible to obtain a list of 'unclaimed' species.

## EXTERNAL EVENTS

In this report I have already mentioned the huge prion wreck and the *Rena* oil spill which had major impacts on our bird life during the past year. While these were both tragic events they did provide an

opportunity to gather data that will add to our collective pool of knowledge.

There were other activities occurring in the world that can also impact on our New Zealand birdlife. The major earthquake in Japan and the destruction of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant could have a long term effect on New Zealand-breeding Flesh-footed Shearwaters and Sooty Shearwaters that feed in that area during the non-breeding season. A long-term study has been initiated to check the levels of radiation in returning birds, and this is an example of how events far away from New Zealand can impact our bird fauna.

Another concern is the extensive tidal flat destruction that is taking place around the Yellow Sea, which would appear to be having a long term effect on the migratory shore birds passing through that region. The Society welcomed the New Zealand Governments decision to become a partner in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, and we have offered our full support in providing information to assist them in that role.

There have been several examples through the year where OSNZ members have provided detailed evidence to hearings to support the cases of other Organisations, such as the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. Some examples are the Mangawhai Estuary mangrove removal and channelisation project, the beach grooming application for Far North beaches and the effects of the growth of Auckland on bird roosting areas around the Manukau Harbour.

I thank all those people that have provided information and I am sure there are other examples elsewhere in New Zealand.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of the office holders of the Society who continue to undertake the work in their various capacities. It is not possible to personally acknowledge all of those people in this report.

However, the lack of a mention does not mean that your work has gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

I particularly wish to thank the members of Council who had provided direct support to me and who endeavour to run the Society to best serve you, the membership. I also thank our Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler, who provides support to the Regional Representatives, Council, editors, committees and scheme convenors. During this year she has also been heavily involved in ensuring the transition to the new online membership system, and in assisting Julia in her role.

I occasionally hear rumblings that members are not happy with the direction that the Society is heading or that we are merely treading water without making any progress. I would urge you to please make your concerns known so that they can be considered and acted upon. Council members do not believe that they are the fount of all knowledge, but decisions can only be based on the collective wisdom and knowledge around the table, or on input from members.

I wish you all happy birding for the coming year and remember that all of our activities should lead to an increase in knowledge and enjoyment of birds.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

# SPECIAL CONFERENCE OFFER TO OSNZ MEMBERS



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Convenor: Dr Brian Gill

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This substantially revised and expanded edition of the Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand is the official list of all the birds in the New Zealand region, including Norfolk and Macquarie Islands, and the Ross Dependency, Antarctica.

Published in association with the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, this comprehensive guide was compiled by the society's Checklist Committee. It provides details of the nomenclature, taxonomy, classification, status and distribution (current, historical and fossil) of every living and extinct species of New Zealand bird and, for the first time, includes complete synonymies. More than fifty species have been added, along with thorough bibliographic references, a list of Māori bird names, a full index and updated maps.

## NOMINATIONS FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES 2013

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 2012.

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 2013 year.

## NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Sandy Bartle (Manawatu); Michael Bradley (Canterbury); Katie Cornish (Wellington); Katie Davison (Waikato); Patricia Dean (Otago); Eli Ewens (South Auckland); Dougal and Denise MacKenzie (Wairarapa); Gail Malecek (Bay of Plenty); Pamela McConnell (Nelson); Andrew Nelson (Auckland); Jane Strachan (Waikato); Sandra Suttie (Otago); Janet Thorp (Nelson); Jacinda Woolly (Bay of Plenty).

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

Jane Ashby; Francie Beggs; Mike Bell; Steve Braunias; Matu Booth; Geoffrey de Lisle; Chris Foreman; Susanne Govella; Jill Hamel; Graham Hunt; Ian Jamieson; Alan Miller; Colin Miskelly; Philip Moors; Kevin Parker; David Pye; Sue Stubenvoll; Kerry Walshe.

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## AWARDS 2012

The following awards were presented at the Annual General Meeting in Tauranga

### Robert Falla Memorial Award

#### KERRY-JAYNE WILSON

This award acknowledged the work of Kerry-Jayne Wilson in the field of ornithology and her contributions to the work of the society over many years.

In the course of her work with Lincoln University and in much of her own time, Kerry-Jayne has worked tirelessly to clarify the biology and status of native bird species in New Zealand. Her ornithological compass has been unusually broad and diverse. It has extended from oceanic petrels in remote insular and mainland contexts to terrestrial species of coastal, forest and alpine environments. Whatever and wherever her species of interest, she has exemplified the virtues of researching, recording and reporting systematically. She possesses the instinct and ability of the natural historian, all too rare in the scientific community now, to interpret her knowledge and discoveries for specialist and lay audiences alike, in terms and language accessible to all.

Kerry-Jayne's ornithological research has been driven by a strong conservation imperative which is explicit in her teaching, mentoring and publications. Crucially, this interest has resonated with generations of students at Lincoln University and elsewhere, thus securing the future of ornithological research by making it relevant

and worthwhile as a discipline. In addition, she encouraged her students to publish the results of their research so that it became more available to the wider ornithological community.

*The Flight of the Huia* (2004) was the first book to present a history of faunal change in New Zealand and a review of the ecology and conservation of those animals. *The Flight of the Huia* achieved the difficult task of writing comprehensive science for the informed general public without detracting from its value as a scholastic reference book. It is recommended to students of vertebrate ecology and to practicing ecologists and conservation biologists who are interested in the birds, bats and other beasts of New Zealand.

More than 10 years ago, Kerry-Jayne recognised the need for a concerted, collaborative approach for New Zealand Pigeon protection and enhancement on Banks Peninsula. She therefore played a leading role in establishing the Kaupapa Kereru programme, which brought together Ngai Tahu, Lincoln University, Department of Conservation, Landcare Research, and the Banks Peninsula community. Kerry-Jayne has been a visionary leader for this New Zealand Pigeon research bringing together the key players and the community to support the species' vitality on Banks Peninsula well into the future.

In doing this she supervised Post-Graduate and Post-Doctoral research projects on:

- seasonal food preferences,
- radio telemetry analysis of New Zealand Pigeon spatial movement,



- predator impacts, cat ecology and New Zealand Pigeon, and
- community-based New Zealand Pigeon surveys

This led to the discovery that exotic plants, in particular Tree Lucerne, play an important role as New Zealand Pigeon food and that the species is seemingly able to raise chicks on plant foliage, and is not obligated to higher-quality foods such as fruit, as has been published in previous studies.

Kerry-Jayne has recently taken this community role to the West Coast where she has been founding trustee, chair and scientific advisor to the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust. She maintains active connections as ornithological advisor to other trusts and community initiatives throughout New Zealand.

Her contributions to the society have included:

- 1990 Member local organising committee 20th International Ornithological Congress
- 1997-2003 South Island Vice President
- 2001- 2004 Convenor Scientific Committee

In addition to time served on Council Kerry-Jayne has made a significant contribution to the Society by being the author and organiser for the *State of New Zealand Bird* reports 2005 to 2009. From 2001-2010 Kerry-Jayne was the OSNZ representative on the Australasian Ornithological Conference organising committee. In addition she chaired the organising committee of the Blenheim AOC in 2005.

## Robert Falla Memorial Award

### DAVID MEDWAY

This award was made to acknowledge the work of David Medway in the field of ornithology and for his contributions to the work of the Society over many years.

David has served the Society in varied roles for almost 50 years:

- Regional Representative for Taranaki 1965-1973 and then from 1981- 2000. His leadership of the Taranaki region must have spanned one of the longer periods in the history of the Society.
- Convenor Rare Birds Committee 1999-2004. In this role he was instrumental in co-ordinating the updating of outstanding records and ensuring that submission were responded to in a timely fashion.



Paul Sagar and David Lawrie at Tauranga after the awarding of Paul's Fellowship.

- Honorary Solicitor 1999- 2006. In his time as the society's solicitor David revised the constitution and led the presentation of it to the membership for adoption at the AGM in 2004.
- President June 2000-2006. It was during this period that the society adopted its first strategic plan.

David has taken his ornithological interests to a much wider audience:

- He has an outstanding research and publication record in interpreting the ornithology of the voyages of James Cook. He has travelled widely to support his research with research trips to Europe, French Polynesia, Hawaii and Australia.
- David was also a member of the Friends of Taranaki Museum and its President for some time in the 1980's.
- David was a member of the National Parks and Reserves Authority from 1968-81 and a member of the Fauna Protection Advisory Council.
- He was elected as a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London in November 1978.
- He has been very much involved with the Friends of Pukekura Park, New Plymouth. His contributions there include the role of newsletter editor and contributions to improved understanding of the history of the Park
- In addition David has published widely on other topics.
- David has also served as the Honorary Consultant in Historical Ornithology to the Alexander Turnbull Library.
- He has served as an executive member and Councillor of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc as well as the Taranaki Branch President.

## Fellowship of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Inc.

### PAUL MICHAEL SAGAR

This is the highest award within the society. The conditions are prescribed in our constitution and require unanimous support of Council. Any recipient must have rendered distinguished service to the society or ornithology, particularly in New Zealand. No more than six people may be Fellows at any one time.

### PREAMBLE

Since joining in 1966, Paul contributed to the running of the society at all levels, and made significant, and continuing, contributions to ornithology of the New Zealand region and worldwide. He gained BSc in Botany & Zoology (1972) and MSc in Zoology (1976), at the University of Canterbury, where he studied under John Warham and Prof George Knox.

Paul then joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as a freshwater scientist. However, he continued his research programmes in Antarctica (penguins) and on The Snares (albatrosses, terns, and Cape Petrels), and the Poor Knights (Red-crowned Parakeets, Bellbirds). In 1992 he moved to the newly-formed National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research where he quickly moved his research objectives towards seabirds, and is still involved in ground-breaking research in the movements and ecology of (in particular) albatrosses. He lists his current research interests as the population dynamics, and the feeding and breeding of seabirds, shorebirds, and passerines.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIETY

Since he joined in 1966, Paul has been an active participant in the society's schemes, initially with Beach Patrol, and Nest Records, then Banding and the Moulting scheme, all the Atlases and the National Wader Count. He has been one of the main contributors to eBird since its inception pioneering the recording of pelagic records as well as contributing regular records from around Christchurch and in South Canterbury.

His individual and collaborative private studies and professional research have resulted in the publication of more than 100 papers and book chapters. These papers include the results of several important long-term programmes. His publications include 50 in *Notornis* since 1967 with papers or notes to the journal in 35 of the past 45 years.

## ADMINISTRATION

As well as contributing significantly, at all levels of activity, to our knowledge of New Zealand birds, Paul has given freely of his time in the formal organisation of the Society over more than 35 years. Following a stint as Regional Representative for Canterbury in the late 1970s, Paul served on Council for 17 years (1980-1997). He has been a long-serving member of both the Rare Birds Committee and the Scientific Committee. His careful contributions and wise advice have helped to underpin the integrity of the scientific activities of the society for many years. In 1986-1990 he was a member of the New Zealand Organising Committee for the 20th International Ornithological Congress, held in Christchurch in December 1990.

## PUBLICATIONS

Paul's contributions to the Society's publications have been immense, both in formal appointments, and in providing invaluable, unbiased, and freely-given advice and mentoring to editors and authors, including the prompt and thorough refereeing of dozens of papers and notes. From 1978 to 1994, he edited 63 issues of OSNZ news. He was a member of the Editorial Panel for *Notornis* from 1994 to 1997, Editor in 1998-1999, and has been Assistant Editor since 2000.

## SOCIETY AWARDS

Paul's contributions to the Society have been recognised by a Meritorious Service Award in 2002, and he received the Falla Memorial Award in 1995 for contributions to New Zealand ornithology and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO ORNITHOLOGY

In addition to his 45 years of membership of the Ornithological Society, the international scope of his contribution to ornithology is evidenced by membership of the Ecological Society of NZ, the British Ornithologists' Union, the American Ornithologists' Union, the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, the British Trust for Ornithology, the International Wader Study Group, and the Australasian Wader Study Group. From 1982 to 1986, Paul was a member of the Ross Dependency Research Committee Biological sub-committee, which reflected his long-term participation in ornithological research in the subantarctic and Antarctic. In 2004, he was co-convenor of the Food and Foraging Ecology Section of the 3rd International Albatross and Petrel Conference, in Montevideo, Uruguay.

# KEEPING TRACK OF BIRD MOULT OVER THREE DECADES

## The New Zealand Moulting Recording Scheme 2009-2011

We have been systematically recording the patterns of plumage moult in New Zealand birds through the OSNZ Moulting Recording Scheme for thirty years now! As a result, we have accumulated through the Scheme 3,270 moult records for 130 species. Half of these records (52%) are for birds in active moult, the rest are for non-moulting birds. Most of the records (64%) are from live birds. We have added 103 new records since my last summary report in 2009 (*Southern Bird* 39, pp. 6-7), covering 16 species, all of live birds in active moult. I am particularly grateful to John Stewart and Ros Batcheler for providing recent records.

No new species were added to the records since the last report, but there are some interesting and valued records amongst them (e.g. Bellbird, Kingfisher, Saddleback, Spotted Dove, Stitchbird, Tomtit and Whitehead). The list continues to be headed by House Sparrow (603 records) and Silvereye (496 records), followed further back

by Greenfinch (106 records) and Chaffinch (97 records). Can I reiterate my clarion call once again – all moult records are welcome, and especially needed are those of native species. There are frequent opportunities to contribute to the scheme by anyone handling birds - banders, beach patrollers, bird researchers, in fact any of us!

The 3,270 records received so far are mostly in a format based on the British Trust for Ornithology's Moulting Enquiry that began in 1960. This asks observers to complete – as far as possible – records for moult across the entire plumage, although some observers have concentrated on the wing and tail moult alone, or parts thereof. With native species especially, it is important to gather as much information as possible, so do please try and complete the whole moult card if you can. If time does not allow that, then please get information on wing and tail moult. If you run low on card supplies, photocopies of the cards and forms are

fine. Please write to me if you need supplies of the *Moult Card* for recording data on birds in active moult, or the *Summary Form for Birds Not in Moult*, (or contact your Regional Representative).

Non-moulting birds include both those in old plumage (worn and faded) and those in new plumage (fresh without wear) and the state of plumage ('old' or 'new') needs to be stated on the card or record form. Remember that you can record useful moult information on birds at any time of year - and potentially from every bird you handle (live or dead). And please don't be too daunted by the apparent complexity of the moult card – it is meant to facilitate accurate records, and many OSNZ members who have persisted through the learning phase have ended up contributing many valued records to the Scheme. We look forward to receiving further moult records from you over the forthcoming year.

BEN BELL, April 2011

## DEVELOPING 'NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE': HOW YOU CAN HELP (PART 4)

Progress on the website [www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz](http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz) has continued apace since my last update in *Southern Bird* issue 48, December 2011. The most significant milestone has been the development of a prototype website by Wellington-based design company Signify. This password-accessed website has been tested, and has since been loaded with core data on all 457 bird species on the New Zealand list. This includes common name, scientific name and authority, Order, Family, conservation status, New Zealand status (i.e. endemic, native, introduced), and alternative names. This provides a framework for all species-specific content to be entered (i.e. text, images, sound files, distribution maps and pdf book extracts).

The main content that has been entered so far is a total of 1,088 species-by-species pdfs created from four books: *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* (Barrie Heather & Hugh Robertson); *Birds of New Zealand – Locality Guide* (Stuart Chambers); *The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds* (George Watola); and *Birds of the Chatham Islands* (Hilary Aikman & Colin Miskelly). I thank the authors and publishers of these books for supporting the project, and Stuart Chambers and Liam Miskelly for their good work creating the pdfs.

Thank you very much also to the 54 people who have agreed to write species texts – and especially those who have already delivered. Texts are trickling in, with 61 received so far. These are being loaded on to the prototype web site as each is edited.

From June onwards, authors will be given a user name and password to allow them to load their species accounts direct to the website, with checking and editing done online. About 140 further species texts have been promised, but I am desperate for authors for the remaining 251 species. You don't need to be an expert – in fact, most of

the species not yet allocated are birds for which there are no recognised New Zealand experts. All aspiring authors are sent a template, instructions and sample texts, and I can provide copies of relevant reference texts if required. Writing any one species text is not onerous, however, I am feeling slightly daunted by the scale of the task if I have to write all the remaining texts myself. Please email [nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz](mailto:nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz) for an obligation-free list of species not yet allocated to authors, and some sample texts.

By the time *Southern Bird* goes to print, the prototype website will be ready to receive digital photographs and sound files from anyone interested in contributing them. Photographers first need to email [images@osnz.org.nz](mailto:images@osnz.org.nz) to receive a copy of the image-use agreement form. This clarifies rights and obligations on both parties, and allows photographers to tell us whether they are willing for their images to be used for other purposes (e.g. illustrating *Southern Bird*), or whether all such requests must be referred back to the photographer. Once we receive a completed image-use agreement form, each photographer will be issued a temporary username and password, and will be able to load their images and associated data (e.g. species name, locality, date) direct to the website.

Access to the prototype website will close in early 2013, after which the best images will be selected for the final website. And the best images aren't necessarily all going to be stunning portraits of males in breeding plumage. We want to tell the life history of each species in images, including nests, juveniles, birds in flight ... tempt us with your contributions! A large proportion of the birds on the New Zealand list are vagrants from other countries. While a good photograph from New Zealand will always be our preferred choice for the master image for each species, there will be many species which have never been photographed here,

and so don't forget to sort through those overseas holiday snaps.

The third area where you can help is providing or checking bird lists from your favourite birding sites. Those of you who attended the AGM in Tauranga will have seen a demonstration of how this search feature worked for Tuhua/Mayor Island, and will realise what a fantastic resource it would be to have the same information for all New Zealand's significant birding sites.

Please email [nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz](mailto:nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz) to find out the bird lists already received (or not) from your part of the country. And please let me know if recording bird sounds is your thing. There is a separate project underway on this, but any hard-to-get calls will be of interest.

While images, sound files and texts continue to be loaded on to the prototype website, we will be working on the final website. This includes getting all the intended search features designed and built, and making the website look great. Those of you who get password access to the prototype website will see that it is rather sparse and utilitarian, but it provides a means to receive and organise thousands of content files.

New Zealand Birds Online is being designed and constructed by Te Papa and OSNZ for your benefit. We are completely reliant on the collective knowledge, writing ability and photographic gems of New Zealand bird watchers and ornithologists to make the website a stunner. All texts will be attributed to author, and photographers' and sound recorders' (and copyright holders') names will remain linked with all images and sound files. This is your chance to make a high-profile contribution to New Zealand ornithology.

The above text is about 890 words – the approximate length of a species account on the website.

COLIN MISKELLY

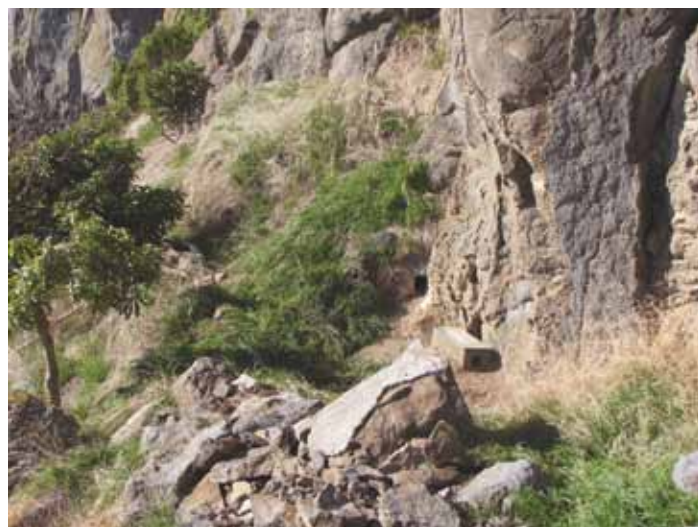
Project Manager, New Zealand Birds Online



# EFFECT OF THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKES ON THE LOCAL PENGUIN POPULATION: A CLOSE RUN THING



Site of the main penguin colony in Harris Bay. The June earthquakes caused some significant rock falls in the eastern half of the colony (left side in photo) while the western half was unaffected. Photo by Chris Challies.



A predator trap box and penguin nest box (only entrance showing) that survived the rock fall in the foreground. Photo by Chris Challies.

Most of the White-flipped Penguin colonies in the Christchurch area are below near vertical coastal bluffs which have been damaged to some extent during the recent series of earthquakes. Fortunately for the penguins, the largest rock falls have occurred on the more exposed parts of the coastline which are least preferred nesting habitat, and mainly at times of the year when few if any birds were ashore. As a result, the overall effect on the penguin population appears to have been minimal with the 2010 and 2011 breeding seasons being largely unaffected. Contrary to media reports, no penguins are known to have been killed or injured in local colonies as a direct result of the earthquakes.

The main penguin colonies in Harris Bay have been closely monitored to see how the earthquakes affected them. This is a relatively sheltered area of rocky coastline backed by bluffs just to the east of Christchurch City. The first and strongest earthquake (magnitude 7.2 on the Richter scale) occurred at night on the 4th September 2010 just prior to the main laying period when at least 50% of the adult birds would have been ashore. It was centred to the west of Christchurch and caused little damage in the Harris Bay area. The colonies were showered with fine debris from the bluffs and slopes above, and there were a few small rock falls. Only one of the 130 nest boxes in the Bay was damaged; it received a direct hit from a large rock. The nest boxes were checked straight after the earthquake and cleared of any debris, and the penguins laid and incubated as if nothing had happened.

During the next six months there were 19 aftershocks in the Christchurch area greater than magnitude 5.0 including the two that devastated the city centre. These were on 26th December 2010 when only a few chicks remained in the colonies, and on 22nd February 2011 when only the late moulters were ashore. These earthquakes had much the same effect in the Harris Bay area as the one in September with the addition of a few more small rock falls. The Godley Head area was closed to the public during some of this period because of the risk of further falls. Despite this it was possible

to check all of the smaller colonies on one or more occasions during the 2010 breeding season, and the largest colony frequently on a semi-regular basis. The key indicators of breeding success were close to long-term averages, which suggest the penguins were unfazed by this ongoing seismic activity.

There were two more large earthquakes (magnitudes 6.3 and 5.9) on 13th June 2011 which were centred under the eastern suburbs of Christchurch. These brought down rock falls from most of the coastal bluffs in the area including numerous localised falls in Harris Bay. In the event 23 nest boxes were buried under slabs of basalt and volcanic debris that had fallen from the bluffs. Fortunately there were no penguins ashore at the time, and their next breeding season was still three months away. Efforts were made to clear the buried nest boxes and by September all but 7 were again available for use. Between September 2011 and January 2012 there were a further 10 earthquakes in the Christchurch area greater than magnitude

5.0. Despite these, the penguins laid earlier and fledged more chicks per pair during the season than the long-term averages.

The numbers of pairs nesting in the Harris Bay nest boxes decreased by 11% during the period of the earthquakes, cf. counts for the 2009 and 2011 seasons. While it is tempting to conclude this reduction was somehow related to the earthquakes there is no direct evidence to support this. Chick production during the 2008 season was poor, and as a result recruitment of new breeding birds was expected to be low in the 2010 and 2011 seasons (i.e. when they would be two and three years old). There was also some evidence that a few pairs were nesting in inaccessible places in new rock piles during the 2011 season and not recorded. Regardless of the reasons, if the medium term positive trend in penguin numbers around Banks Peninsula continues the deficit will quickly be made up.

CHRIS N CHALLIES



Male White-flipped Penguin giving a threatening 'direct look, flipper spread' display. Photo by Bridgit Anderson/WFP Trust

# IDENTIFICATION OF NEW



*Black-billed Gull 1st year immature by John Stewart-Smith.*



*Black-billed Gull adult by John Stewart-Smith.*

The two small gulls native to New Zealand, Red-billed Gull and Black-billed Gull can be difficult at times to tell apart, especially in immature plumages, but there are differences between the species that can be discerned, even at distance, especially if the birds show their non-feathered bits. Some immature birds in certain poses can be very difficult to assign to species even given close views, for example if they are sleeping. The following article is intended to provide some pointers to differences between the species.

## STRUCTURE

The Black-billed Gull is a slimmer bird and has a more pointed rear end with the wings extending further past the tail than the Red-billed Gull, which has a stockier and dumpier shape. Bill shapes are very different, with the Red-billed Gull's being short and fat in comparison to the

longer and more delicate one of the Black-billed Gull. Head shapes are slightly different too with Black-billed gull being more rounded and Red-billed Gull having a shallower sloping forehead with a bit of a point behind the eye.

## ADULT BARE PARTS

Bill colour follows the species' names, mostly, though the Red-billed Gull's beak can darken outside the breeding season. Legs are red in Red-billed Gulls, becoming garishly bright in the breeding season. In Contrast Black-billed Gull legs are red-black becoming blacker in the breeding season. Leg colour is a fast method of telling adults apart in mixed roosting flocks.

## IMMATURE BARE PARTS

Unfortunately these are similar in both species at certain times in their development. Both species

are virtually inseparable from adults by the time they are two years old. Iris colour, which starts dark and slowly turns light grey in both species, and minor differences in the shade of leg colour tend to be the last to change. Bill colour starts all dark and dusky in Red-billed Gull, with the tip darker. The base lightens first, becoming pink. In the Black-billed Gull the bill has a pink base with a dark tip. Structure is the way to tell the species apart. Legs are dull pink in both species, but never like the true red of adult Red-billed Gulls.

## ADULT PLUMAGE

The grey plumage of Black-billed Gulls is a pale pearly version of this colour, whereas that of the Red-billed Gull is a shade or few darker. This can vary according to ambient light conditions, however, but is usually apparent in direct comparison when both species are together.

A major difference between the two species can be seen when the birds fly, as the pattern of black and white on the tips of the upper wings are very different. Black-billed Gulls have a white wedge on the leading edge of the primaries, becoming thicker as it works down from the 'hand' of the wing to the 'finger' tips. There is little black, mostly a thin primary trailing edge. Red-billed Gulls have a lot more black all over the outer wingtip, with a contrasting white 'window' just back from the very tip. Both species show small mirrors along the primaries when the wings are closed as the tips of both species' primaries are white, as if the last few millimetres have been dipped in white paint, so upper wing differences are only apparent with wings open.

Confusingly both species have dark under wing tips, but again the Black-billed Gull has a white leading edge, and the white 'window' of the Red-billed Gull goes straight through this bit of the wing.

## IMMATURE PLUMAGE

Both species moult out of juvenile plumage quickly, just after fledging from late spring to early autumn and this plumage is not dealt with here.

In first year plumage both species can have a few dark spots on the back and upper wings, and this feature cannot be used to tell the species apart. Again structural differences and wingtip patterns on the open wing are the key to telling first year small gulls apart in New Zealand. Black-billed Gulls have the same mostly white wingtip as the adult, though there is more black on the trailing edge and this black line extends up the trailing edge of the wing, almost to the body. On the Red-billed Gull the wingtip is largely black and the white 'window' is much smaller than an adult's, thus giving much less contrast and making the black tip seem larger. Again a black line extends up the trailing edge of the wing, similar to the Black-backed Gull at this age. In fresher first year plumage after the moult out of juvenile plumage a dusky carpal bar can also be seen through the mid part of the wing. This becomes less distinct with feather wear. First year Black-billed Gulls lack this distinct carpal bar. Underwing patterns vary similarly to adult birds, though are darker near the very tip.

# ZEALAND'S SMALL GULLS



*Red-billed Gull 1st year immature by John Stewart-Smith.*



*Red-billed Gull adult by John Stewart-Smith.*

## IN CONCLUSION

When confronted by a small gull in adult plumage check first leg and bill colour if on the deck. Immatures will be more difficult to separate, with bill length and shape and the shape of the bird in general being the best pointers.

In flying birds the species can be rapidly told apart, even at distance, by just looking at the wing tips – a white wedge means Black-billed and a black tip with a window means Red-billed.

NICK ALLEN

## LARGE PELAGIC GATHERING OF SOOTY SHEARWATERS

During the squid season I was on a fishing vessel, about 100 km east of The Snares on the 9th March 2012. Mid-morning I saw a sight I have never seen in 20 years fishing these waters. There were in my estimate at least 150,000 Sooty Shearwaters in huge dense flocks on the water and in flight in an area less than 1 km diameter. They continued this formation for about 2 ½ hours then dispersed quite quickly towards the west (possibly to The Snares). I do not think they were feeding, just sitting on the surface, from what I could see through binoculars, as we were about 1 km from them. The ones in flight appeared to be circulating the ones on the water but often changed from flying to being on the water in large numbers.

PETER FULLERTON



*Upper and lower wings of adult Black-billed Gull. Note white leading edge on both and pink legs of non-breeding birds. Photo by Nick Allen.*



*Upper wing of adult Red-billed Gull. Note black tip with white window, or mirror. Photo by Nick Allen.*



*Upper wing of 1st year immature Red-billed Gull. Note black secondary bar and tip with just small white window. Photo by Nick Allen.*



*Upper wings of 1st year immature (top) and adult (below) Black-billed Gulls. Note black secondary and primary bar on immature's wing, but general lack of black on wingtip – just a little duskiness. Photo by Nick Allen.*

# BIRDING NEW ZEALAND'S THIRD ISLAND

Disembarking at the small wharf in the natural harbour, fishing and other small boats at anchor, the first sound to greet my ears is the liquid gurgling and whistling of Kaka broken by creaking 'kraaks', and many more than one bird was making these sounds. I'm not in a tall forest, however, but the small town of Halfmoon Bay on Stewart Island. This urban environment is the best place to see lots of Kaka on the island, encouraged by some of the 3-400 human residents of the island feeding them, and is just one of the differences between Stewart Island and the mainland to the north.

Stewart Island can be reached either by ferry from Bluff or air from Invercargill. Sea is the way to see birds in Foveaux Strait and the ferry takes only about one hour to make the crossing. Common Diving Petrels are often the most numerous species flying by on whirring wings, then some of the millions of Sooty Shearwaters that nest in the area. Apart from these, albatrosses of many species can be seen and sometimes more exclusively pelagic species such as Mottled Petrel and White-faced Storm Petrels. The ferry doesn't stop for interesting birds however, but then from the plane even large albatrosses would be mere dots.

A small network of roads leads to various bays near Halfmoon Bay, but most of the island is accessible only by foot, boat and in some places light plane. Peak traffic is barely noticeable, including the school run and traffic jams are something of a rarity. It is possible to walk to every road end within an hour, so motorised transport is not a necessity for visitors with a little time on their hands. The walk to Acker's Point at the mouth of Halfmoon Bay in the daytime allows for seawatching with passing albatrosses, especially White-capped and Buller's, and at dusk rafting Little Penguins. Then as it starts to get really dark Sooty Shearwaters perform their aerobatics around the lighthouse before loudly crashing through the scrub to their burrows. Remember to take a torch for the walk back to town as some of the track is through dense scrub that dim light seems to be unable to penetrate. A predator-trapping program in the Acker's Point area and towards town has allowed Weka to be re-introduced to this part of the island, and Southern Tokoeka, the kiwi found in this part of the world is sometimes seen.

Kiwi are still present in reasonable populations on Stewart Island, and can sometimes be seen while still light, especially in summer. The lack of mustelids has allowed Kiwi to survive here in



*Ackers Point at the mouth of Halfmoon Bay.*

these numbers. A popular commercial trip can be taken out of Halfmoon Bay to a nearby isthmus, leaving close to sundown. Kiwi are seen on almost all trips, illuminated by diffuse torchlight, as they forage unconcernedly in the bush or on the beach. Other highlights of the trip are (in the season) long lines of Sooty Shearwaters heading home, and rafting Little Penguins, and sometimes on the way back, often around midnight, ghostly prions and petrels drifting past the boat's lights.

Mason Bay on the western side of the island is another great place to see Kiwi, though you need to be self-contained to stay at the DoC hut there, and have a hut ticket. This is one place where they are sometimes seen while it is light. Their gritty-looking droppings on tracks give away the regular presence of birds, and these are the places to search from dusk and into the dark. It's best to search without a torch if possible, keeping artificial light to a minimum so as not to get lost, as the kiwi will often move away on seeing a light. Listen for the birds moving through the vegetation and snuffling. With ambient starlight I have had a bird move straight past me and been able to watch transfixed as it fed. Mason Bay can be reached by walking in (about four hours on the flat from Freshwater River) or flying onto the beach at low tide. The walking option has the advantages of encounters with Robins in Manuka scrub and Fernbirds in the lip-smackingly-named Chocolate Swamp. Both of these are subspecies endemic to the island. On the beach Southern New Zealand Dotterels can often be found near the mouth of Duck Creek – the stream that flows past the hut.

The highlight of most birders visiting the island these days is a trip (or if you are like me two or more) to Ulva Island, a pest-free island in Paterson Inlet. Water taxis are caught at Golden Bay just 20 minutes walk over the hill from Halfmoon Bay for the short trip over to the island. It is

best to book your taxi the day before, but not an absolute necessity. Arrival is at the picturesque Post Office Bay, where there is often a Saddleback to greet you with its staccato calls. Robins often hop around your feet, Red-fronted Parakeets call as they fly over, and with luck Yellowheads will show you their feeding acrobatics. Saddlebacks, Robins, Yellowheads and Riflemen have been re-introduced and are doing well. Guided walks can be arranged and give a better overview of the island's history and natural history from a knowledgeable local, than is perhaps possible on a self-guided visit. Unfortunately rats re-invade at an average of once a year. Usually these are singletons quickly dealt to by ever-present traps, but last year a more extensive incursion probably caused by one pregnant female led to the need for an island-wide poison drop. Weka were affected by this, so the former common sight of this species feeding and fighting on the beaches is no more, hopefully only temporarily. Off the beaches mollymawks are often flying past in Paterson Inlet and Spotted Shags on the rocks are the darker blue form.

Pelagic trips off Stewart Island are well worthwhile. Most trips go just out past the mouth of Halfmoon Bay and near the Titi Islands there, seeing plenty of albatrosses, shearwaters, some petrels, and sometimes three species of penguins: Little, Yellow-eyed and Fiordland Crested. Subantarctic Skuas can be found on or near the islands. Some full-day boat trips head to the southern part of Stewart Island and these are not to be missed, especially if they have a bird focus or head offshore. Some of the more pelagic species are often seen, such as Cook's and Mottled Petrel and stormies, and from Port Pegasus southwards check the rocks for Antarctic Terns among the more common White-fronteds.

Stewart Island is a must-visit place for nature-lovers and those seeking a bit of laid-back time out from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It is perhaps best avoided by shopaholics, those looking for exciting nightlife or adrenaline junkies. There is one general store, less than a handful of other shops and cafes, one hotel and the Kai Cart (the deservedly famous fish and chip caravan, which serves THE best chowder in New Zealand). If the weather is good there is nothing better than eating al fresco overlooking the harbour with albatrosses threading their way through the gently bobbing boats.

NICK ALLEN

All photos by Nick Allen



*Halfmoon Bay township.*



*Post Office Bay, Ulva Island.*

# ROYAL SPOONBILL WINTER CENSUS 2012

The Royal Spoonbill has become a spectacular and regular addition to the estuary bird life of New Zealand, and breeding colonies are now established throughout the country. OSNZ has been monitoring them since the first colony founded in 1949.

Another nationwide census of the Royal Spoonbill will take place this year in August. There has not been a full census for 12 years. The first census in 1991 recorded 240 birds and numbers increased to 956 by 2000. That year the majority of birds (72%) congregated in the North Island with the remaining 28% seen mainly at Farewell Spit and Lake Ellesmere. The location of breeding populations gives a totally different picture. Breeding colonies started at Okarito on the West Coast, and spread throughout the South Island

east coast from Marlborough to Southland, and there are now a few colonies in the North Island.

Winter is the ideal time for a census. Throughout winter Royal Spoonbills are more easily found on their roosting and feeding grounds away from the breeding grounds. Spoonbills are known to be very mobile and can move very quickly from one area to another, so for it to be successful wherever possible the census will take place on 12th August. RRs have included the Royal Spoonbill Census in the local programmes for each region, so everyone can be involved in this key nationwide event. RRs will email regional results to Peter Schweigman [peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz](mailto:peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz) for collation.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN & MARY THOMPSON  
Census Co-ordinators



Spoonbills in Kaikorai Estuary, Dunedin.  
Photo by Ilke Sohle.

## REVIEW

NEW ZEALAND FAUNA APPLICATION FOR APPLE/  
ANDROID, RYAN GHISI, KIWIPEDIA LTD 2012.  
FREE OF CHARGE

This recently released application offers information on a wide range of New Zealand macrofauna. With a main interest in birds I will concentrate on this class of animals.

The pictorial index is arranged in either alphabetical order or according to whether they are land birds or sea/shore birds, and covers a wide, though by no means complete, range of birds, sometimes grouped taxonomically (as in albatrosses, gulls and terns) and sometimes separately, as in Rifleman and Rock Wren. The information provided covers general biology such as food, habitat, distribution and breeding, sometimes in detail, and including recent findings such as the migration route used by the Bar-tailed Godwit. Traditional Maori stories and lore are provided for some species.

A short sound clip and video clip is provided for most species, with all having a sound announcement of the species' name and an opportunity for the user to record their own pronunciation of the same for playback, should they prefer – in my case the Yorkshire dialect version.

The sound clips of either the song or one type of call are invariably of good quality, although short, and are useful for identification purposes. Background calls suggest many are Australian in origin. The video clips are of good quality, though of very varying usefulness as far as demonstrating the features of the species or group. Many of the videos are from *Meet the Locals* programmes initially aired on TVNZ6. These were well-produced and quite entertaining and I particularly enjoyed seeing footage of the foraging behaviour of a Yellowhead.

Drawbacks mostly involve the use of groups of species. In these cases the species featured in the photo is not captioned, and the sound clip likewise. The video clip is also of only one species, and the species can usually be ascertained from the introduction, though not always, and I am personally unsure of the gull species featured – maybe a Northern Hemisphere species. The Rock Wren sound clip and video feature the American species, a mistake that could have been quickly corrected if the author had consulted a New Zealand birdwatcher likely to be knowledgeable with the species. Other strange claims (e.g. the number of duck species present in New Zealand) could have been corrected by the simple reference to a good field guide. Hopefully these glitches can be sorted in time.

As an easy-to-hand source of information on birds and other New Zealand fauna to browse or quickly research an endemic species this application largely succeeds. As an aid to identification in the field it is not really suitable, though through reference to promotional information on the internet this is not the intended use of the product.

NICK ALLEN

## WHEN A CLAIM TO THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS TERNS SILLY...

On 1st December 2003 Gary Morgan from Invercargill picked up a dead Arctic Tern on Mason Bay. It was banded! What's more, it had been banded as a chick in the Gulf of Bothnia, Sweden, five months before – on 27th June 2003. The distance between the banding and recovery sites is 17,510 km, but the most probable route taken by the bird covers about 25,000 km.

I wrote to the Guinness Book of Records to claim this as a world record. I supplied details and a photograph. They had listed a record of an Arctic Tern which was found in Australia as the record. This one was better. There was no response the first couple of times, but last year an email!

Claim ID: 332008

*Dear Sir, thank you for sending us the details of your recent record attempt for 'Longest flight by a bird'. We are afraid to say that we are unable to accept this as a Guinness World Record.*

*Unfortunately we do not accept records for animal endurance even though, in this case the animal has not been coerced in anyway.*

*We also have the problem that we could only prove that the bird travelled halfway round the world and once this has been achieved the record could never be broken.*

*Guinness World Records has absolute discretion as to which record applications are accepted and our decision is final. As your record application has not been accepted, Guinness World Records is in no way associated with the activity relating to your record proposal and we in no way endorse this activity. If you choose to proceed with this activity then this is will be of your own volition and at your own risk.*

LLOYD ESLER

Despite the risk and lack of official endorsement Lloyd is not giving up, even after a similar reply to further correspondence. Time will tell who has the last word on the farthest band recovery and therefore proven flight length by a bird. ED.



The Swedish-banded Arctic Tern.

Three **Great Spotted Kiwi** were re-introduced into the Nina Valley near Lewis Pass, Canterbury in February. Predator control work by Hurunui College students with support from the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust and Kids Restore New Zealand (an Air New Zealand Environment Trust programme, plus local businesses) has made the area safer for the birds which were supplied from creches at Riccarton Bush and Willowbank Wildlife Reserve in Christchurch, where they were raised as part of BNZ Operation Nest Egg.

**Brown Teal** introduced into the Arthur River area of Fiordland have fledged young for the first time, with an unbanded bird still retaining some down being seen in January. Around 200 North Island Brown Teal have been released in the area.

**Hutton's Shearwaters** at the new colony on Kaikoura Peninsula have bred successfully for the first time with an egg hatching around Christmas Day. In 2010/11 eggs were laid which didn't hatch.

Eight **Kakapo** have been moved to Little Barrier Island, where they will not be, managed in contrast to the rest of the population, spreading the risk of the entire population being wiped out due to being in one small geographical area.

**Saddlebacks** were breeding in November only 10 weeks after being translocated to Motutapu and Rangitoto Islands, with two chicks on each island.

## SHORT REPORTS

In a suspiciously urban environment a **Red-legged Partridge** was found on Roscommon Road, South Auckland on 27/11.

Three **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were found in the suburban Anderson Park, Taradale (near Napier) on 23/9, but were reported by a local to have been there for over a year. They were still present in May. Three whistling ducks probably of this species were also on Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham Island on 3/10. A **Chestnut-breasted Shelduck** was found just north of Miranda (South Auckland) on 27/4. Two **Brown Teal** from the Cape Kidnappers re-introduction were at Te Awanga (Hawke's Bay) on 18/3. No doubt wandering from nearby Kapiti Island two Brown Teal were also at the Otaki Oxidation Ponds (Wellington) on 6/5. The Kaiapoi Ponds (Canterbury) attracted a rather shy drake **Australian White-eyed Duck** on 3/4, staying until 18/4. A pair of **New Zealand Dabchicks** were the first proven to breed in the South Island after a gap of over 60 years when two well-grown young were found at Lake Killarney in Takaka (Golden Bay). Big Lagoon (Southland) held a **Hoary-headed Grebe** on 6-8/5.

A **Gentoo Penguin** was found near Goodwood (Otago) on 23/10. In the moulting season a **Snares Crested Penguin** was reported from Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island on 31/1 and Te Awanga (Hawke's Bay) held two **Erect-crested Penguins** on 5/1, with another on Bushy Beach, Oamaru (Otago) on 13/2. What was possibly a **Tristan Albatross** was seen off the West Coast of the South Island. A **Yellow-nosed Albatross** was reported offshore in Doubtless Bay (Far North) in late September. **Great Shearwaters** were seen about 90 km off the Canterbury Bight (one on 22/11) and in Cook Strait

(one or more on 11/2). A **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** and **Kermadec Petrel** were seen on a pelagic out of Whangaroa (Far North) on 10/1.

A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** was picked up dead in January in the Bay of Plenty, having ingested oil. For the second time in as many years Muriwai again hosted a **Brown Booby**, present from early to mid-March, and another was seen off Rabbit Island (Nelson) on 20/5. Out of the usual range of either species a pink-footed shag, either an immature **King Shag** or a pied phase **Stewart Island Shag** was at Kaikoura (Canterbury) on 23/10.

Two **Little Egrets** were in the coastal wetlands near Napier and Hastings on 4/9 and at least one stayed throughout. The long-staying Mangawhai (Auckland) individual was seen up to mid-November. A **Plumed Egret** was at the wharves of Milford Sound (Fiordland) on 7/2 and was still present in the area towards the end of March.

A **Glossy Ibis** was seen flying over Remuera Road (Auckland City) coming from the direction of the Waitarua Reserve on 4/9. Another was at the regular site of farmland and wetlands just south of Blenheim on 11/9, with two reported from the adjacent Wairau Lagoons from late September to early May at least. One was at Miranda (South Auckland) on 27/9 and another at the Falls Road end of Whangamarino Swamp (Waikato) between 23/11 and 6/1. Two were on the Ohiwa Harbour (Bay of Plenty) between 25/11 and 15/2. Another was at the Manawatu River Mouth on 10/3, and presumably the long-returning individual turned up for its 19th year (or maybe more than one individual is involved) at Bexley Wetland (Christchurch) on 27/3 moving between there and the Travis Wetland after then.

What was possibly a **Papuan Harrier** was seen in the French Pass (Nelson) area on 24/10. The Renwick (Marlborough) **Black Kite** was probably present throughout, being reported a few times by passing birders. A possible **Collared Sparrowhawk** was reported flying over Wellington Zoo on 24/9. A probable **Nankeen Kestrel** was reported by a driver travelling along SH2 near Te Puna just west of Tauranga on 7/9. A more definite sighting was one of a female at Awarua Bay (Southland) on 9/4. Another visited Taiaroa Head (Otago) during summer.

Two closely timed reports of a **crane** in the southern part of the South Island may have been the same bird, with it being seen at Te Anau Downs (Fiordland) on 17/2 and near Lake Moeraki (South Westland) on 19/2. Both were flight views and the bird couldn't be identified to species with certainty. The Ashburton district (Canterbury) is obviously the place to see **Black-tailed Native Hen** in New Zealand, with one reported from Greenstreet on 9/12. The previous record was just down the road at Lake Hood about a decade ago.

The semi-regular site of the Manawatu River Mouth held a **Great Knot** on 1-5/11. Another regular site, the Kaipara Harbour held another, with one being seen at the Waionui Inlet on 11/12 and 15/1. The long-staying **Sanderling** stayed at the Little Waihi/Maketu Estuaries (Bay of Plenty) throughout the period. Two further long-staying birds were on the Kaipara Harbour (Auckland), being reported from Big Sand Island on 26/10-12/11 and Waionui Inlet in late November and 15/1.

Another two were found on the February wader count on Farewell Spit (Golden Bay). Not to be left out there was a further one at Miranda on 13/5. A probable **Baird's Sandpiper** made a fleeting visit to Little Waihi on 7/10. Two possible **Little Stints** were seen on Greenpark Sands (Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury) on 26/12. An **Asiatic Dowitcher** was reported from Miranda on 13/9. Miranda also produced a **Little Whimbrel** on 21/1, with another or the same bird belatedly reported from Mangere on the Manukau Harbour in late February. Miranda also held a **Black-tailed Godwit** on 13/5.

**Grey-tailed Tattlers** were seen at the Ashley Estuary, Canterbury (one on 8/12), the Catlins River Estuary (Otago) on 19/2, Blueskin Bay (Otago) in summer and Mangere (Manukau Harbour) on 23/3. Completing a pair the Ashley Estuary later held a **Wandering Tattler** on 24/1, with another on the Wairarapa Coast at Waimoana Station on 16/1, staying to 15/4 at least, by which time it was in breeding plumage. A well-watched **Common Sandpiper** was a welcome Christmas present for many Auckland birders, showing well at Big Muddy Creek/Nihotupu Dam near Titirangi on the Manukau Harbour from 23/12 to 5/2. Miranda retained its **Marsh Sandpiper** throughout the period, being reported up to 17/4. Awarua Bay (Southland) held a **Terek Sandpiper** on 7/1.

The **Southern New Zealand Dotterel** flock at Cow Island in Awarua Bay has declined recently with 82 in 2010 falling to 69 in 2012. Either there has been increased mortality or the wintering flock usually at this site has split. The February wader count on Farewell Spit turned up a **Lesser Sand Plover** and further south another was at Awarua Bay on 9/4. Its cousin the **Greater Sand Plover** was found at Mangere on 23/3, being seen on the southern shore of the same harbour on 25/4. A **Shore Plover** released with 18 others on Motutapu Island on 19/2 had wandered to Mangere Sewage Ponds on 25/2. The species attempted to breed at Plimmerton (Wellington) with the eggs and adults being removed to Mount Bruce in November. Birds started to come across from Mana Island again in May, with up to 13 being recorded by the end of the month.

**Gull-billed Terns** from the recent invasion continued to be reported with the following being a summary of the records:

- South Auckland—one at Miranda on 2/9 and two from 7/9 to 29/10.
- Manawatu—five were at the Manawatu River Mouth on 14/9 and through to the end of December, with one still present on 6/5.
- Wairarapa—a regular count of the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa turned up five on 15/2.
- Wellington—one was at the small Ohau River Mouth north of Otaki on 21/1.
- Nelson—two on the Waimea Estuary on 17/9 and 20/9, two nearby on the Motueka Estuary and adjacent Moutere Inlet from 18/9 to 10/3 and one on 17/3.
- Canterbury—10 at Greenpark Sands on 4/9, slowly dwindling to one by 19/4. The nearby Motukarara Flats held one on 15/3. Across Lake Ellesmere on Kaitorete Spit two were found on 30/10, and a little to the east up to 15 were reported from Lake Forsyth in early-mid

# PIED SHAG POPULATION REVIEW

Thanks to all those people who have sent in records of Pied Shag colonies. Using these and published information an interesting pattern is starting to develop.

A total of 264 Pied Shag colonies have been recorded. The breeding population is disjunct, with most birds occurring in the upper North Island and central New Zealand (Wellington, Nelson, Marlborough, and Canterbury) with smaller numbers in Southland and Stewart Island (see map). However, data for Southland and the East Cape is limited so breeding could be more widespread in these regions.

Overall the average colony size is small at 18 pairs, with most having fewer than 30 pairs although a few colonies have been as large as 120 pairs. Interestingly over 75% of colonies have been recorded from native vegetation, so although the Pied Shag is known to breed in introduced vegetation (especially pine and macrocarpa), it seems that native vegetation is preferred.

To investigate trends in the population colony counts were lumped into three time bands – pre 1979, 1980-1999 and after 2000. For Northern and Central New Zealand many colonies have multiple counts, but there is insufficient data from Southland and East Cape to make any comparisons. The information collected so far indicates that the population in Northern New Zealand is declining, but is increasing in Central New Zealand (see table). Declines in Northern New Zealand are seen both in total population and the number of breeding colonies, so are likely to be real, but further research is needed.

In order to confirm these initial results it is important to collate as much information as possible – both recent counts but also any historical counts which can be used to make comparisons. So please dig out those old note books and send in any information on Pied Shag colonies. Even presence of a colony with no counts is valuable, as it indicates a colony was still active at a particular time. This information is starting to develop a greater understanding of Pied Shag numbers and will be important in advocating for seabird conservation.

Please send information to P. O. Box 45, Spring Creek, Marlborough 7244, or mike@wmil.co.nz

MIKE BELL



Region	<1979	1980-99	>2000
Northland	854 (40)	530 (34)	302 (24)
Auckland	458 (23)	497 (27)	256 (25)
South Auckland	285 (16)	400 (16)	166 (10)
Bay of Plenty	166 (8)	136 (6)	45 (6)
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>1763 (87)</b>	<b>1563 (83)</b>	<b>769 (65)</b>

Wellington	0 (0)	2 (1)	52 (4)
West Coast	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Nelson/ Marlborough	160 (15)	608 (27)	692 (58)
Canterbury	49 (1)	157 (5)	247 (13)
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>214 (17)</b>	<b>772 (34)</b>	<b>996 (76)</b>

Southland	113 (13)	50 (6)	31 (4)
East Cape	10 (2)	113 (7)	0 (0)
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>123 (15)</b>	<b>163 (13)</b>	<b>31 (4)</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2100 (119)</b>	<b>2498 (130)</b>	<b>1796 (145)</b>
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April. One was on the Avon-Heathcote Estuary (Christchurch) on 14/3.

- Southland – the Invercargill Estuary Walk hosted one on 28/4.

Out of usual range **Little Terns** were reported from Greenpark Sands (Lake Ellesmere) with one present on 9/10 and three at nearby Lower Selwyn Huts on 31/12, one in the Wairau Lagoons on 20/1 and 31/1, two at the Manawatu River Mouth on 20/10, two on the shore of Lake Wairarapa near the Oporua Floodway on 26/11 and another at nearby Onoke Spit on 29/1. **White-winged Black Terns**, away from their usual Canterbury haunts, were at Tiwai Point (Southland) on 18/3 (and maybe the same bird again at The Bluff on 9/4), the Motueka River Bridge (Nelson) between 22/3 and 12/5 and the Wairau Lagoons between 16/4 and 26/5.

The Chatham Island south coast was graced by an **Arctic Tern** on 4/10. Three were on Wakapatu Beach (Southland) on 18/11 and one at Aramoana (Otago) on 29/10. Further north another probable was on Big Sand Island in the Kaipara Harbour on 26/11. **Common Terns** were seen at Maketu (two on 30/10), the adjacent Little Waihi (one on 19/1), the Manawatu River Mouth (one on 14/11 and 18/12), and the Waikanae Estuary, Wellington (one in breeding plumage on 12/4). Southshore Spit (Christchurch) briefly hosted a **Crested Tern** on 23/1.

A probable **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was reported in the Tauranga area on 2/1. The only rare passerine reported was a probable **Dollarbird** reported by a visiting birder at Queenstown (Otago) on 17/1.

Sources: *Birding-NZ email group. Birding NZ internet chat group. What's Up DoC? electronic newsletter, Forest and Bird eNews electronic newsletter.*



Photos: *Leucistic White-faced Heron.*  
Both photos by Jean Hawken

## A LARGE WHITE BIRD

On 27th September 2010 a large all-white bird was seen roosting in the top of mangroves down Motukiore Road near Horeke on the Hokianga Harbour. It was close to a farm gate with the number 393 on it, and the bird looked, in its size, shape and actions, like a White-faced Heron, but it was totally white. A return trip to the area on 24th October produced another sighting of (presumably) the same bird, however a second similar bird was also present, but with white feathers and blotches of grey all over its body! So now there were TWO of them!



On 25th March 2011, some six months since we first sighted these two white birds, we again travelled to the Horeke area. To our surprise, and pleasure, the two white birds were still in the area. This raises a few questions:

Did they hatch in the vicinity?

Were they from the same clutch of eggs?

Were they an adult and a juvenile?

Have they come from another part of New Zealand?  
Or even from Australia?

It has been suggested that they are White-faced Herons with aberrant colouration and we are inclined to agree.

JANET SNELL and CLAIRE BURTT

# OBITUARY ALAN WRIGHT



Alan Wright (aka Arnie, Yogi) died at the beginning of April, aged 84 years, after a life of considerable adventure. Alan was a long-time member of the Society. Born in West Yorkshire, the son of a coal miner, he never lost his North Country burr, though his red Viking beard turned white. Major occupations included the Royal Navy (in submarines because he was short), the New Zealand Lighthouse Service (including Brothers Island) and in the Wildlife Service as ranger in such places as Haast, Te Anau and Taiaroa Head.

In 1966 Alan was appointed to the Wildlife Service of the Department of Internal Affairs at Haast. This appointment placed him a long way from anywhere, though he managed to attract Connie to join the team at about that time.

He moved to Dunedin in 1968 and became the second Wildlife Ranger to be based on the Otago Peninsula, succeeding Stan Sharpe. For the first time as a Wildlife Officer he was in a significant community of people, and he found plenty to fill in any spare time he may have had away from his real work, which was never a 40-hour week. There always seemed to be a juggling act between conflicting requests from the community, and other items on his work programme. The development of a monitoring plan to track albatross growth, and for other activities, at Taiaroa Head was required. Thus 'Plunket Tuesday' was instituted where Arnie was required to be at Taiaroa Head between 0900 and 1200 hours each Tuesday. This weekly engagement was to take priority over all other activities. Arnie's Naval background understood 'an orders of the day type routine' and he maintained a good schedule of reporting what he saw, not to guess, presume, or interpret.

Solving problems, and ensuring everything possible was done to maximise production at Taiaroa Head, became a continuing theme. More than a third of the birds in the colony today have benefitted from many of the specialist techniques developed by Arnie and his successors. Alan and Connie worked out the formula needed to raise an albatross chick and the first they raised returned to breed itself.

Royal Albatrosses are big birds and they bite – quite severely at times, even as chicks. Arnie and Connie raised the first hand-reared chick at Taiaroa Head. In the process of this rearing, 'Junior' became adept at feeding himself straight out of the bucket, which reduced the pain of being nibbled and bitten by that large bill.

In 1972 Chris Robertson and Alan went to the Chatham Islands and became residents of a small rock called the Little Sister, an outlier 12 miles north

of main Chatham. Apart from the two Wildlife Service staff there were 600 pairs of Northern Royal Albatrosses and 300 pairs of mollymawks and sundry seals. The average daily wind speed there is 30 kph, 24 hours a day and they regularly had to endure gales reaching 120-130 kph – not a comfortable place for camping. They spent two six-week spells together with hard rations, cooking on a single burner primus, everything including water for the whole trip having to be landed out of a small boat and hauled up 30 m of cliff. They had virtually no fresh food, bread where the amount of mould cut off each day got increasingly larger, and the ubiquitous Wildlife trail biscuit – the only biscuit that did not soften with dunking... Each day was spent checking round the albatross and mollymawk nests for new eggs and banding birds – arms becoming increasingly sensitive as they expanded to a similar thickness as their thighs, from continual biting by the birds.

In the early 1970's the Otago Peninsula Trust had opened the albatross observatory and wildlife tourism was starting to develop on the Otago Peninsula. A lot more interest was being taken in the Yellow-eyed Penguins. Predator control was becoming increasingly important.

By 1980 a transfer to Te Anau was hoped to reduce the load a little and provide some different challenges. Alan and Connie moved to Te Anau to contribute to the Takahe conservation programme, which was starting to develop skills for chick rearing. In addition Alan was in charge of the Wildlife Park at Te Anau, which was for many years the only place that the public could see Takahe.

One of Arnie's distinctive characteristics was that he always seemed to know what was going on round the country in the Wildlife Service. He was the Facebook and Twitter of the Wildlife Service long before social media became the modern mode of communication. Alan was an integral part of the central underground intelligence service that was part of the glue which held the Service together.

Arnie retired back to Dunedin and the Peninsula soon after the formation of the Department of Conservation in 1988. Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust activity became a major preoccupation during his latter years. But albatrosses remained an enduring interest, and being an Otago Peninsula Trust guide for a time enabled that important social contact which he so enjoyed.

Alan produced a steady list of observations of bird events which were published in 20 published notes in *Notornis* between 1960 and 1980. A full list of Alan's contributions is available through the OSNZ website. They included 'Fairy Prions attacked by Tuatara', 'Mynas on Tiritiri' and 'Welcome Swallows on the Brothers', which tracked some of his spare observational time at lighthouses. His publication record was good solid ornithology: "I saw, I noted, I reported."

The partnership that he and Connie had was unique in the mix of skills and support for each other. That mix of wildlife handling, observational and nursing skills meant that observations could be applied for the betterment of individual birds.

Compiled by BRUCE MCKINLAY on behalf of CHRIS ROBERTSON and JILL HAMEL

# OSNZ NATIONAL WADER CENSUS

This summary covers the June–July 2011, November–December 2011 and January–February 2012 wader counts.

A total of 132,371 waders of 23 species was counted during the June–July 2011 census, a slightly higher number than 2010. There was good national coverage with only the Far North, Gisborne/Wairoa, and Manawatu regions not counted. Numbers of each species were similar to June 2010 except for Bar-tailed Godwits, which were down by about 3,400.

Rarities included: a Grey Plover, a Great Knot, a Marsh Sandpiper and a Terek Sandpiper.

A total of 148,662 waders of 21 species was counted in the Nov–Dec 2011 census, down from 159,111 in 2010. National coverage was very good, with only Rangaunu Harbour in the Far North, Gisborne/Wairoa and the West Coast not counted. The big difference was the number of Bar-tailed Godwits, with the 2011 count down to 88,949 from 2010's 101,459. Godwit numbers have fluctuated widely over the past 10 years and the 2011 count is closer to the 2009 count of 87,590. Rangaunu was not counted, which usually has 2-3,000 Godwits, otherwise, all major Godwit sites were covered. A slightly higher count of Red Knots was obtained this year, and the number of South Island Pied Oystercatchers was just 10 birds less than the 2010 count.

The only rarity this census was a single Marsh Sandpiper.

There was not complete coverage in Jan-Feb 2012 with counts received from Waitemata Harbour, Nelson, Canterbury, West Coast and Southland.

The following tables show the total number of waders for sites with more than 3,000 waders counted during winter and summer censuses. Other tables showing totals for each species are available on the OSNZ website [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

## Sites with >3,000 waders in Jun-Jul 2011

Manukau Harbour	35,843
Kaipara Harbour	27,335
Firth of Thames	18,235
Farewell Spit	9,135
Tasman Bay	6,076
Lake Ellesmere	5,513
Tauranga Harbour	3,816
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	3,549
Kawhia Harbour	3,271
Golden Bay	3,027

## Sites with >3,000 waders in Nov-Dec 2011

Manukau Harbour	31,304
Kaipara Harbour	24,346
Farewell Spit	19,794
Firth of Thames	14,690
Tauranga Harbour	10,319
Tasman Bay	6,797
Golden Bay	4,600
Parengarenga Harbour	4,489
Kawhia Harbour	3,300
Aotea Harbour	3,140
Ohiwa Harbour	3,099
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	3,060

Compiled by ADRIAN RIEGEN



## WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH AND MONITORING ON NEW ZEALAND ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS

A one-day workshop to determine research, monitoring and management needs for those species of petrels and albatrosses breeding in the New Zealand Region will be held in association with the International Albatross and Petrel Conference to be held in Wellington from 13th to 17th August 2012. The workshop will be held at the Te Papa curatorial site, 169 Tory Street (at the corner Tory and Buckle Streets) from 10am to 5pm on Sunday 12th August 2012.

All persons involved with, or with interests concerning, research on and conservation of New Zealand Procellariiformes are welcome. For further information please contact Kerry-Jayne Wilson, email [kerryjayne1@hotmail.com](mailto:kerryjayne1@hotmail.com).

### WANTED

#### Papers on New Zealand Bird Species

All citations, reprint copies or photocopies of papers on, or relating to, any New Zealand bird species that have been published in a scientific journal or general magazine other than *Notornis*. These papers or citations will be made available to all members, and a list of these publications will be published annually in *Notornis*.

Please send to the Secretary, Peter Gaze, P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040 or [gaze@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:gaze@slingshot.co.nz)

## REQUEST FOR SIGHTINGS OF MARKED OYSTERCATCHERS AND WRYBILLS

As part of a wading bird productivity study on the upper reaches of the Rangitata River thirty pairs of South Island Pied Oystercatchers and Wrybills were monitored over the 2011 breeding season. The adult birds and their chicks have been individually marked with alpha-numeric bands, which have been placed on the birds' right tibia and have a letter (A or C) followed by two numbers. The background for the bands is white with the letters and numbers in black. In addition a DoC metal band has been placed on the birds' left tibia.

Any sightings of banded birds with information on the location and dates of the sighting, along with any photographs, would be appreciated and will provide valuable data on the movements, and survivorship of both these wading bird species



*Banded Pied Oystercatcher, by Peter Langlands.*



*Banded Wrybill at Foxton Beach, by Peter Langlands.*

outside of the breeding season. Wrybills banded on the Upper Rangitata River have already been sighted at Foxton Beach and Miranda. Pied Oystercatchers have been recorded from the Nelson Region and the Kaipara Harbour.

Either a telescope with 20X magnification or telephoto lens on a camera (400mm) will assist with the reading of these bands. Please forward sightings to Peter Langlands (email [langlands@xtra.co.nz](mailto:langlands@xtra.co.nz)). All band recoveries will be acknowledged with information on the bird's banding details and will be collated and forwarded to DoC Banding Office.

The alpha-numeric bands have been used instead of colour bands. These bands are relatively new in New Zealand but have been used extensively for bird banding in Europe (with the bands being manufactured in Poland).

PETER LANGLANDS

In Nelson both species of Oystercatchers are being banded with alpha-numeric flags. Variable Oystercatcher chicks are being banded with a two-character flag (black characters on white) with full-grown birds banded with a three-character flag (green characters on white). Pied Oystercatchers are being fitted with flags having black characters on yellow. Please send sightings/photos of these to David Melville (email [david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)).



*Flagged Variable Oystercatcher by Rebecca Bowater FPSNZ.*

## Regional Roundup

### Far North

This is surely the first Regional Roundup to be written beside the Huallaga River at Pumarini in north Peru. So putting aside Sun Bitterns, Fasciated Tiger Herons and Night Monkeys for a while, I will consult my notes on what has been happening in the Far North.

We are delighted to report that one of our members, Anthea Goodwin, has received a Citizens Award by Far North District Council for community services. Anthea has been an active member of the Society for many years and still takes part in shorebird censuses, monitoring and general birding in the region.

As so often happens in our region, we struggle to find a weekend to devote to wader counts when tides, people and boats all fit. Two of us headed up to Parengarenga Harbour over the weekend 24-25th March and despite our northerly latitudes, we found that most of our flocks of Arctic migrants had already departed. We were unable to safely kayak over to Kokota Sandspit because of the wind but we viewed the harbour at low tide from Paua. No species counts were over 300 but many Bar-tailed Godwits, Knot and Turnstones were in breeding plumage so we assumed that they would also be leaving our shores.

As last year we took the opportunity to advertise the Society at Kerikeri's Envirofest on 31st March. Rain for most of the day kept numbers of visitors down but nevertheless people showed an interest.

On 9th March our indoor meeting featured Detlef's presentation on his subantarctic islands trip with Heritage Expeditions. Our April meeting took

place at our northern venue in Mangonui. We had a change from a speaker and instead showed the recently produced comedy film 'The Big Year', about three obsessively devoted birders competing to see the most species in the USA in a year.

On 11th March eight of us went out on another pelagic trip from Whangaroa Harbour, this time for just six hours. Even in the reduced time we recorded 16 tubenose species including White-faced, Wilson's and New Zealand Storm Petrels, Wandering and White-capped Albatrosses, and had an opportunity to compare Cook's, Pycroft's and Black-winged Petrels at reasonable range.

DETLEF DAVIES

### Taranaki

Among the regular attendees at our March meeting were Kara Pranker and Mike Weren from the Lake Rotokare Trust, unusual but not rare visitors to North Taranaki. Kara asked if we would consider resuming five-minute bird counts around the lake, a project members had undertaken some years before. There are anecdotal reports of increasing bird numbers, including three or four Robin territories established where previously there had been only one. Members agreed to do this, but due to the fact some are ageing rapidly and are now audibly challenged the project is on hold until enough competent people can be recruited.

The field trip into Moki forest and the Rerekapa falls had the biggest turnout ever with the Honnor/Gardiner family making up half the numbers. The botanically-minded noted a heavy fruiting of Kaikomako and Maire trees. Some also noted the heavy fruiting of Blackberry and others saw or heard



the usual bush birds including Long-tailed Cuckoo and Robin. Strangely only one Fantail was seen.

Eight Pied Shags have been regularly seen around the Mohakaiti/Awakino Rivers in North Taranaki, so maybe they are expanding their range into our province. The regular Black Stilt turned up again along the Mokau River. We had very few Skua sightings during summer but in early March I counted nine or ten working over flocks of White-fronted Tern close to the beach at Waiongana, the most I have seen at one time.

During the April meeting we learned that the New Plymouth District Council plan to site netball courts close to the Waipu Lagoons had been abandoned, easing our concerns about their encroachment on this remnant wetland. Kay Rodbard and Heather Ward had been touring the North Island visiting birding hotspots including Miranda and Tiritiri Matangi before Heather migrated north for the English summer with Kay heading off a couple of months later.

Taranaki has been enjoying a long dry fine autumn, perhaps to make up for the summer we never had. On one of those lovely days a group of us headed into the Tarata Scenic Reserve just to the east of New Plymouth. The bush area has been badly knocked around by local cattle and goats, but despite this bird numbers were good with many Fantails seen and numerous Silvereyes and Grey Warblers. On reaching a clearing we could hear a bird that we could not identify calling from across the valley. The more intrepid amongst us set off to try and find it. As was to be expected it stopped calling before we could find it, but we were rewarded with an encounter with a large and vocal Robin or maybe two and a Pied Tit was heard. We returned to our compatriots and were organising some lunch when, with a loud raucous screeching, a Falcon flew past overhead and landed in the top of a Rewarewa. It remained there long enough for us to get a good look then flew off. We could hear it calling not long after and it flew past below us twice more; a truly wonderful sight and reward for three hours waiting in the warm sun. Robin and Falcon appear to be first records for us in this reserve.

Mike Tapp, a Community Relations Ranger with DoC spoke to us in May about his experience as media liaison at Tauranga during the clean up after the *Rena* ran aground on Astrolabe Reef. He and twelve other DoC members from New Plymouth were involved in various parts of the cleanup. He was very impressed with the running of the whole operation and the huge number of people involved, and despite a few problems at the start everything was soon under control. Little Penguins were quite resilient and happy to socialise but New Zealand Dotterels had to be kept apart to stop them fighting. Closer to home he reported that another fourteen Blue Ducks had been released into Egmont National Park in April bringing the population to 50-plus birds.

The Indian summer continued into May and five of us ventured into North Taranaki hill country. A meander down a country road with bush on either side was most rewarding with Robin so close and vocal just begging to have their photo taken. Whitehead and Tui were also seen. Barry Hartley and I continued our observations on a grassy knoll while Bill Messenger and Ian Dudding circumnavigated a small man-made lake and were rewarded with a Fernbird. Barry and I made polite conversation with a local with an odd conservation ethic; he never did give us a reason for shooting Harriers. We cruised up and down another couple of gravel roads on the way home and came upon a small dark Falcon in the middle of the road. It flew off into the bush close by then back onto the road where it appeared to be pecking something out of the gravel, before flying down the road and out of sight; a wonderful finale to a lovely autumn day.

PETER FRYER

## Hawke's Bay

Field trips for the year started in February with an outing to an area our group hadn't visited before—the Gallen Lattey Reserve which is located off the Napier to Taupo highway. This is a small area of native bush which has been protected for some years by these families. In March six members spent a weekend at Mahia following on from last year's successful trip there. Once again the Frasers generously gave their time to share their 'patch' with us. Those who went reported an excellent two days of birding.

Brilliant autumn weather made our two bush trips in April very pleasant. The five minute bird count project at Blowhard Bush was very well supported. The bush was full of birdsong, with Tui and Bellbird being particularly vocal. Flocks of Whitehead were also notable. The following weekend our destination was Boundary Stream. Highlights there were a Morepork roosting right above the track, and a little further on a New Zealand Falcon sitting quietly in a tree. Both were causing alarm amongst the Bellbirds. We also observed a Robin at close range. It had caught a rather large weta which it was beating on a log. Rifleman were heard and seen in many locations around the track.

In May we spent a morning at Horseshoe Lake in Central Hawke's Bay. No duck shooting is permitted there so a good number of waterfowl were present. The most notable sight was around 70 New Zealand Scaup; the largest concentration of these birds in our region.

Other sightings reported since the last roundup included two Erect-crested Penguins on the beach at Te Awanga on 5th January. One came ashore and was photographed and reported in the local media, but unfortunately no local OSNZ members got to see it. Orcas had been seen in the bay, so it was suggested this may have been the cause of these birds coming ashore. One headed straight back out to sea. This year wasn't particularly good for waders, but eleven Pacific Golden Plover were seen on 31st March, with two of them looking particularly impressive in full breeding plumage, and most of the others in varying degrees of developing this. The three Plumbed Whistling Ducks were still present at Anderson Park on 17th April. Two Brown Teal were seen in March at Te Awanga Lagoon. Also in that area the Little Egret still appears from time to time and a White Heron has also been seen several times since April. Royal Spoonbill numbers built up over April with 57 at Ahuriri and 12 at Waitangi being the highest count. Arctic Skuas have been seen several times around Waitangi, with six reported on 14th April. Also in April a flock of at least 250 Banded Dotterels were seen in a partially flooded field in Clive.

MARGARET TWYDLE

## Manawatu

The year was kick started with a talk from Janelle Ward, who is a wildlife vet and worked on rehabilitating effected birds following the *Rena* disaster. For those of us here in the region we had seen so much on the television yet only a few had experienced the disaster first hand and this was a powerful insight into the mammoth work of so many that helped to save our vulnerable wildlife. Janelle had been working with other staff at the Massey Wildlife Ward both up in the Bay of Plenty and here locally to rehabilitate Little Penguins. Following this talk some members met to plan activities for the year including fieldtrips, surveys and talks. A number of members attended the Farewell to the Godwits event at Manawatu Estuary and were treated to the presence of a Glossy Ibis. More recently duck shooting has led to the inevitable influx of waterfowl at the estuary but the presence of about 300 White-fronted Terns has been an additional spectacle, in amongst which have been seen Black-fronted Terns and a single Gull-billed Tern.

Following reports of three Nankeen Night Herons present just north of Whanganui a group of six of us headed off from Palmerston North to Upokongaro for a Sunday afternoon drive. Managing to spot a Cattle Egret along Whangaehu Beach Road we felt luck was on our side. We were delighted to get to the café in Upokongaro to find a solitary adult heron roosting in a tree at the back of it, a lifer for all of us and a great treat on what was a lovely Sunday afternoon.

CRAIG STEED

## Wellington

The stark beauty of the Antarctic was magnificently demonstrated by Dominique Filippi in his illustrated talk in April on birds of Terre Adelie. Dominique worked on a study of the behaviour of Emperor Penguins with French colleagues from the Centre d'Etudes Biologiques de Chize (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique). The study has gathered a unique and detailed set of demographic records on Emperor Penguins. This penguin is highly sensitive to variations in the pack ice. Of particular concern is that the penguins will be particularly affected by impending climate change. Dominique described how he developed electronic sensors for the remote monitoring of penguins. He continues his work on the production of scientific instruments through Sextant Technology Ltd.

A number of New Zealand bird species have been rescued from extinction by establishing new populations in environments, especially off-shore islands, which are free of predators. Often these populations were established with small numbers of birds, leading to severe genetic bottlenecks. In May, Kristina Ramshaw from the Allan Wilson Centre, at Victoria University summarised the findings of genetic studies on the Little Spotted Kiwi. Currently there are approximately 1,600 Little Spotted Kiwi with the majority of them on Kapiti Island. There are much smaller populations in protected sites, including Tiritiri Matangi, Zealandia (Karori Sanctuary) and Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds. The population on Kapiti was established in 1912 by the transfer of five birds from the South Island. Subsequently, a new population was established on Long Island with two birds from D'Urville Island and five birds from Kapiti. Using microsatellite markers, the team at Victoria University have demonstrated the very limited genetic diversity of Little Spotted Kiwi on Kapiti. Interestingly, their current data suggests that all the Long Island birds are only derived from Kapiti Island birds, with no evidence of genes from the D'Urville Island birds.

The Long Island population has undergone an extreme bottleneck and may have been established with genes from just two birds. Studies on the Little Spotted Kiwi are continuing to determine whether there are any adverse consequences of such extreme genetic bottlenecks.

GEOFF DE LISLE

## Nelson

A highlight in March was the discovery of breeding New Zealand Dabchicks on Lake Killarney in Takaka, a small pond off the main street of town. Murray Gavin spotted two adult birds with chicks, and for positive ID contacted Chris Petyt and Richard Stocker who confirmed this notable record. The estimated age of the chicks was three weeks. They were still down-covered and not diving. Both adults were kept busy feeding, and as one dived the other popped up, rarely leaving the chicks unattended among the many Mallards present.

Ken George reported two Cattle Egrets just south of Pūponga, the first noted this year. A White-winged Black Tern in non breeding plumage has been present for a few weeks this autumn near the Motueka River Bridge on SH 60. The bird is usually seen mixing with a small flock of Black-fronted Terns feeding over the river.

The Stephens Island Ranger was in contact with one of our members to report large numbers of Harriers circling high over the island. A request for a photo revealed about 150 birds. This phenomenon has been recorded in past autumns, where birds spiral up on thermals before heading to the North Island.

In March Rob Schuckard presented a power point presentation giving more detailed data of the Farewell Spit Gannet Colony study on the feeding/tracking of birds over Golden Bay, Tasman Bay and further into the Sounds. For April there was no guest speaker but we held a show and tell session plus a discussion on future activities. Some excellent bird images from Pauline Samways and Rebecca Bowater were screened, and also a short video of the Takaka Dabchick family.

At May's meeting Sandy Toy gave a presentation entitled 'Petrel Boards and Black Robins: Volunteering on Rangatira Island'. For a team of four the objective of the exercise was to check the breeding success of the Chatham Petrel and also census the Black Robins. All this was done in a three week period of calm sunny weather, an unprecedented event! The board aspect was the attachment to peoples' feet of a circular piece of plywood to prevent breaking through the soil above the petrel burrows which are about 1.5 m apart. Broad-billed Prions, also present, are a constant threat to the Petrels. To deter them from entering Petrel burrows these are protected with a large blue collar of foam like material with an aperture allowing Petrels entry but not the Prions. The Black Robin population appeared to be ok, and despite a rank growth of Muehlenbeckia over the shrubs on the island the species was able to get under this to clearer ground below.

In the absence of Stuart Wood, Gail Quayle has taken on the role of acting Regional Representative. Gail may be known to many members of OSNZ, having been a member herself from the 1970s. Gail is also producing a very informative monthly newsletter.

DON COOPER

## Canterbury

David Melville spoke in February on his work monitoring breeding success in Bar-tailed Godwits. This involves tracking Godwits within New Zealand and on their migration to and from their Arctic breeding grounds, hours of patient observation locating and banding young birds in the vast breeding area and research David is involved in on the birds' feeding grounds in the Yellow Sea. The well publicised problem faced by waders on their stop-over is of major concern but there was positive news on the increasing awareness in Asia of the consequences of continued land reclamation.

The March AGM was followed by a lively Members Night with four well illustrated talks on birds from different areas of the globe – Mongolia, Norfolk Island, The Pantanal in South-west Brazil and Vancouver Island – and an entertaining quiz devised by Nick, which tested members' ability to identify birds well obscured by vegetation, deep shadow and cunning out-of-focus shots.

However, our meeting in April showed Nick is also capable of taking beautiful photographs when he talked us through his research on New Zealand's best bird sites. Three maps with brief written information on the reverse (modelled on SpotX Fishing Maps) will be published for each island covering all the OSNZ regions. Nick hopes to write up these sites in more detail in the future to publish as Bird Site Guides. Although one suspects it was never a terribly onerous task, his dedication to it and his extensive knowledge is impressive.

At the April meeting Kath Varcoe showed photographs she and Elizabeth Burt had taken on the previous weekend's field trip to Akaroa where in glorious autumn weather we explored the town, which resounds to the call of Bellbirds, and witnessed the success of the reintroduction of Tui to the area. A visit to Hinewai produced many more native species. Sunday's four-hour pelagic trip with Tony Muir of Coast up Close was a day to remember. Once outside the harbour the

big birds appeared in graceful majesty with highlights being about 20 Southern Royal Albatrosses, 30-40 White-Capped Albatrosses, 150-200 Sooty Shearwaters and half a dozen or so Little Penguins. Large flocks of Spotted Shags and White-fronted Terns sped purposefully up and down the harbour and a delightful "David Attenborough moment" occurred when a pod of Hector's Dolphins corralled a school of fish, above which sat a circular raft of Sooty Shearwaters.

Local interesting sightings over the past few months include a Grey-tailed Tattler seen at Ashley Estuary in January. In February a Royal Spoonbill colony of about 300 birds near Motukarara contained several nests with eggs and a recent report of a young bird seen begging from adults suggests this species has now bred successfully in this area. Kaiapoi Ponds provided quite a bit of excitement with an Australasian Crested Grebe and three Marsh Crakes making regular appearances and, in April, the arrival of an Australian White-eyed Duck. These are all new species recorded at this site.

ANN SHERLOCK

## Otago

This summer and autumn the weather has been outstanding and our birders have been out and about. Several sightings of fledgling Shining Cuckoos being fed by Grey Warblers suggest it has been a good season for them. Taiaoroa Head was visited by a Nankeen Kestrel, and The Catlins by a Turnstone and Siberian Tattler. A flagged Variable Oystercatcher, banded as an adult at Waimea, Nelson, and spotted in the Otago Harbour was described by Rob Schuckard as "a record of utmost significance". A banded Royal Spoonbill seen at Karitane on 1st April was banded at Blenheim in 1995, making it 17 years old. There is very little information on longevity of this species; the record for European Spoonbill stands at 28.

The Fairy Prion colony on the St Clair cliffs has seen lots of action with near completion of the predator-proof fence, the first returns of chicks banded in the last few years, and the recovery of 12 of 15 geolocators attached to adult birds. These should provide interesting new information when analysed.

A very successful field trip to the Inch Clutha area, lead by Richard Schofield, capitalised on the warmest, driest April ever. Target species were Black-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull and the highlight; 11 early-returning Cattle Egrets.

A full programme of monthly Indoor Meetings has so far covered birding in Texas (142 species in eight days), innovative use of acoustic recording to estimate bird populations, and a project to restore seabirds such as Gannets to coastal Dunedin.

MARY THOMPSON

## Southland

John Taylor gave Southland Field Club and OSNZ members an interesting talk on his results from trapping around Pleasure Bay (the former Tip or Sutton) Lagoon in the New River estuary. We recently secured some funding from the Invercargill Licensing Trust and the Community Trust to purchase a dozen traps, of which six were given for John to use at the lagoon. He was prompted to start the trapping when he came across the headless corpse of a bird near the walking track around the lagoon in 2011. It was identified as a Marsh Crake, a secretive bird that was not known to be present. Since then John has trapped numerous nasties including rats, weasels, stoats, hedgehogs and a rabbit. From the number of ducklings surviving on the lagoon it is obvious John's hard work has paid off and we are hoping the rarer species will benefit from his tireless efforts.

April's speaker was Rose Collen, who gave us an update on the successes and a few failures with captive-bred Shore Plovers that have been released on several islands around New Zealand. I was lucky to see three of these amazing birds that had been released on Centre Island in Foveaux Strait. They had dispersed off the island and were spotted on the coast nearby in 2006. While unsuccessful on this occasion Rose still thinks Centre Island has really good habitat for the birds and is optimistic that it will feature again as an option in the future.

Southland has had a spate of rare birds turning up in the last few months. We were delighted when one of the many Gull-billed Terns visiting New Zealand paid us a visit at Pleasure Bay Lagoon. It picked the right day, as there was a party of photographers visiting the lagoon who were attending a National Photographic Society AGM in Invercargill and two of them happened to also be birders. A Nankeen Kestrel was spotted at Awarua Bay by Matt Jones and Paul Jacques. The last seen in this area was back in 1985. White-winged Black Terns were seen at Tiwai Point and Stirling Point, the latter by Neil Robertson and Shaun Herron, and Pete McClelland spotted a Hoary-headed Grebe while duck shooting at Big Lagoon on the Southland coast. It had survived opening day and was spotted again on the Monday, still in one piece! Other birds of note were a Pectoral Sandpiper (Pleasure Bay lagoon) and a Lesser Sand Plover at South Awarua Bay.

PHIL RHODES

