

Southern *Bird*

No. 49 March 2012 • ISSN 1175-1916

The Magazine of the Ornithological
Society of New Zealand



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RENA WILDLIFE UPDATE

AOC 2011



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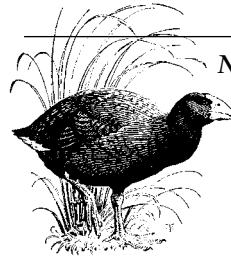
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QUOTATION

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All interwoven and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls...

The Lark Ascending by George Meredith (1828-1909)

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COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover: Kea

Back Cover: Morepork

Both photos by Corey Mosen (see his Kea article page 12)

Publisher

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.

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ISSN 1175-1916 (Print) ISSN 1176-2802 (Online)

We welcome advertising enquiries. Free classified ads are available to members at the editor's discretion.

Articles for inclusion in *Southern Bird* are welcome in any form, though electronic is preferred. Material should be related to birds, birdwatchers, or ornithologists in the New Zealand and Pacific region, and can include news on birds, members, activities and bird study, literature/product reviews, letters to the editor, birdwatching sites, and identification. Illustrations are especially welcome, though they must be sharp. Copy deadlines are 10th February, May and August, and 1st November. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

CONFERENCE WEEKEND

The Bay of Plenty Region are well advanced with the planning for the conference weekend, and the registration papers were circulated some time ago. I urge you to register at your earliest opportunity as that simplifies the planning process for the organisers. I am aware that two very interesting scientific days are being arranged and there is a wide selection of field trips for those able to participate.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

As I have mentioned in the past the Society is dependent on having a network of regional representatives to arrange activities at local level. We are blessed in having such a good team in the organisation.

Council recently re-appointed the bulk of the existing regional representatives to continue in their current positions. We have however been notified of several changes of representatives appointed by their regions.

In Northland David Crockett has been replaced by Janet Snell and we welcome her to that position. David has been regional representative for that region for many years, although in recent times he has been filling in whenever there has been a gap. I have no doubt that David will still be involved in the local area and will provide assistance where necessary.

In Hawke's Bay Helen Andrews has been replaced by Jim Hamilton. Helen has done a wonderful job at retaining interest in that area where there is relatively low membership but a core group of key people. Jim has been closely involved with the region for many years and is one of those key members, and he will be able to continue Helen's excellent efforts.

Ian Armitage has now retired as RR for the Wellington Region and has been replaced by Susan Waugh. Ian has very capably led the large and active group in Wellington for many years but is now becoming more involved on overseas contracts and is no longer able to put the work into regional issues. Susan will be well known from her work on seabirds and in more recent times through her Forest & Bird activities. She now works at The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

As advised regional representatives organise Society activities at the local level, but they are always looking for assistance and I urge members to provide support wherever possible. The organisation as a whole relies on voluntary effort, and the more that load can be spread the easier it is on each individual.

NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING

The November meeting of Council was hosted by the Melville family at their home in Dovedale near Nelson. The generosity of the Melvilles ensures that the cost of holding the meeting is minimised and it is located in very pleasant rural surroundings.

Following the meeting a circuitous route was followed back to the airport which enabled some field work to be undertaken, allowing some close shoreline views of Banded Rails.

Among the matters discussed were the following topics:

- Council moved to congratulate the Department of Conservation on becoming a signatory to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership. Council offered the services of the Society to the Department to assist it in fulfilling its obligations under that treaty.
- Council agreed that the bulk of Society business would be extracted from *Southern Bird* and placed

directly on the new website. This would clear the way for more bird-related articles in that magazine.

- Council also acknowledged the work that Roger Sharp had undertaken in providing assistance to the new membership secretary and in setting up the new membership database.
- Council noted the progress being made by Colin Miskelly with his New Zealand Birds Online project. Council confirmed its commitment to being involved in a partnership with Te Papa on this project.
- Council discussed the situation regarding the scientific committee and resolved that David Melville take over the chair of that committee and ensure that its tasks were undertaken. Ralph Powlesland was also appointed to fill a vacancy on the committee.

NOTORNIS

The Council of the Ornithological Society is committed to *Notornis* as an important resource for bird study in New Zealand and the South Pacific Region and a repository for ornithological investigations. As part of this we have recently updated the *Notornis* website to allow for improved searching. We have also relaxed the access arrangements for non-members so that they have free access 12 months after publication. For the future we are *actively* looking to develop:

- An on-line early system whereby final versions of individual papers are published online as they are approved by the editor;
- More frequent use of special or specific topic issues of *Notornis*;
- Registering *Notornis* with the Institute for Scientific Information to improve its citation profile

However, to achieve the goals it is necessary for members to contribute articles and research papers. I am aware that there are all manner of interesting activities being undertaken by members that are currently not being published, which means that over time that information will be lost.

Council is well aware that the late publication of issues over recent years has caused some uncertainty and loss of confidence by contributors. However Jim Briskie has completed a marvellous effort into now being virtually back on schedule. Council has decided that to assist Jim we would allow him to combine issues, which reduces the amount of work involved and will speed the catch-up process. The first combined issue is currently at the printers which will combine the final two sections for 2011 as Volume 58, Issues 3 and 4.

It is also intended to combine the first two sections for 2012 as Volume 59, Issues 1 and 2 and this will be on time in June this year.

Council, in making this decision, is mindful of retaining the number of pages at a similar level to previous years. Council, as part of its review process to reduce costs, will consider the option of combining further issues in the future.

Another more contentious issue that is being considered is the combining of the refereed section of *Notornis* with a portion which would replace *Southern Bird* all in the one publication. An example of the type of publication is *British Birds*. That decision will be subject to much further discussion but I would be interested in any thoughts that members may have over this or other issues related to our publications. They are a key part of communication with most members and therefore form a very important role.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

OSNZ CONFERENCE 2012

This will be held at the Bureta Park Motor Inn, Vale Street, Tauranga over Queen's Birthday weekend, 2nd to 4th June.

Two days will be largely devoted to scientific presentations; Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd June. A choice of interactive workshops designed to improve your ability to study and enjoy birds will be presented on Sunday morning.

An informal dinner will be available on the Saturday night at Zagger's Café, with the Conference dinner on Sunday at Bureta Park.

There will be a national preview of 'The Godwit Series' by Tauranga artist Katharine Steeds.

Four field trip options are to be offered on Monday 4th June:

- Boat trip to Tuhua/Mayor Island (Brown Teal and Orange-fronted Parakeet amongst other species on this predator-free island)
- Rotorua Lakes waterbirds and Wingspan Birds of Prey Centre
- Otanewainuku Forest and Maketu/Little Waihi estuaries (bush, shore and wetland birds)
- Athenree Wetland and Chudleigh Memorial Bird Sculpture Trail, Katikati

Registration is available online via the OSNZ website www.osnz.org.nz, or a registration form can be downloaded from the same website. For enquiries please contact conference@osnz.org.nz

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

NEW MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

Since September our new membership database is part of the Society's website. This means you can now pay your subscription directly using the very secure Paypal system, and at the same time check and update your membership details. This will save our volunteers from having to process cheques and make manual updates of the information!

In October, all members with email addresses in the Society records were sent a message with their usernames and passwords. If you haven't received this message and wish to add your email address to the system, then please contact our membership secretary (membership@osnz.org.nz). If you have any problems or come across something that's not working then please let us know by emailing support@osnz.org.nz.

COLOUR BANDED GODWITS AND KNOTS

All the answers in one handy report (well, almost).

Since 2004 OSNZ members have been scrutinising flocks of waders around the country for colour-banded birds. Now the fruits of your labours are summarised in a new report from DoC.

Movements of Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots within New Zealand
By P.F. Battley, R. Schuckard and D.S. Melville
Science for Conservation 315. 56 p.

This study of the movements of two Arctic-breeding waders (Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica baueri*, and Red Knot, *Calidris canutus rogersi*) was commissioned in response to (A) a lack of knowledge of how individual birds use networks of sites around New Zealand, and (B) the threat of avian influenza viruses, as migrating waders are potential vectors of these pathogens.

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand ran a colour-banding programme to study the movements of these waders in New Zealand from 2004 to 2008. A total of 770 Bar-tailed Godwits and 345 Red Knots were colour-banded around the country, and OSNZ members and other observers made over 9,500 sightings of 721 Godwits and over 1,500 sightings of 275 Knots during the project. Most re-sightings were from the capture site, but movements of up to 1,185 km (one way) were documented.

On average, young birds of both species were more mobile than adults; Knots were generally more mobile than Godwits. Some juvenile or immature Godwits wandered widely around New Zealand and apparently settled at long-term 'wintering' locations during these explorations. Small numbers of Godwits were recorded making stopovers at northern sites upon arrival from migration before moving on to their eventual destination.

Overall, it is clear that non-breeding Knots use an extensive network of sites around New Zealand and probably move frequently between them. Knots banded in the Firth of Thames were recorded from Parengarenga Harbour in the north of the North Island down to Tasman Bay in the northern South Island, but it is not clear how regular these long-distance movements are. Godwits, in contrast, are much more likely to remain at one site or intertidal system and not venture far away when present in New Zealand during their non-breeding season.

Download from: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/sfc315.pdf>

This is NOT the end of the story – or your involvement! We now have a good population of marked birds and the focus has moved to studying survival – all the more important in view of the rapid pace of habitat loss in the Yellow Sea. Please report ALL sightings of colour-banded birds to Phil Battley (North Island) or Rob Schuckard (South Island). The band reporting form is downloadable from: <http://osnz.org.nz/arctic-wader-colour-banding>

DAVID MELVILLE

BLACK FRONTED TERNS IN A DIDYMO-INFESTED AREA

In early January 2012 we visited Lake Heron Station in Canterbury and had the opportunity to observe and photograph some of the remaining Black-fronted Terns which had bred on the braided riverbed of the Lake Stream, which flows from Lake Heron into the Rakaia River.

At our particular point of observation, there were eight adult birds and four juveniles. The latter were competent fliers and presumably partially feeding themselves, but at times they would return to nest and adopt begging postures to be fed.

The Lake Stream is infested with didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*). We wondered about the effect this was having on insect and aquatic life and hence the birds' diet. The terns appeared to be attracted to areas of infestation along the edge for fishing with obvious success.

It is known that Black-fronted Terns also forage on land for non-vertebrate animals. On the day of our sightings Mr Philip Todhunter, the station owner, saw a tern extracting a worm from the ground.

A photograph taken by us shows an adult tern with a skink in its bill. This is probably not a major part of their food source, but demonstrates the versatility of their diet.

PHIL and VIOLA PALMER



Black-fronted Tern with skink. Caption Black-fronted Tern with skink

AOC 2011

The 2011 Australasian Ornithological Conference in Cairns was extremely well-timed and well-situated from my perspective, with the schedule offering a much-needed break before the final crunch month of my PhD at Massey University, and the location offering a nice tropical respite from a Palmerston North September. The travel grant I received from OSNZ to attend the conference was particularly welcome, as I faced the perennial challenge of the PhD student: needing to disseminate my research findings to an international audience, just when my project's financial support was becoming a quaint memory. The meeting was also a great opportunity to connect with the cross-Tasman contingent of the very collaborative shorebird research community, and to catch up with New Zealand-based colleagues whom I see far too infrequently.

Phil Battley and I arrived in Cairns mid-day on Wednesday, September 28th, giving us several hours to orient ourselves and begin the implementation of our focused 'non-conference' agenda before the meeting's social kick-off in the evening. Because I had last visited Australia in 1995 (tragically, just months before I became a bird-watcher!), even the city streets of Cairns were an exciting wildlife experience, and I had racked up 11 life-birds before we reluctantly headed over to James Cook University. Highlights included White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Mistletobird, and a pair of very friendly Double-eyed



Double-eyed Fig-parrot in Cairns. Photo by Phil Battley.

Fig-parrots. In retrospect, I suppose meeting a bunch of fascinating people over beers and finger food was a highlight as well.

Although it cut dramatically into our birding and whisky-drinking, the conference itself was great, featuring three days of concurrent sessions on a wide range of academic and conservation topics. I spent Thursday in the

seabird symposia, which naturally leaned toward recent developments in tracking methodologies and revelations arising from them, as well as responses to widespread changes in sea temperatures. This opening day segued into the conference banquet, which was enlivened by a dose of aboriginal culture and some interactive musical shenanigans (I'm not at all sure the guy who went up on stage will remember it quite as clearly as the rest of us). On Friday morning, I participated in the migration symposium, chaired by Phil, and then stayed in the small room after morning tea for a great series of talks on the responses of arid-zone birds to climate change. On Saturday morning, I was torn and thus split my time between fairy-wren breeding systems and shorebird conservation, and then settled in for avian diseases after lunch. This session concluded with Josie Galbraith's very entertaining talk on introduced Eastern Rosellas in New Zealand.



Yellow-bellied Sunbird on its nest at James Cook University. Photo by Phil Battley.

I have attended a number of bird conferences internationally, and I think this one was notable for its welcoming and congenial atmosphere, its smooth operation, and the very high quality of the research presented by students. I was particularly impressed with the work on Australian fairy-wrens (associated with Cornell University and the Max Planck Institute) and on coping strategies of birds in the Kalahari Desert (from Phil Hockey's lab at the University of Cape Town). However, the undoubted high point for me, and many others I spoke to, was John Endler's Friday morning plenary on the Great Bowerbird's amazing manipulation of colour and perspective to attract potential mates. This actually leads me to my only real criticism of the conference: I felt that the half-hour time slots given to the three plenary speakers were too short for proper development of some fascinating topics, and the lack of a post-plenary break meant speakers and listeners were rushing to switch rooms afterward. But if that's my biggest complaint in three days the organisers did a great job.

For all the academic greatness on display, the star of the show was really Cairns itself, with fantastic weather and great local wildlife viewing. Just on the university campus during lunch breaks, we discovered two different Yellow-bellied Sunbird nests, watched flocks of fly-catching Rainbow Bee-eaters, and spotted a languid 1.5-metre goanna strolling around the dining area. Minutes from the university were a number of great bird-watching spots such as the Cattana Wetlands, Redden Beach, and The Esplanade, and each evening the sky over the city was filled with hundreds of huge flying foxes streaming out from local roosts. Outside of Cairns, it was only a short drive uphill to reach fantastic rainforest habitat (although it was unusually dry this year) and the Mareeba Tablelands. Phil and I, along with Darryl Jones from Griffith University, had the pleasure of staying in a friend's house up in the bush above Cairns, and this made for some amazing morning/evening birding, as well as after-dark spotlighting for nocturnal birds and mammals. These efforts got our marsupial list up to eight species (but not, alas, any gliders) and brought a lucky discovery of a Large-tailed Nightjar on a two-egg nest. All told, our enthusiastic team compiled 142 bird species (including 92 life-birds for me), which I thought was rather good for less than four days of opportunistic, part-time birding. My only true regret was the complete lack of near-fatal encounters with ill-mannered Southern Cassowaries or any of the world's most poisonous snakes; perhaps next time.

JESSE CONKLIN

The biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) was held in Cairns, far north Queensland, from 28th September to 1st October 2011. This event has been jointly run by Birds Australia and the OSNZ since the 1990s, and was this year co-sponsored by James Cook University (JCU), Cairns. The organisers, Brad Congdon and Leanne Shillitoe, brought together more than 160 delegates from five countries to share 109 papers and posters at the event.

The AOC was the first conference I had ever attended, having started my Master's degree this year, and I was delighted at the prospect of meeting so many like-minded birdy folks. I have to admit the promise of an escape from September Dunedin dreariness to tropical Australia and the Great Barrier Reef was a drawcard as well. So when the OSNZ offered me a travel grant to attend, I jumped at the chance.

I headed to Dunedin airport in the late afternoon through a raging southerly wind, carrying only a small daypack containing t-shirts, shorts, jandals and togs. When I arrived in Cairns, it was sunny and 28°C! I arrived a day early, giving me time to deal with jet lag before the pre-conference meet-and-greet. I checked into my hostel and went for a short jog along The Esplanade, among numerous unidentified waders, tons of Mynas and some extremely noisy

Rainbow Lorikeets. During the whole time at the AOC, I was repeatedly told of the amazing wader diversity along The Esplanade, but as I had no book and absolutely no experience with Australian birds I was hopeless at identifying anything.

On the evening of 28th September we headed out on the bus past fields of sugarcane to the James Cook University campus for the pre-conference meet-and-greet. As I only knew one other person at the conference, there was much meeting and greeting to be done. Luckily the bar was open and everyone was very friendly. The group seemed to be a good mix of researchers, writers, government lobbyists and hobby-birders, hailing from as far away as South Africa and South America.

29th September was the official start of the conference, and the bus picked us up at 7 am. Bleary-eyed from the previous evening's indulgence, we packed out past the sugarcane again to JCU. We had a welcome address from

the local aboriginal tribe, followed by the first plenary speaker (Dr. Carla Catterall), speaking about "the importance of birds in Australian ecosystems".

After that, in one of the two lecture theatres there were talks about birds in agricultural and urban landscapes. The seabird symposia, care of the Australasian Seabird Group (ASG), dominated the day in the second lecture theatre, with speakers addressing foraging ecology and conservation issues, as well as seabird responses to climate change. The Otago seabird contingent (Scott Flemming and I) gave our talks today. I found the seabird talks very informative and well-presented. Some Metallic Starlings were spotted outside the lecture theatre after lunch.

The last session of the day featured a symposium entitled 'The Secret Life of Rattites'. The role of the Southern Cassowary in seed dispersal was discussed, and then Andrew Digby from Victoria University shared some brilliant Kiwi video footage.

Between the afternoon session and the evening dinner, I had enough time for a short jog past the ferry terminal. While running past the entrance to the naval base, I was attacked by a squealing pair of Masked Lapwings. This was particularly distressing as I was running by the side of the motorway and I knew I had to return via the same route. On the way back the birds made a few more passes, but I sped up and they failed to make contact. They did get my heart racing, though.

Dinner was held at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, near JCU. Brilliant didgeridoo performances and some aboriginal dancing were highlights of the evening.

The second day started with a plenary address from Professor John A. Endler (Deakin University), who kept the whole audience rapt with his description of Great Bowerbirds and their use of optical illusions involving colour and forced perspective to impress potential mates at their bower. This talk was definitely an overall conference highlight for me.

The seabird room was taken over by the wader folks, and we heard about Godwits and long-distance migration tracking, including a few tales about the famous E7. Then the South African contingent stepped in, speaking on climate change and arid-zone birds. After lunch, I headed over to Peter Dann's symposium on long-term monitoring of partial migrants, and a few talks about ecology and movement.

Saturday morning was full of doom and gloom for shorebirds in the Yellow Sea. Industrialisation and associated reclamation of the mudflats near Yalu Jiang are threatening many species of shorebird that depend on this area as a refuelling stop during migration.

In the afternoon, Nicholas Carlisle announced the student awards. Travel awards from the ASG were granted to Maggie Watson (CSU), Scott Flemming (Otago) and Kat Manno (Otago). Travel awards from Birds Australia were given to Tegan Douglas (Curtin) and Tracey Moore (Murdoch). The poster prizes went to Heather Gibbs (Deakin), Jessica Dickie (JCU) and Maggie Watson (CSU). The Oral Paper awards were distributed as follows: Highly Commended Andrew Digby (Victoria), Scott Flemming (Otago) and Nick Murray (Queensland); 3rd prize went to Yuna Kim (Macquarie); 2nd prize went to Dean Portelli (UNSW); and 1st prize (Ian Rowley Award) went to Douglas Barron (WSU).

This conference was extremely well-organised and I had the opportunity to meet some very enthusiastic and dedicated bird researchers. Now it's back to the woodburner for me, as another southerly passes through Dunedin. The next AOC will be held in Auckland in 2013.

KAT MANNO

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

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

If you have misplaced your renewal form, a blank version is now available online at www.osnz.org.nz/join.htm, or otherwise please contact the Membership Secretary at PO Box 35150, Naenae, Lower Hutt 5041.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Nicola Brady (Auckland); Kerry Charles (Wellington); Amanda Greer (Canterbury); Rhonwyn Hailstone (Auckland); Joy Houghting (Waikato); Thomas Knight (Auckland); Peter Ladd (Northland); Michelle Lewis (Waikato); Colin Lunt (Auckland); Karen Opie (South Auckland); Cynthia Roberts (Waikato); Patrick Stewart (South Auckland); Trish Wells (Auckland).

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

Maurice Alley; Neil Andrews; William Cook; David Crockett; Jack Davidson; Geoffrey De Lisle; Graham Don; Enviro Research Ltd; Chris Foreman; Florence Gaud; Murray Gavin; Otto Gruebi; Jillian Hanna; Peter Howden; Charles Hufflett; Susie Lindauer; Marion MacBeth; Frank Minehan; Caroline Parker; Marianne Power; Lorna Russell; Paul Sagar; Emil Schmieg; Peter Schweigman; David Seay; Heather Smithers; Joy Soper; Barbara White; Keith Woodley.

NOTORNIS AND SOUTHERN BIRD ONLINE

ALL ISSUES OF NOTORNIS AND SOUTHERN BIRD ARE NOW ONLINE!



VISIT <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>
OR ACCESS VIA THE OSNZ WEBSITE;
<http://osnz.org.nz/>

NOTICE OF MOTIONS AND COUNCIL NOMINATIONS

Two motions have been received for consideration at the 2012 AGM:

- That a new category of membership be added to Section 5.2 of the Constitution as follows: Associate Member, who shall be entitled, on payment of a subscription at a rate fixed from time to time by the Society, to full rights of Ordinary Membership except that they will not receive printed copies of the Journal of the Society.
- That the annual subscription for this class of membership be set at \$49.

Both motions were proposed by Simon Fordham and seconded by Kevin Hayes.

David Lawrie has been nominated for another three year term as President and similarly Bruce McKinlay as Vice-President and Paul Garner-Richards as Treasurer. Ian Armitage has been nominated for one of the two vacant Council positions. As no other nominations were received by 28th February there will be no election and it can be assumed that these four will be appointed to Council for a three-year term. This will leave one vacancy on Council to which someone may be co-opted.

PETER GAZE, Secretary

Ian Armitage

Although Ian has maintained an interest in birds for much of his life he only joined the OSNZ in 1999. Ian became a life member of the society in 2004/05 and he was elected as the Regional Representative for Wellington Region for six years between 2006 and 2011. During that time he led the organisation of two national conferences/AGMs (2006 and 2011) hosted by the Wellington Region and led the operational arrangements for a two-year Wellington Harbour bird survey. Ian's professional background is forestry and for the last 20 years he has focused on the implementation of a range of forest development programmes in Asia, including in forest conservation topics.



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 2011.

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.

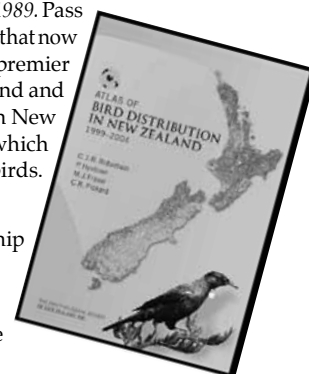
If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of the region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2013 year.

FREE ATLAS FOR NEW MEMBERS!

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

For details of how to join the OSNZ:

- Visit the Society's website www.osnz.org.nz and download a membership form.
- Contact the Society's Membership Secretary.
- Contact your local regional representative – contact details are on the inside back cover of this issue of *Southern Bird*.



BEACH PATROL SCHEME PRELIMINARY REPORT 2010

This report is based on 315 cards received as at 31st December 2011 (compared to 385 in 2009, 381 in 2008 and 403 in 2007). In 2010 3,210 km were patrolled (4,470km in 2009, 2,524km in 2008 and 2,307 in 2007). Dead seabirds found in 2010 totalled 3,266 (4,763 in 2009, 3,906 in 2008, 3,786 in 2007 and 3,117 in 2006). Much of the distance covered was done from a vehicle travelling frequently to and from a wind farm site on Poutu Beach north of the Kaipara Harbour entrance.

The region with the highest number of birds per kilometre was Auckland East with 2.7/km. No patrols were performed in five districts: Bay of Plenty, Fiordland, Offshore Islands, Wairarapa and East Coast North Island. The average recovery rate for the whole country was around 1.02 birds/km.

BIRDS RECOVERED IN 2010

(the number in brackets indicates the 2009 figure):

Feral Chicken 3 (1); Common Pheasant 1 (0); Wild Turkey 0 (4); Black Swan 8 (12); Greylag Goose 7 (4); Canada Goose 7 (0); Paradise Shelduck 9 (4); Mallard 34 (8); domestic duck 0 (1); Grey Duck 1 (0); Fiordland Crested Penguin 4 (1); Yellow-eyed Penguin 4 (5); Little Penguin 410 (420); Little Penguin (white-flipped form) 19 (5); Wandering Albatross 6 (5); royal albatross 5 (2); yellow-nosed albatross 1 (0); Grey-headed Albatross 8 (8); Black-browed/Campbell Albatross 5 (1); Buller's Albatross 16 (27); White-capped Albatross 40 (29); Salvin's Albatross 4 (2); *Thalassarche* sp. 10 (16); Light-mantled Sooty Albatross 2 (3); Southern Giant Petrel 8 (17); Northern Giant Petrel 6 (7); giant petrel sp. 6 (7); Antarctic Fulmar 3 (59); Cape Petrel 36 (41); Grey-faced Petrel 13 (17); White-headed Petrel 7 (33); Mottled Petrel 44 (27); White-naped Petrel 0 (1); Black-winged Petrel 2 (2); Cook's Petrel 11 (19); Pycroft's Petrel 1 (0); Blue Petrel 6 (9); Broad-billed Prion 43 (47); Salvin's Prion 3 (3); Antarctic Prion 7 (4); Thin-billed Prion 22 (14); Fairy Prion 226 (192); Fulmar Prion 0 (2); prion sp. 109 (166); White-chinned Petrel 2 (6); Westland Petrel 1 (0); Black Petrel 2 (1); Grey Petrel 0 (1); Wedge-tailed Shearwater 1 (1); Buller's Shearwater 456 (107); Flesh-footed Shearwater 24 (22); Sooty Shearwater 417 (1,983); Short-tailed Shearwater 116 (157); Fluttering Shearwater 402 (250); Hutton's Shearwater 127 (59); Little Shearwater 12 (14); Grey-backed Storm Petrel 1 (0); White-faced Storm Petrel 19 (6); Black-bellied Storm Petrel 1 (0); storm petrel sp. 0 (1); Common Diving Petrel 111 (86); shearwater/petrel sp. 25 (21); tropicbird sp. 0 (1); Australasian Gannet 213 (429); Little Shag 1 (3); Black Shag 4 (6); Pied Shag 25 (32); Little Black Shag 1 (1); Stewart Island Shag 5 (9); Auckland Island Shag 0 (1); Spotted Shag 70 (47); White-faced Heron 2 (1); Royal Spoonbill 1 (2); Australasian Harrier 4 (4); Banded Rail 0 (1); Pukeko 5 (2); Bar-tailed Godwit 1 (0); Variable Oystercatcher 2 (5); South Island Pied Oystercatcher 5 (1); Banded Dotterel 0 (2); Spur-winged Plover 1 (1); Subantarctic Skua 4 (0); Southern Black-backed Gull 114 (185); Red-billed Gull 21 (33); Black-billed Gull 8 (8); gull sp. 1 (0); Sooty Tern 0 (1); Caspian Tern 1 (8); White-fronted Tern 20 (34); Arctic Tern 0 (1); Rock Pigeon 2 (5); New Zealand Pigeon 0 (2); Kaka 0 (1); Shining Cuckoo 0 (1); Long-tailed Cuckoo 1 (0); New Zealand Kingfisher 0 (1); Tui 1 (1); Australian Magpie 9 (0); Silvereye 1 (0); Eurasian Blackbird 1 (4); Song Thrush 4 (0); Common Starling 1 (0); Common Myna 0 (1); House Sparrow 1 (0); European Goldfinch 2 (0); Yellowhammer 1 (0); unidentified bird sp. 3 (3).

2010 BANDED BIRDS

In 2010 12 banded birds were noted on beach patrol returns:

- **Red-billed Gull** E182681 banded Kaikoura 5/12/1998, found Kaikoura December 2010.
- **Northern Giant Petrel** 131 86474 banded Macquarie Island 31/1/96, found Te Waewae Bay, Southland 7/12/10.
- **Hutton's Shearwater** X1260 banded Seaward Kaikoura Range 5/12/97, found Kaikoura 15/10/10.
- **Hutton's Shearwater** X12384 banded Kaikoura Ranges 24/10/87, found 90 Mile Beach 28/11/10.
- **Fluttering Shearwater** X8928 banded Long Island, Queen Charlotte Sound 2/2/83, found Kaikoura 17/10/10.
- **Australasian Gannet** M52246 banded White Island 22/01/1992, found Pegasus Bay 1/2/10.
- **Australasian Gannet** M74921 banded Cape Kidnappers 13/09/2001, found Kaikoura 8/2/10.
- **Australasian Gannet** M043677 banded Muriwai 7/12/86, found Opunake, Taranaki 24/11/10.
- **Little (White-flipped) Penguin** P15176 banded Christchurch 6/10/2005, found Kaikoura Feb 2010.

- **Little (White-flipped) Penguin** P41682 banded Akaroa 18/01/2009, found Kaikoura Feb 2010.
- **Yellow-eyed Penguin** J19444 banded Otago Peninsula 10/2/10, found Titahi Bay 1/4/10.
- **Campbell Black-browed Albatross** O23668 banded Campbell Island 04/04/1980, found Dargaville Beach 26/3/10.

Cause of death was noted for several birds. These were Red-billed Gulls, Southern Black-backed Gulls, a Pied Shag and a Pied Oystercatcher which had been shot, and 15 Mallards collected from the Fortrose Estuary which were victims of the duck-hunting season.

The continued success of the Beach Patrol Scheme is due to the dedication of those hardy souls who brave all manner of weather conditions to trudge the weary miles in search of decaying corpses. Please note any banded birds on the forms or cards and please note any obvious cause of death. The two significant events of 2011; the *Rena* oiling and the prion wreck, will give some valuable and interesting statistics. Keep up the good work!

LLOYD ESLER

Section of Coast	No. of Cards	No. of Birds	km covered
Auckland East AE	5	41	15
Auckland West AW	65	951	455
Bay of Plenty BP	-	-	-
Canterbury North CN	33	369	305
Canterbury South CS	1	1	1
East Coast NI EC	-	-	-
Fiordland FD	-	-	-
North Coast SI NC	2	10	8
Northland East NE	13	331	125
Northland West NW	46	888	1,873
Outlying Islands OI (Chatham)	-	-	-
Otago OT	2	4	2
Southland SD	34	270	114
Taranaki TA	39	219	171
Wairarapa WA	-	-	-
Westland WD	7	4	23
Wellington South WS	44	44	18
Wellington West WW	40	134	74
Totals	315	3,266	3,210

PUKEKO EATS HOUSE SPARROW

I read with interest the short note published in *Notornis* (vol 55 (2008), pp158-9) regarding the predation of flight-capable birds by Pukeko. I have also witnessed a Pukeko grab hold of, and eat, a young House Sparrow, which was (up to its demise) fully capable of flight.

At our house in Coatesville there is an area on the lawn about five metres from our living room where we feed the birds (Pukeko, House Sparrows, doves, Common Mynas, and the occasional California Quail and Common Pheasant). We tend to feed the birds rolled oats, and generally they share the same space with a few tussles for space going on now and again. The Pukeko usually chase off the other birds when they get too close. There is a group of four Pukeko that have lived here for a couple of years.

I heard a commotion outside and looked up to see a Pukeko with a House Sparrow in its beak (being held by a leg). The Sparrow was very much alive, and as with all the Sparrows around us, was capable of flight. The Pukeko carried the struggling bird off by the leg and moved up the hill slightly when I walked outside (probably about 10 metres from the living room), with clearly no intention of letting it go. I watched the Pukeko place the struggling Sparrow on the ground, place its foot over the Sparrow's body, and begin eating it. I'm pretty sure the Pukeko was the male of the group (very red beak and comb and slightly chunkier-looking than the others).

RUSSELL CLARKE



BLUE DUCK ANECDOTES

I recently heard of two Blue Duck observations which I feel are worthy of making better known.

In April 2011 Willie Cook was driving down the Cobb Dam Road beside the Takaka River. Half way between the power house and the single lane bridge at the beginning of the road he saw two Blue Ducks in a large calm pool. He was able to observe them for 15 minutes through binoculars. They were in shallow water on the edge of the pool and spent the whole time churning up the bed of silt with their feet, and feeding on the food that was disturbed. They would then move a short distance and do the same again. Andrew Smart has seen foot paddling on several occasions in southern parts of the South Island, which he describes as uncommon and usually in calm waters. Jim Campbell has seen similar behaviour on the Retaruke Stream after a landslide destroyed usual foraging opportunities and Graeme Quinn once saw a pair of Blue Ducks paddling in fine gravels on the edge of the Oparara River. In Te Urewera Sarah King saw a single Blue Duck foraging in this manner in a very small side stream. Murray Williams has also observed this behaviour at several spots on the Manganui-o-te-ao River and recalls one occasion when an adult and her entire brood of youngsters were doing it. This was usually seen in a backwater of the river where there was a muddy bottom. These were the only other observations I could gather from all DoC staff working with Blue Ducks. Obviously the behaviour is not something that happens very often yet it has been recorded from a range of quite different habitats and throughout the species' range.

Jenny and Barry Dunnnett were tramping in the Dart/Hollyford catchments during March 2011 when they saw a Blue Duck in the stream draining Fohn Lake at 1,380 m altitude. They had never seen Blue Duck in such alpine habitat and from where it would have been feasible for it to easily move between two major catchments. There is, however, increasing evidence for long distance movements and that this may involve alpine crossings. Andrew Smart recounts several incidents of Fiordland birds doing this, such as the DoC ranger who saw a bird fly over McKinnon Pass at 1,146m. He recalls another bird which was known to have dispersed from the Clinton River to the Rock Burn, which must have involved several passes between 1,100 and 1,400 m. In this same area Barry Lawrence notes that Blue Ducks have occasionally been recorded in autumn from Lake Harris (1,200 m) and Lake Wilson (1,400 m). Mike Harding published an account of Blue Ducks crossing from the Waimakariri to the Otira River which probably involved a crossing of Arthur's Pass at 900 m. John Adams has documented birds crossing the Ruahine and Kaweka Ranges and Kerry Oates tells of Blue Ducks at 1,500 m in the headwaters of the Manganui-o-te-ao on Mount Ruapehu.

Murray has kindly offered a signed copy of David Young's book *Whio – Saving New Zealand's Blue Duck* to anyone who can better the Mount Ruapehu record for a sighting of Blue Duck with altitude.

PETER GAZE



Over the past four years, I have developed the Takapu Research Project, focused on the study of the sensory and nutritional ecology of the Australasian Gannets (*Morus serrator*) and am currently in the final year of my PhD studies at Massey University, Albany Campus, under the supervision of Prof. David Raubenheimer and Prof. Mark Hauber, in the Nutritional Ecology and Coastal-Marine Research Groups.

Since November last year, I have been working with Rob Schuckard and David Melville (OSNZ) on the analysis of data collected at the Farewell Spit gannetry over previous years. The strong enthusiasm for conservation from these OSNZ members motivated me to apply for DoC research permits to conduct a baseline study at Farewell Spit gannetry. We are aiming to gain a better understanding of the role of Gannets as bio-indicators of the Marlborough Sounds, Tasman and Golden Bay ecosystems and exploring possible overlap of their foraging strategies with fisheries.

With the assistance of Peter Gaze and Beverly Freer (Department of Conservation, Nelson), Paddy Gillooly (Farewell Spit Eco Tours, Golden Bay) and the amazing field skills of Rob Schuckard, David Melville, William Cook and Julia Melville, we achieved several GPS deployments and collected regurgitations from nesting adult gannets at the Farewell Spit gannetry from the 8th to the 16th January 2012 (see photo).

Although data is currently under analysis, preliminary results suggest that breeding adult gannets from Farewell Spit gannetry are foraging over Golden and Tasman Bays and also travel to near French Pass (Marlborough Sounds) covering several hundred kilometers in a day.

I am grateful to the people who made this trip so successful and for the possibility of developing future research associations between OSNZ and the Takapu Research Project.

GABRIEL MACHOVSKY CAPUSKA



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RENA WILDLIFE UPDATE: FROM THE FRONT LINES

During our approximately 100 hours a year night work on Mauao (Mount Maunganui) as part of the Grey-faced Petrel team, we often are in awe of the huge container ships coming in and out of the Port of Tauranga. Never had any of us thought that one of these gargantuan vessels would be splayed mercilessly across the local Astrolabe Reef in such gentle calm conditions as October 5th 2011; a day etched in the memories of Bay of Plenty OSNZ members. The reef sits four kilometres off Motiti Island, 22 kilometres from Papamoa Beach.

If any time was precisely the wrong time for such an event to happen, it would have been this exact week, the absolute pinnacle of the first wave of Little Penguins using their burrows. Offshore the Common Diving Petrels had just started breeding for the season with Grey-faced Petrels already having sizeable chicks under way. But without the power of flight, we had real concern for the penguins as they had no choice but to swim and/or walk over/through oil.

For those of us with oiled, and non-oiled, wildlife handling training, it was time to call upon our skills that we thought we would hardly require in our lifetimes. On the spot knowledge of penguin locations and movements were to prove vital to Massey University's Oiled Wildlife Response (OWR) team. Within 24 hours of the ship grounding, OWR had set up their mobile hospital at the local Te Maunga Settling Ponds near Tauranga City. This was to be the site where all OSNZ members were inducted and trained up to OSH (Government health and safety) standards. Over 200 volunteers per day were processed through this site during the first frantic week. OWR during the first weeks of the oil spill was lead by OSNZ member Brent Stephenson – someone with such great organisational skills needed in situations like this.

Oiled wildlife has a limited lifespan once contaminated. We had no time to spare and so Dave Richards, petrel team regular, was instrumental in getting our requests to start night operations heard via Brent. What followed was an astounding amount of paperwork and high-level clearances, with endless delays and frustrations due to the work being very dangerous. The additional fact that the work had to occur on the sites during the hours of darkness complicated matters. The sites for teams to night inspect were Mauao, Moturiki/Leisure Island and Motuotau/Rabbit Island. Maritime NZ, the agency with overarching control of all oil spill-related activities associated with this event, was to eventually grant permission to our team to work during the hours of darkness, which is when we usually worked with penguins on the mainland in spring and summer.

In the meantime whilst we waited for clearance,



Too much oil, Motuotau Island, Mount Maunganui.



Oiled Penguin on eggs in nest at Mauao.

pre-spill checks for numbers of shorebirds that could potentially be oiled were carried out at all Bay of Plenty coastal sites, from Mount Maunganui down to Maketu. Members were stationed at Papamoa, Maketu, Kaituna, Moturiki and Mount Main Beach. A boom was placed across the Maketu Harbour entrance. Dave was responsible for the grid-mapping of coastal Omani to Papamoa Beach, where many of the beach clean-up teams were stationed after the spill. Some initial birds were picked up oiled, mostly those species that could fly like shearwaters and diving petrels, but a few penguins had been oiled as well, and had managed to reach the mainland.

Our team eventually managed to get an overnight check of Motuotau /Rabbit Island. We had previously used this island as a control site to assess comparisons with a pest-free site (the island), and pest-infested Mauao, prior to large-scale pest control being carried out on Mauao. We retrieved one lightly-oiled penguin and observed some very light hydraulic oiling on a Common Diving Petrel. However, upon awakening the

following morning, radio chatter told us the terrible news: the wind had ramped up markedly during the night, changed direction, and thick marmite-like oil had hit the beaches from Papamoa to Mauao and Maketu. The mood at camp was unanimously bleak.

Our trip back to the mainland on the boat was largely silent, knowing that what was ahead of us would not be pleasant work. Once back upon dry land, Dave wasted no time in assembling personnel rosters and equipment and a venue for a base, all to help retrieve what we thought were around 100 resident Mauao Little Penguins (we found subsequently that the number was closer to 400).

Maritime New Zealand provided coveralls, goggles, latex, woollen and vinyl gloves, dead bird bags, capture nets, pillowslips, plastic live bird boxes, towels and gumboots.

We looked like we were prepared for Armageddon, but felt like we needed to be doing



Lone last bird released.



TV1 camera captures penguins getting released, Shark Alley, Mount Maunganui, November 2011.

this, because we were in the best position to do so.

To be honest those first few days passed in a haze, with initial nights on Mauao and Moturiki being frantic, as every penguin we found was oiled. Large numbers of plastic boxes were ferried every night back to the surf club, for runners to take to Te Maunga. One interesting story was a New Zealand Police crew assigned to keep people off the beach were delivering birds from as far away as Papamoa Beach to us based at the surf club in Mount Maunganui, including a beautiful Buller's Shearwater. Another was of a member of the public retrieving a well-oiled penguin and placing it in their bathtub, subsequently getting a rather grubby tub. That first week the seas were tremendously rough. We smelt the oil before we saw it. The oil on the rocks was of the consistency of marmite. The irony of it all was seeing a huge cruise ship exiting Tauranga Harbour one night after spending a terribly wet day in port, with passengers learning access to our internationally-famous beach was closed. Our tourism-based income for the summer was ended before it even started.

It wasn't long before media started sniffing around for a good story, but we were well-trained to just state what we were doing at the time. TV3, TV1, WWF, New Zealand Geographic, and French and German television crews were all attending at one stage.

After the first few days of getting numbers of largely oiled birds, we were very concerned about post-slick Motuotau. Permission was eventually cleared and in total we visited there over a dozen



Penguin field hospital, Matuotau Island, Mount Maunganui.

times, using grid systems and experienced teams to search and retrieve over 100 oiled birds. Methods to achieve access to the island ranged from DoC boats *Mataariki* and *Rewa*, to surf club inflatables, and, eventually, kayaks, which helped lessen the impact of camping on this pristine pest-free island. Returning to the main beach at midnight in kayaks was to prove more exciting for some than others. Amongst our sandy beaches lurk quite interesting rock formations!

To help study the effects of all the rehabilitation work, micro-chipping of each penguin was carried out. Massey wildlife vets took time out from their frantic day work and trained us up in the delicate art of inserting chips. We were tasked to chip the wild populations, to start a long-term monitoring study to determine the survival of birds that have been through the rehabilitation versus birds that haven't been. This project will be ongoing for about four years. We are in a unique position to determine the outcomes of this important work, for if we sit back and rest there will likely be a move to undermine funding from the spillers for rehabilitation of wildlife victims of oil spills.

At Te Maunga, there were over 400 penguins put through the washing that needs to be done to make a penguin 100% waterproof again. 1,500 litres of water per bird later, and a swim test for many hours, they were eventually ready to be released.

Unfortunately, the oiled rocks were initially not cleaned sufficiently for the penguins to be released, and oil remained in pools up to the size of cars for days on Mauao, Moturiki and Motuotau, so holding aviaries were built at Te Maunga. At this time, 60 New Zealand Dotterels were caught to prevent them becoming oiled. These were also housed at the same facility.

Once the oiled areas were finally cleaned, birds picked up from those sites were released. The first release day was during the week of the general election and provided an ideal platform for candidates to do the 'touchy feely' thing and the media lapped this up. Ministers and local MPs attended the November 22nd release, as opposed to the release of December 8th, dedicated to the local school children. It was touching to see the faces of the children when seeing their first penguin, and to know that they will remember this day for the rest of their lives. The 30th of January was the final release, a decidedly more intimate affair, when the final nine penguins made their way home

towards Moturiki. I am sure everyone involved with the night operations was enraptured at the sight of all their hard work retrieving sometimes very reluctant penguins. Their return to their home habitat provided a bright spot in a Bay of Plenty reeling from such terrible luck in the past few years.

At the point of writing our Mauao, Motuotau and Moturiki night work has been stopped. January 20th was our last night operation on the coast. That night's highlight on Mauao and Moturiki: there were no oiled birds. Until the *Rena* breaks up into smaller pieces, we will cease the night operations. However, *Rena* is a sleeping giant capable of further slicks.

Thanks are due primarily to the incredible Dave Richards. Without him and his family nothing would have been done so fast and so thoroughly. Over the course of these past months of nights his family have contributed over 1,000 hours collectively. Thanks also to Julia Graham who 'owned' the Moturiki field work; to Tim Short, Jono Press, Fenna Beets, and Graham McCormack who absolutely took and ran with the day operations as well as leading at night; the Mount Maunganui Surf Lifesaving Club for the venue and quad which helped immensely at peak pickup times. Thanks also to the great night operations crews and leaders who provided us all with humour and some semblance of normalcy in a time of absolute helplessness facing this black tide.

PAUL CUMING,
OSNZ Bay of Plenty and OWRG

All photos by Paul Cuming



On the boat to hospital, Motuotau Island, Mount Maunganui.

BITTERNS IN THE WAIPORI/WAIHOLA/SINCLAIR WETLANDS

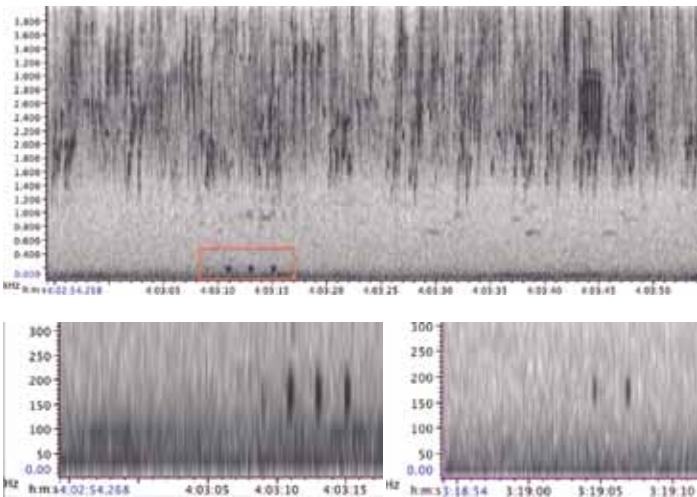


Waipori/Waihola/Sinclair Wetlands by Mary Thompson

Australasian Bitterns, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*, are an iconic species of our wetlands. They are rarely seen due to their solitary and secretive behaviour, along with their cryptic colouration and 'freeze' posture, which blend with the vegetation in their habitat. More often their presence is detected by hearing the male's characteristic booming calls at dusk or dawn during the breeding season. Now over 95% of our original wetlands have been lost and along with them the Bitterns, so they are becoming even harder to find. The total population in New Zealand may be only 500 and they are classed as nationally endangered.

Otago is one region where the Bittern population is most vulnerable. Vast areas of Otago that were once wetland now only have fragments. The Waipori/Waihola/Sinclair Wetland at the southern end of the Taieri Plain near Dunedin is one of the larger remaining areas (about 1,000 hectares of possible habitat for Bittern). Over recent years Bitterns have been heard or seen only sporadically. Although there have been many anecdotal reports of booming and one confirmed report of a booming bird in the spring of 2008 at Waihola, the most recent documented sighting of a Bittern at Waihola was back in 1991. Members of Otago OSNZ spent several cold evenings in 2007 and 2008 at the Sinclair Wetlands on moonlit nights in spring to listen for booms but with no luck. Surprisingly, in February 2009 a juvenile Bittern was found on a road near Warrington 50 km from Waipori, so this renewed our hope that Bitterns may still inhabit the area.

The idea of using automated acoustic recorders to detect bitterns was sparked by hearing Stuart Cockburn's talk at the OSNZ AGM at Lower Hutt in June 2011, where he demonstrated their successful use for monitoring Kiwi in remote areas. We followed up on this idea and recorders were kindly loaned by DoC (thanks to Emma Williams, Colin O'Donnell and Stuart Cockburn). In November and December 2011 a small team of Otago OSNZ members used



Upper spectrogram shows one minute of the dawn chorus with a train of 3 bittern booms indicated in the box. The lower spectrograms, with the scale expanded, show two different boom patterns; the booms are in the 150 – 250 Hz range and about 2 seconds apart.



Murray Efford and Lesley Gowans mounting a recorder at Waihola. Others involved in the study were Sue Galloway, Sue Guthrie, Sue Odlin and Mary Thompson. Photo by Mary Thompson

these acoustic recorders to determine whether Bitterns are still present in the Waipori/Waihola wetlands. Recorders were placed for two to four days at 46 sites throughout the Waihola/Waipori/Sinclair wetlands (see map). Access varied from 'easy' (from tracks in the Sinclair Wetlands and the Titri Road DoC reserve) to 'not so easy' (across farmland, or by canoe along various river channels). We were greatly helped by the adjoining landowners, by Kai Tahu and DoC for allowing access to place the recorders. Each recorder was set to run for about three hours in the evening and two hours before dawn, giving over 900 hours of recordings, although wind noise and rain made some recordings unusable. The recordings were downloaded into Raven, a sound analysis programme from The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, to turn them into spectrograms. These were scanned visually, at a rate of about one to five minutes per hour of recording, for the Bittern boom signature pattern (a short repeated sound at low frequency of about 150–200 Hz, sometimes likened to blowing over the top of a bottle). If necessary the recorded sound was also listened to while observing the spectrogram to confirm identity and distinguish Bitterns from cows, cars, Black Swans, etc.

We were excited to find that booming bitterns were recorded at a cluster of sites in and around the Sinclair Wetlands. Our recordings show at least four distinct booming patterns and each may equate to a specific bird although this has not yet been proven. The population is small, perhaps only three or four males, but the continued presence of Bitterns is good news for the Waipori Waihola Wetlands Society who are working to restore the wetlands and hopefully the habitat for Bittern too.

It is planned to continue the monitoring of Bitterns in Otago using acoustic recorders during the next booming season. Our study will also complement the research being undertaken by Emma Williams and Colin O'Donnell on Bittern monitoring at the Whangamarino Wetlands in Waikato.

MARY THOMPSON



Juvenile bittern found near Warrington, 2009. Photo by Chuck Landis.

NATURAL SELECTION OF KEA RESEARCHERS



SURVIVAL OF THE SLIMMEST

I have been chasing Kea around the mountains for about four years now and there have been a few hairy moments, most involving dangling off bluffs or trees failing to hold my weight when using them as hand rails to get myself down slopes in a hurry. But the one experience that has had my heart racing the most was getting myself inside Nest # 8. My experience with working with Kea is still relatively limited and is still evolving thanks to my full time job with the Department of Conservation and weekend/holiday work that I manage to fit in for the Kea Conservation Trust. DoC work involves researching Kea and threats they face in the wild and how we can help them with the tools that we have available to us. KCT work has involved annual treeline surveys of Kea numbers in various locations around the country for the past three years, spot nest checking (hoping to find nesting females), and telemetry tracking birds to determine where they live and if they are nesting or not.

The Kea Conservation Trust was setup in 2006 to assist in conservation of wild Kea in their natural habitat and to increase the husbandry standards and advocacy potential of those Kea held in captive facilities within New Zealand. They are a charitable trust and continue to do great work benefiting Kea all over the country.

With a few schematic drawings in hand of the shape of the nest and the style in which to enter, as well as assurance from the boss that it was physically possible to get into the nest I enthusiastically headed towards one of my favourite places in the world, Nelson Lakes National Park. The purpose of this trip was to determine whether there was an established breeding pair of Kea on the spur above Nest #8 and to install a camera inside the nest to see what, if anything, has been visiting the cavity.

After an hours drive I met up with Matt Charteris and decided on a plan of attack. Nest # 8 and the spur above it are located on the southern side of the Six Mile Stream. Looking up towards the direction we were heading from the roadside, gives you the impression that it is an inaccessible place, with jagged rocks, steep bluffs and, as always

with Nelson Lakes, pristine mountain streams covering the mountain side; things that all act to make access anywhere difficult. In actuality it is one of the easiest nests in the area to get to. Most of the elevation is gained via the Rainbow ski field road, with a short 20 minute walk up a surprisingly walker-friendly stream. It is steep and our legs were burning on the way up, but we arrived at the nest still relatively fresh. Comparing the real life nest entrance to the schematic drawings of the nest with the stick figure on them doing a head stand to get in got us thinking that you really did have to be a stick figure to get inside this nest. If I hadn't been told that it was possible I don't think I would have attempted it.

Being the slimmest out of the two of us I drew the short straw and started stripping off the layers and even my boots. Anything to make me smaller was going to benefit me getting into and out of this hole safely. Head first was the only option, so in I went, blood rushing, heart pumping and breathing rate increasing. Memories of me getting stuck inside a tunnel when I was young came flooding back to me and an overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia came over me but I continued because it would have been impossible to reverse out. So I was committed and the only way I was coming out was if I successfully got in. The sides of the entrance were in a tight 'V' shape with the

base of the 'V' being much too small for me to get to, so movement along the shaft involved me putting one hand at the base of the 'V' and awkwardly caterpillaring along, all the while having all my body weight wedged against either side of cold rock entrance. I was filled with fear and at the same time excitement as I penetrated deeper into the darkness, breathing became more difficult the further I went, with my body wedged against two sloping sides it was actually quite hard to expand and contract my chest as is necessary for respiration. With each exhalation I found myself sliding deeper into the 'V' and therefore each subsequent inhalation being that much more restricted. There was a lot of pressure on my one arm to keep me positioned high enough to give me adequate breathing room.

I finally got to the end of the entrance tunnel where there was corner to negotiate and all of a sudden I was in what could only be described as a spacious cavern, well compared to the entrance anyway. There was heaps of space to move and even turn around. I spent some time setting up a camera, covering up any potential pest entrances, I inspected the empty nest bowl and set about to extract myself from the earths tight embrace. The boss, who is probably the only other human being to have been inside this hole said that the only way out was the same way you got in, therefore backwards. I choose to ignore that direction and tried getting out head first. After bending my knees around the corner in directions I didn't know they could bend I found myself back in the entrance shaft, and, after what I can only describe as a rebirth, I was back to my pack and ready to keep heading up to locate any birds that might be in the area.

After an evening survey we learnt that there was a pair hanging around which showed a promising chance that there would be photos of Kea coming and going from Nest #8. Two and half months after deploying the camera inside the nest, I returned to find out what had been inside the nest. Of course this involved the whole above process all over again and this time I was all alone but managed to in and out again without any problems, but still with the adrenaline rush. After analysis of the photos all that it showed was a pair of skinny white legs exiting the cavity and regular visits from an inquisitive possum. Hopefully future visits turn up something more promising and I don't gain any weight, otherwise I will need to convince someone else to squeeze in to check the camera.

COREY MOSEN



COSTS OF PUBLISHING AND PRINTING NOTORNIS

One of the objects of the OSNZ is to “produce a journal and any other publication containing matters of ornithological interest” (Article 3.4, Constitution of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Incorporated). That journal is *Notornis*, the name adopted in July 1950 to replace *New Zealand Bird Notes*, first published in January 1943. Since then, many hundreds of papers have been published in *Notornis*, most of them written by OSNZ members. Early papers mostly covered the occurrence and distribution of species; the results of surveys and censuses, including those organised by the Society; and full-length and short accounts of bird behaviour. All have contributed greatly to our knowledge of New Zealand birds, and continue to do so.

In the nature of many things, the structure and content of the papers published in *Notornis* have changed over time, becoming increasingly specialised and moving from more general description to in-depth analysis. In part, this reflects the evolving nature of science, with people studying subjects in increasing detail with improved technology and more sophisticated techniques; in part it mirrors the increasing formality of scientific papers generally. *Notornis* has had to follow these trends to retain its scientific credibility and, with it, that of the Society. Even then, a lot of fascinating research on New Zealand birds is now being published elsewhere, much of it not easily accessible to members of the OSNZ. We all lose as a result.

Given the changes, some members, who simply enjoy watching birds and documenting their natural history, feel an increasing disconnection between their interests and the contents of the many papers being published in *Notornis*. Questions have been raised at successive Annual General Meetings about having a membership category for people who choose not to receive *Notornis* in exchange for paying a reduced membership fee. This was formalised in a motion put to the 2011 AGM, to the effect that a binding referendum of members be held on the proposal that *Notornis* cease as a mandatory printed publication, and that the annual subscription be reduced by the amount of the savings realised; that the journal continues to be published in an electronic form and made available through the OSNZ website; and that abstracts of *Notornis* papers be included in *Southern Bird*. This motion produced much debate at the AGM, as well as many questions, including what the financial implications would be for the Society. The meeting agreed to let the motion lie on the table to allow time for the necessary information on the costs of publishing *Notornis* to be collected and analysed. Following the meeting, I was asked by Council to do this. This article summarises the results.

In June 2011, Council requested the printers of *Notornis* to provide quotes for a 60-page and a 120-page issue of the journal, with a range of print runs for each. The reason for the two quotes is because the OSNZ aims to publish 240 pages each year (four issues of 60 pages each), but we are mindful of the occasional difficulty of getting sufficient material to publish 60 pages every three months. Because *Notornis* is posted together with *Southern Bird* (a measure taken to reduce postage costs), delays in publishing *Notornis* have resulted in delays in posting *Southern Bird*, to everyone’s dissatisfaction. To overcome this, in situations where there is likely to be a delay in getting sufficient material together on time for a normal 60-page issue, Council have given the editor the flexibility to hold back the papers in hand and, instead, to publish the following issue as double one (i.e. 120 pages). This is less than ideal but it would mean that *Southern Bird* goes out on time. We hope that the double-issue option will be a rare occurrence.

Why do we focus on publishing 60 pages per issue? This number, give or take a few, is the minimum that the printers require for the kind of binding (“burst binding”) that we use. A substantially lesser number of pages would be staple-bound, a method that cannot be used securely for thicker issues. Almost every scientific journal the size of *Notornis* uses burst binding. (Bigger journals use stitch binding, an even more expensive method.) We asked our printers to quote for print runs of 250, 500, 1000, and 2500 copies, a spread chosen so that we could calculate the marginal cost per copy under various

Table 1. Cost of printing *Notornis* under various scenarios (number and size of issues per year) for different print runs.

Print run (No. copies per issue)	Scenario 1 4 x 60-page issues	Scenario 2 2 x 60-page issues, 1 x 120-page issue	Scenario 3 2 x 120-page issues
250	\$13,947	\$11,720	\$9,492
500	\$15,290	\$12,964	\$10,638
1000	\$19,371	\$16,474	\$13,577
2500	\$30,765	\$26,598	\$22,432

scenarios. Taking the quotes received from the printers, and adding GST, gave the following figures for an annual volume of 240 pages under three different scenarios (four 60-page issues; two 60-page issues and one 120-page issue; and two 120-page issues) for the different print runs, rounded to the nearest dollar (Table 1).

Take the figures for publishing a volume of four 60-page issues per year, the preferred option over many years. The gross annual cost varies from \$56 per copy for a print run of 250 copies, to \$12 each for a run of 2500 copies (all amounts rounded to the nearest dollar). The reason for the huge difference is that there are fixed costs of having to prepare and set up the material for offset printing from the digital files supplied by the editor, which are the same no matter how many copies are printed. Beyond that, the costs of printing, collating and binding the pages in a volume are variable, depending on the numbers involved. Obviously, with a small print run (e.g. 250 copies each of four 60-page issues), the fixed cost makes up a larger proportion of the total cost than it does in a larger print run.

In terms of estimating potential savings to members who might elect not to receive *Notornis* it may be useful to estimate these fixed and variable costs more accurately. How can we do this from the figures supplied by the printers? One way is to calculate the incremental per-copy cost as the difference in the total annual costs of two print runs divided by the difference in the number of copies in those print runs. Doing this gives average annual marginal cost for Scenarios 1, 2 and 3 respectively of \$ 7.04 (range \$5.37–\$8.16), \$6.25 (range \$4.98–\$7.02), and \$5.45 (range \$4.58–\$5.90). The reason for the range in each instance is because, based on the figures supplied, there are slight differences in the per-copy costs, especially when moving from a print run of 250 to 500

The other approach is to plot the total annual costs against their respective print runs, and then to calculate the line of best fit through the points for each scenario. The results are shown below (Figure 1). The equations describing each of these lines, given on the graph, comprises two parts: an intercept, the value at the point where the line meets the cost axis for a zero print run; and the slope of the line, measuring how steeply the cost rises with each additional copy printed. The intercept reflects the fixed cost of setting up *Notornis* for printing, one that is incurred even before the presses have begun to roll. These fixed costs, estimated from the intercepts, are \$11,794, \$9,829 and \$7,862 for Scenarios 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The other part of each equation, the slope of the line, mirrors the variable or marginal cost of printing, cutting and binding copies for each member. This amounts to \$7.58 for four 60-page issues annually, \$6.69 for two 60-page issues and one 120-page issue, and \$5.81 for two 120-page issues. The differences in the per-copy costs calculated using the two methods are relatively insignificant. The graphical method gives a clearer picture of the costs and likely savings across the full range of print runs, so I use these figures in the following discussion.

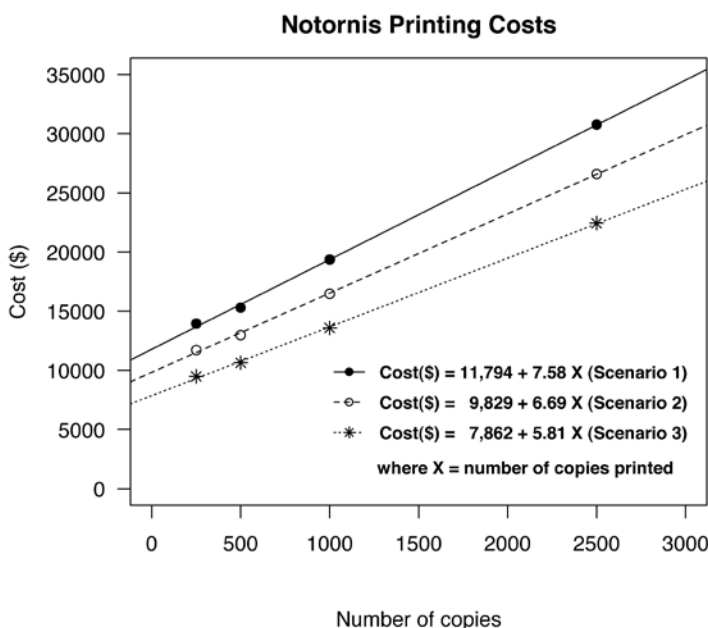


Figure 1. Relationship between the printed number of copies of *Notornis* and the cost of printing. The regression equations express in numerical terms the lines of best fit through these points.

For the coming year, the print run for *Notornis* is likely to be 1,100. Assuming that we produce four 60-page issues in 2012, the total cost of printing *Notornis* should be about \$20,130, or \$18.30 for each printed set of four issues. Of this, \$10.72 is a fixed cost while the balance, \$7.58, is how much it actually costs to print each additional set (i.e. the variable cost). Because the OSNZ will still have to pay this fixed cost, irrespective of how many copies of the journal are printed, it will lose \$10.72 for each member who gets a reduction of \$18.30 in their membership fee in exchange for not receiving *Notornis*. (Let's call these Associate Members). More accurately, the Society will have \$10.70 less to invest in other aspects of its activities (e.g. capitation grants to branches, project funds, revising the Field Guide) for each Associate Member. Of course, one could argue that by having this additional membership category we'd be able to attract new members, while some existing members, said to be put off at present by the apparent high cost of membership, might choose to remain. Just how much the OSNZ will gain or lose is uncertain, however, and represents one of the big unknowns in our planning.

What about possible additional savings on postage for members not receiving *Notornis*? Unfortunately there are none because *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* are posted together at New Zealand Post's letter rate for C4 envelopes (230mm x 325mm x 20mm maximum thickness). The current national postage rate is \$1.80, irrespective of the mass of the contents, provided that this does not exceed 750g. So whether someone receives both *Southern Bird* and *Notornis* or *Southern Bird* alone, the cost to the OSNZ (and therefore its members) is the same. (I assume that, when it comes to packaging the publications, there are no added costs in having to differentiate between those members receiving both *Southern Bird* and *Notornis*, and those opting to get *Southern Bird* alone. This may not be so.)

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the other costs associated with publishing *Notornis*, if for no other reason than recognising the effective subsidy that we all receive from those volunteers who give their time and resources to ensuring that *Notornis* is produced and distributed in accordance with our constitution. The most important of these are the refereeing, editorial and layout costs, borne by the editor (who is not paid) and his employer. These costs include acknowledging receipt of manuscripts, communicating with and despatching these to reviewers, collating the reviewers' comments, making decisions about suitability, and communicating all this to the authors. For some papers, this may mean going through this process twice if the paper needs to be re-reviewed after being revised. Most of these costs are those of the editor's time, along with overhead costs (electricity, office space, some material costs), currently borne by the editor and Canterbury University.

There are also costs associated with making *Notornis* available digitally on the Web, including making PDFs, if not already done and costed earlier; housing these on a server somewhere; and maintaining the site. This is a fixed cost, borne by the OSNZ. Finally, there is the cost of managing subscriptions, one that is borne by volunteers, often at real cost to themselves in terms of time and overheads. This is also a fixed cost, and one that may be higher if we have split membership categories. Whether these voluntary inputs would continue to be provided if publishing *Notornis* was to become even more constrained is another big unknown. Whatever changes we introduce, it is important to think through the likely long-term implications, to avoid falling victim to the law of unintended consequences.

PETER FROST

REVIEW: BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND

Birds of New Zealand. Julian Fitter and Don Merton. 2011, Collins, Auckland. ISBN 978-1-8695-0851-7. 288pp softcover. \$44.99

Birds of New Zealand comes hot on the heels of co-author Julian Fitter's identically-sized book, "*Bateman Field Guide to Wild New Zealand*" (Bateman, Auckland, 2010) and claims to cover all 350 species of birds that you may see in New Zealand. Fitter has been prolific since emigrating from the United Kingdom in 2006. Books have flowed on topics such as the Galapagos Islands, Albatrosses (a Montana Book Award-winner written with Tui de Roy and Mark Jones) and a visitor's guide to New Zealand wildlife, the last of which, as its title suggests, is primarily targeted to the overseas market. It is also the latest entry in a series of traveller's guides from Collins, the others being on Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, The Seychelles, and Fitter's own title on the Galapagos. The targeted readership is both visitors and residents of New Zealand.

Don Merton was perhaps New Zealand's most well-known conservationist and had written books previously on the species he had helped to conserve, namely the Black Robin and Kakapo. The unfortunate and untimely death of Don before this book was released has been recognised in a tribute section, with Margaret Merton's accompanying poignant photograph of Don with Richard Henry the Kakapo. The tribute delivers a message and takes pains to ensure that Don's methods and mana will carry on despite the tragic circumstances.

The first impressions of the book are favourable, namely the attractive, pocket-sized appearance, although a rather large pocket is required. Nevertheless, it is geared for travellers, hence the Collins Traveller's Guide Series on the pre-title. The book is a soft cover, so will take little ill-treatment in the backpack, but it is more convenient than a heavier, and presumably more expensive, hardback book. The binding is adequate for a field guide but the book is unable to be laid flat, which some might find irritating.

Helen Clark, currently chief of the United Nations Development Programme, former Prime Minister, and previously Minister of Conservation – and whose husband is a birdwatcher – provides a foreword. In August 2011 Clark was named at number 50 of the world's most 100 powerful women by *Forbes Magazine*, so this seems quite a coup for the authors.

The layout of the book is presented in an easy-to-follow format which includes introductory sections on geology, geography, climate, flora, habitats, human history, conservation and alien species. Minimal information is re-

worded or repeated from the *Bateman Field Guide to Wild New Zealand*, namely the National parks section and author introduction. Because this book is intended for a slightly different readership than the earlier book I don't see this as a particular problem.

There are good explanations for the identification notes, including easy abbreviations. The use of photographic keys is particularly useful and follows similar techniques used in larger field guides. The use of distribution maps is reminiscent of *The Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* (Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Wellington, 2004) which it follows taxonomically. Fitter's previous work with albatrosses shows through in the extensive coverage of this much-discussed and taxonomically-changed group. His current work with the shorebirds of Maketu Spit is also reflected in the detailed dotterel and oystercatcher information.

The species photos are mostly excellent digital photographs, many digitally represented in a New Zealand field guide for the first time. They cover dimorphism, breeding/non-breeding and juvenile plumages. It is not since Geoff Moon's *A Field Guide to New Zealand Birds* (Reed, Auckland, 1992) that an attempt to cover all New Zealand birds has been made in a single field guide.

A detailed analysis of the photographs reveals little fault with only the following exceptions; the adult Yellow-eyed Penguin is moulting, and is therefore not particularly indicative of how it looks for the rest of the year; the South Island Pied Oystercatcher, male New Zealand Scaup, and female Stitchbird are not in focus; there is no entry for Campbell Island Snipe, (not mentioned in the 2010 Checklist as the paper describing it was not published until after the Checklist was typeset (Colin Miskelly, pers.comm.)), yet it is probably more common than the New Zealand Storm Petrel, which is included here; there is no distribution map for North Island Kaka; and finally, after checking with various sources in ornithological circles, it is agreed that it is a juvenile Paradise Shelduck on page 182 of the book, not an adult male as indicated.

However, despite these minor imperfections, the essence of the book upholds the original author's wish, that the book be "*a song of praise to those native birds and a wake-up call to look after them...*" The last section of the book includes listings of useful contacts, tour operators and organisations.

Fitter and Merton have combined to produce an important weapon in the armoury of today's mobile birdwatcher, with the book also being just as important at home sitting on a personal library reference shelf.

PAUL CUMING



Far North

The results of the New Zealand Dotterel census in the Far North showed a total of 374 birds compared with 353 in 2004. Although this looks encouraging, the coverage of 89 sites was considerably more than last time when 71 sites were reached, so we are not really comparing like with like. Had more sites been counted last time, there could easily have been well over the 2011 total. In early 2012 a few pairs were still breeding near Paihia while other nearby sites had small flocks of post-breeding individuals. Pressures on their habitat continue, the latest being the prospect of beach-grooming around the Bay of Islands.

The New Year began with a day pelagic trip on 10th January from Whangaroa Harbour aboard the *Kuri II* skippered by Brian Candy. It proved to be a very memorable trip for the nine of us on board, the kind which shows what is really in our surrounding seas when you persist in getting there! We recorded 20 species of tubenoses including Wandering, White-capped and Buller's Albatrosses all coming to chum at the back of the boat, Cook's, Pycroft's, Black-winged and Grey-faced Petrels at close range and frequent sightings of New Zealand Storm Petrels of which we estimated up to ten birds. A Wedge-tailed Shearwater joined the shearwater flock behind the boat and a Kermadec Petrel made a brief appearance. We appreciate funding by the DoC office in Kaitaia, which sent two of their staff on the trip.

Late February and early March is the time when Long-tailed Cuckoos pass through the Far North, and following a tip-off from Honeymoon Valley a visit just recently found us hearing several birds immediately on arrival. Eight birds could be seen in flight together and many were perching in view in distant trees. This is assumed to be a late summer gathering site in one of the most northerly forests.

Another Envirofest will take place in late March in Kerikeri following the success of one last year – an opportunity to advertise the Society and raise some money for the region.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

The Pukenui Forest lies on the western boundary of Whangarei City where a dedicated band of volunteers have been working to set up a network of hundreds of bait stations in the 200+ ha reserve. The forest is still very quiet, though last year mobs of Tui were screeching about during the spring pre-breeding frenzy. A DoC officer recently identified the call of a Red-crowned Parakeet.

The Whangarei District Council, Northland Regional Council and Department of Conservation have all contributed to help realise the potential of this forest area – roll on many more bird calls. A trust has been established by volunteers to co-ordinate the recovery effort.

During the December/January period several of our members assisted DoC with monitoring Fairy Terns at the Waipu Refuge where two juveniles have been successfully fledged. They remain with the adult pairs where they are still being fed by the parents.

At the Mangawhai colony, two juvenile Fairy Terns were hatched in mid-January but Australasian Harriers were seen to be menacing the nest. This led to the implementation of a dawn to dusk watch from a nearby hide, and several of our group helped out with 'manning the watch' during evening hours. This was a new experience for us, as was the trip across the estuary in *Tara Iti* the boat belonging to the Fairy Tern Trust. We understand that several Harriers have been trapped, as has one cat.

During mid-October 2011 our members responded to the call and covered our west and east coast beaches to count New Zealand Dotterels as a segment of the national survey. The Northland effort was co-ordinated by Tony Beauchamp and Kevin Hayes, who were thrilled by the willing participation of our limited number of physically active members.

A big vote of thanks to all who took part, with special thanks to Karen Miller and Dale Calvert who were delivered to the southern end of the Hokianga Harbour by Audrey Williams before tramping down the West Coast for three days, counting as they walked. They experienced higher than anticipated river crossings and spent two nights under canvas before arriving at the spot where their vehicle was parked. Janet Snell and Claire Burttt stayed overnight on the northern East Coast, as did Kevin Hayes and Pauline Smith, to get a good start on their respective territories while the tide was right. Both Logan Forrest at Pouto, and the Department of Conservation teams from Dargaville and Waipu, completed their areas efficiently. Special thanks also to Genelle and the Environmental Team at the New Zealand Refining compound for covering a population that we would not otherwise know about. A pair of Spur-winged Plovers was observed there, having 'stolen' the nest of a pair of frantic New Zealand Dotterels, and were sitting on the Dotterel eggs.

Unfortunately the *MV Rena* ran onto the Astrolabe Reef about the time of

the survey and this played havoc with the schedule of John Dowding who is co-ordinating the survey for OSNZ so we still await his official record of the survey.

CLAIRE BURTT

Auckland

2011 finished with the traditional ornithological quiz masterminded by Michael Taylor. As usual, there was much loud debate as we plodded through the maze of ornithological questions, but always in an atmosphere of mirth! The final challenge is always deriving bird names from a given phrase – the phrase this time was 'MY SHAKESPEAR BIRD COUNT' referring to Shakespear Regional Park, Auckland's newest predator-free sanctuary. From those 21 letters the best tally under pressure on quiz night was 42 bird names (though some have added further names at their leisure). I was delighted to collect an extra point for my group for the longest name, Pomarine Skua; a species that I just happened to have seen two days earlier in the Hauraki Gulf! But no more help – it's now over to you to try your best with the phrase.

One of our region's species that warrants an update is the Fairy Tern. The weather over the 2011/12 summer was not kind to the six pairs of Fairy Terns that attempted to breed in the region this past season (Pakiri 1, Papakanui 2, Mangawhai 3). Nine clutches were laid, containing some 12 viable eggs, yet only four chicks fledged (Pakiri 2, Mangawhai 2). Continual periods of rain and high winds most probably caused the desertion of three nests, and may also have claimed a breeding adult and two chicks at Papakanui. Australasian Harriers, attracted to the Mangawhai Spit by nesting colonies of other seabirds, could well have taken two Fairy Tern chicks at that site.

As with the 2010/11 season, a dawn-till-dusk vigil was set up at Mangawhai by DoC Whangarei, with two chicks being 'watched' from 6 am to 9 pm. However, not only were the watchers chasing away the Harriers, but also aggressive interloping adult Fairy Terns. The Mangawhai Shorebird Warden (Rangi Zimmerman) was assisted in this vigil by Auckland DoC, and volunteers from the local community and OSNZ.

MEL GALBRAITH

Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

Bay of Plenty members are slowly getting their lives back with the gradual lifting of the *MV Rena*'s oily shadow, which has covered us since 6th October 2011. Our night work on Mauao, Moturiki/Leisure Island and Motuotau/Rabbit Island as wildlife responders ceased as of 20th January, and we now are preparing for a long-term monitoring project to take place. This project will help us understand the long-term effects on penguins as victims of oil spills. A plea from us – if you find a dead Little Penguin do not bury it, please phone 0800 OIL SPILL and get the bird to the relevant agency, as these birds will have a chance of being micro-chipped.

The first meeting of the year took place in February, with Eila Lawton, Dave Richards and I speaking about how we gave significant amounts of our time over to helping retrieve over 300 Little Penguins from the oily rocks and beaches. As I write in early February, it is hoped the final penguins will be returned to Motiti Island in the coming days. Salvors are still retrieving containers from the bow of the *Rena*, as the stern sank on 8th January.

Bird sightings have been trickling in, with four records of note. Tim Barnard's son saw a Channel-billed Cuckoo on the toll road near Tauriko in early January. Nearby in the same week Bekki Richards observed New Zealand Dotterels on sections in a semi-urban new housing estate called The Lakes. Later the same week, again, a Red-tailed Tropicbird was found by Fenna Beets and her beach clean-up crew. This was autopsied once reaching the bird rehabilitation centre and was found to have ingested oil. In early February Julia Graham saw a Rook on a telegraph pole on Takitimu Drive. Tim Barnard spotted two Glossy Ibises in February at Ohiwa Harbour. Raewyn Adams came across a Cape Pigeon in Pilot Bay, near the Port of Mount Maunganui. This bird had a slight wing injury which only showed up in the incredibly detailed photographs Raewyn is becoming known for. The bird may have been on a ship that came to port, and was released overboard once inside the harbour.

We are now fully into AGM preparation mode. Queen's Birthday Weekend 2012 will be our busiest time of this year ornithologically speaking. Please register soon as we need to have things organised ahead of time. Any speakers not yet contacted are invited to contact us on conference@osnz.org.nz or look at the OSNZ website here: <http://osnz.org.nz/news/osnz-conference-and-agm-2012>

PAUL CUMING

Taranaki

Barry Hartley presented the results of the October 16th New Zealand Dotterel survey at November's meeting. It didn't take long as only eight birds were found



on three South Taranaki beaches. He had expected more but they may turn up later in the season. A discussion was held on e-mail newsletters versus regional roundup. All members agreed that the roundup was more useful and informative, with those present saying that when *Southern Bird* arrived they first looked at the cover photos then turned to the regional roundup. As we are a small group those present saw no need for a newsletter and are kept informed by e-mail of upcoming field trips.

Only three people turned out for November's field trip, a ramble around David Medway's home patch of Pukekura and Brooklands Park where all the usual birds, including Shining Cuckoo, were seen. David later reported that there are now four adult Canada Geese on Pukekura Lake, including a pair with three goslings.

There was a report of 32 Cattle Egrets amongst pigs in a paddock at Opunake. A woman who regularly feeds birds around her home also had a cock Pheasant with three House Sparrows hitching a ride on its tail. Kay Rodbard went to Zealandia to see Sirocco the Kakapo and was very impressed by the bird. Barry Hartley doing patrols on South Taranaki beaches picked up a fresh Fiordland Crested Penguin.

A proposed coastal bird survey along the Taranaki foreshore between Oakura and Waitara was presented at the December meeting. A student was to be employed for three weeks to record species and numbers to provide a baseline of data. Apart from members' records there are very little other data. Those who regularly visit the beaches offered their support.

A farmer in the eastern hill country of Taranaki was woken in the early hours of the morning by an uproar in his chook house. Looking out he saw a hedgehog dragging off a bantam in its jaws; the outcome was unknown. Heather Ward returning from the UK and chasing a New Zealand summer said the first birds she saw upon arrival were two Song Thrushes, not seen around her home for many years. Carol Keight had been visiting Queensland, particularly the Daintree River. She encountered a long list of birds including a pygmy-goose, and also saw also a Platypus. The meeting concluded with the end-of-year feeding frenzy around the supper table, which made a flock of vultures look positively polite.

Bill Messenger and I were the only attendees of the field trip around East Egmont. Tui were numerous and Bellbird, Whitehead and Silvereye were common. Lower down at the Potaema Bog Fernbirds were very vocal with a duet from a pair that were quite conspicuous, even staying out in the open long enough to have their photos taken.

As usual in January the Beach, Birds and Barbecue was held at Waiongana. A cool wind took the edge off the day and only 23 species were recorded, due perhaps to the weather. A pair of Reef Herons was the highlight. Despite the lack of species a good time was had by all, though perhaps not by the member who turned up a day late!

The coastal bird survey report was discussed at February's meeting, with those having seen the report agreeing that despite some errors a lot had been achieved in the three weeks. We turned our thoughts to what could be done to build on it. Some ideas were proposed but more discussion will be needed.

Bill Messenger saw fifteen Wrybills together on the sand spit at Mokau; a first for him there. Everybody had Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and House Sparrows etc busy raising chicks in nests around their gardens. Very few flocks of Pied Oystercatchers have been seen migrating north in contrast to previous years. At Waiongana we have probably seen more Pied Stilts, with a couple of flocks of 40-50 being noted. Siberian Tattlers seen at Urenui and Back Beach in New Plymouth may be the same bird, it having been present in the region for a couple of months.

A wild goose chase would best describe February's field trip. A reliable report of a Cape Barren Goose at the Hawera Oxidation Ponds added further incentive to the trip we had already planned. Unfortunately the bird had departed, but we were kept busy counting the hundreds of Paradise Shelducks and other waterfowl on the ponds, with three Pied Oystercatchers being the first record for the site. Other nearby wetlands were checked but to no avail. A probable Royal Spoonbill at a coastal lake was a surprise, as was a Little Shag that was more white than black. Two members who shall remain nameless then headed off criss-crossing the countryside in a search for the elusive goose, at one stage coming within 2-300 metres of it, but failing to stop and check out the lake it was later reported to have been seen at. The lesson learned, always check thoroughly; but I thought we had, Barry!

PETER FRYER

Hawke's Bay

Hawke's Bay has been rather quiet over summer. In November the summer wader count was completed. The highlight being confirmation that Royal Spoonbill were nesting at Porangahau. In November we also carried out five-minute bird

counts at Blowhard Bush for our ongoing monitoring project there.

2012 got off to a good start with our AGM on 22nd January. This was attended by 11 members and was held in the stunning location of the sand dunes at Ocean Beach within the Cape Sanctuary predator proof fence. We couldn't resist a peek over the dunes to the beach before the meeting got underway, and were rewarded with great views of several New Zealand Dotterels, including a pair with chicks.

Helen Andrews had indicated she was stepping down as regional representative this year, and with no-one volunteering to take up the position it was agreed Jim Hamilton be approached. Jim has agreed to take on the role for a limited period for which we are all very grateful. Helen was thanked for the excellent leadership she has provided over the past five years. Outings were planned for the next six months and we concluded the meeting with a wander around the dunes looking at the many middens in the area. Thanks to Tamsin Ward-Smith for suggesting the venue and allowing access, and to John Berry and Pam Turner for navigating us over the storm-ravaged road to get there. It was sad to see the damage caused by the many slips back in the April 2011 storm.

The three Plumed Whistling Ducks continue to be seen regularly at Anderson Park, Taradale. They were still there on 29th January.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Manawatu

The Manawatu Region has enjoyed two great speakers since my last report. In November we were privileged to have Jesse Conklin come and speak. Jesse discussed the results from his PhD research on the Manawatu River Estuary's own Bar-tailed Godwits and how they manage their epic migration. He gave an account of how he used data-loggers to track local godwits to their breeding grounds, showing that the close-knit Foxton flock spreads out over vast areas of Alaskan tundra for nesting, only to re-unite each year upon their unerring return to Foxton Beach. This was an entertaining and insightful talk and a great way to finish off 2011.

To start off this year we were fortunate to have Janelle Ward come and speak. Janelle is a wildlife veterinarian who has been involved recently with caring for oiled wildlife as a result of the *Rena* disaster. While we were all aware, through media sources, of the *Rena's* impact on the environment, most of us had no idea of the impressive scale of the operation that was set up to care for oiled wildlife, nor the processes followed to carefully treat the birds (and the variety of troubleshooting necessary along the way). It was great to have these insights shared.

Local bird sighting highlights at the Manawatu Estuary over recent months have included a Great Knot which stayed around for about a week in November; a possible sighting of an American Golden Plover by Sav Saville in December (causing great discussion on BirdingNZ); the reliable presence of Gull-billed Terns; and a more recent delightful Curlew Sandpiper, again first reported by Sav.

As a region we are now looking forward to keeping the momentum going and expanding our activities. I am always keen to hear from anyone wishing to be involved in this planning.

CRAIG STEED

Wellington

The Wellington region has a long history, dating back at least 40 years, of conducting periodic bird surveys. They include surveys of the Wellington Harbour, Pauatahanui Inlet, Zealandia and Kapiti Island. In January, the last of a three-year series of 5-minute bird counts was completed on Kapiti Island. There are six count lines each with 10 or 11 count stations. Every four months each count line was monitored by six different OSNZ members. Previous series of Kapiti counts have monitored the effects of removal of possums and later rats. The principal reason for carrying out the latest series of counts was to determine whether or not increasing the number of visitors to Kapiti has had any affect on birds. At the February meeting Colin Miskelly, who organised the latest series of counts, described a preliminary analysis of the three years' counts focusing on the recent invasion of Kapiti by stoats, to see if there had been any effect on the bird populations. Colin described the results of the counts of Saddlebacks, which were likely to be the species most vulnerable to stoat predation. Three stoats have been caught on Kapiti, a female and two of her offspring. Given the reproductive cycle of stoats it would appear that the first stoat arrived after the latest series of counts had started. There was no evidence from the counts of a decline in Saddleback numbers; an indication that the stoats have had a minimal impact on the bird population on Kapiti.

February's meeting also included two other reports of bird surveys in the Wellington Region. Ian Armitage summarised his recent 5-minute counts in the Catchpool Valley in the Rimutaka Forest Park. This is an area of interest as it has had predator control and is adjacent to forest where Brown Kiwi have been successfully released. Uncommon birds Ian recorded included New Zealand Pipit, parakeet and Long-tailed Cuckoo. Susan Waugh presented a summary of counts organised by Rod Orange and Stephen Sharp on Matiu/Somes Island

in the middle of Wellington harbour. Over many years this island has been replanted with native plants by Forest and Bird members. During the three years of counts 37 different species of bird were recorded, including increasing numbers of the introduced Red-crowned Parakeets.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

At our annual barbecue held in Dovedale courtesy of the Melville family we welcomed back Stuart Wood after a long absence overseas.

Chris Petyt visited Bird Island (off Collingwood) in late December and found gulls and terns in a mixed colony with chicks of all ages from fledged to newly-hatched and birds still on eggs, suggesting some nests had been washed away and birds re-nested. About 150 White-fronted Terns 250 Red-billed Gulls and 30-40 Black-billed Gulls were present. Chris also reported on a number of visits with Friends of the Cobb, and their ongoing predator control in the Cobb catchment. A Weka with four chicks was resident near the dam cottages and a Great-spotted Kiwi nest/roost site was located, but on nightfall no Kiwi were heard.

Other Golden Bay news included the sighting of a Brown Skua near the base of Farewell Spit, and in a friend's garden at Rangihaeata three separate Shining Cuckoo chicks were being reared by Grey Warblers. In Westhaven Inlet there was a reliable sight account of a Spotless Crake.

In December Pauline Samways surveyed Pied Shag nest sites around the Motueka River Mouth and coastal sections. Four nests remained in one tree where previously a dozen occupied the site, but a large roost remained on Jackett's Island. Royal Spoonbill numbers were building up again after nesting, with 33 in the Motueka Estuary.

Willie Cook was handed the remains of a Spoonbill from the Waimea Estuary; head and legs only with colour bands. It proved to be a bird banded in the Wairau Lagoons by Bill Cash in 1995. The bird had not been recorded in the intervening 17 years.

Pomarine and Arctic Skuas were very evident and active this summer harassing White-fronted Terns feeding on shoal fish from Kina round to the Boulder Bank. The record-breaking rainfall in December, plus high tides, wreaked havoc on nesting shorebirds around the Waimea Estuary. Variable Oystercatchers nesting on the western end of Rabbit Island failed to rear a single chick, but those on the eastern end fared a little better. The Caspian Tern colony made a promising start with the usual number of eggs (about 60), but only 17 chicks survived the deluge and high tides to make banding possible.

The February wader census had excellent conditions on Farewell Spit. Amongst the less common birds seen were one Whimbrel, 12 Pacific Golden Plovers, 12 Red-necked Stints, three Grey Plovers, four New Zealand Dotterels, one Lesser Sand Plover, two Sanderlings, and one Wrybill (the latter species is not commonly seen here).

We were privileged to host Jesse Conklin and Yvonne Verkuyl as our guests for the February meeting. Both spoke about their respective research projects. Yvonne, from the Netherlands, is Chair of the International Wader Study Group. She has been involved in the study of Ruff migration in Europe, and the shift in populations from the Netherlands to parts of Russia; a problem linked to current dairy farming practices. The male Ruff in its breeding plumage is unique with no two birds identical and, while they are colour-banded for study, it is possible to recognise each bird without the bands.

Jesse is well known for his extensive study of migrating Bar-tailed Godwits in the Manawatu Estuary. He brought us up to date with some astonishing records from his data-loggers on Bar-tailed Godwits and their time-critical return to their Alaskan nesting grounds. Satellite images showed the receding snow/ice and the arrival of birds onto the clear ground were pinpointed within 100 km accuracy. The birds have a very short time 'window' to complete a successful breeding cycle.

DON COOPER

Canterbury

Our October speaker was busy in the North Island assisting with bird recovery after the *Rena* disaster. Jan Walker filled the breach with a talk on her recent trip to the Arctic with Heritage Expeditions. The voyage included a search for breeding Spoon-billed Sandpipers in the never-before-surveyed Olyutorsky Bay area. Two breeding birds were found, one with a nest of three eggs, giving rise to hopes that this area holds a larger breeding population.

In November Bruce McKinley explained DoC's extensive work studying the reproductive success of Yellow-eyed Penguin in Boulder Bay, Otago Peninsula. The question is whether birds fledged there return to continue the breeding cycle. Land-based reasons for breeding failure include heat, diphtheria, predation and erosion of easy access to nesting sites. At sea birds failed to breed due to being caught in gill nets, barracuda slicing the birds' feet and sealions patrolling the

beach. DoC is working to improve counts, improve habitats by planting hardy coastal species, predator control, and managing visitors by closing the beach during the breeding season. More work needs to be done managing the marine system.

In November members assisted with the Ashley River survey undertaken by the Ashley River Rivercare Group. Braided River Aid Inc. attempted a survey of the Upper Waimakariri for the first time since 1966. Due to a major flood immediately prior, all that could be managed was a reconnaissance of parts of the river. No Wrybills were seen above the railway bridge opposite Mt Horrible, the two most common shorebirds being scattered pairs of Banded Dotterels and two colonies of Black-backed Gulls. The stretch between the railway and Mt White Bridges was not inspected but from Mt White Bridge down to the Gorge there were indications of better bird numbers, including Wrybills. Russell Lupin infestation is spreading rapidly and is a definite cause for concern. A full survey of the area is on the agenda for 2012.

The usual Wader Count of Lake Ellesmere was followed by the Christmas barbecue at Cherry and Colin Hill's farm. They have been hosting this event for many years and we relax in beautiful surroundings and dine on succulent meat produced on the farm. Thank you Colin, Cherry and family for your warm hospitality.

It has long been debated whether Royal Spoonbills breed at Lake Ellesmere. At the end of December this was confirmed when an eel fisherman took Bev Alexander, Sheila Petch and Jan Walker by boat to inspect maimais on the lake. He even entered the water to push the boat close enough for them to see four eggs in one nest. There were apparently other nests offshore along the western edge of the Lake.

Recently large numbers of Hutton's Shearwaters have been seen offshore from the Waipara River Mouth to Kaitorete Spit. In late December Andrew Crossland reported a new breeding species for Christchurch after a Black-fronted Dotterel pair was seen with a recently-fledged juvenile at Beacon Street Wetland (Brooklands) and in late January he found Australasian Crested Grebes successfully nesting in the city near the airport at Clearwater Golf Resort and the Roto Kohatu lakes. At least seven pairs of Yellow-eyed Penguins have large chicks in various bays on Banks Peninsula. If the number of Shining Cuckoos seen and heard over the past few months is anything to go by, they will have had a bumper year.

ANN SHERLOCK

Otago

One of the highlights of our birding year was a weekend field trip to Awarua Bay in Southland, when 21 participants had the pleasure of perfect conditions for close-up views of Bar-tailed Godwits, Knots, Red-necked Stints, Turnstones and half a dozen New Zealand Dotterels, whilst also spotting a couple of rarities: Terek Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper. Thanks to Southland members of OSNZ for their expert guiding.

Recent indoor meetings have included talks on our local Fairy Prions, and the birds of the Subantarctic islands. We had a hands-on session with eBird and have been enthused to use this tool to record our birding. We finished the year with dinner at the Albatross Centre and a talk by Neville Peat on his insights into the pioneering work of Lance Richdale on seabirds.

The study of New Zealand Falcons nesting in exotic forest near Dunedin has continued, and movement-activated cameras have been used to monitor some nests. During November and December we used acoustic recorders to detect Bittern booms in the Waiholo/Waipori wetlands and at least four birds were detected. The seasonal count at Hawksbury Lagoon continued.

Otago members have been out and about over the summer and have had some good birding experiences: several Black-fronted Tern colonies on the Clarence River; White-fronted Tern and Red-billed Gull colonies, Turnstones and a Reef Heron at Kaikoura; a Rock Wren nest in Gertrude Valley; a count of 82 Australasian Crested Grebes at Lake Hayes; a Shining Cuckoo being fed by a pair of Grey Warblers; two Arctic Terns at Aramoana; about a dozen Arctic Skuas off the Otago coast; a Black Stilt mating with a Pied at Brighton Swamp; a Siberian Tattler along with the Bar-tailed Godwits at Blueskin Bay; and successful nests of translocated South Island Robins at the Orokonui Ecosanctuary.

MARY THOMPSON

Regional Reps and What's On



This information can now be found on the OSNZ website, www.osnz.org.nz

For regional reps click 'contact us' then 'regional reps'. For what's on click 'events' then 'regional'. Regional newsletters with more information on what is happening around the country are available for download by clicking 'publications' then 'regional newsletters'

Survey Details

Physical address where you did the survey:

Number & Street

Suburb

Town/City

Postcode

Region

Description of survey area (please tick one)

Urban garden Urban Park Urban School

Rural garden Rural Park Rural School

List major trees in your garden (on separate sheet)

Area searched for birds (exc.birds flying overhead)

Up to 100 m² (e.g. up to 10x10m)

100-200 m² (e.g. up to 10x20m)

200-400 m² (e.g. up to 20x20m)

400-600 m² (e.g. up to 20x30m)

More than 600 m²

How many took part? Adults Children (<18)

Contact Details

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

First name

Surname

Tel

Email

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

Please do the survey for 1 hour only,
sometime between 30 Jun & 8 Jul 2012

Survey Date Start Time

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

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

Other species counted during the hour (give number)

Do you feed birds? (please tick) No Yes

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

Seeds Sugar-water Other (please describe)

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

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

Please re-fold leaflet and tape along edge before posting

Fix
Stamp
here

Eric Spurr
New Zealand Garden Bird Survey
145 Ashley St
Rangiora 7400



Photographs by:
 Andrew Walmsley
 Tom Marshall
 Craig MacKenzie
 Brian Massa
 Roger South
 www.istock.com

New Zealand  Aotearoa
GARDEN BIRD
SURVEY 2012

30 June - 8 July

Landcare Research and the Ornithological Society are asking for help again this year in spotting birds in New Zealand gardens. Taking part is easy – spend just 1 hour (that’s 1 hour only) sometime between **30 June and 8 July** looking for birds in your garden, parks or school grounds. For each species you detect, record the largest number you see (or hear) at any one time. Please *count* not just tick the species you observe. The easy to follow guide below will help you identify most birds you are likely to see.

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

www.osnz.org.nz
 Click on link to Garden Bird Survey

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

Bird Guide (not to scale)

Small birds
 15cm or less

Medium-sized birds

Large birds



House Sparrow (m)



House Sparrow (f)



Yellowhammer (m)



Yellowhammer (f)



Eastern Rosella



Tui



Kereru



Greenfinch (m)



Greenfinch (f)



Goldfinch



Dunnock



Song Thrush



Bellbird



Magpie



Chaffinch (m)



Chaffinch (f)



Redpoll



Fantail



Myna



Starling



Red-billed Gull



Silvereye



Welcome Swallow



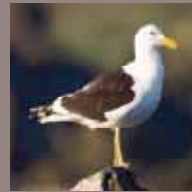
Grey Warbler



Blackbird (f)



Blackbird (m)



Black-backed Gull

