



Southern *Bird*

No. 51 September 2012 • ISSN 1175-1916

*The Magazine of the Ornithological
Society of New Zealand*

**BIRDING THE BULLER
RAPTOR WATCHING
IN EASTERN SPAIN
ORANGE-FRONTED
PARAKEET IDENTIFICATION
IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS**



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QUOTATION

The nightingale has a lyre of gold,
The lark's is a clarion call,
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,
But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,
And we in the mad, spring weather,
We two have listened till he sang
Our hearts and lips together.

The Nightingale Has a Lyre of Gold by William Ernest
Henley (1849-1903)

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COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover: Pied Shag

Back Cover: Saddleback

Both photos by Karl Crossley

Publisher

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Email: osnzeo@slingshot.co.nz Website: www.osnz.org.nz

Edited by Nick Allen, 11 Seagrave Place, Ilam, Christchurch 8041. Phone (03) 358 5994, fax (03) 358 5997, Email southernbird@osnz.org.nz

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

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



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The annual conference was held in Tauranga over the weekend, 1st to 4th June. My congratulations go to Eila Lawton and her team from the Bay of Plenty who organised a very successful event held in a venue which was very suitable for our purposes.

The team had also arranged for wonderful weather for the field trips which is not something that had been achieved for other conferences in the recent past.

The range of speakers and topics through the two days of scientific papers was varied and included something to interest everybody. The opportunity to network during breaks and in the workshop sessions meant that friendships could be formed or renewed and experiences shared.

The challenge has now been accepted by the Otago region to organise the next conference in Dunedin and members should note the 2013 Queens Birthday Weekend in their dairies as an event not to be missed. This will be headlined as The NZ Bird Conference.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting saw the end of the term of Keith Owen on the Council. Keith brought a high level of practical experience to the deliberations around the Council table. That input will be missed but we wish him well in his retirement.

Ian Armitage from Wellington was elected unopposed to replace Keith and we look forward to the benefit of Ian's business experience in future deliberations. Unfortunately Ian will be working overseas for some of the next 12 months but he will still be able to have an input via email. In future years he will be back in New Zealand for longer periods, when he will be more easily able to contribute.

There was still a vacant position on the Council, but following the annual meeting Sarah Jamieson volunteered to be co-opted to fill that vacancy. Council duly considered this application and ultimately approved Sarah's co-option for the next 12-month period.

Sarah has served since 2009 on the Council of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and we look forward to her different perspective during coming debates.

COMBINED RR'S MEETING

There was a very productive session when Council and the Regional Representatives met as a collective as part of the conference weekend. There was a genuine desire by both groups that the Society should consider options for future advancement in a co-ordinated manner.

A SWOT session was held, ably lead by Susan Waugh. The notes from that session will provide the basis for the Council to commence a revision of the strategic plan and it is hoped that this can be further considered by the membership leading towards the next Annual General Meeting.

WORLD SEABIRD UNION

Council had been advised of a proposal to establish a world seabird union as an outcome from the International Seabird Conference held recently. After consideration Council has agreed to apply to become a party to that union. Council agreed to appoint Graham Taylor as the Society's Representative. We look forward to the outcome of this organisation co-ordinating the various regional bodies throughout the world.

The Society also has an involvement through joint membership with the Australasian Seabird Group and Council believes that these collaborations will lead to better knowledge of the seabirds in the Southern Oceans.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE CHANGE

Further to my previous report where I advised that Jim Hamilton was replacing Helen Andrews as RR in Hawke's Bay there has now been a further change in that region. Jim has set a new record for the shortest term as Regional Representative as he has now retired and has been replaced by Bernie Kelly. Jim was a reluctant taker for the position and was only filling in so that activities could continue in that region, so we thank him for that. We welcome Bernie to our team.

It is clear from the reports and newsletters that I receive that most regions are active and have been busy in recent months with either the winter wader counts or the Royal Spoonbill census.

In the coming months I hope that regions can participate in the Caspian Tern and Pied Shag breeding surveys which are being organised by Mike Bell. The data gathered from these surveys will be useful in our collaboration with the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society to identify the key coastal bird areas. These breeding colonies will likely form the nucleus of many of the important bird areas that will be nominated through BirdLife International.

PHOTOGRAPHY ETHICS

The Society has been recently approached by a photographer who was wishing to develop a set of protocols for photographing wild birds. Following some initial discussions a small group of the Photographic Society is intending to pull together a protocol that can be considered by both organisations to minimise any potential future conflict caused by photographers approaching wild birds. While this is not currently a problem there is potential for conflict, particularly with the availability of digital cameras which could encourage people to cause unnecessary disturbance to the birds and to fellow bird watchers.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Discussions have been held between the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and Council regarding establishing a closer working relationship based upon the existing Memorandum of Understanding that was signed several years ago.

This is particularly relevant at this time as Forest & Bird, in association with BirdLife International, is beginning the process of identification of important bird areas in New Zealand in terms of international criteria. Further details relating to this programme are contained in an article in this edition of *Southern Bird* by Chris Gaskin.

The Ornithological Society has accumulated much data over the past 70 years and this information will provide the basis to assist Forest & Bird in identifying these important bird areas.

While the current Society data is contained in the latest atlas every member can help accumulate data by entering information into the eBird programme. Access to eBird is available via the Society's website and so far this year 2,073 individual check lists have been submitted covering one or more records for 215 species in New Zealand. Over the past four years nearly 120,000 records have been added.

This is a method where records of common species can be added which will enable population monitoring on a long term basis to be tracked. Now that spring is nearly here I urge all members to get out into the field and complete check lists as a normal part of their birding day around their homes or work places. Check the website: <http://ebird.org/content/newzealand>

It is only by recording many observations, that individual records can be pooled into a useful set of data that can be used for programmes such as the important bird area identification, and to assist in resource management queries.

Enjoy your bird watching while adding valuable information on even common birds.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

MINUTES OF THE 73RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NZ (INC) HELD AT THE BURETA MOTOR LODGE, TAURANGA ON 2ND JUNE 2012

ATTENDANCE:

The President, David Lawrie, opened the meeting and welcomed about 115 members and friends.

APOLOGIES:

Murray Williams, Ian Armitage, Detlef and Carol Davies, Janet Snell, Julia White, Stuart Wood, Barry Hartley, David and Ruth Crockett, Steve Sawyer, Paul Garner-Richards, David Wilson, Eliane Lagnaz, Rangi Zimmerman, Paula-Jean Pridham, Bill Palm, Lyn Duff, Brian, Sue and Biz Bell, Zoe Clifford, Nick Allen, Maureen Holdaway and Rosemary Heather.

Motion: That the apologies be accepted.
Mel Galbraith/Richard Holdaway (carried)

RECENT DEATHS:

Members rose to remember Chris Pryor, Alan Doig, Gordon Gorbey, Marj Davis, Barry Lawrence, Alan Wright, Arthur Dixon and L.S Rickard.

MINUTES:

Motion: That the minutes, as circulated, be taken as read and be approved.
Russell Thomas/Ben Bell (carried)
There were no matters arising.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Members had been provided with a copy of the report and statement of accounts as approved by the auditor. Bruce McKinlay spoke to these on behalf of Paul Garner-Richards. A copy of the report and accounts will be published in *Southern Bird*.

Motion: That the financial report and accounts be accepted.
Paul Garner-Richards/Bruce McKinlay (carried)

Motion: That John Khouri be re-appointed as auditor. Bruce McKinlay/Richard Holdaway (carried)

continued on next page...

MINUTES OF THE 73RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NZ (INC) HELD AT THE BURETA MOTOR LODGE, TAURANGA ON 2ND JUNE 2012

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President presented his annual report providing an update on Society activities and thanking those who had managed these for the membership. Special mention was made of the work of Jim Briskie in getting the publication of *Notornis* back on schedule. The report will be published in full in *Southern Bird*.

Motion: That the President's report be accepted. David Lawrie/Bruce Postill (carried)

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

It was noted that David Lawrie had been nominated for another three-year term as President and similarly Bruce McKinley as Vice President and Paul Garner-Richards as Treasurer. As there were no other nominations for these positions all three were duly elected. Keith Owen had retired from Council at the close of his term and Ian Armitage was the sole nomination for this position. The meeting acknowledged Keith's service and warmly welcomed all appointments. One position remains available for co-option.

MOTIONS NOTIFIED FOR THIS AGM

A motion from last year's AGM had been left to lie on the table. This was withdrawn by the proposer, Simon Fordham, so that his current (and replacement) motions could be heard.

Motion: 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. Simon Fordham/ Kevin Hayes

Simon and Kevin spoke in support of his motion and provided the meeting with written arguments in favour. They were particularly aware of the need to save on publication costs as well as encourage members who did not necessarily wish to receive a hard copy of *Notornis*. The President spoke against the motion and read a formal motion from the previous day's Council meeting recommending to the meeting that the motion be rejected. Nevertheless, Council had recognised the concerns behind this motion and the need to address these. Much of the ensuing debate focused on the relative costs of producing hard copy and electronic copies and what savings could be expected from a somewhat smaller print run. Others asked that the issues be worked through as part of a strategic review of Society business.

A show of hands recorded eight in favour and 87 against. The motion was lost.

Motion: That the annual subscription for this class of membership be set at \$49 Simon Fordham/ Kevin Hayes.

As the earlier motion had been lost this 2nd motion was logically withdrawn.

AWARDS

Paul Sagar was awarded the Fellowship of the Society with his citation read by Richard Holdaway. David Medway and Kerry-Jayne Wilson were each awarded the Robert Falla Memorial Award and their citations were read in their absence.

GUEST SPEAKER

Mike Britton, General Manager of Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society spoke about the history of his society, the close connections between our memberships and ways in which the two societies can work together to mutually advance our goals.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Votes of thanks were proposed to Eila Lawton and her team for organising a most enjoyable conference and to David Lawrie for his work as President and in successfully chairing a long meeting.

The next meeting will be during Queens Birthday weekend 2013 in Dunedin

The meeting closed at 5.50pm.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 2011

JOHN KHOURI

2/97 TE KAWA RD, ONE TREE HILL
P O BOX 8905, SYMONDS ST, AUCKLAND 1150
TELEPHONE : 579-7686 FAX : 526-4960 E-MAIL : johnkhouri@xtra.co.nz

TO THE READERS OF THE SPECIAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INC FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

Scope

I have reviewed the financial statements that provide information regarding the financial performance of the Society and its financial position as at Balance date.

My engagement instructions are to perform a limited assurance review which provides a level of assurance that is less than an audit engagement.

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for the preparation of financial statements which fairly reflect the financial position of the Society as at 31 December 2011 and the results of its operations for the year ended 31 December 2011.

It is my responsibility to express an independent opinion on the financial statements and to report my opinion to you.

Basis of opinion


A limited assurance review includes examination on a test basis, evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes a review of accounting systems and procedures to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatements, whether caused by fraud or error. Other than in my capacity as reviewer, I have no relationship with or interests in the Society.

Qualified Opinion

Control over cash income, prior to it being banked is limited, and there are no practical audit procedures to determine the effect of this limited control.

As a result of my review, I have concluded that nothing has come to my attention that would cause me to believe that the financial statements do not present a true and fair view of the operating activities of the Society during the year ended 31 December 2011 and its financial position as at 31 December 2011.

My review was completed on 11 May 2012 and my qualified opinion is expressed as at that date.

 (Signature)

John Khouri B Com, ACA (Name)

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2011		
	2011	2010
GENERAL ACCOUNT		
INCOME		
Annual Subscriptions NZ	\$48,462.64	\$48,059.29
Annual Subscriptions Overseas	\$15,308.75	\$9,510.00
Donations	\$2,943.00	\$3,505.50
Donations - Auction of Westerkov Books	\$0.00	\$6,267.90
Donation - T Gear Trust	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
Expenses Repayment - Canterbury Region	\$0.00	\$6,200.00
Sales General	\$506.08	\$228.87
Sales Kakapo Issue	\$110.43	\$126.95
Notornis & Southern Bird Refunds	\$4,299.00	\$4,080.00
Copyright Licensing Fund Payment	\$832.66	\$0.00
Interest	\$247.69	\$677.08
SUB TOTAL	\$77,710.25	\$79,055.59
Transfers from	\$1,893.00	\$1,962.00
1. Life Membership Reserve Annual Contribution	\$940.40	\$3,845.26
2. Projects Assistance Fund		
i. Royalties	\$0.00	\$11,000.00
ii. Grant Executive Officers Costs	\$2,500.00	\$17,000.00
iii. Grant Operating Costs	-\$20,006.01	\$0.00
3. Meadows Atlas Memorial Fund Closure	\$808.06	\$0.00
4. Library Auction Reserve Closure	-\$13,864.55	\$32,807.26
SUB TOTAL	\$63,845.70	\$112,862.85
TOTAL INCOME		
EXPENDITURE		
Audit	\$800.00	\$350.00
Annual Return Fee	\$44.44	\$8.89
Bank Fees	\$803.36	\$810.16
Computers & Software	\$0.00	\$321.22
Conference & Meetings Expenses	\$9,622.96	\$7,056.80
Donations to BNZ Save The Kwi	\$0.00	\$4.00
eBird Hosting & Maintenance	\$1,156.39	\$2,967.36
Executive Officer Contract Fees	\$17,709.60	\$29,348.00
Freight	\$217.39	\$0.00
General Expenses	\$13.04	\$286.67
Insurance	\$500.00	\$1,196.76
Internet	\$376.60	\$311.55
PayPal Fees	\$414.48	\$0.00
Postage	\$1,089.21	\$873.31
Postage - International	\$270.13	\$2,798.84
Postage - Notornis & Southern Bird	\$5,461.59	\$8,358.75
Printing - Notornis	\$15,250.10	\$19,219.00
Printing - Southern Bird	\$10,717.00	\$11,965.00
Printing & Stationery - General	\$4,330.00	\$3,338.72
Telephone	\$109.28	\$79.87
Website Domains Renewals	\$135.00	\$175.00
SUB TOTAL	\$69,020.57	\$89,749.90
Transfer to:		
1. Library Auction Reserve - Grant for Journals	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$69,020.57	\$90,749.90
Surplus/Deficit	-\$5,174.87	\$22,112.95
Plus Balance as at 1st January	\$5,787.05	-\$16,325.90
Balance as at 31st December	\$612.18	\$5,787.05

STATEMENT OF BALANCES AS AT 31st DECEMBER		2011	2010
MEMBERS FUNDS			
General Account		\$612.18	\$5,787.05
Life Membership Fund		\$19,968.36	\$18,927.54
Library Auction Reserve		\$0.00	\$1,346.29
TOTAL		\$20,580.54	\$26,060.88
RESTRICTED FUNDS			
Project Assistance Funds		\$80,648.78	\$93,280.33
Meadows Memorial		\$0.00	-\$19,684.37
Contracts Fund		\$126,299.80	\$126,299.80
TOTAL		\$206,948.58	\$199,895.76
TOTAL MEMBERS & RESTRICTED FUNDS		\$227,529.12	\$225,956.64
ASSETS			
Bank		\$26,282.18	\$31,218.92
Investments BNZ		\$166,898.74	\$164,031.64
Investments Auckland Mortgage Trust		\$9,800.00	\$11,400.00
Accounts Receivable		\$1,669.56	\$2,021.41
Library Account		\$41,863.00	\$40,163.00
GST		\$2,358.48	\$651.34
TOTAL ASSETS		\$248,871.96	\$249,486.31
LIABILITIES			
Accounts Payable		\$14,774.19	\$14,665.59
Subscriptions in Advance		\$6,568.00	\$8,863.50
TOTAL LIABILITIES		\$21,342.19	\$23,529.09
NET TOTAL OF ASSETS		\$227,529.77	\$225,957.22

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2011

General Accounting Principles
The general accounting principles recognised as appropriate for the measurement and reporting of earnings under the historical cost method of accounting have been adopted by the Society

Particular Accounting Policies

a. Subscription Income
Subscriptions in arrears have not been included in income.
Subscriptions in advance have been included in income.

b. Royalty Income
Royalties from the Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand (Heather & Robertson) are credited to the Project Assistance Fund.

c. Interest Earned
Interest earned by investments of funds have been credited to respective funds by apportioning the total interest received over Restricted and General Funds

d. Goods & Service Tax
Income and expenditure are stated exclusive of goods and services tax

LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND		2011	2010
INCOME			
Interest		\$1,733.82	\$1,273.30
New Life Members		\$1,200.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME		\$2,933.82	\$1,273.30
EXPENDITURE			
Transfer to General Funds		\$1,893.00	\$1,962.00
Surplus/Deficit		\$1,040.82	-\$688.70
Plus Balance as at 1st January		\$18,927.54	\$19,616.24
Balance as at 31st December		\$19,968.36	\$18,927.54
LIBRARY ASSET ACCOUNT			
Library Exchanges		\$1,700.00	\$1,700.00
Surplus/Deficit		\$1,700.00	\$1,700.00
Plus Balance as at 1st January		\$40,163.00	\$38,463.00
Balance as at 31st December		\$41,863.00	\$40,163.00
PROJECT ASSISTANCE FUND			
INCOME			
Royalties Penguin Field Guide		\$940.40	\$3,845.26
Sponsorship - T Gear Trust (for new website)		\$3,240.00	\$14,540.00
AGM Profit		\$0.00	\$2,951.00
Payment from BDO Investment		\$3,465.74	\$0.00
Interest		\$6,274.78	\$8,074.39
TOTAL INCOME		\$13,920.92	\$29,410.65
EXPENDITURE			
Regional Allowances		\$6,919.50	\$6,993.00
State of NZ Birds		\$0.00	\$3,430.00
AOC Scholarships		\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Wellington Zoo Banding Project		\$0.00	\$300.00
Otago Falcon Project		\$0.00	\$618.00
Dotterel Survey Expenses		\$12,915.94	\$0.00
Website Update & Training		\$754.89	\$0.00
Shorebird Counting Course - Miranda		\$521.74	\$0.00
SUB TOTAL		\$23,112.07	\$11,341.00
Transfers to General Account		\$940.40	\$3,845.36
i. Royalties		\$0.00	\$11,000.00
ii. Executive Officer Costs		\$2,500.00	\$17,000.00
iii. Operating Costs		\$3,440.40	\$31,845.36
SUB TOTAL		\$26,557.47	\$43,186.36
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$26,557.47	\$43,186.36
Surplus/Deficit		-\$12,631.55	-\$13,775.71
Plus Balance as at 1st January		\$93,280.33	\$107,056.04
Balance as at 31st December		\$80,648.78	\$93,280.33

MEADOWS ATLAS MEMORIAL FUND		2011	2010
INCOME			
Sales - Atlas		\$251.90	\$85.22
Sales - Atlas Data		\$975.00	\$664.13
Donations		\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME		\$1,226.90	\$749.35
EXPENDITURE			
Atlas Postage & Packaging		\$688.39	\$1,173.68
Atlas Sales		\$660.15	\$873.04
Atlas Storage		\$1,548.54	\$2,046.72
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$2,897.08	\$4,093.44
Surplus/Deficit		-\$1,670.18	-\$3,344.09
Balance as at 1st January		-\$15,684.37	-\$18,387.00
Transfer to General Account		-\$20,006.01	\$0.00
Balance as at 31st December		\$0.00	-\$19,684.37
LIBRARY AUCTION RESERVE			
Interest		\$0.00	\$80.85
Transfer from General Account		\$0.00	\$1,000.00
TOTAL INCOME		\$0.00	\$1,080.85
EXPENDITURE			
Journals		\$538.23	\$1,791.56
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$538.23	\$1,791.56
Surplus/Deficit		-\$538.23	-\$710.71
Balance as at 1 January		\$1,346.29	\$2,057.00
Transfer to General Account		\$808.06	\$0.00
Balance as at 31st December		\$0.00	\$1,346.29
CONTRACTS ACCOUNT			
Wader Surveys		\$0.00	\$700.00
TOTAL INCOME		\$0.00	\$700.00
EXPENDITURE			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$0.00	\$0.00
Surplus/Deficit		\$0.00	\$700.00
Balance as at 1 January		\$126,299.80	\$125,599.80
Balance as at 31st December		\$126,299.80	\$126,299.80

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2011

1. RESERVES
The Life Membership Reserve consists of life membership subscriptions and interest, less annual transfer of 10% of balance to General Funds

2. ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

Royalties Penguin	\$940.40	\$1,470.41
Atlas Sales	\$0.00	\$230.00
Interest BNZ	\$636.16	\$321.00
Southern Bird Advert	\$93.00	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$1,669.56	\$2,021.41

3. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Audit Fee Accrued	\$800.00	\$800.00
Annual Return Fees	\$44.44	\$43.48
Notornis & Southern Bird	\$13,624.00	\$13,234.00
Atlas Storage	\$60.75	\$93.15
Expenses	\$245.00	\$494.96
TOTAL	\$14,774.19	\$14,665.59

4. NOTORNIS & SOUTHERN BIRD REFUNDS

Notornis/Library Exchanges	\$1,700.00	\$1,700.00
Papers in Notornis	\$2,200.00	\$2,200.00
Southern Bird Adverts	\$399.00	\$180.00
TOTAL	\$4,299.00	\$4,080.00

5. PROJECT ASSISTANCE FUND GRANTS MADE

Regional Payments	\$6,919.50	\$6,993.00
State of NZ Birds	\$0.00	\$3,430.00
AOC Scholarships	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Wellington Zoo Banding Project	\$0.00	\$300.00
Otago Falcon Project	\$0.00	\$618.00
Website Update & Training	\$12,915.94	\$0.00
Dotterel Survey Expenses	\$754.89	\$0.00
Shorebird Counting Course - Miranda	\$521.74	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$23,112.07	\$11,341.00

6. CASHFLOW STATEMENT

A cashflow statement has not been prepared. The provisions for differential reporting under Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, specifically Exposure Draft No. 62 "Framework for Differential Reporting" allows entities of the size of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc be exempt from the completion of a Statement of Cashflow

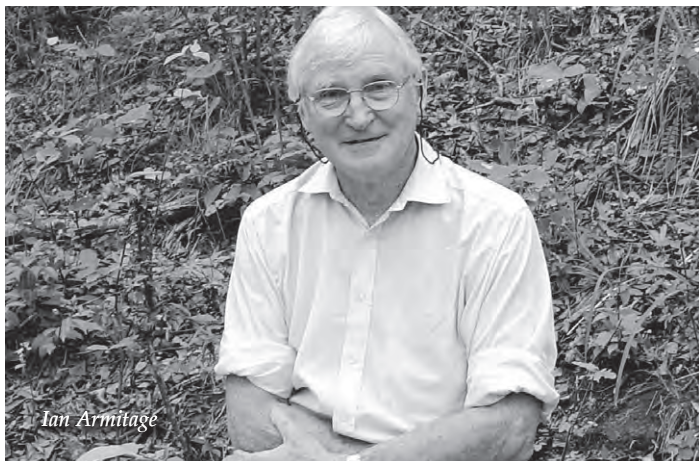
NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

IAN ARMITAGE

Ian has enjoyed an interest in birds from childhood and, being a Wellingtonian, three of the locations he best remembers watching and learning about birds in the 1950s were when tramping in the Taranaki and Rimutaka Ranges, and at the Pencarrow lakes near the entrance of Wellington Harbour.

A keen interest in birds and forests led Ian into a career in forestry, firstly with the former New Zealand Forest Service, working mostly in several North Island regions. During the 1980s Ian was appointed to advisory positions for forestry development and conservation in Samoa and in the South Pacific and South East Asia but since 1991 he has been an independent consultant in forestry development in several Asian countries, especially in China.

Ian joined the OSNZ in 2001, becoming a life member in 2004, and was the Regional Representative for the Wellington region for six years. He contributed to the organisation of the 2006 and 2011 Society conferences that were hosted by the Wellington Region, and led the organisation of the Wellington Harbour Bird Survey between 2008 and 2010. In another dimension involving birds Ian is a member of the National Oiled Wildlife Response Group for Maritime New Zealand and was actively involved in wildlife management and recovery operations in the *Rena* accident near Tauranga in late 2011 and early 2012.



Ian Armitage

FALLA MEMORIAL AWARD, A.T. EDGAR JUNIOR AWARD AND MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the OSNZ Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) by 31st December 2012. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs, or the Secretary secretary@osnz.org.nz.

The Awards Committee will consider all nominations, and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting

Further information on OSNZ award procedures is available from your RR or the OSNZ Secretary.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Subscriptions are due on 1st January. Those members with email will receive 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) will receive a renewal form as an insert with this issue of *Southern Bird* and *Notornis*. 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.

SARAH JAMIESON

Sarah has been working as an ornithologist since 1998 and completed her PhD at Simon Fraser University, Canada in 2009. Her thesis focused on factors that influenced breeding investment of female shorebirds nesting in the sub-Arctic. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow with Massey University and the Institute for Conservation Research of San Diego Zoo Global investigating the breeding ecology and habitat preferences of wild North Island Brown Kiwi. In her spare time she enjoys bird-watching, tramping, and volunteering with various conservation/environmental groups in Palmerston North, such as Reel Earth (environmental film festival), Just Zilch (sustainability group), Monarchs in the Park (creating wildlife in urban areas) and Forest & Bird's Kiwi Conservation Club (children's conservation group). Since 2009 she has also been a Councillor of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists- Société des Ornithologistes du Canada (the Canadian equivalent of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand).



Sarah Jamieson



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eBIRD AND NZBRN

Recently members who contributed to the Society-supported New Zealand Garden Bird Survey would have received a request to allow their data to be contributed to a scheme called NZBRN. This might have come as a surprise to you so this note is intended to supply some background. NZBRN is a scheme to collect observations of all taxa in New Zealand. It has similarities and differences to eBird, which is the key scheme for birds in NZ.

eBird has been assessed by the Scientific Committee and the Council of the Society as the preferred means to compile, store and analyse your bird records in New Zealand. eBird was chosen ahead of other schemes, such as NZBRN, for the following key reasons: eBird requires effort data to be included when submitting full checklists; eBird has data quality filters to check entry of records; and eBird has a system of post entry data checking.

Additionally eBird is supported by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which has an international commitment to supporting and leading the significant contribution that bird watchers can make to ornithology by providing unique opportunities for birders to participate in hands-on science and conservation efforts. eBird data are fed into international biodiversity data systems, such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). In this way any contribution made to eBird increases our understanding of the distribution, richness, and uniqueness of the biodiversity of our planet.

Uptake of eBird by Society members is promising with 1,904 checklists including 214 species being submitted so far this year. Society support to encourage more members to starting eBirding is available through presentations, and workshops at the AGM. RRs can get you started as well.

Council is engaged with the leaders of NZBRN to identify how we can best work together to complement each other's work. As this progresses we will continue to update you on progress.

In the meantime eBird remains the recommended tool for you, family members, and your friends to get the most out of your birding by submitting your observations into a structured database where they contribute to the national story of what is happening with our birds.

More information is at <http://ebird.org/content/newzealand/about/what-is-ebird>

BRUCE MCKINLAY

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Corey Annandale (Auckland); Paul Bennett (Nelson); Nichollette Brown (Auckland); Heather and Rebecca Davies (Marlborough); Brett Gartrell (Manawatu); Amy Greaves (Bay of Plenty); Tineke Joustra (Auckland); Jim Knight (Canterbury); Traian Leu (Canterbury); Blair McLeod (Bay of Plenty); Em Oyston (Otago); Michael Paviour (Waikato); Colleen Philip (Canterbury); Tim Quinnell (Waikato); Alvin Setiawan (Otago); Lara Shepherd (Wellington); Genevieve Spargo (Wellington); Terry Toohill (Northland); Juliana Venning (Wairarapa); Connie Wright (Otago); Jingjing Zhang (Auckland); Rangi Zimmerman (Northland).

We also thank the following members for their generous donations to the Society:
Bill Campbell; W A Watters.

BEACH PATROL SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT

The 2010 results of the OSNZ Beach Patrol Scheme have just been published in *Southern Bird* (issue 49 (March 2012) p7). This will include totals for all the bird species recovered in that year. The reason for the delay of 12 months in finalising the data is because of the time taken to check and send results to me. Also factors such as banding details and identification queries take time. The results could be published earlier but they would be less complete.

In 2008 the online Beach Patrol form was introduced and most returns are now emailed. Advantages are that there is no postal cost and the contributor retains a copy.

The most obvious occurrence in 2011 was the unprecedented wreck of prions on the west coast of the North Island, providing some extraordinary figures. No doubt these will be analysed when all the records have come in. The wreck of the *Rena* in the Bay of Plenty resulted in significant seabird deaths but these have not so far appeared on the records. I assume that the numbers are being recorded and will be published some time in the future.

The figures as at 1st April 2012 are:

Cards or forms returned: 297 Birds: 44,278 Kilometres: 1,674

Twelve cards recorded over 1,000 birds with the top score being one patrol of 8,296 birds. One patrol averaged over 1,600 birds per kilometre.

Many thanks to all the observers who reported their findings. The data are being used for studies of seabird mortality and distribution.

LLOYD ESLER

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/>

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CASPIAN TERN CENSUS

This spring will be the second year of the National Caspian Tern Census. Counts from last season are trickling in, but unfortunately coverage has not been complete so it is difficult to compare with previous counts. A total of 542 breeding pairs were recorded from 20 colonies (see Table 1 on next page). Even correcting for regions that recorded colonies, but didn't count them, it would appear that Caspian Tern numbers are in decline. As such, it is vital that we get full coverage during the last two years of this survey.

This will be the third survey of breeding numbers and distribution of Caspian Terns, with counts occurring at twenty year intervals (1971-75, 1991-1995 and now 2011-2013). Huge changes have occurred in New Zealand during this last interval, with increased coastal development, increased four wheel drive ownership and greater access to many beaches. As a result, Caspian Terns may be a sensitive indicator of how such changes are impacting shorebird species more generally. We need the numbers, however, which makes it imperative that we survey thoroughly as many areas as possible, even ones where the terns no longer breed; negative results are important in this case.

Thanks to everybody, and to those regions that have taken the time to survey colonies. With several regions undertaking repeated counts at their colonies, together with first-time counts elsewhere, we hope to get a clearer picture of what changes are occurring, if any. If you are interested in being involved, or know of breeding Caspian Terns in your birding patch please contact your RR. This survey is being co-ordinated in each region by the RR, and they have the methodology and recording forms available.

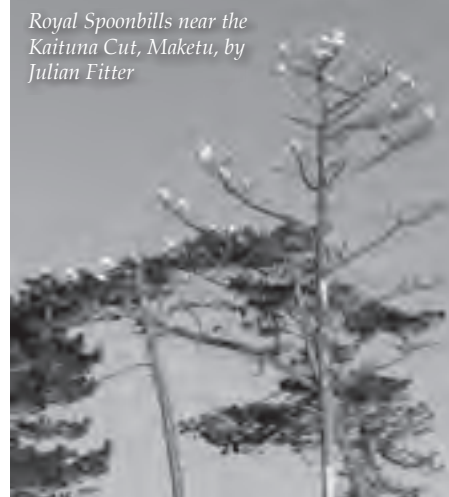
I look forward to receiving your returns over the summer.

MIKE BELL

Caspian Tern Survey Co-ordinator

Table 1. Breeding pairs and number of colonies of Caspian Tern in surveys

	1971-75		1991-95		2011		Notes
	Pairs	Colonies	Pairs	Colonies	Pairs	Colonies	
Far North	258	3	121	2			
Northland	49	2	85	3	6	2	Colonies known, but not counted
Auckland	337	2	315	3	57	2	
South Auckland	164	2	105	3	241	3	
Waikato	0	0	22	1	?	1	Colonies known, but not counted
Bay of Plenty	73	2	151	1	50	4	
Volcanic Plateau	7	0	6	0			
Taranaki	0	0	0	0			
Wanganui	1	0	2	0	0	0	
Hawkes Bay	0	0	12	1			
Wairarapa	48	1	38	1	11	1	
Marlborough	53	1	40	1	23	2	
Nelson	212	2	172	2	123	3	
Canterbury	9	0	43	1	3	1	Colonies known, but not counted
West Coast	6	0	6	0			
Otago	1	0	1	0			
Southland	48	1	80	1	28	1	
TOTAL	1266	16	1199	20	542	20	



Royal Spoonbills near the Kaituna Cut, Maketu, by Julian Fitter



Looking for Orange-fronted Parakeets on Tuhua/Mayor Island by L Millar

WHY YOU SHOULD COME TO CONFERENCE 2013

The Bay of Plenty team put on a great conference at Queen's Birthday weekend – we have the feedback to prove it. Nearly 150 people, mostly OSNZ members, turned up for three days of talks, workshops and field trips. But that means over 1,000 OSNZ members didn't come. Some won't have been able to make the conference this year, but others may not know what they are missing. So I asked people to tell me why this annual event is truly such a highlight of the year.

The first two days were a mixture of presented papers (oral and posters) and practical workshops. This year, the AGM was embedded in Saturday afternoon rather than after dinner. On the third day, there was a choice of field trips to the birding hotspots of the area. There were two convivial dinners and time to chat at lunch and teatime, and an art exhibition.

What follows is an edited, stitched together, selection of the feedback received.

THE PRESENTATIONS

I have not been a member for very long and this was my first conference but the quality of the speakers and the topics were absolutely brilliant, from the touchy-feely stuff to hard data. (The "Water off a duck's back" talk was brilliant.) I enjoyed the wide range of topics, and the discussions that were started from them. There were two days of papers and workshops, not just one (it costs a fair bit to travel these days so just one day of papers would make it marginal).

Listening to the scientific presentations and also getting to meet people who up until now have just been used as references on my university reports. Gaining insight and new ideas on how to approach current and future work, and not least just having the opportunity to ask questions to some of New Zealand's top ornithologists over a cup of coffee is just invaluable.

THE WORKSHOPS

I like the availability of workshops so that people can take home something learnt not just new information.

The workshop I attended was a good introduction to shorebird ID. Really great to have practical skills taught like mist netting, more of this, please. A chance to establish contacts with people with similar interests, learn something new and perhaps kick off a new project

THE FIELDTRIPS

If you just wanted a pleasant day out it was a lot of fun. If you wanted to see birds - there were plenty. Of course we didn't see the Blue Ducks, but at least now the visitors to the area know where to look next time they are here. A chance to explore new areas, which you wouldn't otherwise visit. The excursion to Mayor Island which will be a memory for life. Field trips always create opportunities for in-depth conversations about diverse subjects, building friendships and just getting to know other people.

It helped that it didn't rain, of course.

MAKING CONTACT

Meeting OSNZ members new and old is so enjoyable and an important part of a far flung organisation. Never enough time to catch up with everyone but the two days made that a bit easier this year. In addition to the talks the important thing about the conference is that it allows time for talking with others because this is where friendships are made and maintained, information is passed on, and ideas/projects are spawned. It was definitely a better idea to have the AGM on the Saturday afternoon rather than in the evening when everyone is wanting to relax and socialise. The quiz was also good fun.

I got to talk to a lot of people and not exclusively about birds; all sorts of stuff, in fact. How to feed a male Toutouwai and possibly an invitation to be part of a three day survey out on Farewell Spit in July.

KEEPING THE FAITH

What I got from the conference was a buzz about the positive state of the society and people enjoying birds and birders' company. Sometimes as a Councillor I and others struggle away with problems and it all seems a bit unreal but when you go to a weekend like that when everybody is determined to have a good time it makes it all worth while.

I would attend OSNZ conferences any time again - it's the only place where so much knowledge and up-to-date information on NZ birds gets shared in such a short time. It's also the perfect opportunity to connect and meet people that are interested in our birds - from basic bird watchers to top ornithological scientists! Just brilliant!!!

I did not hear any grumbles from anybody, so that is good sign.

Conference 2013 is in Dunedin and will be even better than 2012. It would be great to see you there.

But there is one more comment - Perhaps it might be worth doing a survey through Southern Bird asking the non attendees why they don't feel tempted to come along.

Now is the time to tell the Otago team what would bring you to Dunedin. Send a note to the editor or an email to conference@osnz.org.nz.

Thanks too to all those who made suggestions for improvement. These have been passed on to the 2013 team.

EILA LAWTON

RR Bay of Plenty/Volcanic Plateau

BIRDING THE BULLER

Most of the birding interest in the Buller District, which comprises roughly the northern third of the West Coast Region of the South Island, is near or on the coast. Most of the district is clothed in beech forest and the coast itself is spectacularly wild and rugged, being directly exposed to the prevailing westerlies.

Despite the onshore winds truly pelagic birds are seldom seen from the coast, with distant views of albatrosses being the norm. Exceptions are the two species of tubenoses that breed in the district. The Westland Petrel only breeds in the forest inland of Punakaiki, doing so over the colder months of the year from March to November. Flocks gathering over the sea before flying inland can be seen just before dusk from places such as the Pancake Rocks. Then places such as the Punakaiki River Mouth area can be good places to see them fly inland as it gets dark. They breed in a special protection area, requiring a permit to visit their colonies. Elsewhere at headlands such as the Kohaihai Bluff (north of Karamea) and Cape Foulwind (south of Westport) there are mainland colonies of Sooty Shearwaters.

Estuaries of any size are scarce, with just three holding reasonable populations of birds, and therefore of interest to birdwatchers. Luckily (or maybe due to scarce flat land being there to allow settlement) two are adjacent to the major population centres of Karamea (Otumahana Lagoon) and Westport (Orowaiti Lagoon). The remaining one, the Okari Lagoon is difficult to work due to a lack of access. All attract Bar-tailed Godwits and oystercatchers. The Otumahana Lagoon also attracts small numbers of Red Knots, and sometimes Whimbrels and other wading birds. Banded Rails reach their southern limit on the South Island here, and Fernbirds are a common inhabitant of its marshier edges.

To me the forests hold the greatest attraction in this area, however. There is an almost unbroken swath from the Kahurangi National Park in the north to Paparoa National Park and Victoria Forest Park in the south. The vast majority of the area is administered by the Department of Conservation, though unfortunately predators are only controlled effectively on a small part of it. One particular jewel is the Oparara Basin north-east of Karamea. Here tall beech forest escaped the chainsaw, which was wielded just to the west, and whisky-coloured rivers and streams flow through a fairy-tale land of caves, natural arches and under epiphyte laden boughs. The fairy-tale effect is enhanced by names taken from Tolkien stories. Thus it is possible to walk to Moria Gate Arch, through an avenue of Treebeards' relatives. Trapping has been under way for many years to protect and increase a population of Blue Ducks, though a lot of luck is needed to see them from the tracks. A greater chance can be had by booking on a kayaking trip. These only run in the summer and early autumn, however. Robins, Tomtits and Weka are common in the basin, and Kaka, Kea and Yellow-crowned Parakeet are present in smaller numbers. Great Spotted Kiwi are also present, as they are over a large proportion of the Buller's forests and alpine areas, but rarely reported. By taking an organised trip to Honeycomb Cave former inhabitants of the area – the bones of moa, Kakapo and Haast's Eagle can also be seen, as well as very alive huge cave spiders and weta.



Another favourite forest is that inland of Punakaiki, which starts off near the coast as Nikau-studded scrub, then mixed forest including some of the southernmost Northern Rata and eventually becomes tall Red Beech forest. The best habitat for forest birds is along the Inland Pack Track, with a similar range of species to the Oparara, though the larger parrots are generally absent or very scarce. A particular feature to be wary of are the many sinkholes, some right next to the track. Walking the track at night in search of Great Spotted Kiwi is not a good idea for this reason.

For non-birding visitors the Buller District offers numerous breathtaking scenic views. Most visitors take in the strange geological formations and blowholes of the Punakaiki Pancake Rocks.

Another popular sight is the Fur Seals and large breakers of Cape Foulwind. Karamea is a real end-of-the-road place, even boasting the Last Resort among a small handful of other comfortable places to stay and dine. The Heaphy Track continues up the coast from the end of the road at the Kohaihai River. Westport has a museum devoted to the area's coal mining history, and places such as Charleston and Reefton have attractions featuring their gold mining heritage. Climbing through the clouds it is also possible to visualise what life would have been like for Denniston Rose. DoC have recreated the top of the railway incline here, and on a fine day the views over the Tasman Sea are unbeatable.

NICK ALLEN

REVIEW

Where to find Birds in Far North New Zealand, by Detlef Davies.

Published by the author, Kaitia, 2011.

ISBN 978-0-473-19890-9. 82 pages, colour throughout. \$25.



Written by long-time OSNZ regional rep for the Far North, Detlef Davies, the author's extensive knowledge of the area is readily evident in this guide to 40 sites in the Far North region, plus five areas covered by pelagic trips. Topographical maps near the

front of the book visually show the general location of each of the sites, and colour sketch maps aid the site descriptions for eight sites. The text, from my experience of the area, is accurate, up-to-date, and provides helpful tips on what birds are likely to be present, and for some species where, at that site, they are best looked for. The text is liberally interspersed with photographs very ably taken by the author (with two exceptions only) of birds likely to be seen at the site or of the site itself. A problem, probably due to the paper used for publication, is the 'muddy' reproduction of some photos.

A list of birds recorded in the Far North region is provided after the site descriptions, giving the population status from common to rare of each species. This is followed by the descriptions of 10 sites in the Auckland and Northland regions that can easily be visited en route to the Far North, a list of useful contacts and a code of conduct for birdwatchers.

This guide is essential reading for anyone with an interest in birds residing in or visiting the Far North region.

NICK ALLEN

Raptor watching IN EASTERN SPAIN

By Suzi Phillips



Dupont's Lark Cristian Jensen Marcet

On a high mountain pass in the Pyrenees, a massive Lammergeier cruises among the peaks towards our group of birders.

Someone shouts out the sighting "large raptor nine o'clock" and lunches are abandoned as everyone focuses on the bird. Excitement mounts as the Lammergeier's ID is confirmed, and *Gypaetus barbatus* flies our way.

This is my target bird for the trip, but on this day I'm battling illness and so both my camera and binoculars are sitting in the van. In those long seconds that stretch into minutes I can only stand and watch transfixed as the Lammergeier comes closer, gliding effortlessly on a thermal.

To our amazement it swoops to within 50 metres, circles around several times in front of the peak beside us, quartering the rocky slopes before slowly disappearing over a pass. Our guide Cristian's relief is evident. The pressure is off him - at least for this much requested bird.

Our Lammergeier was an adult and its long narrow, brown wings were about two and a half metres from long fingered wingtip to wingtip. Its head, neck and lower body were stained to an earthy orange from its mineral rich clay environment.

Lammergeiers are striking not just for their size and strong features, but also their ability to survive in this harsh environment. They are extraordinary raptors that inhabit the rugged mountain ranges of Africa and across Eurasia, occurring in small numbers in Spain - both in the Pyrenees and in the mountains of Extremadura in the west.

The Lammergeier was only one of many stunning raptors that we saw during our ten day exploration of Spain's mountains, plains and coastal wetlands in the eastern region of Catalonia.

On our first day heading inland near the Lleida steppes, we were watching two Little Bustards in wheat stubble when a young Red-footed Falcon rose out of a nearby hedgerow and landed in the field. It hopped around briefly before whirling up into the air at speed and disappearing north. Western Red-footed Falcons (*Falco vespertinus*), breed in western central Europe and migrate to southern Africa in winter. That sighting was completely unexpected in the area for the time of year - a hot summer's day in early June. Surprises like these are of course, the essence of birding.

The trip was not confined to raptors and every day we added to an extensive bird list that finally totalled nearly 180 species. Other alpine birding highlights in the foothills and mountain valleys of the Pyrenees included Bonelli's and Subalpine Warblers, Ring Ouzel, Red and Yellow-billed Choughs, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush and a stunning male Rock Thrush - to name just a few. We even hiked up a narrow mountain track to get a laid-back (literally!) glimpse of a tiny Wallcreeper high up on a sheer cliff face.

Raptors were always my main focus and we started our second day with a surprise sighting of a Eurasian Eagle Owl, (*Bubo bubo*) perched on a cliff ledge near Loporzano. Unfortunately it was too distant for a good photo, but in the telescope we good see its bright amber eyes peering back.

Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) were seen every day and Red Kites (*Milvus milvus*) were relatively common too with Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) and Griffon Vultures (*Gyps vulvus*) also putting in regular daily appearances. We had fleeting daily views of Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*) and of Common Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) with Short-toed Eagles (*Circetus gallicus*) often seen from the van as we crossed areas of steppe. There were also a few Hobbies and Peregrines seen, usually in river valleys where we often stopped for morning or afternoon refreshments.

There were plenty of other raptor highlights to come as we moved from our base in the Pyrenees to lodgings in the central steppes between Belchite and the Monegros region. In a beautiful stark steppe landscape of low scrub plains and striking metallic ochre and grey hills, we spent several days exploring parts of El Planeron, a 700 hectare reserve owned by the Spanish Ornithological Society.

There we had a glimpse of the almost mythically elusive Dupont's Lark - heard calling at dawn and seen later the next day. We also saw a variety of other larks including Thekla, Crested, Short-toed, Lesser Short-toed, and the large Calandra Lark. We saw other steppe dwellers too, including Little Owl, Stone Curlew, Black-eared Wheatear, Tawny Pipit, Hoopoes, and both Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse.

Nearer Monegros, we got lucky with good views of six Great Bustards feeding in wheat field stubble in the noon-day heat - up to around 33C most days. Those were large birds, but there were still plenty of



Lammergeier by Cristian Jensen Marcet



El Planeron by Suzi Phillips

raptors around to steal my attention - not least the group of hungry looking Griffon Vultures waiting to feed on carrion outside a pig farm.

Not far from the Great Bustards, we came upon a group of four Buzzards feeding on large numbers of juicy crickets in the stubble. On closer inspection, Cristian and fellow guide Jaume, identified one of the perched Buzzards as a Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*) - another rare find for the Spanish steppes. On the way back to our accommodation we stopped in a narrow rocky gorge by a reservoir lake and had distant views of a Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*) perched in a tree on the far side. We also saw Booted Eagles (*Hieraetus pennatus*) on several occasions in this area.

Another raptor highlight was a beautifully marked Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) out hunting over the steppe scrublands near El Planeron, and we had frequent views of the smartly attired Lesser Kestrel, (*Falco naumanni*) there too.

On our last day in the steppes we stopped in the late afternoon near a farm building on a ridge where the roof tiles had been adapted to encourage Lesser Kestrel to nest there. We had excellent views of Lesser Kestrel coming and going from the roof nests, as well as a pair of Rollers making use of some nest boxes, whose beautiful pale blue to turquoise plumage was lit up by the afternoon sun.

From that same spot, we looked across the valley to our right for stunning views of a pair of Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), that circled slowly up on the thermals, eventually rising to a height, closing their wings and disappearing from

view. Cristian also pointed out a Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), coursing a nearby wetland and delivered us a brief but exciting view of a beautiful large grey, Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*), perched in a copse of trees beside a farm building.

As we left the steppes the next day, we left most of our raptor watching behind us, as our destination, the Ebro Delta hosts very few raptors. On the way there though, we stopped at several wetlands and lakes. One such lunch stop featured a determined Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) chasing and catching large blue dragonflies over a wetland lake for much of the time we were there. Another stop revealed a lakeside nesting colony of Sand Martins with chicks waiting outside their bank burrows for the split-second feeding visit of a parent.

We spent the next three days based at the Ebro Delta where Cristian showed us the wetland and coastal birding riches of this area. My pick were close-up views of a Purple Heron, Collared Pratincole, Little Bittern, Audouin's Gull and chick, Redshank, and the elegant Greater Flamingos that stalked the ponds and inlets.

After we had all but exhausted the Ebro's birding highlights, we spent a day in the nearby Els Ports mountains with a visit to Mas de Bunyol, a vulture feeding station run by the dedicated Josep Ramon Moragrega, who has fed vultures there every day for the past 20 years.

We drove from the nearby village of Valderrobres to the feeding station and walked up a track through trees to a beautifully appointed hide, (that also has accommodation available), where we

had excellent views seated in front of large glass windows. The sky soon filled with hundreds of circling Griffon Vultures, and as Josep appeared pushing a wheelbarrow of offal, they began to land and devour the scraps.

Josep explained later that EU regulations now prevent farmers from leaving any animal carcasses outside, so many vultures that had previously relied on cleaning up countryside farm carrion, were now going hungry. His special license allows him to divert offal and other scraps from a slaughterhouse to feed the vultures under controlled conditions.

Four wheelbarrows later, there were about 400 Griffon Vultures fed or feeding (and one wary and very out-numbered 'little' Egyptian Vulture). After their meal, the vultures mostly walked sedately up to the pond to the right of our hide, for a drink. They then arranged themselves along the terraced take-off area before launching into the air and disappearing down the valley.

The trip was a good introduction to raptor watching in Spain, but I'm told it is just the beginning, because the serious raptor watchers time their visits for the spring and autumn migrations between Europe and Africa when Morocco and the Straits of Gibraltar are the places to be.

If you are interested in learning more about these trips, a good place to start is Audouin Birding Tours, a company based in Spain, and run by Cristian Jensen Marcet who has a formidable reputation as a birding guide. Go to www.audouinbirding.net

SUZI PHILLIPS



Purple Heron at Ebro Delta by Suzi Phillips



Sand Martin at lake near Alcaniz by Suzi Phillips

FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF THE ORANGE-FRONTED PARAKEET: AVOID THE PITFALLS...

As birders we all need to identify birds correctly but know we are going to occasionally get the odd one wrong, and separating Orange-fronted Parakeet (OFP) and Yellow-crowned Parakeet (YCP), in the field, has produced more than its fair share of errors. While most reports of OFP sent to me turn out to be YCP, the last thing I want is to discourage birders from looking. However, a major issue here is that no field guide is accurate enough. They describe the different colours of the frontal band but also allude to other unsubstantiated diagnostic traits and never mention the major issue around juveniles. Here I provide a guide to separating these two confusing species.

Running the Department of Conservation's OFP field team has led me to a single conclusion; there are only two field traits that will accurately separate these two species, and nothing else. These two traits are based upon the Type Specimen description, held in Paris, which in turn was genetically matched to wild endemic specimens.

So the first issue to get used to is that you cannot identify all parakeets you encounter. On the OFP programme we might identify 30 to 50% of all the parakeets we see in a day; on a good day 60 to 80%. Yet to any competent observer separating an OFP from a YCP, in good light and at close range, should pose few problems, as long as you obtain a clear view of the colour of the frontal band. It is simple; the OFP (Fig 1) has an orange frontal band, while that of the YCP is crimson (Fig 2). There are no colour intermediates.

The only other field trait that is entirely consistent is the colour of the rump patches (see Figs 1 & 2); two small patches of feathers (one either side) on the lower side of rump, usually obscured under the folded wing. Their position can be located by following the rear edge of the secondary and primary coverts. This field trait can be very useful, especially when observing birds at some height. Both rump patch and frontal band will always be the same colour, so the rump patch in the YCP is the same colour as the frontal band, i.e. crimson. The point here is that these two colours, orange and crimson, are really different and obvious in the field, but you do need a clear unambiguous view. So if you can see a clear colour in the frontal band or rump patch, you can assign the parakeet to species.

What of other field traits? No matter what the field guide says you cannot assign these two species using crown colour alone. Field guides should tell you the OFP crown (perhaps more correctly the fore-crown) is lemon-yellow and the YCP crown is golden-yellow. What they fail to highlight is it's totally impossible for any observer to consistently tell these apart. Try comparing the crown colours in Figures 1 and 2, and then imagine the birds 30 metres up a swaying beech tree in changing light conditions. I think you get my point. Even at very close range the colour difference is often just too fine to separate the two species. That there are many birds, of both species, that do have a crown colour obviously different, is indisputable. But prevailing light conditions, distance, length of time on the bird, your level of experience and no comparative bird near by will all influence your ability to assess crown colour. We have reached the conclusion that crown colour alone never provides an accurate or consistent guide to species, so do not use it.

The other field trait that is often cited as diagnostic is the colour of the contour feathering. If your field guide says something close to a cold blue-green for the OFP and a yellow-olive/green, (especially on the breast), for the YCP, then the guide has it right (compare figures 1 and 2). But, as with crown colour, the difference is too close to use as a consistent diagnostic field

trait. Field conditions, and especially your experience with the species, will impact severely on your ability to judge this very tricky difference between the two species. Field workers with a good deal of experience will be able to use this trait as an indication that the bird they are observing is of a particular species. And when you have been watching YCP for most of a day, the sudden appearance of a bird with blue-green contour feathering is obvious, and you almost certainly know that you have an OFP. But we never assign to species unless we can confirm the colour of the frontal band or rump patch. We have concluded, however, that contour feather colour is very close to species diagnostic, but only for observers with a high level of experience in working with both species. For the more casual birder this field trait must never be used as diagnostic.

Now we can consider the issue that causes most of the incorrect field identifications, the presence of juveniles. Recorded in all months, although more usually from February to May, juveniles are easy to identify as juveniles. They have little or no colour on the head (or rump patch), have flesh-pink legs and bill, may have residual down feathering and may have a short tail (see Figs 3 & 4). They are clumsy in their movements and their calls will be a squeaky version of the adult. The frontal band and rump patch will only develop colour in around two to three weeks.

Figures 3 and 4 show juvenile OFP at less than one week post fledging. The obvious observation is that neither parakeet exhibits a single diagnostic field trait. There are a few yellow feathers on the fore-crown and no sign of any frontal band colour; I can also tell you that there will be no colour on the rump patch. In short these two parakeets are unidentifiable to species and must be reported as such. The only way to assign species would be to wait and see which species feeds them.

Figure 5 shows a juvenile OFP around 3 to 4 weeks old. Note the extent of yellow crown feathering and the very thin, but definitely orange, frontal band. While the bill appears to be gaining its more adult grey/blue colour the legs are still pinkish (not obvious here). The legs are the last trait to develop adult colour (grey/black) and can remain pinkish for several months.

The type of bird in figure 5 is a regular sight and these are the ones that cause so many problems. With such a narrow frontal band it can be nearly impossible to confirm a diagnostic colour; a quick view, for a few seconds, and its gone. Juvenile YCP will appear just as in Figs 3 and 4 and by the same stage as Fig 5 they will also have a very narrow frontal band, but it will be crimson. Any parakeet with plumage like this, and they will be independent at this age, will require a great deal of care when trying to assign to species. A quick view of a juvenile YCP, in poor light with a minute frontal band, and you see 'something different' and start to think it might be an OFP. If you cannot see the colour of the frontal band you must not allot to a species.

Once they reach around 6 weeks plus (see Fig 6) both the frontal band and the rump patch will have full colour and the crown is usually complete. While the bird in Fig 6 ostensibly looks like an adult, its clean fresh plumage and flesh-pink legs readily gives it away as still a juvenile.

Finally, vocalisations will not separate these two species. Field experience suggests that limited differences can be detected, but research has found the differences overlap between the two species. There are no behaviours that will help with separation. Sexing parakeets in the field is possible, but experience is required. Males have longer bills (by an average of 0.7–0.8 mm); a bolder frontal band and larger yellow crown. They are overall larger (40–52 g) compared to females (30–41 g) and their plumage tends to appear brighter.



Fig 1. Male orange-fronted parakeet (Captive Unit Isaacs Wildlife Trust; Photographer J. Kearvell)

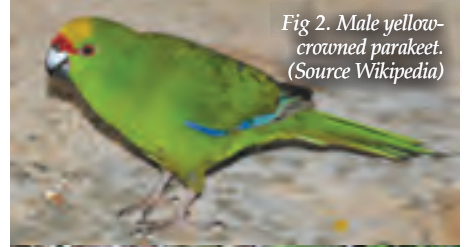


Fig 2. Male yellow-crowned parakeet. (Source Wikipedia)



Fig 3. Juvenile orange-fronted parakeet on day of fledging. (Hatodon Valley; Photographer Megan Farley).

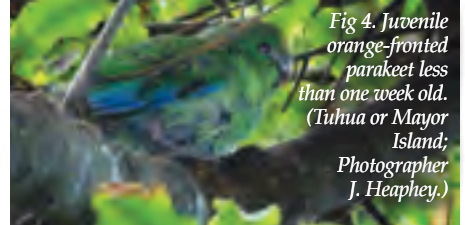


Fig 4. Juvenile orange-fronted parakeet less than one week old. (Tuhua or Mayor Island; Photographer J. Heaphey.)



Fig 5. Juvenile female orange-fronted parakeet less than 4 weeks old. (Maud Island; Photographer L. Ortiz-Catedral.)



Fig 6. Juvenile female orange-fronted parakeet, around 6 weeks old (Captive Unit Isaacs Wildlife Trust; Photographer S. Bernert.)

But beware of using mensural characters, as they all overlap.

To assign a parakeet to species follow this simple rule. Can I unequivocally verify the actual colour of the frontal band or rump patch? If you can answer yes then you can assign to species; but you must be 100% sure. If you answer no then you cannot assign to species and there is no other way that you can, so it must remain as unidentified. The only exception is if you see a juvenile being fed by an identifiable adult; but then you'll have the adult anyway! Also remember, plumage characteristics occasionally vary, especially during moult and long breeding seasons. To help further there will be a more detailed account in *Notornis* shortly, but minus the pretty pictures.

Remember, be 100% certain of the colour.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

BirdLife International's Important Bird Area (IBA) programme has for more than 30 years been successful at setting priorities and focusing actions for site-based conservation on land and in fresh waters, and is being adapted and extended to the marine environment. It is a global programme with over 11,000 IBAs identified worldwide. While none have been formally identified here in New Zealand, work is well under way to identify IBAs for seabirds through Forest & Bird, BirdLife's New Zealand partner. OSNZ will soon too become an official partner in the process as we work towards the release of the inventory of IBAs for New Zealand's seabirds in early 2013. Elsewhere, the approach has been to look at all bird populations in a country – i.e. land, shore, water and seabirds. For example, between 2005 and 2009 a network of 314 IBAs were identified in Australia covering 5.7% of its land area. Of those almost one third (98) have been designated at least partly for seabirds. In New Zealand, the initial focus is on seabirds.

Seabirds make up over half New Zealand's endemic and native bird species, and our approach clearly recognises New Zealand's rich and diverse seabird fauna. Also, because most seabirds are colonial breeders, it provides the opportunity to work with the IBA process within the New Zealand context before moving ahead to identifying IBA for our land, shore and water-birds. In fact, a number of IBAs recognised under the present work could equally have been recognised as IBA sites for species other than seabirds; for example, areas of braided rivers, estuarine, some coastal sites and quite a number of key islands.

An IBA is defined and delimited, as far as possible, as being: a) different in character, habitat or ornithological importance from surrounding areas; b) exists as a protected area, with or without buffer zones, or is an area that can be managed in some way for conservation; and c) an area which provides the requirements of the trigger species for which the site qualifies. IBAs can be identified on the basis of single or multiple species, or, could be a combination of multiple sites. Legal protection, management and monitoring of these crucial sites are all important targets for action, and many (but not all) bird species may be effectively conserved by these means.

So far, most IBAs for seabirds have been identified for those sites where they breed. Extending IBAs into the marine realm is important but poses both conceptual and practical challenges. Given the long periods that seabirds spend at sea, the multiple threats they face there and the vast distances they cover, identifying a network of priority sites for their conservation in the marine environment is critical to ensure their future survival. New Zealand has a rich marine environment. Our Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) is the World's 4th largest, and, with additional continental shelf extensions, is being made larger. This enormous resource area supports a diverse seabird fauna and 140 of the world's 350 seabird species occur here. Determining high-use areas and the identification of Marine IBAs will make a vital contribution to initiatives to gain greater protection and contribute to efforts to ensure sustainable management of New Zealand's EEZ.

DEVELOPING 'NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE' – HOW YOU CAN HELP (PART 5)

Members who attended the OSNZ conference in Tauranga in early June were shown a PowerPoint presentation on progress with developing the website www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz, which was a very effective way of creating awareness and building enthusiasm for the project. A version of the presentation has since been shown at several branch meetings, and posted on the OSNZ website. To find the presentation, open the OSNZ website (<http://osnz.org.nz>), click on 'more news' at the bottom right of the home page, and scroll down to the item 'New Zealand Birds Online' posted on 20 June 2012. To view the presentation, click on the 'PowerPoint presentation' hyperlink.

In the last update in *Southern Bird* no. 50, I requested assistance with writing the 457 species texts. I am delighted to report that all species have been assigned to authors, and the texts are flooding in. A total of 115 authors are contributing to the website; over 60% of the texts have been received, and the remaining texts are due by the end of September. I am particularly appreciative of the efforts of the seven authors who are each contributing ten or more species texts. Three authors (Ian Southey, Michael Szabo and myself) have already completed over 20 species texts each.

The next focus is building the library of digital images showing all plumages and life history stages of all New Zealand birds. After some frustrating delays, the prototype website is ready to receive images from photographers. This is a two-step process, with photographers first completing an image use agreement identifying what they are happy to see their images used for (email images@osnz.org.nz to receive a copy). Photographers can choose to have images on the website only, or select a variety of other options including publication in *Southern Bird* and other OSNZ publications, plus potential uses by Te Papa and the Department

of Conservation, which are partners in the website. Once we have received a signed image use agreement, we issue user profiles allowing photographers to upload images in their own time. Contributing photographers are able to see those images already submitted for each species, and so get an impression of image quality and diversity for each species, to guide which images to upload. The website will be locked down early in 2013, and selections made from the images uploaded to that point.

As mentioned in the last update, many species occur in New Zealand only as vagrants. We welcome good images of these species taken overseas, as there are many species that have never been photographed in New Zealand, and others for which there are few images.

If sound recordings are your thing, please contact me at nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz for information on uploading sound files.

The final area where members can assist is in preparing or checking species lists for your favourite bird-watching localities. An example of how these lists will be used is given in the PowerPoint presentation, where a list is shown for Tuhua/Mayor Island. These site lists will provide links to the webpages for all the species that occur at the site. Please email me at nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz for information on lists submitted for your region, and lists that require checking.

There is a lot of work needed to get the website ready for launch at the New Zealand Bird Conference in Dunedin on 1 June 2013, but I am increasingly confident that we will have the content (text, images, sound files and site lists) to make the website a stunner from day one. I look forward to your ongoing support!

COLIN MISKELLY

Project Manager, New Zealand Birds Online

Global IBA criteria:

- A1. Threshold numbers of one or more globally threatened species
- A2. Representative populations of restricted-range species (five percent of the species population with a small geographic range)
- A3. Biome-restricted species
- A4. More than one percent of the world population of one or more congregatory species
- A4i 1% of the biogeographic population of water-birds
- A4ii 1% global population
- A4iii 10,000 pairs seabirds or 20,000 individual water-birds
- A4iv migration bottleneck sites

The IBA selection process follows the Ramsar Convention in stating that IBAs must meet threshold numbers in two-thirds of years for which there is adequate information, and uses IUCN threat rankings, although national threat classification systems need to be taken into account at the national or regional level.

So far only two of the global IBA criteria have been applied in the marine environment:

- A1 Regular presence of threatened species
- A4 1% of global population

There are four aspects of seabirds' annual cycles where they are most likely to occur in IBA threshold numbers, potential areas to investigate include:

- Seaward extensions to breeding colonies.
- Coastal congregations of non-breeding seabirds.
- Migration hotspots and pathways.
- Important areas for pelagic species.

Seabird IBAs

When it comes to identifying potential IBAs for seabirds' breeding sites in New Zealand a number are straightforward, 'no-brainers' in fact. The Pyramid, Forty-Fours and Sisters (all Chatham Islands Group), the Bounty Islands, Poor Knights Islands (Hauraki Gulf) and Macauley Island (Kermadec Islands Group) are all obvious examples. Some IBAs could be defined by the island on which breeding sites that meet threshold numbers occur, or as a single site around one breeding colony (with appropriate buffer and flyway/access zones). However, it is also possible to group breeding sites. For example, when we consider the ocean side of the Otago Peninsula we could look at treating it as single IBA, rather than a string of individual sites, each one a Yellow-eyed Penguin breeding site. In this way a distinctive stretch of coastline would be identified, taking account of all the penguin sites plus other seabird species including another threatened species, Stewart Island Shag. In this way, we can encourage a collective approach towards effective management, support and monitoring once sites have been identified. But our diverse seabird fauna, and numbers of threatened species means we need to adopt a variety of ways in identifying our seabird IBAs. For example, at Kaikoura the candidate IBA will need cover not only where Hutton's shearwaters breed, but also their flyways in an out of the mountains. Identifying threats to a species is important in the process; these can be in the colony or areas surrounding. Buffer zones are important; think of many of shag colonies where birds are very vulnerable to disturbance from boats coming in close.

Moving inland from the coast, Black-billed Gull and Black-fronted Tern come into the frame. In looking at IBAs for these species utilising freshwater areas we need to take account of where they forage and feed, not only within the waterways but also the adjacent land where they forage for invertebrates. Braided rivers are also vitally important for other threatened species, so when considering IBAs for particular river systems, for example, the broad grouping of other bird species (e.g. Wrybill, Black Stilt, Banded Dotterel) can be taken into account.

Offshore, given the complexity of our marine environment and number of species we have to consider, the network of Marine IBAs will

develop from a mosaic of 'layers', with each 'layer' representing the high use or regular foraging areas of a particular or distinctive grouping of species. Thus candidate Marine IBAs are being identified on the basis of their 'distinctiveness', a combination of the suite of 'trigger' species, whether birds are sedentary or disperse during non-breeding periods, oceanography, marine habitats, as well as fisheries interactions (by-catch) and other threat issues. These threats can vary from area to area, e.g. habitat depletion, shipping volumes (think 'Rena') and marine/seabed exploration.

Non-breeding congregations in New Zealand will also trigger some IBA sites, for example, Fluttering Shearwaters in the Inner Hauraki Gulf and other northern New Zealand inshore waters. Spotted Shags gather in very large numbers at some localities around the South island, two or three thousand-fold at a time of the year their colonies would be deserted. The movement of endangered Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns from inland breeding sites to coastal areas certainly warrant consideration in terms of this criterion. Likewise, post-breeding dispersal for crested penguins; are there any regular moult sites, not breeding sites, which would meet IBA criteria?

Migration hotspots and pathways are sites where, because of their geographic position, seabirds become concentrated in the course of regular migration. The passage of Sooty Shearwaters prior to breeding along the east coast of both North and South Islands could figure. There is one very intriguing seabird pathway, the passage of Cook's and Black Petrels and possibly other seabird species across the North Auckland peninsula, the 'North Auckland Seabird Flyway', moving from the Tasman Sea coast at dusk to the Hauraki Gulf.

Important bird areas for pelagic species present the greatest challenge. These sites are defined as those marine areas remote from land at which pelagic seabirds regularly gather, to feed or for other purposes, in large numbers. The Global Procellariiform Tracking Database (GPTDB) has proved to be a resource established to house tracking data. It is a critical resource for IBA identification. However, this data has been collected for a wide range of purposes and using a range of remote tracking technologies. Also, when considering identifying IBA for pelagic species we

need to be able to take account of variation from year to year, stages of breeding and geographic distribution. In order that analyses are consistent across the large geographic and taxonomic ranges in question, it is essential that these varied data inputs are standardised and comparable. All tracking analyses for New Zealand Marine IBAs are being undertaken by the BirdLife International team in close collaboration with providers.

While a lot of emphasis is given to the use of tracking data in identifying Marine IBAs, there are other datasets which allow us to test the veracity of analyses derived from those studies. One is from the fisheries observer programme – these are counts of seabirds taken around a vessel at each set – long-line or trawl. A further example is with fisheries by-catch data. This map shows birds killed through fisheries interactions in 2009, kill records are plotted against effort. Observations of seabirds collected at-sea has up until recently been the predominant data used to determine seabird distribution. Aerial surveys for Maui's Dolphin on the western North Island coast, Basking Sharks off Canterbury, and a marine survey in Tasman Bay will also provide data on seabird distribution in coastal waters.

We will aim to have IBAs recognised within and informing planning and management processes, ideally embedded within legislation. They are a conservation tool, and through monitoring and community participation, will provide a measure of how well we're protecting these important sites, and because they use global criteria, they are a check on how well we're doing internationally.

The New Zealand seabird colony database is fundamental to the IBA identification process for seabirds in providing critical data on populations and sites. Currently data is being entered into World Bird Database which BirdLife International administers. A lot of it is in spreadsheets extracted from WBDB that are being reviewed and added to. A regional approach to collating breeding site data has been adopted. The aim is to ensure the database is as comprehensive and up-to-date as we can make it. At some future stage, online hosting of the system for on-going access and updating will be negotiated.

CHRIS GASKIN

NEW ZEALAND DABCHICKS BREEDING IN GOLDEN BAY

New Zealand Dabchicks have been confined to the North Island for many years, though there has been a trickle of stragglers in Nelson and Marlborough in recent years. On 19th March 2012 I got a phone call from Murray Gavin to say he'd taken his fish and chips to eat by Lake Killarney, in suburban Takaka, Golden Bay, and noticed a small grebe with two young.

Murray thought they were Dabchicks or Hoary-headed Grebes but I presumed they'd prove to be Australasian Little Grebes which had nested at the Wharariki Lakes in Golden Bay, unsuccessfully, in 2002. However I was wrong and over the next couple of weeks several OSNZ members and other interested people were treated to the sight of a pair of New Zealand Dabchicks feeding two well-grown young. They were photographed, filmed and watched for hours by different people, and a

report submitted by Richard Stocker to the OSNZ Records Appraisal Committee.

It transpired that a number of people living nearby had noticed these birds but not thought to inform any local ornithologists so many thanks to Murray for promptly getting in touch. The sighting has led to a certain amount of research and detective work for a short note for *Notornis* on this exciting occurrence. In early July there were still two Dabchicks at the lake, so presumably the young have dispersed elsewhere.

I find it very interesting that Dabchicks retreated to the North Island by the 1960s, but are hopefully re-invading the South Island. Meanwhile the Crested Grebe, which had also once inhabited both islands, became restricted to the lower half of the South Island, though they cope with the same predators in other parts of their range. Crested

Grebes too seem to be expanding their range to the east and north in recent years. How can our knowledge of introduced predators explain these changes?

CHRIS PETYT



A Takaka Dabchick by Willie Cook

ROYAL SPOONBILLS BREEDING IN HAWKE'S BAY

On 6th November 2011, during the summer wader count at Porangahau Estuary, 34 Royal Spoonbills were recorded, including a group of six nests (2-4 eggs each) on Bird Island alongside a Black-backed Gull breeding colony. Five nests were on the

ground in rank tall fescue grass, with one nest on top of driftwood one metre above ground.

This is the first recorded nesting attempt for Hawke's Bay. The Royal Spoonbill has been encountered regularly at Porangahau Estuary

during summer and winter for some years so a nesting attempt was not unexpected.

JOHN CHEYNE and BERNIE KELLY

PISONIA CATCHES MOREPORK



The Morepork recovering

A Morepork found sitting motionless in a driveway in Katikati last summer had fallen victim to a garden shrub, *Pisonia brunoniana*, also known as parapara or bird-catcher tree.

The very stressed owl, almost unable to move because of sticky plant secretions on its feathers,

was taken to Tauranga wildlife rescuer Chrissy Jefferson. It took Chrissy four days to remove some 30 seedpods and various twigs from the bird. Each individual feather was gently cleaned with a mild solvent to remove the sticky pods and then washed and dried.

Parapara is a small native tree, usually found on New Zealand's offshore islands; the common variegated garden shrub is often an exotic subspecies. Glands on the ridged fruit exude a very sticky glue that can trap insects and small birds such as Fantails and Silvereyes. Chrissy suggests the Morepork was attracted by the struggling of a smaller bird and then itself fell prey to the glue.

Why has the parapara evolved this strategy? Presumably it does not benefit from digesting the birds and insects, as insectivorous plants such as sundews do. Sticky seeds are usually a seed dispersal mechanism.

John Dawson, in his recently published *New Zealand's Native Trees*, writes "... feathers can be seen of larger birds that have become stuck but managed to escape, carrying seeds with them.



The Parapara fruits and trigs removed from the Morepork

Some ... are migratory and carry seeds from island to island."

Dawson does not identify what bird such feathers might belong to. New Zealand Pigeon? Large petrel? Harrier?

The recovered Morepork was released in native forest. The particular *Pisonia* shrub was pruned of its fruits, as it now will be each year.

EILA LAWTON

REVIEW

The Call of the Kōkako, by Maria Gill, illustrated by Heather Arnold, 2011, New Holland Publishers. ISBN 13 9781869662943. Hard cover \$29.99.

This is the second collaboration between Maria Gill (writer) and Heather Arnold (illustrator), and is an excellent example of how best to introduce conservation issues to child readers – through dramatic stories and lavish illustrations. It explains the plight of one of New Zealand's most beautiful and best-loved native birds, the Kōkako, whose haunting song once echoed throughout the country, but is now confined almost entirely to offshore islands and the more remote North Island forests.

The first half of the book is filled with succinct, poster-style presentations of Kōkako problems and what is being done to solve them: the pests that drove them near to extinction, the work of the Kōkako Recovery Group, the monitoring of remnant populations, the translocation of birds to safer locations, the disappearance of the South Island Kōkako. It also describes the qualities of the species; its way of moving through the forest, its unique song, the importance of regional dialect, and the reasons why it is so vulnerable to predators. Readers also receive tantalising snippets about the work involved in Kōkako conservation: the setting of baits and traps for predators, the use of mist nets, recorded song and shaker trees to attract the birds, their transport by plane and helicopter in special travel boxes. The style of presentation is personal and specific, through extracts from conservationists' journals and descriptions of real events.

The second half of the book focuses, at greater length, on a particular story: one man's campaign to save the Kōkako of Matahina Forest. The Forest was threatened by a logging contract that would have removed the native trees and replaced them with a pine plantation. Working mainly on his own, but eventually enlisting the support of the press and the public, Geordie Murman managed to move ten Kōkako to Little Barrier Island, and persuade the logging company to conserve what remained of the Forest.

This book is about real issues faced by real people and birds, so it is fitting that the illustrations, superbly painted by Heather Arnold, should portray the individuals involved – which they do with striking accuracy. It is a story in words and pictures, both equally important and complementing each other beautifully. The paintings of the birds, in particular, are full of life and movement.

It is hard for an adult to see this book through the eyes of a child, and my few minor complaints would probably be irrelevant to the target readership, but I think they are worth raising. First, and most important, the question, 'Why save the Kōkako?' is answered, 'The Kōkako is worth saving for its song alone...' (p5), and for its other special features. Maybe, but what an opportunity missed to address this important philosophical issue in a more radical way. Isn't the Kōkako worth saving for itself?

There is an attempt to give the book, particularly its cover and the brief snippets and articles featured inside, the appearance of having been ravaged by time, browned and worn round the edges, as if they have been found festering on a neglected library shelf for many years – even an account of events that took place in 2009! Why? It is hard to see what this adds to the book's attractiveness – it merely mystifies.

A contradiction in the story of Kōkako in the South Island might irritate adult readers, but might provoke a child to ask interesting questions. Rhys Buckingham 'last saw the South Island Kōkako in 1977 and heard the full song in 2006' (p12), but the article on the facing page tells us the last accepted sighting was in the 1950s. So what does this tell us about Rhys's observations? Adults will probably draw their own conclusions; children will want to know.

It is ironic that the Kōkako Recovery Group website (www.kokakorecovery.org) referred to in the book appears to have become extinct – and unfortunate since it was once a useful and informative resource – while the site dedicated to the supposedly extinct South Island Kōkako (www.greyghost.org.nz) is alive and well.

In general, I would strongly recommend this book to a wide range of readers. It is an excellent teaching resource for introducing children to important conservation issues. It raises questions and provokes thought, and does so through beautifully memorable illustrations and concise prose. Its story is both optimistic and cautionary, and contains a message for New Zealanders of any age.

KAY MILTON

Far North

The Region has kept afloat during the RR's absence abroad and a meeting took place in July at our northern venue in Manganui. Kevin Matthews gave a presentation about his recent week on the Chatham Islands. We met again at our home in Kerikeri on 17th August and showed a DVD produced by Duncan Watson, one of the pioneers who came on our first Peru tour.

We have two rarities from Australia in our region, both still present. There has been a Nankeen Kestrel near Kaitaia for several months, frequently seen looking for prey from its vantage point on high cables. On 7th August the local DOC office phoned to say that a pelican had been seen swimming upriver in Kerikeri Inlet and after a little searching we found it perched on a post, clearly an adult Australian Pelican. Several more have been reported near Dargaville so there has clearly been an influx and there must surely be more lurking in some of our other estuaries. A Kaka was reported in Kerikeri recently – we often hear that a mobile flock is in our area in winter but local members have yet to pin them down.

The region took part in the Spoonbill census over the weekend 11th – 12th August and although all the results have yet to be checked, they suggest a substantial increase since the last census in 2000, probably now well over 700.

Many members are aware that an application for consent to use a beach-groomer on beaches in the vicinity of Paihia was made last year and that the Society put in a submission. Following the grant of consent, the matter was taken to the Environment Court by local member, Carol Davies, and after negotiations with the applicants, Focus Paihia, agreement was reached not to groom some of the beaches used as post-breeding flocking sites by at least 45 New Zealand Dotterels and feeding areas by a few Turnstones and Godwits.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

The most notable happening here has been the arrival at the beginning of August, of several groups of Australian Pelicans; one at the Kerikeri Basin and two other groups that totalled 14 on the Kaipara Harbour between Aratapu and Ruawai. The Kaipara groups were first reported by the operator of a sand barge on Monday 6th as he returned with a load, and he had the forethought to take a video-camera with him so that he could film them on his return. His film is currently with the Dargaville Office of DoC and we will get to see it soon.

Northland member Jean Hawken joined the Russian charter vessel *Spirit of Enderby* on its voyage to the Arctic region and admired the wealth of bird-life on the Sakhalin/Okhotsk/Kamchatskiy coastlines. At a recent meeting we enjoyed the excellent photos taken by Jean under difficult lighting circumstances.

By a rare fluke, our speaker for August was Paul Bonetti, who travelled with Gareth Morgan on his recent voyage to the Antarctic and to the Subantarctic Islands where again, the birdlife was spectacular with so many penguins and albatrosses etc. We were glad that we did not have 'smellivision' to convey the gentle aroma of all of that semi-digested fish!

JANET SNELL

Taranaki

Continuing the recent Falcon theme, Dean Caskey from the Taranaki Regional Council forwarded six reports via Barry Hartley of birds seen or heard at various locations. Barry saw one at Awakino chasing a Fantail, and one was seen passing through Waiongana late one afternoon, much to the consternation of a pair of Tui, and was mobbed by flock of Starlings.

There was a report from a non member of a family of Pukeko pre-dating Blackbird nests when the chicks were heard. If the eggs hadn't hatched the Pukeko apparently waited until they had. This behaviour caused great angst to the human family and the Pukeko paid the price for their ingenuity. Offshore at Waiongana birds were quite active with White-capped Albatross, Fluttering Shearwater and Giant Petrel seen, and on one occasion thousands of probable Short-tailed Shearwaters streaming down the coast.

The field trip to a regular spot, Barrett's Lagoon, on the Western side of New Plymouth was held on a reasonably fine day, Tui as usual were active around flowering *Banksia integrifolia*. Unusually no New Zealand Pigeons, Kingfishers or Dunnocks were recorded.

At the smallest meeting I can recall, in July Ron Lambert officially confirmed David Medway as our kaumatua, the reason being David's receipt of the Robert Falla Memorial award for his contributions to ornithology and the Society. David said he was surprised and humbled at receiving such a prestigious award and reminisced about time spent living in Wellington and associating with Robert who used to call him "Young Medway". As a young lad David used to do beach patrols around the Taranaki coast and, due to a shortage of literature to aid in identification, he used to remove the heads of beach wrecks, boil them up at home and send the skulls to Dick Sibson. Unsurprisingly no one in the Medway household ever drank soup.

David Medway has yet to see the Kaka in Pukekura Park although it has been around for a couple of months. A single Cattle Egret has been present at Waiongana in the muddy paddocks.

There was a much bigger turn out for the August meeting and the main topic of discussion was the lack of Silvereyes around home gardens. The Messengers noted a general shortage of all passerines, but Silvereyes in particular. David Medway said they were still around his house but taking longer to consume the food put out for them. We wondered if Taranaki's warmer winter meant there was plenty of other food around. There was however no shortage of Fantails with at least twelve at Lake Mangamahoe and many along the Te Henui stream walkway in New Plymouth.

Helen Elder and Marie Mitchell had been much further afield, spending three weeks in Mongolia mainly around Ulan Bator but also visiting a copper mine at Erdenet and Karakorum. There is no real tourist infrastructure there and the roads are just dirt tracks. Although not a birding trip they did manage to see a good number of species including Bar-headed Geese, Demoiselle Crane, many unidentified species of larks, Taimen in the rivers and, much to Helen's delight, Przewalski's Wild Horse. A visit to the excellent National Museum was of great interest.

Meanwhile much closer to home a night visit to the Grey-faced Petrel colony at Rapanui was most rewarding with many birds flying and calling, and at least 28 seen on the ground.

PETER FRYER

Hawke's Bay

Porangahau provided the highlights of the June winter wader census, with 17 New Zealand Dotterels and 88 Wrybills. In July our field trip was an afternoon outing to the Waitangi wetlands. A walk around The Horseshoe area gave very close views of New Zealand Dabchicks. Eight were there, and later another 10 were seen at Bell Street, Clive.

The national Royal Spoonbill census was our focus in August. In the region Ahuriri had the largest count, with smaller numbers at Waitangi, Lake Hatuma and Porangahau.

This winter has seen larger than usual numbers of Black-fronted Terns in our region. Our highest count was 102 on July 8th. That group included at least nine first year birds. On several occasions we observed the terns hawking over the Tukituki River quite a long way upstream. This is unusual behaviour for them here, where they usually feed out at sea or sometimes in the estuary. Presumably there was a good food source available in the river at that time. There were also large numbers of Welcome Swallows as well as Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls feeding in the same area. Many of the gulls were sitting on calm water just below Black Bridge, whilst a few were in the main current. These latter birds would rapidly float downstream on the current for perhaps 50 metres, then fly back to the start and repeat the process, over and over. They didn't appear to be feeding, just enjoying the ride!

A Grey Phalarope was photographed in a small pond along the beach at Awatoto on 5th July, but unfortunately it was several days before local members became aware of it and subsequent searches proved fruitless. However, the photograph was clear and confirmed the identity of the bird which the observer had recognised as being something different. A whale had been beached nearby at the time.

A Northern Giant Petrel was found on the road near the Ahuriri Estuary on 9th June. It was reported as being uninjured but appeared tired. It was returned to the ocean and eventually flew off, but several days later Bernie Kelly found what was presumably the same bird resting in the vineyards at Clearview Winery at Te Awanga. He also returned the bird to the sea.

Jim Hamilton reported four Eastern Rosellas on his property in Kereru Road, west of Hastings, in mid-August. One or two have been seen each year since 2009. Jim has spoken to some other landowners in the area who have also noted the Rosellas. One reported a group of seven.

Six to eight Yellow-crowned Parakeets were seen in flight over Havelock North by Norma Smith on 4th May. The Little Egret is still seen regularly in the Clive area, and the three Plumed Whistling Ducks were still at Anderson Park, Taradale on 6th August. They have been there for a year now.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Manawatu

The Gull-billed Terns originally reported by Roger Slack in June 2011 continue to be reported at the Manawatu Estuary in varying numbers. One bird was present during the June wader count and most recently four birds were sighted on 11th August. This means the birds have had a recorded presence for over a year now, numbers varying between one and five birds.

A number of local members participated in the June wader count, and apart from the usual species was an interesting sighting of Bar-tailed Godwit 4YYYY at the Ohau Estuary, apparently over-wintering in New Zealand despite having previously recorded regular departures. This bird was the first bird banded by Phil Battley and Jesse Conklin during the start of Jesse's study on the migration patterns of Bar-tailed godwits.

In early July Peter Frost reported hearing a Marsh Crake on the Moutoa Floodway close to Foxton and this record certainly suggests further exploration of the area would be invaluable.

The area around the Manawatu Estuary and upstream continues to be an interesting area for exploration with Kyle Morrison reporting a New Zealand Falcon during the wader count. A high tide roost with 34 Royal Spoonbills was found by Kyle and I by kayak prior to the August 12th Spoonbill count, only 27 birds being sighted on the actual count date (with another 13 at the Ohau Estuary). An Australasian Harrier was observed to attack an adult Pukeko on this trip also, though after a short period the Pukeko was able to escape the hammering being meted out.

A likely Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike was reported up Pohangina Valley in late July. Most recently a Little Egret has been reported and photographed at the Ohau Estuary.

CRAIG STEED

Wellington

The Wellington Region of OSNZ has for many years conducted censuses of its major birding areas. They include a series of five minute counts on Kapiti Island and Zealandia (Karori Sanctuary) and the surveys of Wellington Harbour and Pauatahanui Inlet. These counts offer an opportunity for members to participate in projects which provide valuable information on the trends of bird populations in our region. July marked the start of the fourth series of bird counts in the Pauatahanui Inlet. These counts have been carried out every ten years starting in 1982. Since 1982 the Pauatahanui Inlet has undergone significant change with increasing numbers of houses replacing farmland. Another major change has been the restoration by Forest and Bird of the DoC reserve. The plantings in the reserve are now well established providing an improved habitat for wetland and estuarine birds. The Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet was founded in 1991 by a group of local residents who were concerned about the threats to ecology of the inlet from human activities round its shores. Among their activities includes an annual cleanup of the inlet that began in 1992.

For the bird counts the inlet is divided into six different areas which are counted once a month. Counting extends over a three year period. While only two counts have been completed in the 2012 series a number of trends are emerging. For example, Canada Geese were rare or absent in previous counts but are now breeding in the inlet and are numerous. As in other parts of the Wellington region, Pied Shags appear to be becoming more prominent in the inlet while the number of Black-backed and Red-billed Gulls have decreased. The decline in Black-backed Gull numbers from 1982 most likely reflects improved management of the local landfill sites.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

The winter wader count for the region was done in July for manpower reasons, plus suitable tides.

Only 51 Turnstones were recorded on Farewell Spit, possibly the lowest on record.

In early July an adult Australasian Gannet from the Farewell Spit colony was found in an exhausted state on Lennox Head, New South Wales. The bird was rescued and put in the care of the Wildlife Link Sanctuary, Ballina where it made a full recovery and was released on 20th July. It was seen to fly east; possibly on course for Farewell Spit? The bird was banded in October 1999 and re-sighted on five occasions, the latest with a chick on 14th January 2012. Rob Schuckard states this is a significant record as it is the first recovery of an adult Gannet in Australia in July after breeding at Farewell Spit.

David Melville gave a PowerPoint presentation on Avian Pox in July. This was prompted by the discovery on Rabbit Island, and subsequent capture, of a juvenile Variable Oystercatcher carrying an extremely large growth on its right leg. Veterinarians at Massey University were keen to take the bird and carry out surgery to remove the poxvirus lesion. While the operation appeared successful the bird died a week later and samples from the lesion are being studied for a positive identification.

Weka are being seen in the Nelson City area around the Grampians. Recently a resident reported one in her garden. The re-appearance of the species is probably a consequence of a group performing predator control in this area.

Dr. David Butler spoke on 'Adventures in Bird Conservation in Samoa' in August. Adventure was an apt title with steep climbing in dense forests and recovery by helicopter, not to mention small boat travel between islands! David has been involved with predator control and conservation with some of the rarer bird species since

1993 on the two main islands of Apia and Savai'i. Three species he focused on were the Giant Honey Eater, the Shy Ground-dove and the Tooth-billed Pigeon; the latter having a beak resembling a Dodo. The familiar story of deforestation has seriously affected the habitat for these species. Despite dense forest cover making photography difficult some remarkable images were captured.

Recent sightings in and around the Waimea district include a Black-fronted Dotterel in a ploughed paddock at Appleby, 45 Little Black Shags near Best Island in the Waimea Inlet and six Cattle Egrets seen regularly in the Redwood Road area, Appleby. Willie Cook recorded 250 Wrybills at Bells Island (Waimea Inlet) on 15th August, the largest number he has ever seen during their southward migration.

DON COOPER

Canterbury

John Dowding spoke in May on the Rena bird recovery operation and what can be learned from it which will be of help in the event of future disasters. In June we heard from Mike Bell, who gave an interesting and informative talk on restoration of native birds and habitat on the Chatham Islands. In July Robin Smith, Projects Manager DoC Christchurch, explained the work which will be done at Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere), predominantly along the western edge of the lake, to gradually remove Grey Willow from the lake margins to enable native wetland vegetation to flourish. Robin was receptive to concerns voiced about the plan to leave Harts Creek (a very important habitat for Australasian Bittern and other wetland species), until the final stages of the operation. Ron Nilsson also briefly updated us on the most recent sound recording technology being used to track South Island Kokako. The device can be set up to allow 100 hours of recording and has already produced exciting results. Remote cameras and decoys will further aid the search.

In the field, there have been only a few reports of Cattle Egret this year. There were 19 in the Lake Road area of Lake Ellesmere in June, but they have been elusive since. One was at Travis Wetland in mid June. Other reports at this site include the Glossy Ibis, a White Heron and a Black-fronted Dotterel. Jan Walker reported her "best bird of the year so far", a superb adult White-winged Black Tern in breeding plumage, seen at Cooper's lagoon, west of Lake Ellesmere. This followed a maximum of five in non-breeding plumage earlier at Yarr's, at Lake Ellesmere itself.

By the end of the month Australasian Crested Grebes had returned to the coast, with a very high count of 269 birds being seen on Lake Forsyth at the end of June. In early July a Black-billed Gull at Taumutu, Ellesmere, was found to have been banded by Sheila Petch at the Ashley River in 1998. A New Zealand Falcon was seen twice at Mimimoto Lagoon, Amberley Beach. At Harts Creek a Marsh Crake was observed by a very damp RR. Towards the end of the month a Nankeen Kestrel was reported at Kaitorete Spit by a DoC biodiversity ranger, and on a recent wader count in the area a small number of overwintering Arctic waders were recorded.

A Tui has been seen in Geraldine and in Peel Forest. It seems Tui are now moving into the Canterbury Foothills, with four seen in Wooded Gully, Mt Thomas and another in the nearby community of Loburn. A Crimson Rosella was seen in Huntsbury, possibly one of the group of four inhabiting Victoria park on the Port Hills, which Andrew Crossland sees regularly, sometimes peering in his office window.

The numbers of Australasian Bitterns counted in local wetlands in July has been of great interest. The first report on 11th July, together with photo, was of a bird seen at Bexley Wetlands, which Andrew Crossland says is the first confirmed sighting at the Heathcote/Avon Estuary for at least 15 years. As Bitterns are one of the threatened species monitored for the Christchurch Biodiversity Strategy, Andrew conducted a systematic search through the whole area. He found a total of six birds, a very unusual event. Another bird was found on the Lower Heathcote by Peter Langlands. Peter says this minimum number of seven Bitterns could constitute one-fifth of all Canterbury's Bittern population at one site. This may be a potential problem because of the ease of predation in this area. Although Bitterns are probably able to hold their own against cats and stoats, except when nesting.

ANN SHERLOCK

Southland

Wynston Cooper was surprised to see two Sanderlings at South Awarua Bay on June 1st, and even more so as one of them was in full breeding plumage. He says this is the first time he has seen one fully coloured-up in June. Sanderlings are usually located at the head of the bay.

The winter wader count held on June 16th was one of our best. Plenty of counters were on hand, so we were able to cover all the main areas and this produced some good numbers of birds. Highlights were a Terek Sandpiper and the usual resident pair of Wrybills at the head of Awarua Bay, and 69 New Zealand Dotterels at South Awarua Bay. Pete McClelland and Paul Jacques got a good count of Bar-tailed Godwits, with a total of 300 at the shellbanks on the New River Estuary.

Other interesting bird snippets: Pete McClelland reported a Stewart Island Shag feeding at Big Lagoon, which is fresh water; Lloyd Esler picked up the remains of an Erect-crested Penguin on Oreti beach; and there has also been a small wreck of Hutton's Shearwaters on local beaches. The Lesser Sand Plover is still associating with Banded Dotterels at South Awarua Bay and after 30-odd years of searching I finally saw my first Reef Heron while on a trek around the coast behind Omaui. One bird flew past, harried by a couple of Southern Black-backed Gulls, and some time later another flew past heading in the same direction. Reef Herons are quite rare around this part of the Southland coast. Lloyd also reported a Falcon from Mores Reserve in Riverton. It was giving the usual kekking call.

PHIL RHODES

WOODPECKER STARLING UPDATE

The beak of the Starling featured on p15 of *Southern Bird* 47 (September 2011) continues to grow. The accompanying photo was taken in July by Barry Wainwright and illustrates the difficulties of feeding with a beak like an avocet.



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.



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

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

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

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

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



