

Southern *Bird*

No. 48 December 2011 • ISSN 1175-1916

The Magazine of the Ornithological
Society of New Zealand

**MOTUEKA WELCOMES
BACK THE GODWITS**

**A HISTORIC ACCOUNT
OF THE DISCOVERY OF
THE MOA**

**CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF
THE FEATHERED KIND**

AFTER DINNER TALK



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QUOTATION

...Why I borrow their sight
Is not to give small birds a fright
Creeping up close by inches;
I make the trees come, bringing tits and finches...

Field Glasses by Andrew Young (1885-1971)

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COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover: Tui

Back Cover: Silvereye

Both photos by Rebecca Bowater FPSNZ

Publisher

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

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

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

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

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

THE SOCIETY HAS A NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Julia White, PO Box 35150, Naenae, Lower Hutt 5041, phone 021 112 8841, email membership@osnz.org.nz

Many thanks to Julia for taking on this important Society position!

A big thank you also to Yvonne McLaughlan for looking after this task for the past three years, and to Roger Sharp for all his support. Roger remains our contact for backnumbers of *Notornis*, *Southern Bird* and *State of New Zealand Birds* (roger_sharp@xtra.co.nz).

NEW MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

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

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

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Jennifer Blankley (Auckland); Phillip Cochrane (Canterbury); Duncan Cunningham (Nelson); Carole Donaldson (Nelson); Erik Forsyth (Auckland); Zoe Grange (Manawatu); Owen Hughes (Wellington); Constanze Keye (Canterbury); Sophie Mills (Otago); Jim O'Malley (Wellington); Nick Page (Manawatu); Denise Peacock (Canterbury); Christian Roschak (Canterbury); Penny Taylor (Auckland); Jacqui Wairepo (Auckland); Susan Waugh (Wellington); Rebecca Wilcox (USA); Howard Williams (Nelson).

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

Dorothy Alloo; Roland Chipchase; Michael Fitzgerald; Neil Hayes; Michael Hermansson; Jane Higham; Mary McEwen; Bruce MacKereth; Bruce McKinlay; Philip Munns; Lance Pickett; Betty Seddon; D M Stracy; Ian Sutherland; Penny Taylor; Ian Williams.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

At the end of September I attended the 6th biennial conference, which was held at James Cook University in Cairns. This conference is jointly organised by Birds Australia and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

Kerry-Jayne Wilson has been the key person from OSNZ involved in the organisation of all except the first conference. During the past two conferences she has been assisted by Phil Battley and I wish to acknowledge their contribution on behalf of OSNZ.

There were approximately 170 participants at the conference and at least 20 were from New Zealand. OSNZ provided some monetary support for two students to attend, these being Katarina Manno from Otago University and Jesse Conklin from Massey University.

Virtually all of the New Zealanders present gave presentations during the conference, with the exception of Chris Gaskin and myself. These were all of an excellent standard and reflected well on the quality of students currently at universities in New Zealand.

2013 AOC

The big news, however, was that the location of the 2013 Conference was announced as being in Auckland. This was in terms of a bid that was submitted by OSNZ, prepared by Mel Galbraith and his team from Auckland.

In due course further details will be provided of the dates but Mel's team is already active in Auckland undertaking the necessary planning. This will be an opportunity for many OSNZ members to attend and participate in this joint conference.

AUSTRALIAN BIRD WATCHING

Prior to the conference I had five days bird watching in the Cairns area in the company of Adrian Riegen and also spent a couple of days with Kerry-Jayne Wilson. This was totally non-scientific but comes within the category of enjoying birds as required by our constitution.

For those listers among you my final tally was 170 species in the five days, of which approximately 30 were new birds on my life list. I can confirm, unfortunately, that Southern Cassowary was not among those birds seen, despite spending half a day in the right habitat. We did however participate in a major Australian twitch and got to view 13 Spotted Whistling Ducks at Wonga Beach; a species rarely seen in Australia.

ANNUAL MEETING 2012

The Bay of Plenty Region are well advanced with the planning for the annual meeting over Queen's Birthday weekend in 2012. The planning has been a little disrupted because of distractions caused by the grounding of the *MV Rena*. Many members of the Society are involved in various capacities in the response to this terrible event. The toll on seabirds in the Bay of Plenty has been heavy and it has caused major disruption to the shorebirds breeding along that coastline including New Zealand Dotterels. Half of the local population of this species has been taken into captivity as a pre-emptive measure to protect the adult breeding birds.

The threats to the beaches and estuaries will be ongoing for a long time and local members are likely to be required on bird rescue efforts for many months. We wish them well in this heartbreaking work.

NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

As will be seen in this issue of *Southern Bird* nominations are called for a number of positions within Council. While the existing members are available for re-nomination I would urge members to consider standing as new ideas are always essential to keep an organisation vibrant and relevant.

This is also an appropriate time for members to consider nominations for the various Society Awards. This is an opportunity for the organisation to acknowledge the efforts of worthy individuals.

COUNCIL MEETING

Council met in late November and the outcomes of that meeting will be covered in my next report. We believe that good progress is being made on a number of issues.

ON LINE MEMBERSHIP

The portion of the new website that allows members to check their personal details and upgrade and pay their subscription has now been made operative. This is part of the ongoing project being lead by Bruce McKinlay and it is hoped that this will reduce the workload of the executive officer and also the voluntary membership secretary.

We welcome Julia White to the position of membership secretary, and we hope that she enjoys the contribution she is making to the Society. There were good and bad aspects of the timing of introducing the new system at the time of appointment of a new membership secretary. The major good aspect is that it allows Julia to grow with the system and to only have to learn the one operational technique.

The major detrimental aspect is that members who are struggling to utilise the new system are taking their frustration out on Julia and I would urge you all to show some tolerance in these initial months. If there are concerns they should be made known to an officer of the Society and if there is an aspect of the website that does not appear to be working then Bruce McKinlay should be the contact point.

NOTORNIS AND SOUTHERN BIRD

As part of the website upgrade the back issues of *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* are now contained on the main website. This gives access to all of the older issues of the journal, although there is still currently an embargo on those within the last 12 months, which are only accessible to members.

This gives immediate access to all of the previous information to members who have computers and the ability to utilise them.

E-BIRD

There has been an increased use of this recording system by members. It may of interest to know that I recently started entering my current and historical data onto this system. My initial foray seemed to indicate that this was a difficult process but once a start is made it is much easier than it first appears. I would therefore urge members to utilise this as a method of keeping your sightings in a format that will provide valuable long term information.

Council is considering options to provide more training if members still need help to utilise this rewarding system.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

WANTED PAPERS ON NEW ZEALAND BIRD SPECIES

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

Please send to the Secretary, Peter Gaze, P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040 or gaze@slingshot.co.nz

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2011 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2012 and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2012 Annual General Meeting will be held at the Bureta Park Motor Inn, Vale Street, Tauranga following the close of scientific day presentations on Saturday 2nd June 2012.

A page on the OSNZ website <http://osnz.org.nz/events/ornithological-conference-and-agm-2012> will give conference details. The registration form will be available for download soon.

Peter Gaze
Secretary
P.O. Box 834
Nelson

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The three year Council terms of David Lawrie (President), Bruce McKinlay (Vice President), Paul Garner-Richards (Treasurer) and Keith Owen expire at the next AGM. We also wish to fill the empty Council position due to Stuart Nicholson's departure overseas. Nominations are called for these five positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again for these positions.

Nominations will close with the Secretary on 28th February 2012. Nomination papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include brief *curriculum vitae* of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

CALL FOR PAPERS

You are invited to submit papers and posters for the 2012 OSNZ Conference, to be held in Tauranga between the 2nd and 4th June, with the scientific sessions on Saturday and Sunday.

Oral presentations should reflect original research or summarise existing unpublished information. The organisers welcome the work of both amateur and professional ornithologists. Time allotment will ordinarily be 15 minutes, with an additional five minutes for questions.

All topics are welcome. Papers will be grouped in themes, and we particularly invite contributions from those concerned with oiled wildlife response and recovery, seabird research, including the 2011 prion wreck, and the birds of offshore and Pacific islands.

Poster presentations should normally be a maximum A0. Presenters should be prepared to 'staff' their poster during the designated poster session.

Details should be submitted electronically to the conference committee (conference@osnz.org.nz) by 10th February 2012, so that a list can be published in the March 2012 issue of *Southern Bird*. Please include the following information:

- Title of your presentation
- Your first and last names and (if applicable) co-author(s) first and last names
- Your email address
- Your affiliation and/or sponsoring organisation(s)
- Title of your paper or poster
- A short summary of the proposed presentation.

Authors presenting papers at the conference are encouraged to publish their work subsequently in *Notornis*.

Updates on the conference programme will be added to the conference webpage at www.osnz.org.nz. If you have queries, please contact the organisers by email at conference@osnz.org.nz.

PAUL CUMING
Scientific Day Organiser

OSNZ CONFERENCE 2012

This will be held at the Bureta Park Motor Inn, Vale Street, Tauranga over Queen's Birthday weekend, 2nd to 4th June. A registration form is included with this issue of *Southern Bird*.

Two days will be largely devoted to scientific presentations; Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd June. A choice of workshops will be presented on Sunday morning.

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

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

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

MOREPORKS SURVEYED IN HAMILTON



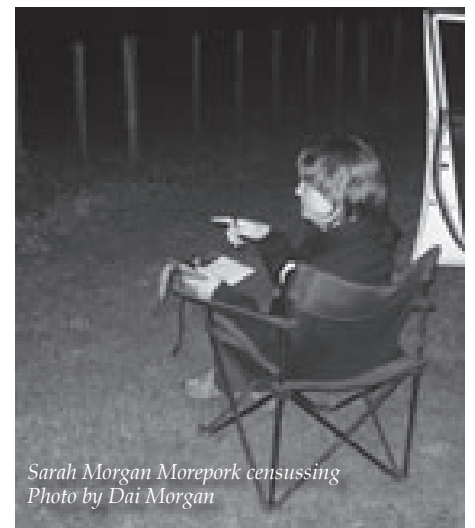
Morepork
Photo by Dai Morgan

At the end of October, the Waikato region of OSNZ organised and ran the first Morepork survey in a New Zealand city. Our aims were to get a snapshot of the population dynamics of these birds in Hamilton. To do this, we chose twenty sites across the city that should be able to support Moreporks (e.g. were close to parks, gullies, or other green spaces). We felt it would be a waste of time to do this in industrial areas. We managed to visit each of these sites every night for five consecutive nights, which should also give us a relative abundance measure too, something that subsequent surveys can be compared against in the future (assuming we return to the same sites and follow the same protocols). Therefore, this year's survey really acted as the baseline data.

We hope that as our gully systems are improved and pest mammals controlled, Morepork numbers will increase. This is looking tenuous at the moment, though, as the Hamilton City Council has cut funding in these areas recently. At worst, if we do the survey again and record major declines in Morepork detections at our 20 sites, this may kick start a bit more conservation work, and what is good for Moreporks is also good for other birds too. We also thought this would be a fun project to do, and one that can involve a lot of the community. It is still too early to say what the final numbers will be, but many of our sites had Moreporks detected, so we are looking forward to fully exploring the data.

We were really pleased with the level of interest and support from the community though. This survey was too big for just the Waikato OSNZ members to do, so we asked Forest and Bird, the University, and Hamilton Environment Centre to get involved (plus a few friends that we roped in too). All up, around sixty people were involved at various times over the week. When the final numbers are crunched, we will let the rest of the OSNZ know how it all turned out, and may even suggest other regions do it in their cities next year!

DAI MORGAN and ANDREW STYCHE



Sarah Morgan Morepork censusing
Photo by Dai Morgan

OSNZ SALES TABLE

Items on sale from the OSNZ are a good way of keeping up with the society and identifying yourself as an OSNZ member. Keep those lists ticking over with a Ticklist. Look up all those old *Notornis* articles with a fifty year index (1939-1989), and then check out the Chatham Islands and wander through the waders in the special editions of *Notornis*. Read up about our Society in *A Flying Start*, your essential introduction to the ins and outs of why we are here as birdwatchers!

Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ 1999-2004 – \$98 (within NZ only – overseas purchasers should enquire below for a quote)

Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ (1985) – \$14

Chatham Islands Ornithology – \$19

Fifty Years of Bird Study in New Zealand (Index to Notornis 1939-1989) – \$14

Wader Studies in New Zealand – \$24

Birds of Hawke's Bay – \$10

A Flying Start – \$14

Stickers - Pied Stilt (specify outside glass/bumper or inside glass only) – \$3

Notornis – \$3

Ticklist – \$1

Checklist (1990 edition) – \$9

Send orders to:

Paul Cuming, OSNZ Sales, 2/7 Robins Road, Judea, Tauranga
Tel. (07) 571 5125, fax (07) 571 5126, email birde@post.com

FREE ATLAS FOR NEW MEMBERS!!!

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

For details of how to join the OSNZ:

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



OBITUARY: MARJORIE (MARJ) DAVIS

With the death of Marj on May 10th this year, the Canterbury region of OSNZ has lost a valuable member of the society, active from the early 1960's until a few years before her death.

Her main studies from the early 1960's focussed on Wrybills on the Rakaia River, and the Red-capped Dotterel, and its interbreeding with Banded Dotterel, on the Ashley River and rivers of North Canterbury. Marj was a pharmacist and used her skills on occasions, as mentioned in her short note on the Red capped Dotterel (*Notornis* Vol 27 (4) 1980 p367-8). Using an eye dropper she was able to come to the rescue of a baby Red-capped Dotterel with eyes full of sand.

She was an active member when Dick Jackson was Regional Organiser in the 1960's. They thought nothing of setting off at 4am on a field trip. A short note in *Notornis* (Vol 11 (1) 1964 p61-2) mentions wading waist deep in water at Harts Creek.

The cameras for sale in her Chemist's shop led her to try them out and Marj soon concentrated on bird photography. Her gear consisted of camera, scope and bins. Photographing later became difficult due to her failing eyesight, but birds and their habitats still attracted her. She spent much of her spare time plodding around the estuaries and rivers of North Canterbury studying the birds she loved. Always inquisitive, she would ask herself "What will the bird do next, where will it go and why? Food? Sanctuary? Mating ritual?"

Marj kept a road-damaged Little Owl for years. His name was Wol and he loved to perch on open doors. Marj's house was an open home to all birders and the house rule was to check before you closed a door.

Marj had many other interests, including the Japanese language and Geology, but birds came first and outlasted most, if not all, her other interests. In recent years orthopaedic surgery replaced bits of her spine, knees and hips, curtailing her activities. Even in severe pain, she never gave up. In 1999 she made a valuable contribution to the Canterbury's hosting of the Annual Conference and AGM, using her computer to record registrations.

Marj has left Canterbury Region of OSNZ a legacy. We hope to make good use of it in her memory.

SHEILA PETCH and MAIDA BARLOW

OBITUARY: ARTHUR DIXON

Canterbury member Arthur Dixon died in late October at the age of 86.

Arthur had only been a member for a few years but impressed all of those who met him with his charm, good humour, friendliness, and a determination not to let poor health get him down. He gamely struggled onwards when he joined us on long fieldtrips, and attended many indoor meetings.

WANTED: DEAD PEAFOWLS

I am interested in receiving dead Peafowls, both sexes, any age, and both the Black shouldered and Indian Blue forms, for a study on their moult that I have been undertaking.

Please freeze any dead Peafowls you find and contact me at subtropicals@orlrikeet@hotmail.com or 903 Queen Street, Thames 3500 to arrange transportation. I appreciate your help.

CLINTON CARE

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/>

DEVELOPING 'NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE' – HOW YOU CAN HELP (PART 3)

Great progress has been made by Te Papa and OSNZ on developing content for the proposed website www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz (see *Southern Bird* issue 47, September 2011, p. 7). There are three broad areas where OSNZ members can help to ensure that the website delivers what you, as birdwatchers and ornithologists, want to see. Information on how to contribute or check species lists for favoured birding sites was provided in the last issue of *Southern Bird*, and I here provide information on contributing photographs and text.

WANTED – PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW ZEALAND BIRDS AND THEIR NESTS

We are seeking up to 16 images of every bird species on the New Zealand list. One image will be the 'master image' prominently displayed on the species' home page, and the 15 others will be thumbnails that can be enlarged. These will allow portrayal of different plumages and developmental stages (e.g. downy chicks, juveniles), different subspecies, birds in flight, and eggs and nests.

Where possible, the master image will be one taken in New Zealand, but we welcome images of vagrant species taken in their country of origin or elsewhere. And don't be shy of submitting inferior images if they show a feature rarely photographed. The 16 images will collectively provide a summary of the appearance of each species – the images don't all need to be immaculate portraits of a bird in breeding plumage.

All contributing photographers will be required to sign a property rights agreement, clarifying whether they wish to retain copyright of their images when used for different purposes. Photographers will not be paid to display images on the website, but their name will always be displayed alongside the image, and they will have the option of retaining copyright for any subsequent commercial use of their images resulting from their display on the website. This is likely to be managed by referring commercial enquiries back to the photographer.

Image management and selection will be managed by Neil Fitzgerald, Brent Stephenson and Peter Langlands. I welcome their expertise and enthusiasm, and have no doubt that the resulting images will be absolutely stunning.

Anyone interested in contributing images should email images@osnz.org.nz or write to Neil Fitzgerald, Landcare Research, Private Bag 3127, Hamilton 3240 to receive instructions on how to submit images (by email or post), plus a copy of the image copyright agreement. Digital images are preferred initially, but we may spread the net wider if we become aware of gaps that could be filled by scanning slides or negatives.

WANTED – DRAFT TEXT ON YOUR FAVOURITE SPECIES

We also require homepage text of up to 1,000 words for each species (500 words for vagrant species). This is your chance to write about your favourite species (one or more). If anyone gets bitten by the writing bug, I am interested in developing a team of writers for the less favoured species. Anyone contributing texts will have their name provided on the webpage as the contributing author, with recommended citation similar to a contributing chapter author in a book.

I have developed a species page template plus draft texts covering examples of extinct species, common species, vagrant species, migratory species, introduced species and polytypic endemic species (i.e. a species with multiple subspecies). The template and sample texts will be provided to anyone who offers to write texts. The sample texts cover South Island Snipe, Japanese Snipe, Red-necked Stint, Southern Black-backed Gull, Fernbird and Goldfinch.

Where there is one or more recognised authority on a species, they will be offered first opportunity to write about 'their' species. With over 400 species to choose from, there is a lot of scope to match aspiring authors with needy species!

The reason for the 1,000 (or 500) word limit is to ensure a tight format for intended species factsheets and print-to-demand books (more on that later). But if you want to write a *HANZAB* style 5,000+ word contribution in addition to the 1,000 word core text, please don't feel constrained. Websites are a lot more flexible than books. We may offer an 'Extra information' tab accessible to OSNZ members (as one example of a members-only feature), which will ensure that any extra information contributed is not lost. Each species page will also be a portal providing links to information from other sources, including pdf extracts from selected reference books – this will reduce the need for detail to be repeated in the home page text.

Anyone interested in contributing text should email their species wish list to nzbirdsonline@osnz.org.nz.

Please make an effort to support this project. You – New Zealand bird watchers and ornithologists – are the intended primary audience. If you want to have pride in the published text for a species dear to your heart, then grab this chance to be the writer.

COLIN MISKELLY
Project Manager
New Zealand Birds Online

PIED SHAG POPULATION STUDY

The Pied Shag has been assessed as being at high to moderate potential risk from inshore fishing methods, and some by-catch has already been documented from the inshore fisheries. The species feeds in coastal waters as well as estuaries, bays and harbours, which puts them at risk to inshore fisheries.

The endemic sub-species that is found throughout much of coastal New Zealand is presently classified as nationally vulnerable. Recent population estimates range between 5,000 and 10,000 pairs, though there have never been any systematic colony counts. As such, population numbers and trends are not well understood, with both colony declines and disappearances reported, along with growth and the formation of new colonies.

Due to this limited knowledge we have been contracted by the Department of Conservation to collate existing information on Pied Shag

colonies to determine population numbers and trends. We are interested in hearing from any members of OSNZ who know the location of Pied Shag colonies or have counts of colonies they would be happy to share (both recent and historical). Information needed is count date, number of breeding pairs/nests, and location (detailed description or GPS reference). All information used will be fully acknowledged in any publications resulting from this work and a summary will be published in *Southern Bird*.

It is planned that the information collected during this investigation will be used to determine the population size and trends and to make recommendations for future research to allow a better and more accurate understanding of impact of commercial fishing on Pied Shags.

Your help in with this study will be greatly appreciated.

MIKE and BIZ BELL

Please send information to:-
Pied Shag Review,
PO Box 45,
Spring Creek,
Marlborough 7244

Email: mike@wmil.co.nz



SUMMARY OF NATIONAL WADERS CENSUSES 2009

Compiled by Adrian Riegen August 2010

Results of National Wader Censuses Undertaken by OSNZ in June – July and November – December 2009 and January – February 2010

There was good coverage at most sites on the winter and summer 2009 censuses with all key sites counted except for the Bay of Plenty in June. There was rather poor coverage in January - February 2010 with the Bay of Plenty, the Waikato Harbours and the Nelson region and Canterbury being the only major sites covered. The poor coverage means comparisons between November 2009 and February 2010 counts are rather limited.

Table 1 shows sites or regions covered during the three counts. Tables 2 and 3 show count totals for June and November along with the June average from 2005-09 and the November average for 2006-09. Tables 4 and 5 show sites with the highest wader counts. Tables 6, 7 and 8 show comparisons between November and February where that data exists.

Table 1. Regions and Sites covered 2009

1 = Counted x = Not Counted	Win 09	Sum 09	L Sum 10		Win 09	Sum 09	L Sum 10
Parengarenga H.	1	1	x	Porangahau Est	1	1	x
Rangaunu H.	1	1	x	Aotea H.	1	1	1
Houhora H.	1	1	x	Kawhia H.	1	1	1
Whangarei H.	1	1	x	Raglan H.	1	1	1
North Kaipara H	1	1	1	Manawatu	1	1	1
South Kaipara H	1	1	x	Lake Wairarapa	x	x	1
Mangawhai Est.	1	1	x	Tasman Bay	1	1	1
Auckland East Coast	1	1	x	Golden Bay	1	1	1
Waitemata H.	1	1	x	Farewell Spit	1	1	1
Manukau H.	1	1	x	Kaikoura / Marlborough		x	1
Firth of Thames	1	1	x	Canterbury	1	1	1
Coromandel	1	1	x	Lake Ellesmere	1	1	1
Bay of Plenty	x	1	1	West Coast	1	x	x
Gisborne / Wairoa	x	x	x	Otago	1	1	x
Hawkes Bay	1	1	x	Southland	1	1	1

Table 2. June 2009 Count Summary

Species	Count June 2009	Average June 2005-09
Pied Oystercatcher	79,373	82,344
Variable Oystercatcher	1,812	2,022
Oystercatcher hybrid	11	16
Pied Stilt	14,021	15,451
Black Stilt/hybrids	22	22
New Zealand Dotterel	490	426
Banded Dotterel	5,212	5,670
Black-fronted Dotterel	101	89
Greater Sand Plover	1	1
Wrybill	4,612	5,185
Pacific Golden Plover	0	4
Spur-winged Plover	1,423	1,404
Ruddy Turnstone	141	252
Lesser Knot	1,730	2,659
Curlew Sandpiper	2	2
Red-necked Stint	15	25
Whimbrel	1	13
Bar-tailed Godwit	9,719	9,278
Hudsonian Godwit	1	1
TOTAL	118,687	124,864

Table 3. November 2009 Count Summary

Species	Count Nov 2009	Average Nov 2006-09
Pied Oystercatcher	16,116	17,986
Variable Oystercatcher	1,706	1,675
Pied Stilt	4,450	4,225
Black Stilt/hybrids	5	3
New Zealand Dotterel	395	311
Banded Dotterel	534	572
Black-fronted Dotterel	6	7
Greater Sand Plover	2	3
Lesser Sand Plover	1	1
Wrybill	35	319
Pacific Golden Plover	167	246
Grey Plover	1	1
Spur-winged Plover	845	1,392
Ruddy Turnstone	1,024	1,618
Lesser Knot	26,996	32,469
Sanderling	1	2
Curlew Sandpiper	8	11
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	13	23
Red-necked Stint	86	144
Eastern Curlew	2	11
Whimbrel	14	40
Bar-tailed Godwit	87,590	79,401
Terek Sandpiper	1	1
TOTAL	139,998	140,456

Table 4. Sites with more than 2,000 waders. Counted in June 2009

Manukau Harbour	28,403
Kaipara Harbour	24,704
Firth of Thames	16,970
Farewell Spit	10,643
Golden Bay	9,009
Tasman Bay	6,503
Kawhia Harbour	3,962
Avon-Heathcote	3,238
Aotea Harbour	2,380

Table 5. Sites with more than 3,000 waders. Counted in November 2009

Manukau Harbour	26,173
Kaipara Harbour	20,488
Farewell Spit	17,323
Tauranga-Maketu	10,536
Firth of Thames	9,803
Tasman Bay	5,804
Golden Bay	5,095
Kawhia Harbour	5,054
Ohiwa Harbour	4,082
Southland	4,071
Parengarenga Harbour	3,310
Rangaunu - Karikari	3,529
Avon-Heathcote	3,235

Comparison of three key migrant species between November and February for sites counted on both occasions show some variation in numbers particularly with Bar-tailed Godwit at Farewell Spit and to some extent in Tasman and Golden Bays where the combined February total was about 10,000 higher than the November count. Lesser Knot figures also showed an increase at all sites counted between November and February and although only three of the sites that were counted had significant numbers of Turnstone, all of these had more in February. However as the Auckland region was not counted in February, comparisons are impossible on a national level.

Table 6. Bar-tailed Godwit differences between November and February

	Raglan	Kawhia	Aotea	North Kaipara	Manawatu	Tasman Bay	Golden Bay	Farewell Spit	Canterbury	Otago	Southland	TOTAL
Nov 09	1950	1612	3998	1055	181	3897	2937	6950	2612	1457	2951	29600
Feb 10	71	2909	3387	950	177	4344	3696	15723	2744	1789	3165	38955
Difference between Feb & Nov	-1879	1297	-611	-105	-4	447	759	8773	132	332	214	9355

Table 7. Lesser Knot differences between November and February

	Manawatu	Tasman Bay	Golden Bay	Farewell Spit	Canterbury	Southland	TOTAL
Nov 09	88	780	39	8730	15	98	9750
Feb 10	143	800	200	9450	10	350	10953
Difference between Feb & Nov	55	20	161	720	5	252	1203

Table 8. Ruddy Turnstone differences between November and February

	Tasman Bay	Farewell Spit	Canterbury	Southland	TOTAL
Nov 09	50	399	9	129	587
Feb 10	2	469	11	297	779
Difference between Feb & Nov	-48	70	2	168	192

KEY SPECIES SUMMARY

PIED OYSTERCATCHER

W 79,373 – S 16,116

The Manukau Harbour had 20,146 in June and the whole Auckland region accounted for 49,128. The Waikato harbours held 5,448 and a further 19,692 were counted in the Nelson region. In November the Manukau held 5,545, almost five times more than any other site.

VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER

W 1,812 – S 1,706

The Bay of Plenty usually has high numbers in June but was not counted in 2009. The Nelson region had 688 and Whangarei Harbour 157. November saw 542 in Tasman and Golden Bays and 308 in the Bay of Plenty.

PIED STILT

W 14,021 – S 4,450

The Kaipara Harbour led with 4,014 in June followed by the Firth of Thames with 3,465 and the Manukau Harbour 1,995. Parengarenga Harbour had 550. Lake Ellesmere had 1,901 in November the Firth of Thames had 676, Hawkes Bay 519 and the Kaipara Harbour 443.

NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL

W 490 – S 395

Mangawhai Estuary and Kaipara Harbour both held 95. Matarangi on the Coromandel had 77 and Southland 82.

BANDED DOTTEREL

W 5,212 – S 534

In June, Farewell Spit topped the list with 1,921, the Kaipara Harbour had 520, Kawhia Harbour 500 and the Manukau Harbour had 359.

WRYBILL

W 4,612 – S 35

The Auckland region as usual held the bulk of the wintering Wrybill with 4,435. Houhora Harbour in the Far North had 51 and was the only other site with more than 50.

RUDDY TURNSTONE

W 141 – S 1,024

November saw 399 at Farewell Spit, 167 on the Kaipara Harbour, 154 on the Manukau Harbour and 129 in Southland.

LESSER KNOT

W 1,730 – S 26,996

A very low summer number with just 8,730 at Farewell Spit, 7,637 on the Manukau Harbour, 4,375 on the Kaipara Harbour, 1,785 on the Firth of Thames and 1,200 on the Whangarei Harbour.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT

W 9,719 – S 87,590

The Kaipara Harbour leading the way with 13,913 in November followed by the Manukau Harbour with 12,417 the Bay of Plenty with 9,522, Farewell Spit with 6,950, Firth of Thames with 6,187 and the Far North harbours had a combined total of 7,481.

Compiled with the help of many counters and co-ordinators around the country.

WELCOME TO THE SHEARWATERS

In a first for New Zealand, and possibly the world, a small tubenose species was officially welcomed back for their breeding season when the Hutton's Shearwaters at Kaikoura were the subject of a ceremony on 24th September. Around 80 people attended, including representatives of the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust, Environment Canterbury, Department of Conservation, Te Runanga o Kaikoura and many pupils from local schools. All climbed to a lookout close to South Bay and were treated to the haunting sound of a conch being blown, songs from local group The Bellbirds and talks by HSCT chairman Paul McGahan, and rediscoverer of the breeding colonies, Geoff Harrow. As if summoned, the many thousands of Hutton's Shearwaters that had been streaming past offshore settled off the peninsula in large 'slicks' during the ceremony, which finished with the flying of hand-made kites by the school children.

After the ceremony a stall was manned at the Rugby World Cup street party on Kaikoura's main street, West End, selling hand-made greeting cards and 'Hutton' burgers.



Kaikoura children flying kites after the ceremony. 'Slicks' of birds are just visible in the background



Geoff Harrow addresses those attending the ceremony.

Both photos by Nick Allen

HELP WANTED FEEDING HUTTON'S SHEARWATER CHICKS

The Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust is planning to set up the translocation of a further 100 chicks from the Kowhai colony to that on the Kaikoura Peninsula in March

2012. If you are able to help with the feeding of the translocated chicks please contact Lindsay Rowe at admin@huttonsshearwater.org.nz or 03 319 7211.

MOTUEKA WELCOMES BACK THE GODWITS



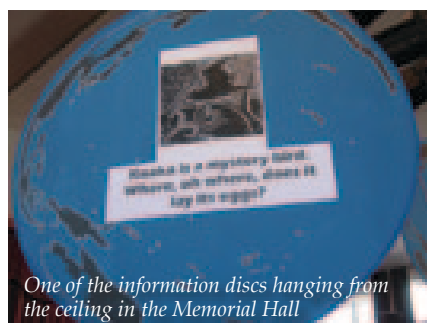
Minister of Conservation, Kate Wilkinson getting a bird's-eye view of the godwits

The people of Motueka in the Nelson Region celebrated the return of the Bar-Tailed Godwits to their estuaries with a great turnout for our Welcome to the Godwits Celebration in September. It was a real community event with the Memorial Hall full of displays, information, art works, photographs, school displays and slides shows. There was even some 'godwit grub' in the Forest & Bird display where children could learn about, then make and draw the kinds of food the Godwits like to eat when they visit us for the summer.

The Minister for Conservation, Kate Wilkinson, opened the show after viewing the birds in the estuary. The Godwits dutifully lined up either side of the old wharf so she could get a close-up view.

A highlight this year was a presentation by author and godwit researcher, Keith Woodley. Keith also went on to talk 'over the hill' at Takaka, where they also made a big deal about the Godwits arrival. In both areas, we gave the public a chance to see the Godwits close-up through the telescopes of local OSNZ members. The highlight for me personally was talking to the children in schools and taking them down to the beach to see the birds feeding after their long flight.

PAULINE SAMWAYS



One of the information discs hanging from the ceiling in the Memorial Hall

Both photos by Pauline Samways

AFTER DINNER TALK

Given by Mary Mcewen following the 2011 OSNZ Conference Dinner

Lower Hutt on Sunday 5th May

I was surprised when Ian Armitage invited me to speak this evening. I had spoken to both the Wellington and Auckland branches about my father Charles Fleming, whose biography I wrote, so I did not want to repeat what I had said. Then I realised that because of Dad's interests I had met and known a number of other prominent ornithologists.

In February this year I found myself standing on Cape Royds on Ross Island in Antarctica with none other than OSNZ vice-president, Bruce McKinlay, who happened to be the DoC representative on the Heritage Expeditions trip that I was on with my husband Andrew on Rodney Russ's ship *Spirit of Enderby*. Here we were standing out near the sea, on a perfect day with blue, blue sea and sky, and pure white snow, looking back the way we'd come, towards Shackleton's Nimrod Hut, with quite a lot of black and white Adelie Penguins on the ground – though fewer than there would have been in January as it was getting late in the breeding season – and numerous Antarctic Skuas making their presence felt all around and above us.

This reminded me of one of my first experiences in ornithology. Our family had a bach at Waikanae Beach and my big sister Robin and I had been taught that if we ever saw a dead or sick bird on the beach we were to bring it home. So one day after a big storm we went down to the beach, I might have been about nine and Robin twelve, and we saw a bird struggling in the shallows amongst the breaking waves. So Robin said to me, "Take off your jersey". I dutifully took it off and she bravely paddled out to this bird (which we thought was a juvenile Black-backed Gull) and wrapped it in my jersey and carried it home. It turned out to be the first Antarctic Skua to be found alive on that coast.

At the Orewa conference a couple of years ago our president David Lawrie mentioned that his birding mentor had been Ross McKenzie. I remembered meeting Ross and also his wife Hettie sometimes when our family visited Auckland to see our grandparents. What I remembered about him was a waterproof poncho or cape that he used to wear for birding. At this conference we have seen the typewriter that Hettie McKenzie used when she typed OSNZ newsletters and other things for Ross. When I was working on the Fleming biography I came across a letter Ross had written to Dad when he had heard on the birding grapevine that our family was heading for Auckland. It was a wonderfully enthusiastic letter that went something along the lines, "Let us light the beacon fires on the hilltops to tell the

birding world that the Flemings are going to visit Auckland!" I can imagine that Ross must have been a wonderful mentor.

On our trip to Antarctica we heard a lecture about albatrosses given by a young Australian biologist. At the end she showed a quotation about these birds by the well-known early American ornithologist and writer of *Oceanic Birds of South America*, Robert Cushman Murphy. He was curator of Birds at the New York Museum of Natural History and in 1947 he and his wife Grace, an amazing woman, profoundly deaf but a strong feminist even in the 1940s, had come to New Zealand to join an exhibition to the Snares Islands, run jointly by our then Dominion Museum and the New York Museum, collecting bird specimens for the diorama exhibits there. Grace Murphy went to the Snares as did Bob Falla and Charles Fleming. Afterwards the Murphys were in Wellington and my parents invited them to dinner. While Dad poured the visitors a drink Mum was bathing me. I was two at the time. Then Dad put on the gramophone my absolute all-time favourite record, Sibelius's Karelia Suite. I called it 'the Drum Drums' and when I heard it I simply had to dance. As Mum lifted me out of the bath, I slipped out of her arms and the towel and ran down to the sitting room where I danced naked in front of one of the world's most distinguished ornithologists of the time!

In 1960 when I was just 15 we stayed on Long Island with the Murphys for a week and were taken around the Museum of Natural History after hours.

I mentioned Bob Falla or Sir Robert as he became. My parents had known him for years and I always called him Uncle Bob. His wife Molly was Auntie Molly to me. She was a very good water colourist and painter of birds. Bob was director of the Dominion (later National) Museum, now Te Papa, and when sick birds collected at Waikanae died, as they inevitably did, Bob would drive out to pick up the corpse for the museum. One summer in the early 1950s when my little sister Jean was only a toddler, someone brought a sick mollymawk (we called them that in those days) to Dad to see if he could make it well. He and Mum tried to feed the poor animal on sardine smoothies, one of them holding the bill open while the other poured in the gunk until they thought they saw the bird swallow. Inevitably, when they let the bill go, Molly would shake its head vigorously with lots of bill rattling, and the sardines would fly out in all directions.





Some senior members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand at the 50th anniversary celebrations at Whangaparaoa in 1989. Left to right back row, Brian Bell, Brian Ellis, David Crockett. Front row Graham Turbott, Peg Fleming, Dick Sibson, Peter Bull.

Jean with the Mollymawk mentioned in the talk. Circa 1955

Dad and Bob Falla were good friends but they did not always agree on things ornithological. One Sunday Dad was driving us home from Waikanae when somewhere north of Porirua he spotted a wader he had not seen before standing in one of the tidal pools cut off from Porirua Harbour by road straightening. He slammed on the brakes, luckily not causing an accident, and reversed rapidly along the shoulder to where he had seen the bird, stopped the car, whipped out the binoculars that lived permanently under his car seat, and had a good look. He decided that it was a yellowlegs from America but he could not tell whether it was a Greater or Lesser Yellowlegs. The next day he took his technician from the Geological Survey (where he worked as a palaeontologist, studying fossil shells) and they made a plaster cast of the wader's footprint in the mud, so as to be able to measure it accurately. He decided it was, say, a Lesser Yellowlegs, though I can't really remember. He also told Bob Falla about the bird and he went out to see it and decided it was in fact a Greater Yellowlegs. Somehow the press heard about this rare bird at Porirua and a reporter must have spoken to these two senior Wellington bird men, Bob Falla and Charles Fleming (both later knighted for science and conservation). Perhaps not wanting to offend either of them the newspaper reported the bird as a 'Greater-lesser Yellowlegs'!

Someone else we used to visit on our trips to Auckland was a real uncle: Uncle Dick Sibson, R B Sibson, or old Sib. He was a friend and mentor to many an aspiring ornithologist, especially those lucky enough to be in his bird club at King's College, Auckland. When Dick came to New Zealand from England to teach classics he had a letter of introduction to the young Charles Fleming and became a regular visitor at his family home in Remuera where he met and later married Charles's sister Joan. As I child I was rather bored by Dick and Charles's conversations which seemed to consist of large numbers of godwits and somewhat smaller numbers of knots and other migratory waders seen at Miranda. But Dick was really wonderful and amongst his other talents he was something of a poet.

He knew that Charles had always loved the old woolshed on Southeast Island or Rangatira in the Chathams where he had spent the Christmas of 1937 camping with Graham Turbott and Alan Wotherspoon. On future visits when on the Fauna Protection Advisory Council (FaunaPAC), Dad had always slept in the woolshed for old times' sake, listening to the crooning of Broad-billed Prion chicks in burrows underneath the old building, even after a proper hut was built on Rangatira. So when Dick Sibson also visited that island on a FaunaPAC trip, he wrote a poem for Charles called 'The Woolshed Serenaders':

This is the song of *Pachyptila vittata*,
On South-east Island, far across the water.
Let there be no question or fuss,
This ramshackle joint belongs to us.
This old dump of rusting iron
Is claimed by many a house-proud Prion.
Broad-billed, big-mouthed, how our prattling
Sets the frame and timbers rattling ...

I came across another poem Dick wrote which I particularly enjoy, having taken up beach patrolling in recent years. He called it 'Strange Harvest of the Sea'

Your dyed-in-the-wool ornithologist is a creature
of curious culture, Who may rejoice in a Skylark's
song; yet acts like a drooling vulture
When day after day fierce storms have cast on
Auckland's bleak west coast,
From the hosts of far-based ocean-birds, the weak,
the tired and the lost.

So out go the keen beachcombers; for they are a
hardy breed,
To seek 'mid flotsam and jetsam, all tangled with
cordage and weed
Pathetic bundles of feathers, once masters of every
wave,
Shearwaters, petrels, prions, now trapped on a
leeshore grave...

Also in Auckland we sometimes visited Graham Turbott and his wife Olwyn, though we didn't call them uncle and aunt. After Graham and Charles and Alan Wotherspoon had spent Christmas on Rangatira, they had managed on their third attempt to land on Little Mangere Island where they had rediscovered the black robin and Forbes parakeet on 2nd January 1938. These two birds had been thought to be extinct because they had not been seen by ornithologists since the turn of the century. I must say however, that what I most remember about visits to the Turbotts was that they had a pet goat tethered on the lawn, which you had to negotiate to get to the house.

So there they were, Falla, Sibson and Turbott, authors of the early handbook of New Zealand Birds and I called two out of three of them uncle.

Back in Wellington there was the kindly Polish gentleman Kazimierz Wodzicki, though I never could pronounce his full name. To me he was Uncle Kazio. He and Charles studied birds of the Waikanae Estuary over many years and later Kazio was my first boss when I worked at the Animal Ecology Division of the DSIR in university holidays. Needless to say Dad got me the job. Kazio took me to Cape Kidnappers when the gannet chicks were being banded in January 1964. My job was to record all the bands and measurements and they took the seat out of a Landover for me to lie on in the sun while I wrote everything down. Both my parents and sister, Jean, had gone along for the fun and they all got pecked while I lay there like Lady Muck. Another well-known ornithologist I met there for the first time was Chris Robertson, with whom I later worked in DoC.

Back in Animal Ecology Division in Lower Hutt there was also another of my Dutch uncles, Peter Bull. I'd known Uncle Peter and his wife Mary since I was about one, when they stayed with us in Karori with their first baby, Barbara, when they moved to Wellington from Auckland. While they were courting, my parents used to take both Peter Bull and Dick Sibson to be their chaperones when they went to Muriwai

Beach after a storm to collect dead prions, which became the topic of Charles's MSc thesis.

As mentioned the Chathams were an important place in my father's life and I associate the next three ornithologists with the Chathams. David Crockett first met Charles in 1951 at an OSNZ conference in Christchurch where, he once told me, Charles inspired him with the ambition to be the person to rediscover the Chatham Island Taiko. I first met David when he stayed with our family in Wadestown for another OSNZ conference. Later, as you know, after huge effort, David did rediscover the Taiko.

Of course no mention of the Chathams Islands in ornithological circles would be complete without including Don Merton. How we will all miss dear Don. I worked in the same building as Don in the first few years of the Department of Conservation and when I was researching Dad's life he helped me and gave me very sage advice. When they decided to put up a plaque at Chatham Island airport to commemorate the Black Robin story Dad had already died but my mother Peg wanted Don's name to be included on the plaque as well as Old Blue and Charles Fleming. As I understand it, Don did not want his own name on the plaque but said it was more important to mention "the staff of the Wildlife Service" than to single him out. That was so typical of Don's modesty. The plaque commemorates three things: the Chatham Island Black Robin, Old Blue, who saved her species by her prodigious breeding, Charles Fleming, who re-discovered the Black Robin back in 1938; and the staff of the Wildlife Service of the Department of Internal Affairs whose hard work and dedication made it possible to save the species from certain extinction.

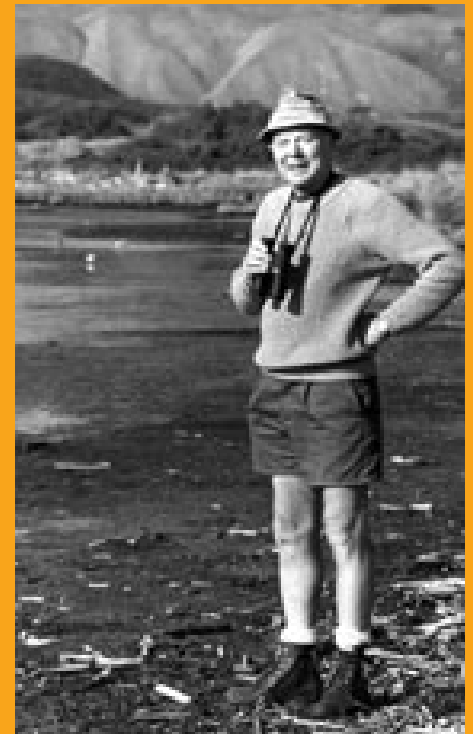
I also first met Brian Bell in the later 1980s. Dad had always talked about Brian's amazing

organisational skills and his ability with small boats. Early in 1977 shortly after Charles had been knighted by the Queen, who happened to be visiting New Zealand, he took Peg, now Lady Fleming, to the Chathams where Brian had invited them to witness the transfer of the last two Black Robins from Little Mangere to Mangere Island. They were taken across to Mangere with Brian in a fishing boat and Charles was landed safely with some of the gear, but the second load in the Zodiac, including Peg, was not so lucky. The boat was flipped over by a wave in what has been described elsewhere as a life-threatening incident. Luckily they all survived and for years afterwards Mum used to tell funny stories about the occasion when she gave talks about what it had been like being married to Charles Fleming. Brian, his son Mike, David Crockett and Chris Robertson recently visited the Chathams with both my sisters on Rodney Russ's ship *Spirit of Enderby* and Brian showed them where Peg had been tossed into the sea. Brian Bell has been a mentor to many, not the least to Don Merton himself.

Waikanae, as mentioned was another important birding place in Dad's life and Nga Manu is a great Waikanae asset for birders. I remember when Peter McKenzie was setting up Nga Manu he got Dad involved. He used to go and spend hours there photographing birds and became the second Patron of Nga Manu following Bob Falla. Nowadays I love to take my grandchildren to visit Nga Manu. We are all very sorry to learn that Peter McKenzie is not at all well.

Also at Waikanae I first met Sandy Bartle when I was a child. Sandy used to bring the dead birds he found on Waikanae beach to Dad for help with identification. Later I knew Sandy at varsity and thereafter he worked at the National Museum and Te Papa.

I don't know if it had anything to do with red hair, but someone else who used to bring his bird specimens to Dad at Waikanae was Alan Tennyson. Like Sandy before him, Alan now works at Te Papa and nowadays I take my dead birds from Waikanae beach to Alan so he can help me with identification.



Charles Fleming at the Waikanae Estuary
Photo by Ken George.

A HISTORIC ACCOUNT OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE MOA

In reading Steve Braunias's *How to Watch a Bird* (Awa Press 2007) I was moved to revisit those early ornithological texts in my own collection, and arrived back at *Animals of New Zealand* by Hutton and Drummond (Whitcombe & Tombs 1904). The earnest original owner (it is hard to read the inscription but appears to be one R M Laing of 37 MacMillan Avenue, which I take to be a Christchurch address) had collected three newspaper stories of the day and had left them inside my copy of the book, two (1902 and 1904) of which make reference to one of the book's authors, Captain F.W. Hutton FRS (President of The New Zealand Institute and Curator of the Christchurch Museum). The third article is written by his co-author James Drummond FIS and concerns the history of discovery of the order Dinornithiformes by western science in 1839.

I can't vouch for the accuracy but I transcribe here the contents of this story as it appeared in the Lyttelton Times on Saturday 9th November 1907. Certainly, his colleague Hutton was knowledgeable in this area (although he died a few years prior to publication), having his own moa species named after him (Oliver 1955 p576) in addition to the well known eponymous shearwater. The story is consistent with the account contained in Barney Brewster's book *Te Moa* (Nikau Press 1987) although it is worth noting that there was anecdotal evidence of the existence of large 'kiwis' especially amongst sealers in the decades preceding Richard Owen's identification in 1839.

As an aside, the Lyttelton Times was well established by the early 1900's, having been first published on 11th January 1851. It subsequently

changed name to the Christchurch Times, and when it was last published in 1935 was the country's oldest newspaper. It left behind the legacy of the historic Lyttelton Times building in Cathedral Square (Category One).

All punctuation and spelling is as it originally appeared. The author's name is followed by a roman numeral for "one", suggesting this story is part of a series which unfortunately I do not possess. However the story is complete within itself.

MICHAEL TURNER

A NEW ZEALAND ROMANCE – THE STORY OF A FRAGMENT

HOW THE MOA WAS DISCOVERED (By JAMES DRUMMOND F.I.S.) I

One day, in the early part of 1839, a man walked in to the British Museum and offered to sell to the authorities a fragment of a bone, six inches long and about three inches wide, which he carried in his hand. He said that it had been given to him by Maoris in New Zealand, who told him that it was the bone of a great eagle. He asked ten guineas for it. The Museum authorities declined his offer, but they sent him and his bone to the Royal College of Surgeons, in London.

There, the man from New Zealand was referred to Sir Richard Owen, who took the bone from his hands, and, turning it over several times, casually inspected it. He saw at once that it was part of a thigh bone. He also saw that the man's story was not correct in its details. The specimen could not have belonged to a bird of flight like an eagle, because the eagle's bones are pneumatic, and the specimen was a marrow bone. "It's a marrow bone," Owen said, "like those brought to a table wrapped up in a napkin." The New Zealander was greatly disappointed at this. He could not, of course, deny the scientist's statement, but he held to his opinion that the bone must possess some extraordinary interest. Owen was not inclined to argue the point just then, as he was very busy with other work which he had in hand; but he promised to extend his investigations later in the day, and to communicate the result to the visitor on the following day.

As soon as he was at leisure, he took the fragment into the College Museum. He went first the skeleton of an ox, expecting to verify his surmise that the bone was part of an animal brought to New Zealand by Europeans. He knew that before the arrival of human beings New Zealand had no large mammals, but he thought that the bone belonged to some introduced by early settlers. There were resemblances between the fragment and the thigh-bone of an ox, but there were also some striking differences, which would not allow him to ascribe it to that animal. The wall of the cavity that held the marrow was very thick. This fact led him to the skeletons of other large animals. He passed from an ox to a camel, a lion, a buffalo, a grisly bear, and an orang-outang.

While he was making these comparisons, he saw that on the bone, which had now excited his keen attention, there were some obscure markings. These recalled to his mind markings he had seen on the surface of the leg bones of large birds.

By this time, it may be supposed, his interest was at fever-heat. The general public cannot understand the thrill of excitement experienced by an ornithologist when he realizes he may be on the point of an important discovery. The finding of a new species of bird is ample reward for months, perhaps years, of toilsome search, hardships, and dangers. It is an honour and a pleasure to handle a skeleton which has not been described before. To make known to science a bird of gigantic proportions, which might still be living in a remote corner of the world, is an achievement that may well make the ornithologists blood run quickly, and his heart beat wildly.

The largest bird known then was the ostrich, and Owen hastened to an Ostrich skeleton, with which he compared the wonderful fragment. It corresponded with the thigh-bone of that bird in size, but not in shape. Both bones had the same reticulate impressions that arrested his attention when he made the comparisons with the bones of the mammals.

He now knew that he was on the eve of a great discovery. Without resting, he extended his examinations, and made them more minute. By the time he had finished, he had come to the conclusion that the bone from New Zealand had belonged to a bird, that it was the shaft of a thigh-bone, and that it must have formed part of a skeleton of a bird as large as a full-sized ostrich, or larger. The specimen, however, still had a marked distinction. The thigh-bone of an ostrich, like the thigh-bone of an eagle, is pneumatic, while there was no doubt, as he had seen at first glance, that the bone from New Zealand was a marrow bone, like that of a beast.

At that time, the kiwi was the largest bird reported from New Zealand. It was not much larger than an ordinary domestic fowl. The fragment seemed to represent a bird of almost fabulous proportions. The ostrich and all the other members of the strange group of struthious birds roam over vast continental areas. New Zealand is composed mainly of two small islands. Owen's contemporaries and seniors pointed out that evidence was against the probability of a large terrestrial bird being able to find sufficient food supplies in a small country like New Zealand. Owen's interpretation of the fragment, therefore, was considered hazardous, far-fetched, and unwarranted.

Owen was convinced that his surmise was right, and he refused to relinquish his opinion. He made a sketch of the fragment, and wrote a short paper on it. This paper he read before the Zoological Society of London. There seems to have been very little comment on it. Probably his fellow scientists thought the subject hardly worthy of serious consideration. Then came the question of publication. Should the paper be admitted to the Zoological Society's "Transactions?" The publishing committee discussed the point for a long time. Owen already had a high reputation, and a statement by him could not be swept aside lightly. He showed that he was very earnest. He placed his reputation side by side with the fragment. "Any opinion as to the specific form of this bird," he said. (sic¹) "can only be conjectural; but so far as my skill in interpreting an osseous fragment may be credited, I am willing to risk



the reputation for it on the statement that there has existed in New Zealand, if there does not now exist, a struthious bird nearly, if not quite, equal in size to the ostrich."

Ultimately a majority of members of the committee agreed to admit the bold statements in to the "Transactions," together with one plate of illustrations, but the risk taken was felt to be a fairly heavy one, and a stipulation was made that the responsibility of the publication should rest entirely on Owen.

His reputation hung in the balance for four years. During that time, from 1839 to 1843, nothing more was heard in England of the wonderful bird from New Zealand. Owen recommended the Museum Committee of the College of Surgeons to purchase the fragment from the owner. In spite of the ornithologist's testimony as to its value, the committee declined to do so. Owen was a poor man. He could not afford to pay the ten guineas out of his own pocket. He told the New Zealander, however, that he would recommend the specimen to other men and institutions, and he soon found a purchaser in Mr Benjamin Bright, M.P. for Bristol. It found a place in the famous "Bright collection," and some years afterwards it was presented to the British Museum together with the rest of the collection, by the grandson of the founder. It is now regarded as one of the most valuable and interesting exhibits in the ornithological department of the great scientific institution.

HOW THE MOA WAS DISCOVERED (By JAMES DRUMMOND F.I.S.) I CONTINUED...

In the meantime, Owen did not allow the wonderful bird he believed he had discovered to rest in the "Transactions" of the Zoological Society. Hundreds of copies of his paper were printed. These copies he sent to all parts of New Zealand, with a request that inquiries should be made in regard to the existence in the present or the past, of "a struthious bird nearly, if not quite, equal in size to the ostrich."

One of these circulars fell in to the hands of Rev W. Cotton, a missionary stationed at Waimate, near Auckland. He had neither seen nor heard of the bird Owen described, but while he was visiting the mission station at Poverty Bay, he told Bishop Williams of the inquiries that were being made. The Bishop had a basketful of moa bones in the next room. The two missionaries ransacked these, and on the following day Maoris were instructed to gather large quantities of the bones, which were scattered in the sand. Several boxes were filled with the bones, and the consignment was sent to Owen with all the expedition that shipping arrangements in those days allowed.

It is a matter for regret that Owen has not recorded his feelings when he opened the boxes. It would be interesting to know if he steeped his arms in the bones, as Edgar Allen Poe's treasure-seekers dipped their arms in to the gold and silver to which they

were lead by the famous gold bug. We would like to know how far his delight carried him, and into what ecstasies he was thrown when his eyes feasted on the beautiful, white, glistening bones, into which his genius subsequently breathed the breath of life, and from which he gave the world the most remarkable being which has inhabited this dominion, and which he happily named Dinornis - "The Terrible Bird."

This episode is one of the most romantic and extraordinary in the annals of natural history. A fragment of a bone, found in distant corner of the world, was placed in a scientist's hand in London, and in a few days - in a few hours, in fact - he had read its story. In all the records of all the learned societies of the world, there cannot be a more brilliant, and striking example of the value of profound scientific knowledge or a more triumphant application of philosophical reasoning.

Note 1: It is likely that the newspaper's compositor had a hand in the punctuation and spelling. This stray full stop is a typographical error (or poor printing impression that lost the comma's tail) in an otherwise tidy composition, albeit displaying the hallmarks of this period of the generous use of commas.

REVIEW

The Wisdom of Birds: An Illustrated History of Ornithology

by Tim Birkhead.

ISBN 979-0-7475-9822-0

This year Bloomsbury have published a paperback edition of "The Wisdom of Birds: An Illustrated History of Ornithology" by Tim Birkhead. Originally published in 2008 this book was awarded Bird Book of the Year by the British Trust for Ornithology in 2009. It is now available at a very reasonable price in paperback (I found it for \$38.95 through Whitcoulls online, with free delivery) and I recommend it as a must read for anyone interested in the history of ornithology.

Birkhead's writing style is remarkably readable and he engagingly narrates fascinating historical accounts of early experiments and discoveries in ornithology before taking us through to more recent developments in the field. The chapters cover a variety of topics including instinct and intelligence, migration, light and the breeding cycle, territory, birdsong, sex and infidelity. Birkhead, a well-known behavioural ecologist and ornithologist, addresses each of these topics in an entertaining and refreshing way and recognises the contributions of amateur birders, bird breeders and scientists alike.

A remarkable aspect of the book is the delightful illustrations throughout, some dating back as early as the 17th and 18th centuries. The author spent over two years searching for appropriate images and he certainly uncovered some gems. The book includes 50 pages of notes and references leaving plenty of follow-up material for the keen reader. I highly recommend this book.

Finally, those interested in Birkhead himself can watch a TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Talk about early birdwatchers online at http://svalbard.ted.com/talks/tim_birkhead_the_wisdom_of_birds.html

CRAIG STEED

THE LEGEND OF THE LAST MOA BIRD

by Alexander Nevzorov

In the land of New Zealand
There were birds all around,
They didn't fly in the sky,
They walked on the ground.
Clumsy fat kiwi bird
And no predators by!
If nobody can catch you,
Why should you fly?
The little green parrot
Had two small wings, you see,
But it still used its beak
To climb up the tree!
Bird called Moa was tall
With two strong graceful legs,
It walked, sang its songs
And, of course, laid its eggs.
But some hungry strong people
Sailed to those distant lands,
Mighty, sly, clever humans
With sticks in their hands.
They built huts all around,
Made some weapons to beat
In order to kill and have more meat to eat.
Poor Moa couldn't fly,
It could just run away,
A huge pants-like bird
Was so easy to slay!
A great bunch of meat
So easy to get
They didn't realize
What they were doing yet.
Humans used sticks and stones
To hit Moas' weak backs
and then used to bring Dead birds home
packed in sacks.
One day men went hunting
As they used to go.
They met the last Moa
(But they didn't know).
As usual, they took some stones from the sack.
When Moa got closer,
They ran to attack.
Moa couldn't be sly
With its tiny bird's brain.
It fell slowly dying
And crying of pain.
The last Moa bird on the planet was beaten,
The last Moa bird on the planet was eaten.
So look, human predator,
What have you done?
You killed the bird that was born to have fun
and run.
And all other birds killed by you were so cute.
Think before you shoot,
Or should I say,
Don't shoot.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE FEATHERED KIND

On Saturday 15th December 2007 we had a group of people gathered at our home in the South Waikato for an end-of-year hangi and family fun. By 10.30 pm most people had gone home, and my husband and I were sitting outside with the two remaining visitors. We had several outside lights on, and music playing through an amplifier.

We noticed a Morepork sitting on a fence post about four metres from where we were sitting. We watched with interest as it swooped silently and caught a large green Puriri Moth that was fluttering around the lights. It appeared to take no notice of us as it sat quietly waiting for another moth to arrive, and then flew at it, taking it before we even realized it was on the move.

At one stage it flew through an open door into the house after a moth that had gone in there. The Morepork seemed very surprised to find itself in the kitchen sitting on top of the cupboard, and I had to turn off the inside lights so it could see where to fly out again.

One of our visitors commented "I wonder if it would take a moth out of my hand?"

He caught one of the large green Puriri Moths, and held it up by a wing so that it fluttered.

The Morepork sat on its post and looked on for a few minutes, then suddenly, without warning, the moth was gone from our friend's hand, and the Morepork was sitting on another post a little further away, his back to us, holding the moth down on the top of the post with his feet while it was devoured.

We were incredulous. Brian, who had held the moth out, was ecstatic and couldn't wait to catch another moth and do it again. The second time we did not have to wait as long before the Morepork launched itself off the post to claim its moth.

Brian next suggested that I catch a moth and try. I sat in a chair a couple of metres away from the others and held the fluttering moth not far from my ear. Luckily I was facing the Morepork, as it made no noise at all when it swooped towards me, feet outstretched. I felt the wind from its wings but only knew it had taken the moth when I noticed it was not in my fingers.

Although I have watched nature programmes and seen birds of prey swoop in with their feet outstretched, I was amazed to see it happening right in front of my eyes. Somehow I was expecting the owl to snatch the moth with its beak. It flew towards me beak-first with its feet tucked up, then suddenly executed a mid-air change of position in the fraction of a second before it reached the moth so that its talons were held in front, its wings braking against the air, holding its body vertical. In that same instant the moth disappeared from my hold and the Morepork righted itself, flipping its body back to a streamlined flying position.

This time the Morepork did not stop to eat the moth but disappeared in the direction of the bush, about 60 metres away from the house. Ten minutes later it was back for another moth and sat waiting patiently on its post while Pete, my husband, caught the next moth for him. Once again it was taken back to the bush, and once again left behind a group of incredulous and excited people. Then it was the turn of Vic, our other guest to have the very special experience. We all laughed when we heard "more pork" being called out from the bush. Mum owl was probably there with a nest of hungry babies, waiting for their next feed. Brian commented that the owl was getting us well trained, we catch the moths and the owl ferries them to its nest.

We were not being particularly quiet, and the music was still playing. Maybe it liked the blues.

We stayed out there until midnight, feeding the Morepork about every 10 minutes. Eventually the supply of Puriri Moths dried up, and when we ceased to provide them the owl sat there on its post for a long time, swivelling its head and looking at us expectantly. We tried ordinary moths, which it was not very interested in. They were apparently too small to bother with after the sizeable Puriri. Brian tried to make a moth look like a better meal, by holding a live one to flutter, and a dead one to bulk up the appeal. The Morepork swooped, and picked up both moths in one grab, but had discerned the dead one and dropped it within one metre of taking it. At the speed it was travelling that was lightning decision-making.

The most amazing experience for all of us was one time when we were all sitting in a row with our backs towards the house. One of the men held a moth out in front of him, and to take it the Morepork had to fly in towards us, brake, turn at right angles to snatch the moth in its feet, and then turn at right angles again to head out back to the bush. We all had an eye-to-eye view as the owl's forward motion ceased when it manoeuvred around.

Since then there have been no Puriri Moths around, and though we put the outside lights on for several days afterwards we have not seen the owl. We regularly hear Moreporks calling from the bush during the night. Perhaps they are waiting for the music to serenade them back.

LYNN SMITH

NEW ZEALAND ROBIN CAUGHT BY HOOK GRASS

On 12th February 2011 the extended Guest family were camped at the Ngaherenga camping site at Pureora. The site abuts the Pikiariki podocarp forest and around the campsite were numbers of Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeets, Whiteheads and New Zealand Robins. In the late afternoon we became aware of a flapping noise on the bush edge by our camp site and were amazed to see a Robin apparently tangled in Hook Grass (*Uncinia uncinata*). We studied the bird for some time and we were agreed it was unable to free itself, before stepping up to help it. As we closed in on the bird it flapped violently in fright and thus became free. We were agreed that without our intervention, the bird would have remained entrapped. There are a number of old records of birds caught by Hook Grass including Silvereeye, Dunnock and Redpoll, whilst on Kapiti Island there were also records of Morepork, Tomtit, Fantail, Whitehead, parakeet and Long-tailed Cuckoo (Daniel 1970, *Notornis* 17(2):101) but this was our first experience of such an event.

ROB GUEST

WRYBILLS AT AWARUA BAY

During the June winter wader count two Wrybills were spotted at the head of Awarua Bay. They were photographed a month later by Southland OSNZ member Glenda Rees. In fact there seems to have been a single Wrybill and sometimes two at the bay since 2002. Rob Schuckard and David Melville, while wader catching at the head of the bay, even caught one in their cannon nets when trying to catch their primary target waders, Lesser Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits.

According to recent records the highest number noted was three in 2008, and they seem to be present throughout the year with sightings in spring, summer and winter. While other regions of New Zealand may not think this is anything special, the species is not common in Southland. It is always a pleasure to catch sight of these unique birds and we are more than happy for them to spend some time in the deep south.

PHIL RHODES



Southland Wrybill
Photo by Glenda Rees



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Regional Roundup



Far North

Over the last month (since early October) the New Zealand Dotterel census has been in full swing. For the first time for many years access has been obtained overland through private forestry areas to the beaches along Great Exhibition Bay where many birds were found in the past. If it were not for the distance, and the fact that we were walking, we could have got to the well-known Kokota Sandspit. So this magical place with its whiter than white sand will still need to be reached for this census. At the time of writing more than half the census sheets are back and our impression is that there has not been an increase in numbers since 2004.

The September indoor meeting took place at our new Kerikeri venue. Members Robin and Verna presented a video complete with music of their holiday in the Seychelles with emphasis on the avifauna and wildlife.

Recent records of interest include Kaka heard flying over Puketi Forest in July, whilst two visited a garden in Kerikeri regularly in August. Royal Spoonbill numbers appear to be increasing, and the species is appearing in new places such as Mangonui Harbour and Waitangi. Kevin Matthews saw a flock of 103 Cattle Egrets in paddocks near Waiharara in September.

A late report has been received of a Cape Petrel in Doubtless Bay in March. Seabirds seen during the Dotterel census include a passage of at least 12 Black-winged Petrels moving west along Spirits Bay where masses of birds could be seen on the horizon most of the day. An albatross clearly dwarfed the other generally unidentified species.

In the September roundup we mentioned the attempts to lure Gannets to Moturoa Island. We can now report that at least two live birds have been seen on the rocks with the decoys so we await the next episode with great interest.

A bird census (mainly land and coastal birds) is now being carried out on some of the islands in the Bay of Islands which were cleared of predators a couple of years ago. It is hoped that native species will show a substantial increase, even in the last 12 months. It is proposed to look for seabird burrows some time too and pelagic trips from the Far North east coast are planned for early 2012.

DETLEF DAVIES

Northland

The national census of New Zealand Dotterel on the weekend of October 15th and 16th was a busy time for some of our members. The beaches preferred by Dotterels are often not easily accessed and require a degree of fitness on the part of the observers. Several of our groups overnighted in tents, caravans or cabins to catch high tides and to avoid a lot of travel. The time of writing is too early to have many figures in, but there does not appear to be an increase in our area.

Refining NZ, who operate the country's only oil refinery at Marsden Point, have established an Environmental Division. Their technicians have identified that, as a fringe benefit, the security precautions required to protect the operation of their plant also assist some shore birds. The perimeter of the refinery is fenced with substantial mesh netting over two metres high with security personnel at all openings. There are also serviced predator traps at regular intervals around the fence and an additional programme operates within the grounds. New Zealand Dotterels have utilised this as a refuge from both human and predator danger with 25 birds being counted recently. As at 8th September a pair were nesting and during the survey a technician, Genelle, noted that a pair of Spur-winged Plovers had taken over a Dotterel nest and were sitting on three Dotterel eggs with the nervous Dotterels hovering nearby.

Beach patrols continue on the east coast although a couple of months were missed due to stormy weather. Some shorter stretches of the west coast out from Dargaville are patrolled, but the ageing process has caught up with many of our members who can no longer cover the 12 km walks of yesteryear.

On 13th August 68 Cattle Egrets were counted near Camp Road in the Waiharara area north of Awanui (near Kaitaia). There have been no recent reports of any in the Whangarei region. On 19th September a Reef Heron was seen at Ti Point near Leigh and on 16th October, two Brown Quail were seen pecking alongside the road at Sandy Bay, seemingly oblivious to traffic, surfers, or children at play. A Little Egret was seen at Mangawhai on 14th October near the bridge on the Black Swamp Road corner.

During October an emaciated young Brown Kiwi was found wandering during daylight hours in a paddock of Kikuyu grass at Whananaki. It had a crossed bill that interfered with its ability to feed and it was taken to the Whangarei Bird Recovery Centre who reported that it was now eating and that the bill defect could, in time, be corrected.

CLAIRE BURTT

Waikato

Members in the Waikato have been fairly busy of late. First it was the prion wreck, then some have been helping with the *Rena* disaster, and most recently the northern New Zealand Dotterel census. The dotterel census was initially postponed due to the *Rena* oil spill but was completed at the end of October. Waikato members helped out by counting dotterels largely in the Kawhia and Aotea Harbour areas, which was convenient as we could also conduct the regular Harbour census at the same time. At the time of writing the numbers from any of the surveys were unavailable.

As far as regular monthly meetings and trips are concerned, we have had an interesting and varied programme. In August, John Gumbley from Waikato DoC, talked about his recent trip to the United States on a study award to investigate fish barriers in wetlands and rivers. This was not exactly your normal OSNZ talk, but very interesting nonetheless, and we managed to squeeze a bit of North American bird information out of him! Seriously though, like in America, pest fish are a significant problem in the Waikato and is something our members are concerned about, so John's talk was in many ways highly relevant.

In September, Alan Clarke, a visiting Assistant Professor from Fordham University in New York, talked about how light and noise affect birds migrating through New York City. Alan talked about some of the high- and low-tech ways in which he and his students are investigating how these contrived variables influence bird behaviour. We did not realise just how big an effect cities can have on this type bird behaviour, but Alan also pointed out some ways in which these effects can be minimised so it was not all doom and gloom. October saw Gerry Kessels, CEO of Kessels and Associates, talk about the extensive work his company has been leading to determine the potential effects that the proposed wind farms may have on migratory bird mortality in western Waikato. His group conducted extremely large surveys of birds passing key points and used these data to model potential losses from wind turbines. Gerry also talked about a wind farm conference he recently attended in Norway, and showed us pictures from a fieldtrip he went on where turbines were placed in the wrong areas and caused significant bird mortality. This highlighted the importance of conducting appropriate research before these structures are installed to estimate potential risk.

I mention this every year, but on behalf of the Waikato OSNZ, thanks to all the speakers that came and talked to our group in 2011. We really appreciate them giving up their time to do this, as time seems to be a rare commodity these days!

DAI MORGAN

Bay of Plenty and Volcanic Plateau

Highlights of the regions were the Baird's Sandpiper discovered at Maketu by Tim Barnard in early October, a Nankeen Kestrel sighted by an Australian visitor at Te Puna in August, and a White Heron seen by Lisette Collins at Papamoa East Reserve, quite the urban bird, late September. Chris Gaskin's tours bring in the good Volcanic Plateau sightings every time! On October's tour it was an Australasian Bittern with one flying overhead in clear view over the Old Wharf Road at Tokaanu (then out across the lake). There was another bird fairly booming close by.

New member Raewyn Adams keeps finding startling records, with a 19-year-old banded Gannet picked up on Pikowai Beach in the first week of October. Tim Barnard reported that 538 Bar-tailed Godwits were back at Pukehina Spit at Little Waihi on October 3rd.

News that broke on the Wednesday morning of 5th October 2011 of a ship grounded on Astrolabe Reef near Motiti Island struck fear into our collective hearts. This was just at the height of the breeding season for offshore feeding seabirds such as the Common Diving Petrel and Grey-faced Petrels. Many OSNZ members from all over New Zealand became instant overnight volunteers, with duties such as bird capture, cleaning, Little Penguin retrieval and offshore island bird capturing. The slick that came ashore from the *MV Rena* had oiled about 1,000 birds by the time of writing, and one large concern is the prospect of another oil slick being released once the ship breaks up.

A region-wide New Zealand Dotterel census was conducted early October, but numbers were possibly affected by the oil. Some Dotterels were captured to prevent them from becoming oiled, plus observers were taken up with *Rena* duties, so an accurate count may not have been possible. Two Dotterels were seen at the Mount Surf Club for the first time; this beach is normally covered in people.

Grey-faced Petrels have had a tough time, with three of our four study burrows on Mauao/Mount Maunganui losing their chicks. This was possibly due to a Stoat, which was sighted in September. Since the chick count only numbers 50, all it takes is one stoat to clean up a whole generation. Possums and rats have also made their presence known on our nightly oiled penguin

patrols. A probably Stoat-killed chick was found on Mauao on the 22nd October. Ian Armitage reported seeing Grey-faced Petrel breeding burrows on the upper edge of several coastal cliffs, beneath pohutukawa trees, on Motiti Island, in October. He also reported Black Petrels, with several seen offshore in Wairanaki Bay, close to the island.

PAUL CUMING

Taranaki

New Plymouth and its environs must be the Tui capital of New Zealand. At the September and October meetings we all had records of Tui from around the district including Carol Keight, who saw twenty in a *Prunus campanulata* at Barrett Lagoon, and other members had them in flowering Kowhai and other blossom trees in their gardens. In September the Messengers had ten in trees at their home and David Medway managed to count approximately thirty in Kowhai at Lake Mangamahoe. Members with magnolias budding up were visited by New Zealand Pigeons making a meal of the new growth and they were seen elsewhere around the province.

Beach patrollers were still picking up prions in August; Barry Hartley has put together the local record on recoveries and the total came to 7,750 from Awakino in the north to Opunake in the south. As with other regions there was a lot of coast line not patrolled. September patrolling was back to normal with the only notable recovery being a Fiordland Crested Penguin found on a south Taranaki beach.

August's field trip around northern beaches up to Mokau and some inland reserves turned up the regular Bellbirds, Tui and New Zealand Pigeon along with eight Royal Spoonbills at the Mokau Estuary. Carole Medway heard the first Shining Cuckoo on September 11th so won the much coveted prize, although a non-member had heard one a week prior.

The September field trip was delayed by inclement weather and was finally held in early October; a meander around Pukeiti on a fine spring day. David Medway had seen a Long-tailed Cuckoo there in late September but it and Fantail were absent on our visit, although most of the other usual species were present.

The Little Shag colony in Pukekura Park is active again with chicks in some nests. This colony has been going since 1991 and is very successful. It would be interesting to know where the juveniles end up upon leaving.

A few migratory waders have been seen around the coast, with some small flocks of Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots on the move. A flock of 19 Wrybills was recorded at Pungareere. As yet no Pacific Golden Plovers have been seen; they are usually amongst the first arrivals. The Identity of Bill Messenger's mystery wings and other miscellaneous body parts was finally resolved, with the help of some museum specimens, as formerly belonging to a White-faced Heron.

A Cattle Egret seen in Pukekura Park in early September was the first record of this species in the Park. During a couple of windy days many albatrosses and giant petrels were seen offshore at Waiongana, but not seen further down the coast. White-fronted Terns are being seen as they return to nest on the islands in the Ngamotu Marine Reserve. On a nice fine October morning six Royal Spoonbills flew in from out at sea and over my head while I was on the beach at Waiongana, and yes I did risk looking up.

PETER FRYER

Hawke's Bay

The region has irregular meetings depending on when speakers are available, but we have had two recently which were very well supported. Denise Fastier from DoC who manages the Boundary Stream Mainland Island project, and Tamsin Ward-Smith from Cape Kidnappers Preserve presented their plans for the next few years. These focused on which species they were intending to translocate, with particular interest on the proposal to introduce several petrel species to the Boundary Stream area.

Brent Stephenson gave us an update of his travels over the past year starting with a cruise around coastal New Zealand and finishing with Scottish islands. He had stunning images to illustrate his talk and we eagerly await the next instalment.

October's field trip was to Boundary Stream and Lake Opouahi. We were greeted with birdsong in the car-park, and all the expected bush birds were heard and seen during the morning. Highlights were good views of a Long-tailed Cuckoo after hearing several, and also good views of two Kokako. At Lake Opouahi a pair of New Zealand Dabchicks were feeding two young.

John Cheyne is organising a Bittern survey in Hawke's Bay aimed at identifying wetlands where Australasian Bitterns breed with a view to ensuring the habitat is protected. Several members attended a training session



at Lake Hatuma where it was a great experience to hear booming from several different areas of the lake. We then discussed the project over a barbecue dinner. Jim Hamilton is co-ordinating the coverage of local areas and there have been some interesting outings at dawn and dusk.

Anderson Park, a suburban park with a small lake, has had three Plumed Whistling Ducks present since 25th September. Local residents noticed the birds and reported them. Subsequently most local members have managed to see them, and there have been a number of out-of-town birders who have come to see them too. They were still present at the end of October.

MARGARET TWYDLE

Wanganui

As usual, winter has been quiet, but with some notable sightings. A colour-banded Red-billed Gull, first banded as a chick at Kaikoura in November 1980, returned to winter on the Whanganui Estuary for at least the third successive year. She is now over 30 years old, but certainly does not show it. In early October, a banded male Bar-tailed Godwit 'AJD' popped in briefly before moving on to Foxton Beach where it had been banded originally in October 2008. This bird has spent the past three summers on the Whanganui estuary, together with another marked Godwit, 'AJB', also now back at Foxton Beach. If these birds follow the pattern set in previous years, they should return to the Whanganui estuary in December, where they will stay until departing in late March. The first Shining Cuckoo was heard on 19th September, but this may have been a bird passing through as it was almost a week before other records started coming in.

Most members undertake field trips on their own although, where possible, we join those organised by the Wanganui Museum Botanical Group. One such trip in late October, to Lake Waikato, a small dune lake near Nukumarū, produced three Australasian Bitterns, at one time all circling around together when disturbed. There doesn't seem to be much suitable breeding habitat, so their status is unclear. When this lake was surveyed in the early 1990s as part of Protected Natural Areas programme, Raupo was growing in one arm of the lake, but it is no longer there. Loss of habitat may be pushing Bitterns into marginal areas. Another Bittern, crippled with an injured wing, was picked up in Wanganui in mid-June. It was in poor condition and was taken to the veterinary school at Massey University, but it did not recover and died about six weeks later.

Monitoring of the birds on the Whanganui Estuary continues, with the patterns of movement of birds on to, off, and through the estuary becoming clearer as data accumulate. For example, the status of Banded Dotterel locally is now better understood thanks to monitoring of birds at Wanganui airport by Bevin Shaw. Previously, we thought that the Dotterels recorded on the estuary were moving through on migration but now we believe that these are mostly local birds. Bevin's data show regular daily occurrence of up to 80 birds on grassland around the runway throughout autumn and winter, with numbers fluctuating during the day as the birds move off to other foraging sites, including occasionally the estuary.

Monthly meetings continue to be popular, with an average of around 17 attendees at each (not all OSNZ members, unfortunately). We had a 'show and tell' session in July, at which various people brought along and spoke about interesting books, magazines and photographs. Among them was a photographic essay by Jacqui McGowan of the development through to fledging of a brood of Blackbird nestlings, based on daily photographs of the chicks and their parents. This is an idea that would be worth repeating on other species. In September, Allan Anderson spoke about the proposed reintroduction of Stitchbird to Bushy Park, a 95 ha mainland sanctuary of well-preserved temperate lowland rainforest, surrounded by a predator-proof fence. Both Robin and Saddleback have already been successfully reintroduced here, so hopes are high that the same can be achieved with Stitchbird. Establishing another population will create a further buffer against population crashes at other sites and provide an additional source of birds for genetic management, if needed, of the species as a whole.

The following month, Colin and Robyn Ogle spoke about their birding trip to the Cape York Peninsula in mid-2011. Among the many highlights were Red Goshawk, Golden-shouldered and Eclectus Parrots, and dust! In October, Eric Dorfman, director of the Whanganui Regional Museum, talked about various projects in urban biodiversity in which he has been involved, including Australia's *Birds in Backyards* programme and Wellington's *Project Kereru*. Given that more than 85 per cent of New Zealanders live in towns or cities areas, there is obvious potential for, and a need to promote, studies of those species that have adjusted to an urban existence, and how this now differs from that in more natural environments.

PETER FROST

Manawatu

Massey University lecturer Murray Potter presented an entertaining and engaging talk in September. Last summer Murray spent two months carrying out research on Macquarie Island. Murray is an excellent photographer, and his informative talk was accompanied by stunning photographs of some very wild and unforgiving habitat which is home to some magnificent birds.

Within the region we have enjoyed the presence of five Gull-billed Terns at the Manawatu Estuary since the beginning of June. They are regularly seen feeding on crabs which they catch from the shallower waters of the estuary. Sav Saville also reported two Little Terns at the estuary on 20th October. Interesting for the region has been the presence of larger than usual numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits, especially juveniles. On the same day as the Little Terns Sav reported more than 370 Godwits including over 140 juveniles. That is hopefully a good indication of a successful breeding season for this species.

CRAIG STEED



Some of the Gull-billed Terns at the Manawatu Estuary. Photo by Craig Steed.

Wellington

In the past few months Wellington has hosted two international superstars of the avian world. First Happy Feet the Emperor Penguin called in, and after much publicity and a diet of salmon, disappeared in the Southern Ocean. A short time later Sirocco, the maladjusted Kakapo, came for a season at Zealandia (Karori Wildlife Sanctuary). While there was some discussion about the price for seeing Sirocco, the group I joined appeared to be most grateful for seeing such an endangered bird. The experience was helped greatly by Sirocco, who appeared to enjoy all the human attention. In marked contrast, I can remember seeing in the 1960's a far from happy looking Kakapo at Mount Bruce. Perhaps, like the deceased Norwegian-Blue parrot in the Monty Python sketch, it was pining for a lost fjord.

At the October meeting, Murray Williams presented the findings of his investigation of the Auckland Island Merganser (*Mergus australis*). The last pair to be seen alive were shot in 1902. Murray's studies included searching historical records and examination and measurement of specimens held in museums in New Zealand and overseas. While the cause of the extinction of the Auckland Island Merganser is open to speculation, there appears to be little doubt that collectors significantly added to the demise of this species; in 1901 and 1902 eight specimens were collected. One interesting question that Murray's investigations have addressed is how well the Auckland Island Merganser could fly. He showed by using measurements from museum specimens and applying them in a mathematical model for flight, that it is highly likely the Auckland Island Merganser could fly reasonably well.

GEOFF DE LISLE

Nelson

Ralph Powlesland was guest speaker at the September meeting with a presentation on the 'Shags of Mainland New Zealand'. He spoke about the different biologies of four of our shag species, their populations, foraging and prey, breeding biology and threats. His interest and enthusiasm was clearly evident and one of our largest attendances of members and guests were treated to a memorable evening. October's meeting was more low key, featuring local issues, future meetings, surveys, and environmental topics up for discussion.

The sighting of three Gull-billed terns in non breeding plumage in the Waimea Estuary on 17th September (the first in 21 years) was followed by a sighting of a single bird on the Motueka Sandspit the following day. From

photos the markings showed this to be a different bird. Regular reports at the time of writing indicate these birds are still present.

David Melville recorded the bird on the Motueka Sandspit and gave a short talk at the October meeting in which he described its range pointing out he had seen them in the Gobi Desert.

The National Cycleway has recently completed a track through Rabbit Island with a ferry link to Mapua. Parts come close to sensitive areas for breeding Variable Oystercatchers. The Region provided data for three large information panels along the route for the attention of the public. The illustrated professionally-prepared panels also direct viewers to the OSNZ website for further information.

Among the flocks of returning Bar-tailed Godwits in the Waimea Estuary Willie Cook recorded a White over Blue flag and informed Adrian Reigen requesting further details.

The reply; one sole bird flagged in Taiwan in 2005 and re-sighted in Korea in 2007. With this astounding information Willie made another visit to the estuary and was lucky enough to re-sight the bird and confirm colour and configuration.

In recent weeks frequent sightings of New Zealand Falcons have been made on properties surrounding Richmond with some good photo records.

The survey for the presence of Banded Rails has been restarted in Golden Bay after the absence of the leader for three months. Chris Petyt and Helen Kingston were in group of dedicated Golden Bay members checking out estuaries in the Collingwood and Rakopi areas. Indications are that birds appear to be present in suitable habitat, but some areas could benefit from trapping work.

Chris also reported from a recent Friends of the Cobb trapping visit that Weka and Robins were heard calling all over the place. A single unbanded Blue Duck was on the Cobb River below the bridge near the power house.

DON COOPER

Canterbury

Life in Christchurch still seems surreal at times – aftershocks and snow storms to sea level interspersed with week after week of perfect, crisp, clear winter and spring weather to renew optimism and determination. The tenacious trio of Jan Walker, Bev Alexander and Sheila Petch are out every week monitoring their regular haunts from Ellesmere to the Ashley Estuary, surely one of our most beautiful and productive birding areas in Canterbury.

On a 'Mystery Trip' in September members found 52 different species in a variety of habitats. Not a minute was wasted on Bev's well organised minibus trip to sites around Christchurch's northern suburbs and coastal Waimakariri. It was complete with maps and bird list, and three quizzes en route which led to an interesting discussion and some surprises about which birds are species in their own right and which birds are endemic.

In late September members congregated at New Brighton Spit to welcome back the waders. There were about 250 Godwits present, with 11 or more having band combinations that were recorded and sent to the organisers of the wader banding project.

Bev organised a weekend trip to Ellesmere in October, where nine members stayed in a cottage overlooking Harts Creek. The emphasis was on early morning and evening birding, target birds being Australasian Bitterns, terns, Australasian Crested Grebes and crakes. Almost immediately and before they had unpacked the scopes, four different Australasian Bitterns were seen. Mostly these were brief views of birds moving behind reeds or popping up for a headshot. Booming Bitterns were heard from all over the reedbed, mostly when the weather was overcast and drizzly. On Sunday a bird was booming right in front of the house at the edge of the reeds. There were also five White Herons on a nearby jetty. These birds continued to hang out together as a group the whole weekend and might be some of this season's new arrivals from Australia.

We have had some interesting speakers at indoor meetings. Andrew Crossland gave an optimistic talk on the possible outcome of changes to habitat brought about by the earthquakes. Land north of the Avon Heathcote Estuary has sunk up to a metre in places. Wetland areas are wetter, which could have an important impact for our water birds and waders.

James Fraser of Nose for Conservation enthralled us talking about the work he and his partner, Tash, do with their setters, tracking and monitoring birds throughout New Zealand and offshore islands. His well illustrated talk showed them in action and included Brown Teal in Northland, Kiwi in mountainous terrain, Blue Ducks on fast flowing rivers and Campbell Island Snipe on Jaquemart Island, where breeding success is high. The couple's love of their dogs and enthusiasm for what they do is infectious. We envied them their interesting job, whilst recognising the fitness, dedication and hard work needed to achieve their results.

Don Geddes of Ashburton, who regularly accompanies Paul Sagar on his expeditions to The Snares monitoring Buller's Albatross, explained the

methods being used to track birds with GPS loggers for both long term travel and also to measure daily movement of birds whilst on the island. His many beautiful photos of the island terrain, fauna and flora brought home what an amazing place it is, home to something like 17,000 Buller's Albatross, 40,000 Snares Crested Penguins, innumerable Sooty Shearwaters as well as many other sea birds and the endemic sub/species of Tomtit, Fernbird and Snipe. Don quoted the claim that on this tiny island of a few hundred hectares there are more sea birds than in the whole of the British Isles.

ANN SHERLOCK

Southland

In a previous roundup report (June 2011) I mentioned a Turnstone that had been photographed in Southland by Glenda Rees and was thought to be a bird fitted with a geolocator in Australia. Clive Minton has advised Rob Schuckard that in fact our bird was banded as a juvenile at Flinders on 1st November 2010 and not fitted with a geolocator. But as Rob says, still a really good sighting that adds to our knowledge of the movement of these birds between Australia and New Zealand.

Southland sightings: Sandy King spotted a Cattle Egret flying over Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island on 11th May, Lloyd Esler heard parakeets calling at Omaui Reserve near Bluff on 2nd June and Phil Rhodes heard one calling at Daffodil Bay at Sandy Point; a first in this location. This could possibly be a cage release or a visit from the Omaui Reserve birds. Two Moreporks were heard in Otatara by Jenny and Ian Gamble. It has been several years since they were last heard in this area.

Phil Rhodes saw six New Zealand Scaup and a White Heron at Suttons Lagoon near the Invercargill Estuary on 17th June. A single Scaup had been photographed in March and was thought to be a first sighting for this species on the lagoon. The Southland Natural History Field Club recently donated 12 Stoat/rat traps for use around the lagoon area and walking track and this should help the local bird population and a few rarer visitors to survive and flourish.

A pair of Black-fronted Dotterels was seen by Lloyd Esler on the Aparima River downstream from Otautau in October. The species has been reported from this area previously, but not seen for several years, probably more for lack of birding visits rather than being absent.

PHIL RHODES

Regional Reps and What's On



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

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

