

THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Otago Region Newsletter 6/2003 December 2003

Supplejack and Saddlebacks

Following a request for volunteers from Ian Jamieson at the August OSNZ meeting, I found myself heading for Stewart Island towards the end of September. My destination was Ulva Island, where **New Zealand Robins** and **Saddlebacks**, among other species, have been re-introduced following the eradication of rats. After filling out the necessary paperwork at the DOC office, I took the short crossing from Thule Bay over to Ulva, my home for the next three weeks.



The birds were being studied to investigate the effects of an isolated population on genetic diversity. My major task, and that of Juliette Parsons, a fellow volunteer, and Kari Farmer, the research assistant, was to track both **Robins** and **Saddlebacks**, to ascertain whether individual pairs were nesting, and if so to find the nests. Easier said than done! Nearly all the birds of these

two species were colour-banded, so that particular birds could be identified and followed. The plan was to visit the relevant territory, find the birds, and watch the female for as long as possible, the theory being that she would not be away from an occupied nest for more than a few minutes at a time. A Ph.D. student, Pascale Michel, was studying the foraging behaviour of the two species, so another of our tasks was to collect feeding observations while we were tracking the birds.

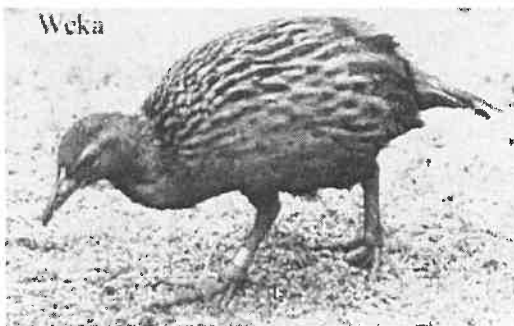
In the case of **Robins**, finding the birds in the first place was relatively easy, since they have very little fear of humans. Following them was also not too difficult, except that they had a habit of standing immediately behind you, or remaining

motionless behind a leaf. The **Saddlebacks** were a different kettle of fish: for a start they favoured the coastal parts of the island, presumably because of the denser vegetation; also they were considerably more wary, and tended to get on with their own business (which usually involved disappearing into the bush!). Following them involved moving through the undergrowth (with its considerable quantities of Supplejack and Bush Lawyer) both quickly and silently – seemingly a mutually exclusive combination.



It was still early in the season, and though there was plenty of courtship activity going on, not many birds were actually nesting. Having ascertained that any particular pair did not have an active nest at that stage, we could leave them alone for a few days and get on with other birds – there were plenty left! Towards the end of my stay, nest finding was becoming quite a regular activity.

Although our efforts were concentrated on **Saddlebacks** and **Robins**, there is a wealth of other bird life on Ulva. Other re-introduced species are **Yellowheads**, which I heard frequently and saw once or twice; and **Rifleman**, whose call I cannot hear (much to the amusement of the rest of the crew), but I saw them on a few occasions. I also had an early morning encounter with a pair of **Brown Kiwi**, which



were oblivious to me as they bounded by within a few feet. **Weka** were present all over the island – not just the obvious ones on the beaches, but if you sat anywhere on the island for any length of time, one would wander past, rustling in the undergrowth. **Kakariki** were widespread, mainly **Red-crowned**, but also a few of the less obtrusive **Yellow-crowned** variety. **Little Penguins** could

be heard calling at night, and their tracks were visible on the beaches, but I saw only two; another penguin, species unknown, met its fate in the jaws of a Hooker's Sea Lion in one of the bays.

So, all in all, a very interesting time, and another good reason to attend OSNZ meetings!

Richard Schofield

Orokonui Sanctuary

The Otago Natural History Trust (ONHT) is undertaking a feasibility study into the potential of establishing a "mainland island" on a DoC reserve in the Orokonui valley, Waitati. The reserve is 230 hectare and contains significant native bush. The

sanctuary would be similar to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington. The aim of the Trust is to establish at Orokonui a permanent, nationally significant, predator-free sanctuary to conserve New Zealand's native flora and fauna, particularly that of lowland Otago. The benefits of the sanctuary will also include opportunities for ecological research, education, recreation and tourism. It would help to secure Dunedin's reputation as the Wildlife Capital of New Zealand. This is going to be a major conservation project for Otago and already has significant community support.

The ONHT has asked the OSNZ to undertake a survey of the bird life currently in the reserve. We are looking to carry out a robust survey to provide a foundation for future research by the University of Otago and others. Our goal will be to identify the species present and their numbers. The survey is going to be coordinated by OSNZ members Peter Schweigman, Ilka Soehle and Jim Wilson.

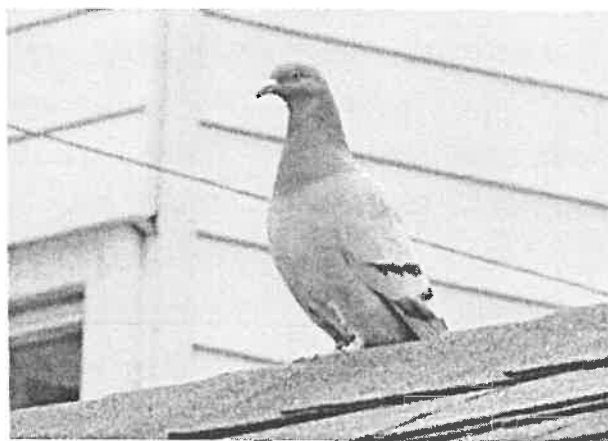
If you would like to be involved in this exciting project, please contact me on 476-3235 or email j.j.wilson@actrix.co.nz. I also have more detailed information should you want it.

Jim Wilson
OSNZ Member and ONHT Trustee

Feral Pigeon Nests

We need your help!!!

Through a current research request from DoC in Wellington, we realised that our **Rock (Feral) Pigeon** (*Columba livia*) data for eggs in the Otago Museum is very poor. In cooperation with Peter Schweigman, I would like to use this opportunity to examine and measure some eggs in nests in and around Dunedin. This is where we really appreciate your help! If you know of any accessible rock pigeon nests please report to me (contacts below) or Peter (peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz). Your help would be greatly appreciated!



Ilka Soehle
Curator - Natural Sciences, Otago Museum, PO Box 6202, Dunedin
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Recent Additions to the Dunedin Public Libraries

Ainley, David G. *The Adelie Penguin: Bellweather of Climate Change.*
Correia, Clara Pinto. *Return of the Crazy Bird: The Sad, Strange Tale of the Dodo.*

- Dunne, Pete. *Golden Wings and Other Stories about Bird and Birders*.
 Fuller, Errol. *Dodo: From Extinction to Icon*.
 Green-Armytage, Stephen. *Extraordinary Pheasants*.
Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 6, Pardalotes to Shrike-thrushes.
 Holden, Peter. *RSPB Handbook of British Birds*.
 Hume, Rob. *RSPB Complete Birds of Britain and Europe*.
 Oddie, Bill. *Bill Oddie's Introduction to Birdwatching*.
 Orbell, Margaret. *Birds of Aotearoa: A Natural and Cultural History*.
 Paul, Gregory, S. *Dinosaurs of the Air: The Evolution and Loss of Flight in Dinosaurs and Birds*.
Pukaha: Songs from the Forest [CD]
 Watling, Dick. *A Guide to the Birds of Fiji and Western Polynesia*.
 Wells, Diana. *100 Birds and How They Got Their Names*.
 Wolfe, Richard. *Moa: The Dramatic Story of the Discovery of a Giant Bird*.

Dead Birds Recently Brought in to Otago Museum

Common Name	Species	Location	Age
Snares Island Penguin	<i>Eudyptes robustus</i>	Victory Beach	Adult
Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes</i> sp.	Port Chalmers	Juvenile
Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes</i> sp.	Warrington Beach	Juvenile
Salvin's Prion	<i>Pachyptila salvini</i>	St.Kilda Beach, Dunedin	Adult
Shining Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx lucidus</i>	Waverley, Dunedin	Adult
Australasian Harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>	Merton Park/Farmland	Adult
Australasian Harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>	Merton	Adult
New Zealand Pigeon	<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i>	Opoho, Dunedin	Adult
New Zealand Pigeon	<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i>	Brockville Road, Dunedin	Adult
New Zealand Pigeon	<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i>	Ross Creek area, Dunedin	Adult
New Zealand Pigeon	<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i>	Opoho, Dunedin	Adult
Kea	<i>Nestor notabilis</i>	Glenorchy	Juvenile
Chestnut-breasted Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadornoides</i>	Glenorchy	Adult
Paradise Shelduck	<i>Tadorna variegata</i>	no data	Adult
New Zealand Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>	Broad Bay, Dunedin	Juvenile
5 x Rifleman	<i>Acanthisitta chloris</i>	Ulva Island, Stewart Island	Adult
Australian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>	Lumsden, Southland	Juvenile
Tui	<i>Prothemadera novaeseelandiae</i>	Macandrew Bay, Dunedin	Adult
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Opoho, Dunedin	Adult

Otago Summer Wader Count, 2 November 2003

	Aramoana	Papanui Inlet	Hooper's Inlet	Harbour West	Harbour East	LPG Depot	Total
SIPO	17	57	131		33	5	243
VOC	4	8	13	2	3		30
Bar-tailed Godwit	250	325	460				1035
Banded Dotterel			5				5
Pied Stilt		8	32				40
Royal Spoonbill		1	1				2
White Heron							0
White-faced Heron		4	2				6
Caspian Tern		4	1				5
Black-fronted Tern							0
Kingfisher							0

Atlassing in Otago

The fourth spring has almost been completed, which means that we have one more year to go for this five-year Atlas Scheme: four more seasons left to try and fill in the gaps. In this newsletter a computerised map for the previous 4 summers has been included. It shows the squares surveyed and the ones not visited. What it does not show is the number of species, which will have to wait till the very end of the scheme. Of interest, though, is the relative high number of squares in which the **NZ Falcons** have been sighted, 70. If you want to see these **falcons**, join Alan Baker, Louise Foord or Lesley Gowans on their atlas 'bashing'. They seem to attract them without trying. Lloyd Esler comes across them in a slightly novel way. Under general notes he writes: '**Falcon** included on the evidence of a shower of **pigeon** feathers falling like snow from a clear blue sky' (at Tautuku). And nine squares have **Crested Grebes** recorded.



Another four seasons to go to add to the records. Good luck!

Peter Schweigman
Atlas coordinator for Otago

Summer Atlas Camp: Alexandra, 6-8 February 2004

This summer is the last in the five-year atlas scheme. I believe we still are able to visit every accessible square not yet covered in summer. To make this aim possible, it is crucial to keep me informed if you visit a square, so that others can be directed to somewhere else. If you have not been so active in this area, please give some serious thought to taking part in this enjoyable activity: visiting new areas and discovering interesting parts of the province. Another personal reward is the unexpected discovery you make about the presence of birds and their activities.

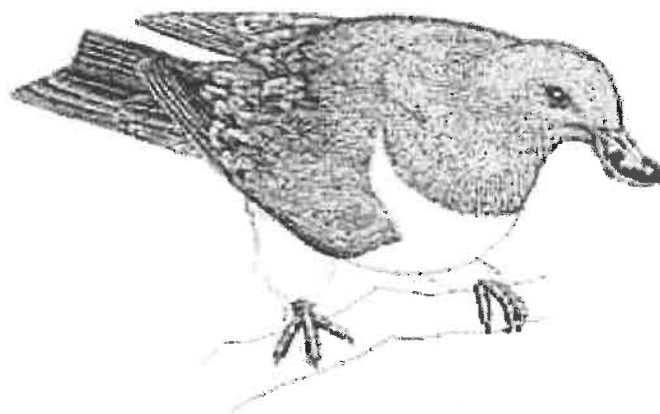
Alexandra is chosen for our summer camp, at a time – Waitangi weekend – when we usually expect good weather. Within reach are most of the squares needing attention. I hope a good number of you will be able to participate. Contact me at the number above.

Louise Foord

Kereru Survey: Request for Sightings

As part of my MSc research I hope to capture and tag up to 20 **Kereru** (**Kukupa** or **Native Pigeon**) in the urban Dunedin (and surrounding) area. The birds will have radio-transmitters and coloured leg jesses attached before being released and followed. I hope to determine the importance of different seasonal food resources, and the area over which the birds are moving.

While I intend to follow the birds closely, I won't be able to keep a constant track of them all. For this reason, there is a survey sheet attached to this newsletter, in the hope that you may have time to record observations of any **Kereru** in your own area. I'm interested in the location of all **Kereru**, if they have leg tags (and if so the colour of these), what the birds are doing (e.g.,



feeding, flying, roosting) and what vegetation they are using (if known). I'm also interested in the flock sizes of birds seen. Any information at all will help me gain a better understanding of how far **Kereru** are moving and of the importance of different areas and food-types to the Dunedin **Kereru** population.

I'll be starting to tag birds from mid-December and hope to capture them in central, urban areas. If you or anyone you know has regular **Kereru** visitors to their garden and wouldn't mind being part of the study please contact me as I am still looking for

more capture sites. In addition, if you would like additional survey forms or have specific questions I can be contacted at the e-mail and postal addresses below.

Thank you all for your time. I wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year.

Lisa Daglish

Department of Zoology, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin

E-mail: dagli950@student.otago.ac.nz

Ornithological Snippets

Southland member Wynston Cooper reported a juvenile **Black Stilt** at the Kaikorai Estuary on 17/10/03. It was banded and was previously seen at Brighton in a group of three juveniles on 17 June 2003 as mentioned in the August newsletter. The stilt was still present on 13 November.

During the summer wader count at Papanui on 2 November 2003, two **Bar-tailed Godwits**, as part of a group of 325, were seen with an orange flag on the right leg. Orange flags are used in Victoria, Australia since 1990. It is not uncommon to see flagged waders in the North Island, Farewell Spit and Lake Ellesmere, but this is the first record of flagged waders in Otago.

Programme 2004

The indoor meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of every second month, in the Otago Art Society Building on the corner of Great King and Albany Streets starting at 8 p.m.

Friday, 6 February -	Summer Atlas Camp, Alexandra
Sunday, 8 February	Contact: Louise Foord, ☎467 5041

Wednesday, 25 February	Indoor Meeting	Speaker: TBA
	Topic: TBA	

Newsletter Editor: Hamish Spencer, 50 Grey Street, NEV, Dunedin.

Email: h.spencer@otago.ac.nz

Otago Bird Atlas: squares covered during the four summers																																			
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36										
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4 summers,	entered 4 March 2003
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