



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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WELLINGTON

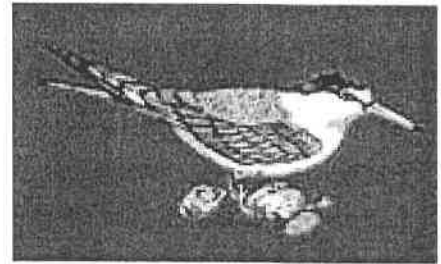
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Otago Region Newsletter 6/2004 December 2004

Little Tern at Aramoana

I received a phone call on Saturday, 4 December, to say there was an immature **White-winged Black Tern** at the mole at Aramoana. I had a look in the wind on Sunday and found a **Little Tern** feeding on the harbour side of the mole and briefly settling near the car park. It appears to be a juvenile from a few brownish looking feathers on the lower back, moulting into 1st winter plumage - obvious dark mark on around carpal. The long slightly down-curved bill and almost black outer primaries (3-4?) suggest it isn't **Fairy Tern**. There was one in almost exactly the same place - roosting within metres at times, about 10 years ago.



Derek Onley

Crested Grebes in Central Otago

On the way to a scientific meeting in Queenstown, on 28 November, I stopped to look over Butchers Dam, near Alexandra and saw a lone **Southern Crested Grebe** preening in water at east end near willows. There were also **Coots** nesting. On Moke Lake there was a pair of **Grebe** swimming and diving around the lake. Two days later, on Lake Wakatipu, near the Earnslaw wharf and St Omer Park I saw a pair of **Grebe** preening, diving and displaying.

On 2 December, on the Frankton Arm of Wakatipu on a beautifully calm, blue morning, near the jet boat wharf a pair of **Grebe** were swimming and diving. We had a great view. One bird, the smaller (female?), was doing all the diving and then we realised the other bird had a chick on its back. We could see its stripy head popping out from time to time. The diving bird returned and we watched two feeds



take place but she was not very successful at fishing, catching something on only one out of every five or six dives. After about 30 min. we witnessed the changeover of duties: there was a little discussion between the pair, then orders given to the chick to swap 'ship.' It jumped into the water then clambered up onto the other parent who had lowered its 'tail-board' for easy climbing and fluffed

up its back feathers in preparation. We did not wait to see if the male bird was a better fisher, but it was a lovely half hour or more of bird-watching.

Mary Thompson

Atlas Celebration

Calling all Atlassers: To celebrate a job well done and have the chance to exchange "The ones that got away" stories, you are all cordially invited to an "End of Atlas Party."

Proposed Venue: Lumberjack Cafe, Owaka

Proposed Time: Lunch on Sunday 6th March 2005

A convivial time is expected and for the afternoons entertainment either/or looking for **Mohua** in the Wisp or a sea watch from Nugget Point (both options available depending on the day and peoples preferences). All Otago and Southland Atlassers welcome and anyone else that happens to be about!

RSVP by 20th Feb 2005 to Suzanne Schofield, 64 Frances Street, Balclutha.

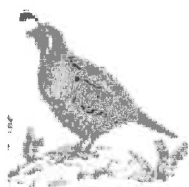
Phone/Fax (03) 418 4415. E-mail: soozie@pcconnect.co.nz

Atlas Camp at Alexandra, Labour Weekend, 2004

Seven members in three cars travelled nearly 3,000 km in four days! One of the highlights was driving to the top of the Carrick Range, at 1,300 m, the highest public road in NZ, and looking down into the Nevis Valley where goldminers worked 150 years ago. I heard a **NZ Falcon** at this point. One lucky car was able to negotiate the rocky road, cut like steps into the rock, down to the valley. They covered two more squares, finding 16 and 17 species, respectively. Can we presume all birds we saw were breeding? Why else were **Banded Dotterels** in the Lower Nevis?

We all pushed our cars to the limit, with four days of the roughest and steepest climbing. On Lake Hawea, at the Neck, we had the pleasure of watching two **Crested Grebes** doing courtship displays across the wide bay. One more bird was sitting on a nest near the edge of the open water. No reed or rushes were available

for cover, as there were at the north end of Lake Dunstan, where at least three more **Grebe** were seen.



Further north, around the side of the lake, in beech forest, which runs from the mountain tops to the shore, we saw a **Falcon** flying through the trees. **California Quail** were identified in a number of locations, but no chicks were seen.

The most species seen in a square was 28, around Bannockburn, and 27, around Alexandra. In all this high country some changes in habitat provided for the various species. We visited some 75 squares, with 22 not previously visited in spring, and identified 45 different species in all, with 16 of these positively breeding.

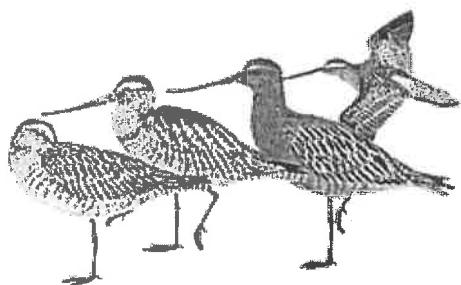
Louise Foord

Summer Wader Count

The summer wader count was completed on 7 November 2004. As usual we went out at high tide, but we soon became aware of how variable the tides are. At 1.7 m, it was 40 cm lower than average, and left vast areas not covered by water. Aramoana, at the Otago Harbour entrance, looked more like low tide, with the whole sand flat exposed. No **Banded Dotterels** there yet; were they all inland, nesting in the mountains?

Louise Foord

Spring Arrivals of Blueskin Bay Waders



Main counts at high tide roosts of **Bar-tailed Godwits**

- 24 Sept 04 114, all adults, including one with an orange flag on right tibia, apparently banded in Victoria Australia - date?
- 6 Oct 04 292, including 13 juveniles and 2 adults with orange flags on the right tibia. One was probably the same bird as 24 Sept judging by size, plumage and behaviour. The other, a large bird, was probably new as it was one of 2 adults feeding on the ocean beach throughout the high tide with 11 of the juveniles.

- 7 Oct 04 295, including 13 juveniles. Only one orange flag - the same large adult bird as the day before, feeding with feeding with flock of 13 juveniles. The other flagged bird could well have been present but roosting on the other leg.
- 18 Oct.04 main roosting flock inaccessible on an island in bay – rough estimate of 250-300. 41 juveniles feeding on ocean beach throughout the high tide.
- 22 Oct 04 total ~575-585 consisted of ~540-550 in high tide roost which included 7 juveniles and a further 35 juveniles feeding on the ocean beach. 1 adult with orange flag on right tibia – but view not that good.
- 31 Oct 04 total 572 including 22 juveniles – 7 juveniles in high tide roost and 15 feeding on ocean beach. 2 adults with orange flags on right tibia.
- 7 Nov 04 total 576 including 22 juveniles – 19 in high tide roost and 3 that flew in later from elsewhere. 1 adult with orange flag on right tibia – but view not that good.

Also on 6 October, 2 **Wrybills** feeding on the sandy beach like **Sanderlings** do everywhere else in the world except NZ On 22 October, there was a single **Wrybill** with a metal band on the right tarsus, On 6 & 31 October, there were 2 **Knot**.

Derek Onley

Wakatipu Basin Trip

Lesley Gowans and I made the last atlas trip of spring in November. We aimed to cover some squares not visited so far in spring, and we returned with 12 sheets, six new ones. We started recording at Clyde, because we saw a **Kingfisher** calling on the river while we had lunch. Most of our records, however, were from Arrowtown to Glenorchy and beyond. We stayed overnight at Kinloch, where we saw large flocks of **Kereru** feeding high in the tops of poplar trees. A little further north, off the road, nesting **Falcons** had been reported defending their nest by attacking people.



We walked a short distance along the Routeburn Track, through beech forest and heard **Parakeets**. We saw a young **Robin** close to the track. The father bird came to it with a grub in his beak and fed the young bird just in front of us.

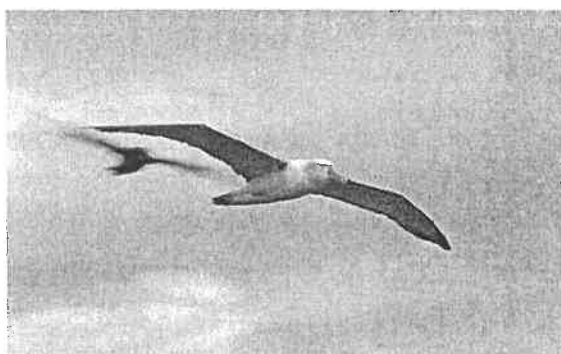
We walked the track to Lake Sylvan through beech forest, following the stream draining the lake for some distance. We heard and saw **Bellbirds**, **Fantails**, **Riflemen**, **Robins**, **Parakeets**, **Gray Warblers** and **Yellowheads**. We heard, but didn't see **Shining Cuckoos**. At the

lake we heard a **Kingfisher** calling from various positions. The sight and sound of these native birds was lovely. **Chaffinch**, **Blackbird** and **Thrush** were also present.

Our sheets with the most species were Glenorchy (27), Paradise (29) and Coronet Peak (28). This last also includes the start of the road to Skippers. You climb very high very quickly, with great views across the landscape from a rock and tussock outlook. Seeing remote places has been part of the reward of this task; so is the pleasure of the birds.

Louise Foord

Ornithological Snippets



Derek Onley reports that on 23 November 2004, amongst hundreds of **Black-backed Gulls** following a fishing boat into Karitane Harbour were ~30 **White-capped Mollymawks** (adult or near adult), 100+ **Cape Pigeons** (most appeared to have darker upper wings), ~40 **White-chinned Petrels**, and about 5 or 6 **Sooty Shearwaters** and **Giant**

Petrels. All but one of the **Giant Petrels** were dark immatures and all too far away to see the colour of the bill tip, so he couldn't tell if they were **Northerns** or **Southerns**. Derek also found a dead juvenile **Broad-billed Prion** in the middle of SH1 at the top of the Kilmog on 12 December 2004, in the midst of unseasonable cold, wind and rain.

Richard Schofield reports a **NZ Falcon** hunting along the coast and over a garden between Nugget Point & Kaka Point on 25 September 2004, and, on 4 October 2004 6 **Cattle Egrets** by SH1 near the Waipori River. Alan Baker saw a **Falcon** chasing a **Harrier** above the Lake Roxburgh Walkway near Alexandra on 11 November 2004.

Bird Books Added to the Dunedin Public Libraries' Collection in 2004

Audubon's Elephant: America's Greatest Naturalist and the Making of "The Birds of America" by Duff Hart-Davis

Back from the Brink: The Fight to Save Our Endangered Birds by Gerard Hutching

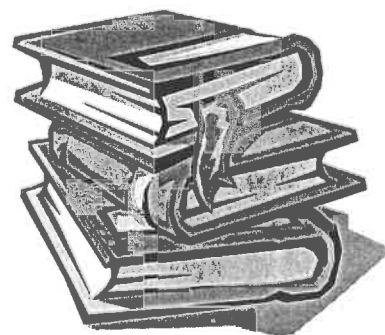
The Big Year: A Take of Man, Nature and Fowl Obsession
by Mark Obmascik

Eagle [DVD]

The Feather and the Furrow: The bird Photographs of
Chris Knights

Firefly Encyclopedia of Birds

Magpie Alert: Learning to Live with a Wild Neighbour by
Darryl N. Jones



Orokonui Sanctuary Feasibility Report, Parts A and B By Otago Natural History Trust

Owls of the World: Their Lives, Behaviour and Survival by James R. Duncan

Penguins by Lloyd S. Davis & Martin Renner

Spix's Macaw: The Race to Save the World's Rarest Bird by Tony Juniper

Taking Flight: Journeys of Migration by Guilhem Lessaffre

Tiritiri Matangi: A Model of Conservation by Anne Rimmer

Winged Migration by Jean-Francois Mongibeaux

The library also receives many donated books in Asian languages. This year they included two books on Japanese albatrosses by Hiroshi Hasegawa. The text is in Japanese, but there are photographs.

Atlassing in Otago

The Atlas Programme has finally come to an end. After 5 years we have covered most of accessible Otago. It was a long spell but we made it. From very high up we are allowed to continue Atlassing, but from 1 December 2004 to 28 February, only the 'virgin' squares on the map of Otago, attached to this newsletter, may be added to the atlas. Without spending a lot of time tramping, mountain biking, this is just not possible. But we are not alone in this. Spare a thought for Canterbury, the West Coast and Southland having to deal with the Southern Alps and Fiordland National Park.

May I take the opportunity here to thank the dedicated who have gone out of their way to make this programme a success. A special thank you goes to Louise for giving us the opportunity to visit remote areas, where one not normally goes 'birding'.

All sheets are supposed to be in by 31 March 2005, but may I suggest we make that 'before Christmas', to make life for your coordinator easier. So if you are sitting on any sheets, please send them in for inclusion. And the sheets for those 'virgin' squares will be sent later.

Peter Schweigman

Otago Atlas coordinator

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