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Otago Region Newsletter 5/2005 October 2005

OMARAMA HOLIDAY

My father and I visited Omarama from 29/8 and 2/9. On the way up we saw Crested Grebes on Lakes Benmore and Aviemore, including a close view of a pair at Sailor's Cutting. After we had installed ourselves in the motel, I set out to walk to the Ahuriri River. However I never got there, as I found a pair of Black Stilts at the oxidation ponds.. It was a very pleasing discovery, as during our last two Omarama holidays we had not seen any Black Stilt. What was even more pleasing was that the stilts were at the ponds every day of our stay, whenever we looked for them. They appeared to be finding plenty of food there.

The most numerous birds at the ponds were Mallard and Grey Teal, but I also saw Pied Stilt, Pied Oystercatcher, Scaup, Little Shag and Paradise Shelduck.

On 31/8 we visited Lake Ohau. On Lake Middleton were a pair of Crested Grebes, many Scaup, 6 Black Swan, and Black Shag and Little Shag. In the beech forest at Parsons Creek I had good views of Rifleman, Tomtit, and Brown Creeper.

In the afternoon we drove out to the end of the Ohau Canal at Lake Benmore. We found an interesting collection of birds there, including Caspian and Black-Fronted Terns, Black Billed Gulls, Grey Ducks, Scaup Shovellers and a Banded Dotterel in flight. However the best sightings came from an irrigated paddock below the road as we were heading back towards Twizel. There we had excellent views of 3 Black Stilts, 5 Black Fronted Terns, 3 Banded Dotterels and 3 Pied Stilts.

On 1/9 we went up the Birchwood Road, where the birds included 4 Black Stilts in a wetland just past the Birchwood Station buildings.

On our way home the next day we stopped briefly at the Otematata boat harbour, which lived up to its reputation as a good place to see coots.

Alan Baker.

Another Falcon sighting in the Dunedin Botanic Garden.

On 17/9 I visited the Dunedin Botanic Garden. In the early afternoon in the lower garden I saw a falcon fly into a holm oak. It was carrying a duckling, which it proceeded to pluck and eat. From the oak it flew to a totara, moving around inside it as though it could have been looking for nests.

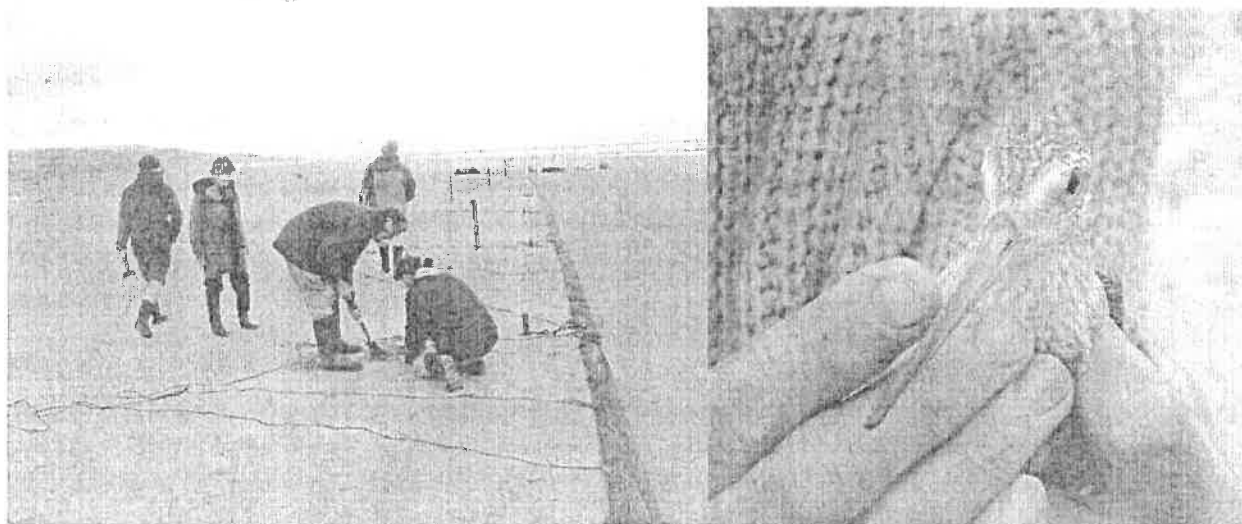
Then it flew to an elm, where I left it at 1.10. At 1.45 it was in a different part of the same elm, overlooking the Leith and it stayed there for half an hour. Just before 3 I saw the falcon in a kowhai beside the duckpond. It flew over the pond and landed on the cafe roof, then went into a large pine.

Alan Baker.

Banding Godwits at Warrington Beach, 20th October.

Audrey, Mary, Gerhard (Peter's son) and friend (who has been studying blue ducks) and Rob Schuckard and David Melville (both banding gurus) gathered at the beach about 3.00 pm after a fairly unpromising rainy morning, but the rain cleared and the evening was calm and cold. The experts let us help them set up a 40 metre cannon net and the tickler line, camouflage the cannons and run the explosive line into the sand dunes; this all took about an hour and then there was another 2 hour wait until high tide and the godwits flew over from Blueskin Bay. They landed about 500 metres down the beach and David had to tickle them long to the spit end of the beach. We novices had to remain hidden in the dunes and so didn't see a lot of the action- 6 spoonbills flying south, a circling harrier, men and dogs and a naked swim from the Doctor's Point Beach! The cannons were set off at 6.50 pm but unfortunately the tide had washed across two of the cannons and they failed so the net only partly unfurled but two godwits were caught. These were duly banded and measured so we now have our own first two banded godwits to watch out for; left leg: white flag/ blue/ yellow; right leg: yellow /red, and the other bird white flag/ blue /yellow, yellow/ blue. The banding team was very pleased as this was their first catch for some time and the site was deemed ideal so they are due back in February. It was a very satisfying day and wonderful to see the birds closeup. In the meantime please start looking for bands and flags.

Banding godwits



Cattle Egret News : The flock has had a constant presence around the area Marshall Road, Berwick to Henley Road. Lesley reported 14 at the last count, on the farm around the herd of dairy cows.

Ohter sightings :

Alan Wright reported their first Shining Cuckoo on the Peninsula on October 16th. Lesley Gowans was surveying at Orokonui reserve on October 15th and heard a Shining Cuckoo.

Doreen Grant saw a falcon flying overhead at Outram on October 15th.

Louise F. saw a falcon flying overhead across Phosphate Road Clarendon on October 5th, at almost the same spot as Louise and Lesley saw one previously while doing the Atlas surveying.

Waders and migrating birds.

November 13th : Wader Count Contact Ken Gager phone 4876670.

For a complete count of Godwits across the whole country, it would be appreciated if everyone with access to places on the coast, including those we don't normally cover, would please take the time to count, even a few.

I am informed that there is uncertainty about the total of Godwits, nationally.

Thank you.



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