



THE  
**ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
(INCORPORATED)

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## *Otago Region Newsletter 3/2006 June 2006*

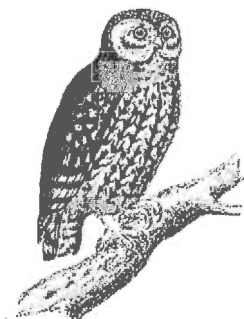
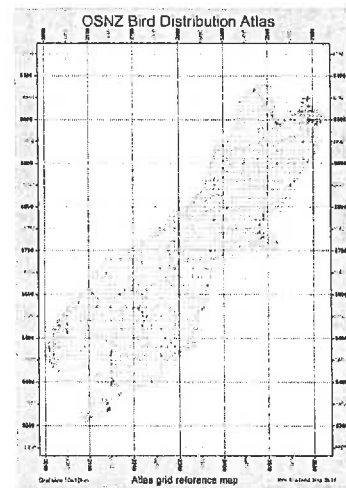
### **Thank you to our retiring RR**

A great big thank you to Louise Foord, who has been our Regional Representative for the past seven years.

This time encompassed the OSNZ Bird Distribution Atlas Scheme, 1999-2004, and saw us complete bird surveys for all but 34 of the squares in our region. Malcolm Foord initiated the computer system for data recording, then Peter Schweigman continued to collate the data, update maps and provide lists of birds seen, and identify squares not visited. Louise organised one or two Atlasing Camps each year in order to cover remote squares and encourage us to get out there. I was able to go on four of them and each yielded exciting finds for me – **Little Owl** at Naseby, **Crested Grebes** at Hawea, **Quails** at Lake Dunstan, **Shining Cuckoo** at Jackson Bay. You can see from this

list that we got to go into many areas that we don't usually visit – some have done cross country trips across the Maniototo area, through Beaumont Station, down

towards Cascade Creek south of Haast, into the Hunter Valley Station and over into the Nevis Valley. A most memorable and successful camp was held at Makaroa at Labour weekend, 2001 with about 15 people attending. We had the use of a lodge to ourselves for meals, the planning of trips and filling in our report forms at the end of the day. There were also Atlasing Camps at Naseby, 2002, Gore and Kurow and Waimate, 2003 and two trips to Alex. in 2004. On average about 70 squares were covered and about 45 species seen per trip. Louise also organised a weekend trip to visit Awarua



Bay (**Golden Plovers**) and do a Beach Patrol on Oreti Beach with Lloyd Esler as our guide; this was a special introduction to that area for those of us who were lucky enough to go. For all these adventures, Louise not only decided the venue, organised and booked the accommodation, but also planned and catered all the meals. Somehow after a days' birding, driving long distances, Louise would produce roast dinners and other fabulous treats. Fortunately, Louise says she is still happy to help organise future trips for us. Thank you, thank you!

Louise, with the help of Hamish Spencer and Peter Schweigman, has ensured a series of indoor meetings featuring interesting speakers with expertise in many aspects of bird study. OSNZ Otago has contributed sessions to the NZ International Science Festivals and has continued to provide a prize to the best project involving birds entered in the Schools Science Fair – Louise has judged this on occasions as well as Peter. OSNZ members have also helped with the **Fernbird** study of Okia Reserve and more recently with the bird surveys, organised by Derek Onley, of the proposed Orokonui ecosanctuary.



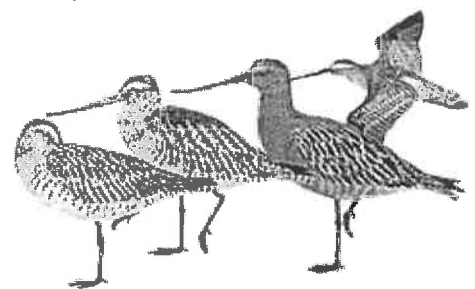
Others may have other highlights to report of their birding that have come about because of the efforts of Louise, but I think we will all agree that we think of Louise as our great 'falcon-spotter' – somehow a **Falcon** or two will always show when Louise is around.

We wish you happy and relaxed (now that you have retired as RR) birding.

Mary Thompson.

## National Colour-banded Godwit Spotting Weeks, 2006

The OSNZ project to study the extent to which individual **Bar-tailed Godwits**, **Red Knots** and **Ruddy Turnstones** use a network of estuaries while in New Zealand has been running now for two years and has a final year to run (year two will be reported on in the 2006 Scientific Days; final report is due in December 2007).



The coming season will be the last to mark and intensively spot Northern Hemisphere migratory birds for this project. So far about 700 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 300 **Red Knot** and 40 **Ruddy Turnstones** have been individually banded. Efforts over 2006/07 will be aimed at filling in the gaps in our coverage. This pool of individually marked birds has already significantly increased our knowledge of how northern migratory species use New Zealand's estuarine habitats. Additionally, international sightings of banded birds (particularly **Godwits**) on migration are proving extremely valuable for understanding the migrations of these species.

The project has already resulted in considerable public involvement and thus increased public awareness of issues relating to shorebird conservation both locally and internationally. To increase involvement from the wider public, Department of Conservation, and OSNZ, I would like to organize, in close collaboration with the RR's, two national colour-band spotting weeks. During these periods I would aim to mobilise as many people to get out and specifically look for colour-banded birds. Because DoC involvement is likely to be during week-days and OSNZ during weekends, and appropriate tides vary around the country, we are targeting specific weeks rather than days. With increased intensive coverage we hope to cover a large proportion of the birds in New Zealand during those periods. Because making a full census and checking for bands are often incompatible tasks, we have decided not to combine these efforts with the annual winter and spring census.

Rob Schuckard

### **Proposed Spotting Weeks for Otago: 16-23 July and 7-15 October**

The above information was sent to us by Rob Schuckard - South Island team leader for the godwit colour-banding project. I have assumed that Otago members will be keen to participate. The most likely dates for the winter spotting will be **22 and 23 July** when the high tide is at about 2.00 pm, which would give us a chance to look for flags and bands when the birds are still moving around as they come into roost and as they move out feeding again after high tide. Peter Schweigman will most likely be going spotting during the previous week as well. In the meantime can people check whether there are **Godwits** still hanging out at Karitane, Blueskin Bay, Aramoana and Hoopers.

As there won't be another Newsletter before the event, please can interested people phone Peter Schweigman (455 2790) or Mary Thompson (464 0787) to let us know and to get the latest information.

Mary Thompson

### **Silverpeaks Robins**

A few weeks ago Elton Smith mentioned that he had seen a **Robin** in the City Forest plantations of Douglas Fir in the Silverpeaks up Double Hill Road from Blueskin Bay. Elton, Rosemary and I took a tape of **Robin** song along the logging road on 10 June 2006 and barely a minute after playing the song we had attracted four **Robins**. We then drove along the road northward, stopping about every 500m and found **Robins** everytime – at least 15 individuals. Most of the sightings were in the stands of older Douglas Fir (c40 years). We did not find any birds in a check in a couple of younger (or smaller)



stands at the southern end of the road. This appears to be the first record of a population of **Robins** outside the Silverstream catchment apart from those that were in the now logged Douglas Fir in Flagstaff City Forests. We hope to carry out a more complete survey later this winter and maybe answer the question of their preference for just one type of exotic tree. For those who want to look, turn left into Double Hill Road just beyond the shop at Blueskin Bay, turn right at the top of the hill and follow the logging road to the locked barrier where you will have to walk another couple of hundred metres to the first of the more mature Douglas Fir. Watch out for logging trucks!

Derek Onley

### Why do waders stand on one leg?

The following answer was given by Phil Battley.

“Tucking the foot up is a common heat conservation method in birds. As the legs have blood flow just under the skin the potential to lose heat through them is high, which is why birds tuck their feet up most of the time and why it is good for waders to get their feet wet when it's hot. Heat conservation is also the reason why birds tuck their bills into their back plumage, to minimise heat loss through the bill and maybe also the eyes.”



### Our Godwits Sighted at Farewell Spit!

I have just looked at some early emails and came across the sighting, reported by David Melville, of a Warrington bird at Farewell Spit on 31 March 2006. It was banded at Warrington on 28 February, 2006. It was 1BRWW, where the 1 means it has a white flag on the tibia. I can provide further news about this bird. I saw it at Aramoana on 16 March amongst 231 **Godwits**. The population had diminished to 75 on 23 March and only two banded birds were present, but not 1BRWW.

Peter Schweigman

### Ornithological Snippets

Richard Schofield had a call from the local vet on 5 May 2006 to say a petrel had been found by the side of the road 10km north of Balclutha (about 20km from the sea). It was an adult **Mottled Petrel**, in good condition, and flew away strongly when released at Kaka Point that afternoon. There had been no strong winds, so presumably the bird was affected by misty conditions the previous night. Richard received a second report of another lost **Mottled Petrel**, this time at Warepa, 10km WSW of Balclutha, on 15th May 2006. He wonders how many others don't get found.

Alan Baker reports 2 **Black Stilts** again present at the Omarama oxidation ponds every day during their recent stay (10 - 14 April 2006). Neither were colour-banded, and Alan presumes they were the pair they saw there in August and September 2005. He also tells us that from the Weston-Ngapara Road, a farm lake can be seen near Windsor. On 10 April 2006 it surprised them with 2 **Royal Spoonbills**, which were still there on 14 April. Three **Cattle Egrets** were seen on 14 April 2006 at Karitane. They were roosting along the Waikouaiti River with 9 **Spoonbills**. Nick Allen from Christchurch came across one at Hilderthorpe, North Otago, also on 14 April 2006. Richard Schofield reports that there were 20 **Cattle Egrets** on Inchclutha on 20 May 2006.



Alan and Connie Wright saw 5 **NZ Scaup** on 16 April 2006 at Anderson's Lagoon. Spring arrived rather early in Dunedin apparently: Alan Baker saw a brood of ducklings in the Botanic Gardens on 5 June 2006! An ex member, Robyn Gledhill, reported the sighting of (now) 4 **Coots** at Sullivan's Dam, on 27 May 2006.



Derek Only reports a **Pied Shag**, very unusual for Otago, near the wharf at Karitane from 28 May 2006 to (at least) 5 June 2006. It was often standing next to a pied Little Shag, making the size difference obvious.

A **Ruru** was photographed the middle of the day on the ground at the base of a rock north of Lake Harris at an altitude of 1320m during a period of settled weather in the middle of March 2006.

Barbara Markby saw 6 **Caspian Terns** and a lone **Gannet** on 15 May 2006 at the south end of Warrington Beach. She also reports the sighting on 5 **Yellowheads** at Whispy Gully, on the Tapanui side of the Blue Mountains. Alan Baker saw a **Rock Wren** near the top of the Red Tarns Track in Mount Cook National Park on 12 April 2006.



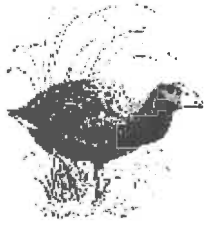
Derek Onley still sees **Cirl Buntings**. He saw two on the road on the northern end of Waikouiti beach on 2 April 2006.

### Programme 2006

Indoor Meetings will be held in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street at 8 p.m. Please be on time: the door will be locked after 8 p.m.

- Wednesday, 28 June      Indoor Meeting      Speaker: Karin Ludwig  
Topic: Saddleback Song and Inbreeding
- 16-23 July      Godwit Spotting Week  
Contact: Peter Schweigman, ☎ 455 2790, or Mary  
Thompson ☎ 464 0787
- Wednesday, 23 August      Indoor Meeting      Speaker: Bruce McKinlay  
Topic: Fernbirds
- 7-15 October      Godwit Spotting Week  
Contact: Peter Schweigman, ☎ 455 2790, or Mary  
Thompson ☎ 464 0787
- Wednesday, 25 October      Indoor Meeting      Speaker: Sabrina Taylor  
Topic: Saddlebacks
- Sunday, 12 November      Summer Wader Count      Aramoana High Tide 9.26 a.m.  
Backup Date: 19 November High Tide 2.46 p.m.  
Contact: Ken Gager, ☎ 487 6670

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## **The Ornithological Society of NZ**

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