



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

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## *Otago Region Newsletter 4/2006 August 2006*

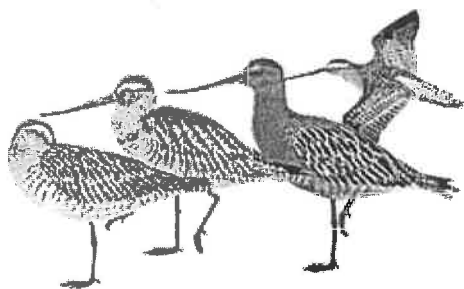
### **Brighton Black Stilt**

Further to the report of a **Black Stilt** at Brighton, I took the attached photos there yesterday (5th July). I could not get all three birds together, but the hybrid certainly looking more like **Pied** at the moment. The **Black Stilt** was making all the noise, whereas the **Pied** was silent.

Richard Schofield



### **Otago Bar-tailed Godwits in July**



It is not often that we hunt for bands amongst those legs of **Bar-tails** in July, the height of winter, for the obvious reason that the birds are just not there. This was more or less confirmed at Karitane with a nil count on 16/7/06. The same for Hoopers Inlet with no godwits seen on 27/7/06 and Blueskin Bay was not much better with a meagre 5 on 19/7/06.

Papanui, on 27/7/06 did have 49, but no bands.

The only significant number was seen at Aramoana, 104 nicely parading along the harbour's edge on 26/7/06. Four birds were banded and the interesting find was 1BRWW, the one banded at Warrington on 22/2/06. As mentioned in the last newsletter, it was seen at Aramoana on 16/2/06, at Farewell Spit on 31/3/06 and turned up again at Aramoana. This is an adult female and one would have thought it should have been in Alaska breeding. The experts are still contemplating why this bird stayed in NZ after all.

Peter Schweigman

## OSNZ (Otago) Award at the Aurora Science Fair

Louise Foord and Mary Thompson judged the projects relating to birds at the recent Science Fair and chose Rhian Gaffney, Year 7, as the winner with her very eye-catching poster. The project was entitled 'When is a duck not a duck?' and described a 9-month detailed set of observations of plumage of several individual birds that frequent her garden all year; the drakes look like ducks during January and February and start gaining their green head in March and maximum colour by May.

Waxeyes are still popular study subjects and the other projects studied food preferences of waxeyes; they are very fond of sugar water!

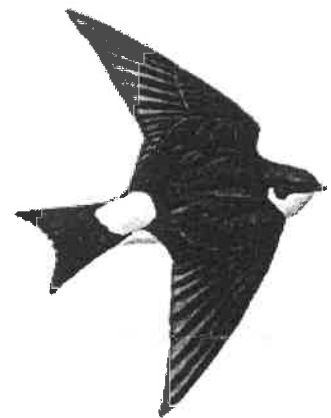
## A Great Invitation

New subscribers to our OSNZ Otago Newsletter, Barbara and Ray Prince, are more than happy for members to go onto their property to observe waders at Coast Road Evansdale-Warrington and to call in for a cup of tea. Phone 482 2681. You will find their place after going over the railway then a stream, and, as you come near to the estuary, there is a pulloff to the right and their drive starts with a bridge over that stream which otherwise is very difficult to cross. Godwits often roost in this area when it is windy on the beach. Thanks very much from us all.

## Birding Highlights of a Recent Trip to Europe

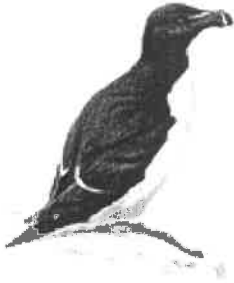
### Rhine Valley, Germany.

We hired bikes from the Gastehaus and cycled the bike paths along the Rhine. We were rather distracted, spotting castles on every promontory and dozens of barges and boats on the river and picturesque houses along narrow, medieval cobbled streets of the villages, but eventually a few birds caught our eye. On taking a closer look we discovered colonies of **House Martin** mud nests under the eaves of some of the houses. The parents would fly in in waves to feed the young and little black-and-whites heads would pop out the top of the mud for a feed; in one area the young birds were taking short flights but returning to their nests. The colonies were always at houses where the house owners had attached 'dropping catcher' ledges strategically under the nests; we think the other houses must have knocked the nests off as we couldn't see why only those houses with the ledges were chosen as nesting sites. We also biked along the water meadows beside the Rhine to the south and the Nahe tributary along paths that also went through wheat fields and cherry orchards and vineyards and on both these excursions we came across a **Stork** nest on top of high power pylons-one had 2 young and the other 4 nearly fledged storks strutting about on their platform nests. We found that **White Storks** are the national bird of Germany and many efforts are



underway to help them; originally the pylons had pointed tops and were too precarious for nests, so the flat platforms were added just for the storks.

### Yorkshire Coast, United Kingdom



The highlight of a short stop-over in England to visit an old friend was a planned expedition to Bempton Cliffs, an RSPB reserve on the Yorkshire coast. With perfect weather, the whole experience was quite surreal. The impressive limestone cliffs are home to thousands of nesting auks – **Guillemots**, **Razorbills** and **Puffins**, as well as **Gannets**, **Herring Gulls** and **Fulmars**. A walk along the cliff tops gave us close encounters with all these birds. The **Guillemots** and

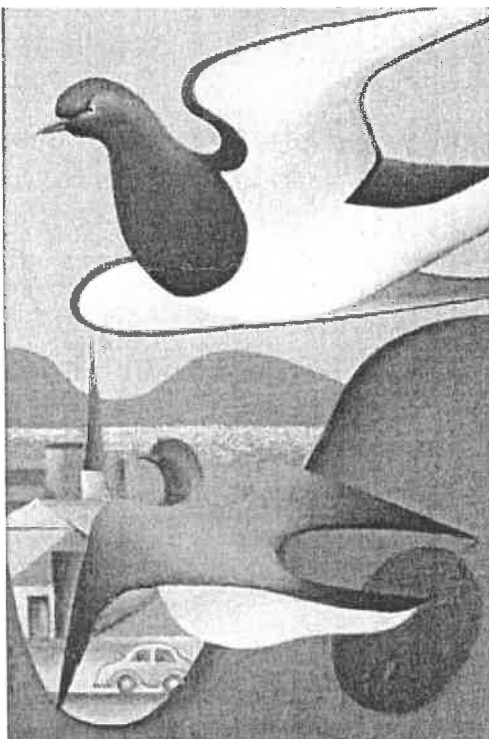
**Razorbills** were crammed in on very narrow ledges and appeared really squashed with their faces against the cliff and wings slightly spread. But as the sun went off them they straightened up and revealed the chicks they had been sheltering from the heat of midday. The **Puffins** nest mainly in rabbit holes but gave themselves away their hiding place by their bright orange feet sticking out of a crevice on the grey cliffs. The whole experience was so unreal it was like being in a bird picture book.

Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway

### Godwit Cannon Netting and Banding at Warrington

The date for this is tentatively set for the afternoon of Monday, 6 November (failing that, Tuesday, 7 November) with high tide late afternoon. Please let Peter Schweigman (phone: 455 2790) know if you are interested in being involved and might be available, so you can be contacted nearer the time.

### Ornithological Snippets



Hamish Spencer's garden in Northeast Valley has had good number of birds visiting the sugar water he has been putting out this winter on his veranda rail. In July he counted up to 10 **Tuis** on some occasions and they clearly have a pecking order. The **Tuis** are remarkably tolerant of the resident male **Bellbird** sitting in a nearby tree, but he departs the feeder whenever a **Tui** lands at it. This **Bellbird** will let in a female, but chases away a second male and the flocks of **Silvereyes**. It turns out that **Tuis** are not "top dog," though: on 23 July 2006, a **Kereru** managed to land on the rail, frightening off everything else and, after a few pecks at the feeder, plunged its head into the sugar water a gulped down several mouthfuls.



## 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.

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|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Wednesday, 23 August        | Indoor Meeting<br>Topic: Saddlebacks  | Speaker: Sabrina Taylor |
| 7-15 October                | Godwit Spotting Week<br>Contact: Peter Schweigman, ☎ 455 2790, or Mary Thompson ☎ 464 0787  |                         |
| Wednesday, 25 October       | Indoor Meeting<br>Topic: Fernbirds  | Speaker: Bruce McKinlay |
| Monday, 6 November          | Godwit Cannon Netting & Banding, Warrington<br>Contact: Peter Schweigman, ☎ 455 2790  |                         |
| Sunday, 12 November         | Summer Wader Count Aramoana High Tide 9.26 a.m.<br>Backup Date: 19 November High Tide 2.46 p.m.<br>Contact: Ken Gager, ☎ 487 6670 |                         |
| Wednesday, 28 February 2007 | Indoor Meeting<br>Topic: Prothonotary Warblers: Neotropical migrants on the move  | Speaker: Bryan Rhodes   |

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