



# Out 'n' About

Newsletter of the Southland  
Natural History Field Club

**Vol 10 Issue No. 6 July 2010**

**Meeting Thursday July 8 at 7.00 at the museum**

**Note time and place!!**

**Night walk on the Glory Track at Bluff. A chance to listen for moreporks, check the forest life at night and get some fresh air.**

Leaving 7pm from the museum and back 9pm ish. We will walk around the Foveaux Walkway to the signal structure and either back the same way or up and back along the Glory Track which is a little longer.

Bring warm clothes and torch

**August Meeting:** The August speaker is Bruce McKinlay from Dunedin who will be speaking about the Albatross programme on Taiaroa Head

**Fieldtrip Saturday 17 July Lake Hauroko** Meet at 9am at the museum. Lunch, suitable clothes and footwear etc. The lake is grim and cold but there is a track up to a viewpoint. There can be good bush birds in the vicinity and there have been kokako reports from here. Who knows?? Contact Lloyd if keen, \$10 for driver. 9am start.

**Fieldtrip Sunday 1 August Haldane Harbour.** Mudflats, rocky shore and a possible walk over the headland to Curio Bay Contact Lloyd if keen, \$10 for driver. 9am start.

## FOREST AND BIRD PROGRAMME

**Tuesday 13 July 2010 – Brian Rance – Subantarctic megaherbs – A 20 year study of Subantarctic Island flora.** Venue - Room B1:11 SIT Tay St Entrance 7.30pm

**Saturday 24 July 2010 – Te Rere penguin colony – main planting day –** Leader Brian Rance Ph 2131161 or rances@ihug.co.nz – bookings essential for transport arrangements. Free mini bus available.

**Tuesday 10 August 2010 – Short Films Night! – “The Coal Mining Story”, The world premiere of the “Te Rere yellow-eyed penguin reserve story”, and more.** Venue - Room B1:11 SIT Tay St Entrance 7.30pm

**Saturday 14 August 2010 – Te Rere working day – second planting day –** Leader Brian Rance ph 2130732 bookings essential.

**Tuesday 14 September 2010 – James Reardon – Lizard and Frog conservation around the world – including a year working in Sri Lanka.** Venue - Room B1:11 SIT Tay St Entrance 7.30pm

**Weekend 24/25 September 2010 – Tautuku Working weekend** (Book with Tony Bretherick 2186137 for free accommodation).



We had two trips in June. On Sunday 20 June 12 members did the Piano Flat walk, crossing the Waikaia River on the bottom swingbridge and recrossing on the upper swingbridge about two hours upstream. It was good weather and a pleasant walk

The botanists made a good list and the birders listened



without much success. There were a few robins, tomtits and bellbirds around but the yellowheads have died out and there weren't any parakeets. We found a Piano Flat spider *Pianoa isolata*. They are actually quite common there. It is a large spider which has clawed feet which it uses for grip and for snagging its prey.

On Saturday 3 July eleven of us did the walk from the mouth of the Tokanui River to Waipapa Point. Again, the weather was favourable. We started from Colin and Christine McKenzie's farm and worked our way around the coast. It was a mixture of coarse sand beaches, rock platforms, boulders and cliffs. There were a number of fossil logs and treestumps (right) on the platforms. We encountered a colony of Spotted shags preparing to nest.



At one place the rock was fractured just like state tiles (left) and looked as if it was manmade.

**Winter Wader Counts**  
Despite some awful Queens Birthday weather we managed to get out and count waders

at the usual haunts ie Awarua Bay (Head of the bay and Cow Island) Lloyd Esler and Wynston Cooper respectively. I headed to the shell banks on the New River Estuary and battled a huge tide and very cold conditions. Chris Betts ventured out to Fortrose to do a count. Wynston seemed to have some of the more interesting sightings including 82 NZ Dotterel (exactly the same count as last June) he also counted seven Red

necked Stint and a Grey tailed Tattler. 129 Godwit were at Cow Island with 83 at the head of the bay and 12 at the New River estuary. PHIL RHODES





## Low Flying Kereru

With the recent news items about low flying Kereru in Otatara and their brush with death when cars are involved, Dane Dixon from Waiheke Island sent me this photo of a Kereru that doesn't find cars a problem. Not the best of photos but you can see the Kereru perched on the passenger side of the car.

Dane is interested in the idea of warning signs such as those proposed for Otatara.

Dane has also sent some nice pictures of Tui on his deck feeding juveniles which we will feature in future Field Club newsletters. PHIL RHODES

### Borland Lodge trip

To celebrate the field club's 10 years

anniversary we are planning a weekend away to Borland Lodge. We will keep you informed on dates etc and will be looking to get numbers for those interested in attending. Possibly Friday night to Sunday afternoon 17-19 September or 1-3 October.

### Spraying Programme

For those club members who are out and about in the next few weeks, Environment Southland have advised that ground spraying commenced on July 1 on the following rivers: Mataura, Oreti, Aparima, Mararoa and the Waiiau. This is to control gorse, broom and willow. Phone Environment Southland during working hours for more information.

**Katipo spider status** The katipo is now an endangered species. The ongoing loss of its natural habitat – coastal grasses and driftwood – and the introduction of a competitor, the South African steatoda *Steatoda capensis*, has resulted in a dramatic decline in its population.

**Spur-winged plover status** Another creature with a change in status is the Spur-winged plover. Now common enough to be a pest in some situations, it is deemed partially protected rather than fully-protected. The main area of concern is air-strikes with a more than a third of the impacts caused by the plovers. The change in status means that airport staff can be pro-active in getting rid of plovers where there is deemed to be a potential problem.

### Rats: the next episode Lloyd Esler

There is peace. The ceiling rats are lying low which isn't all that hard for a rat to do. Rats and mice can squeeze through remarkably small gaps, the equivalent of one of us entering and leaving the house via the cat flap. My rats are all Ship rats *Rattus rattus*, also called Black rats, Bush rats and Ceiling rats. This species and the Norway rat are probably the most widespread mammals on Earth apart from humans. Once you got them on your sailing ship they were permanent. They are so successful because their habitat is the same as our own and they thrive in the same conditions that humans thrive in. They like the same temperatures, eat the same food and use the same forms of transport. I even heard of someone out on the waves who discovered that he was sharing his surfboard with a rat.

They have better hearing and eyesight, breed faster and don't have taxes and mortgages. On one trip to Stewart Island, a boy in the group pointed to a bush and announced that there was a dead rat in there. How did he know? He had seen it running along a branch, die and drop off. Sure enough, we parted the leaves and there was the rat twitching its last. We don't see things dying in nature much. They are normally fairly discrete about it but this guy was caught out.

Newsletter: Phil Rhodes 2131228 [p.rhodes@xtra.co.nz](mailto:p.rhodes@xtra.co.nz)

Chairman: Lloyd Esler 2130404 [esler@southnet.co.nz](mailto:esler@southnet.co.nz)

Secretary: Joanne Forbes 2162423

Note: I am emailing the newsletter to members who have given Lloyd email address. If you are want to get the newsletter by email let me know. It's quicker and the pictures are in colour.