



# *Out 'n' About*

Newsletter of the Southland  
Natural History Field Club

**Vol 10 Issue No. 10 November 2010**

**Meeting Thursday 11 November 6.30pm**

**Phil Rhodes will lead an evening excursion around the Sutton Lagoon. Meet at the old Invercargill wharf by Lady Barkly at 6.30pm. Binoculars might be useful!**

Excursion: Saturday 27 November. Waikawa Harbour. Explore the Otago side of the harbour. We did this last year and its time for another visit. 8am start. Phone Lloyd or Phil if interested

**Future trips.** In December we may have a day trip in to Deep Cove, walking a bit of the old Dusky Sound Track. Possibilities for the holidays are Waipohatu River Walk, Taieri Mouth and Kaka Point. Any other ideas?

## **Wader Catchers success at Labour Weekend**



Our intrepid wader catchers Rob Schuckard and David Melville were in Southland at Labour Weekend for their sixth year of catching waders and thankfully had some success at Awarua Bay. This time they decided to set up the cannon nets at the end of Awarua Bay Road close to a known roosting site for waders. There were a few anxious moments as several motor bikes roared up and down further along the road but the birds didn't seem too worried about their antics and as the tide was well in by this stage there was little chance of them skirting around the edges of the bay that would have brought them nearer to the roosting birds.

Although godwits are usually the target species, the guys are just as happy catching Turnstones and as it turned out this species made up the bulk of the catch.

They caught nine Turnstones and three godwits and had plenty of helpers to process the birds. This involves a moult count and measurements, weighing and finally having their bling put on. This consists of four colour bands, a white flag and a metal band. All the birds looked healthy and no worse for wear after their ordeal. Actually one of the smaller birds caught put up quite a struggle and was

very feisty for their size. (One gruesome fact I learnt during the weekend is that Turnstones are the only waders known to eat human flesh, they were recorded feeding on a dead body in Great Britain). As we processed the birds we could see rain clouds building in the south and we managed to get them all processed and the gear packed before the first spots of rain began to fall.

## **A New Zealand first for Southland**





On the Saturday before the wader catching we did a recce of Awarua Bay and also checked the wader flocks for colour bands and flags. There was some excitement as we spotted a godwit with a black flag with J19 printed on it. It turns out that this godwit had been banded in Alaska in June 2009 here is the response from Phil Battley to an e-mail Rob sent about the sighting  
*“Great work Rob! The first sighting on the non-breeding grounds of any of the Nome (Alaska) 2009 birds caught by Jesse, David and co. Male, banded on 23 June 2009, mile 27 on the Teller Road”.*

*(Below left yellow pin is the location of where J9 was flagged) (At right the male godwit J9 in breeding plumage in Alaska)*

### **Southland Natural History Field Club Inc Annual report 2009-2010 14.10.10**

The Field Club started operations in August 2000 so we have now completed our tenth year of existence. We have a core of regular members and a total of 60 on the mailing list.

During the year we have had a series of talks as follows:  
 October 2008 Evening walk in Seaward Bush  
 November – AGM Falcons – Dave Bell  
 December – Evening walk Bushy Point and BBQ  
 February – Rob Schuckard and David Melville – Waders  
 March – Niue Island – Lloyd Esler  
 April – Trip to see the glowworms at Forest Hill  
 May – Wynston Cooper - Tasmania  
 June – Sarah Murray – Antarctica  
 July – Evening walk – Glory Track  
 August – Bruce McKinlay – Albatrosses of Tairaroa Head  
 September – Pete McClelland – Macquarie Island

During the year a number of excursions were held.

The annual beach walk from Riverton to Invercargill was held on 12 September.

Trips were held as follows: 25/10/09 Bluff Harbour walk; 2/12/09 Awarua Bay to Waituna Lagoon mouth; 31/1/10 Waipapa Point to Slope Point; 23/1/10 Twinlaw; 22/2/10 Aparima Hut; 21/3/10 Barracouta Point; 14/3/10 Waipohatu; 10/4/10 Cayford’s Track at Dipton; 25/4/10 Catlins River Walk; 16/5/10 Tahakopa Beach; 22/5/10 Bluecliffs Beach; 12/6/10 Piano Flat; 3/7/10 Tokanui River to Waipapa Point; 17/7/10 Lake Hauroko; 1/8/10 Haldane Harbour to Curio Bay; 21/8/10 Ben Bolt; 12/9/10 Oreti Beach walk; 3/10/10 Waituna Lagoon to Fortrose Estuary; 8-10/10/10 Weekend at Borland Lodge.

Club members helped with bird banding at Awarua Bay and censuses of wading birds.

We obtained a grant from the ILT Foundation for the purchase of Eagles Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand and a meteorite as well as paying for two years’ room hire.

With the advance of technology we are now emailing the newsletter to most members, saving on postage and proving members with a colour copy.

The club continues to meet at the Hearing Association rooms which seems a satisfactory venue

Suggestions for future activities and speakers are welcomed.

My thanks to members for their continued interest, particularly Phil Rhodes for producing the monthly newsletter and to secretary Joanne Forbes.

Lloyd Esler Chairman





**Jamie in Australia.** Last weekend I went up to the semi-arid region about 200km north of Adelaide with the Adelaide naturalists club who were doing a mammal survey. We didn't see a lot of mammals, but did catch one small native mouse. The reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates were amazing though, we saw lots of different skinks, geckos, dragons, snakes, frogs, as well as funnelwebs, wolf and redback spiders. Here is a *barking gecko* which we found under a rock in a dry creekbed - and

incredible looking beast! Jamie Wood

**White-headed petrel** dead on a traffic island in town on 15.10.10

**Frogs:** Lindsay Hazley reports good numbers of Brown frogs apparently increasing at Mavora in October

**Sara Kross is looking for electrocuted birds.** I'm still looking for reports of any birds that are electrocuted in NZ. This is for part of my PhD research on NZ falcons, but I believe the issue may extend through to many of our birds and would like to collect reports from anywhere in the country and on any species. Last year I collected a few reports including of electrocuted Kaka, Kea, Kereru, Harriers and falcons.

Please keep an eye out for dead birds under power poles while you are out birding. They sometimes appear to have nothing wrong with them, as the majority of injuries are internal, but they sometimes have burned feet or beaks, or can have burned feathers. If you do come across one, please take note of the location (region, town, surrounding habitat, etc), the date, the type of pole the bird is under (particularly whether there is a transformer box on the pole), and what species and sex it is. Please email reports to [Saramaekross@gmail.com](mailto:Saramaekross@gmail.com)

**Central Otago excursion.** Just four of us spent the day visiting Central Otago on 23 October. We stopped at the Kawarau Gorge to watch the bungy jumping but nobody was game. Then to Bannockburn where there is an hour long loop track through the old sluicings up to Stewart Town on the terrace. Very interesting with lizards, Californian quails, Californian poppies and species that like arid conditions. We came back through Wanaka and over the Crown Range. Great view from the top.



**Tapanui trip** On 30 October eight members had an interesting day around Tapanui. We had hoped to get up the Blue Mountains but the access was closed for logging so we did some short walks instead. We visited Black Gully and Whisky Gully close to Tapanui. Both have a short walk but the main tracks from there to the top of the range are overgrown and nettle might be a problem. We saw and heard falcons. Nice to see the extensive patches of Scarlet mistletoe at Black Gully just at eye level. It's not in flower yet but puts on a good show around Christmas. We then went on to the Conical Hill tunnel. It is 71 metres long and was last used in 1975. We finished the day at

The Crater near



Pukerau. It's a huge landslip that has been mistaken for an impact crater. The rock there is Miocene quartzite with very clear leaf and bark fossils embedded in it.



On the weekend of 9/10 October 12 of us headed to Borland Lodge to celebrate our tenth birthday. We did the Nature Trail, walked up the road in search of glowworms, did the Burnt Ridge Track, visited Lake Monowai and sampled the birdlife at the Wairaki River mouth. The road to the saddle was closed unfortunately but we will get to the saddle and up to Mount Burns next time

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