

# *Out 'n' About*

Newsletter of the Southland  
Natural History Field Club

**Meeting Thursday 14 April 7.30**

**at the Hearing Association meeting rooms, 126 Leet Street  
Committee meeting 7pm**

## **Southland Records – especially Animals and Plants Lloyd Esler**

Biggest, oldest, most unusual, first records etc... and the usual quiz.

### Coming up...

**Fieldtrip:** Tuesday 26 April, the Tuesday of Easter. Walk around Tiwai Point from the carpark to the end of Toetoes Bay. There are several graves in the area. A chance to visit this rarely visited bit of coast. Meet 9am at the Museum. Back mid-afternoon. A bit of boulder negotiating required and quite boggy in places.

**Fieldtrip:** Saturday 7 May. Bluecliffs Beach at the start of the Humptrack. We did the beach here a couple of years back and found a dead Leopard seal and Hector's Dolphin. There are fossil-bearing rocks along the coast and interesting vegetation. 9am at the Museum. \$10 for driver. Please let Lloyd know if you intend coming.

### **Field Club field trips**

Photos from recent and past trips are available to view on the Invercargill Environment Centre's website just type in this link. [http://www.iec.org.nz/g\\_fieldclub.html](http://www.iec.org.nz/g_fieldclub.html)

### **Dumbest rejection of a claim to the Guinness Book of Records**

I contacted the Guinness Book of Records to get the distance record of the Arctic Tern found on Mason Bay in 2003 verified. I supplied a picture and the relevant facts. After a long wait, here is the reply.

Claim ID: 332008

Dear Sir, thank you for sending us the details of your recent record attempt for 'Longest flight by a bird'. We are afraid to say that we are unable to accept this as a Guinness World Record.

Unfortunately we do not accept records for animal endurance even though, in this case the animal has not been coerced in anyway.

We also have the problem that we could only prove that the bird travelled halfway round the world and once this has been achieved the record could never be broken.

Guinness World Records has absolute discretion as to which record applications are accepted and our decision is final. As your record application has not been accepted, Guinness World Records is in no way associated with the activity relating to your record proposal and we in no way endorse this activity. If you choose to proceed with this activity then this is will be of your own volition and

at your own risk.



**Mega mushroom:** As things slowly turn autumnal, toadstools become more and more prominent. Here is a giant toadstool from Manapouri sent in by Aaron Nicholson on 13 March..

### **The Rats and I or Me.**

Last month I referred to the Rat King in Otago Museum. I was there recently and it is on display in the Natural History Gallery. Wonders. The label says, "This family of rats was discovered in the 1930s. They had fallen from their nest in the rafters of a shipping company in Birch Street (Dunedin) and were immediately followed to the floor by a parent who

vigorously defended the squeaking youngsters. Their tails were tangled together when they fell. After they had been killed and donated to the Otago Museum, it was found that their tails had become tied together with horsehair that presumably was used to build the original nest. Such entanglements, which are very rare, are called 'Rat Kings'. In medieval times, if one was found in a house, the women were immediately condemned as witches and usually burnt at the stake. The origin of the term 'Rat King' is thought to be German."

**To give away** – a large sack of grass seed.

**Mason Bay** Anyone interested in a trip to Mason Bay, Stewart Island 14-15 May? Ferry to Oban, watertaxi to Freshwater and walk to Mason Bay. Kiwi-spotting in the evening. Sunday – Beach patrol, picked up by plane afternoon on 15 May 4pm. Probable cost around \$270 : (Water taxi \$50, Ferry \$66, Plane \$145)

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

**Yellowheads** On 14 February 2011 a group of 7 volunteers from the Pomona Island Charitable Trust and 3 DoC field workers visited Breaksea Island on the Fiordland coast to catch Yellowheads (Mohua) for transfer to Pomona Island on Lake Manapouri. Pomona Island (262 Ha) is the largest inland island in New Zealand and, in a project started in 2005 by volunteers from the local community, has been cleared of introduced pests (stoats, possums, red deer, ship rats and mice) to allow the restoration of the habitat for native wildlife. In 2009 South Island Robins were successfully transferred to Pomona Island and Rona Island in Lake Manapouri, where they have now bred successfully. The Yellowhead transfer marks the first time that a threatened species has been translocated to Pomona Island.



A total of 42 Yellowheads were caught using mist nets at various locations over two days on Breaksea Island. The birds were transferred by helicopter to Pomona Island at the end of each day, where they were released together to allow them to form a feeding flock.

Pomona Island trustee Neil Robertson carefully removing a yellowhead from a mist net. Photo: John Stevenson (trustee)

Breaksea Island, which is a Special Area, accessible by permit only, has



been pest free since the pioneering rat eradication in the mid-1980s. It is now home to large populations of native birds, which are rare or extinct on the NZ mainland, such as South Island Robins, Yellowheads and South Island Saddlebacks. The island is near capacity for many species which means that birds are available for transfer to other pest free areas, thus expanding the range of some of our rarest and most endangered species.

The Yellowhead transfer was sponsored by the Meridian Te Anau-Manapouri Community Fund and organised by the Pomona Island Charitable Trust. For more information on the work of the trust



visit [www.pomona-island.org.nz](http://www.pomona-island.org.nz)

PS. The latest monitoring visit to Pomona was on 26 February. Yellowheads were heard at a number of locations on the island but not during the 5-minute bird counts. A number of unbanded (i.e. hatched since the 2009 transfer) South Island Robins were also seen which hopefully means this species is on the way to becoming established on the island.

Adult Male Yellowhead.

Photo: Viv Shaw (trustee)

**Visit to Taringatura.** On Sunday 20 March four of us headed out for a trip. The advertised excursion was a walk up the Oreti River but the water level was a bit high. Instead we had a day in the Taringatura area walking along the forestry road and doing the loop track through the beech forest from the old picnic ground. This dates from Forest Service days when the whole forest was maintained for its amenity value as well as for forestry. There had been tracks, a picnic ground and a swimming hole. Alas, those days are gone and all that remains is the overgrown loop track with a few rotten bridges.

At the old school camp at Taringatura I found what I thought was an Asian paper wasp, a species common around Auckland. It makes a little paper nest attached by a stalk to the underside of a leaf. It has a vicious sting. However, it is not an Asian paper wasp. Tony Harris from Otago Museum says... This is *Ancistrocerus gazella* the European tube potter wasp. In 1989 - 1990 this species became abundant in Alexandra - Clyde. It now occurs throughout the North Island. It spread very slowly to Mt. Cook - it was at Ohau settlement for some years in 2001, but at that time it was not present in Mt. Cook village. It has now clearly reached Mt. Cook village and Winton.



It nests in spaces such as a nail hole, laying one egg in each cell, the egg suspended from a thread on the roof of the cell. It then brings in about 7 paralysed caterpillars (more or less, depending on their size). Finally, it seals the cell with a plug of moulded mud in much the same way as the small native mason wasp, *Pison morosum*, does and then the wasp begins the next cell. It fills up trap nests with a row of cells, separated by c-shaped plugs of moulded mud.



**On 2 April** Four of us – yes, only four!! Did the Whisky Creek walk at Dolamore Park. There was an excellent view from Popplewell's Lookout and the track was in good order. We found a patch of Earth stars – odd little puffballs that peel apart into five petals. On the subject of fungi, I recently found a very different one at More's Bush in Riverton. It was a conspicuous clump of white spores on a short stalk. I unearthed it carefully and it is a Cordyceps, a fungus

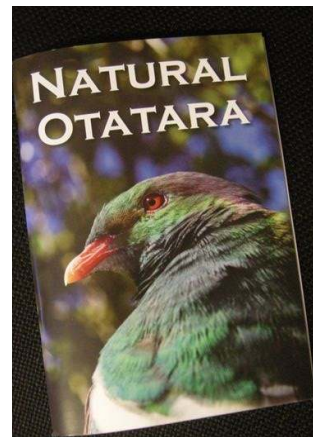
that invades an insect larva and takes over its body, effectively mummifying it. This one was infecting a beetle larva. The best-known of the Cordyceps is the Vegetable caterpillar, a large caterpillar hardened by the fungus which sends up a single spore stalk.



Left – the Cordyceps on a beetle larva.  
There was another conspicuous fungus at More's Bush, a Flower fungus



**For sale** South Island Birds \$10 and Natural Otatara \$5



*Newsletter and Treasurer: Phil Rhodes 2177699 [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*

