



TARA

Newsletter of Auckland Region OSNZ

February 2012

Kokako Success in Auckland



Kokako 'Te Koha Waiata' on Tiri. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).

Kokako are one of New Zealand's most unusual and exciting rare endemic birds and due to conservation efforts, are becoming increasingly accessible to keen bird watchers in the Auckland region.

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Annual Picnic at Orakei Basin



Enjoying the annual Auckland OSNZ picnic were (from left), Ian McLean, Ken Bond, Gillian Eller, Chris Thompson and Brian Gill, beside the Basin's Pied Shag roost. (Photo: Mel Galbraith).

Auckland Region of OSNZ

Auckland Branch OSNZ meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm, at Unitec on Carrington Road in Point Chevalier. Admission by donation. Visitors and friends always welcome. Unitec Building 115, room 115-1028 in February, and 115-2001 from March 2012.

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Census and Surveys

All members are invited to take part in the OSNZ Auckland branch census and surveys that take place during the year. There are always experienced members on these trips and they welcome new members to get involved in identifying and recording the birds.

The Auckland OSNZ annual picnic was held at the Orakei Basin walkway in January.

The new walkway can be walked in less than an hour. Native bush around the basin includes toi toi and fruiting karaka and mahoe. Shags were observed nesting, and the bird list included Pied Shag, Little Black Shag, Little Shag, White-faced heron, Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Spotted Dove, Rock Pigeon, Eastern Rosella, Kingfisher, Welcome Swallow, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Grey Warbler, Silvereye, Tui, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Myna and Starling. (Total - 22 species).

Auckland To Host AOC in 2013

The Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) is a biennial conference that provides a forum for academic exchange and networking between avian-based researchers and conservationists throughout Australasia.

The Auckland region of OSNZ has been successful in a bid to hold the event in 2013, with tentative dates being 4-7 December. A brief promotional presentation for last year's AOC held in Cairns billed Auckland as a "city of birds".

Auckland promises to be a rewarding location for an ornithological conference because of the numerous nationally (and internationally) significant birding sites within easy reach for field trips.

The conference will take place at Unitec Institute of Technology, hosted by the Department of Natural Sciences. Planning is underway for the event, and naturally we will welcome members to join the organising team. **Mel Galbraith**

Kokako Conservation Partners Boost Local Populations

By Suzi Phillips

Kokako are becoming increasingly accessible to keen bird watchers in the Auckland region.

Conservation of the Kokako in the region is a partnership between the Heritage team at Auckland Council, (led by Heritage Scientist, Dr Tim Lovegrove), the Department of Conservation, the Kokako Recovery Group, and the many volunteers who help with pest control and Kokako monitoring at projects in the Waitakere and Hunua ranges and on Tiritiri Matangi Island. Kokako are one of five species of our unique Callaetidae family that includes both Kokako species (North and South Island), our two species of Saddleback, and the extinct Huia.

This family of birds are characterised by their strident song, fleshy wattles at the gape, strong legs and weak flight. North Island Kokako are renowned for their beautiful, haunting song with its liquid organ notes and 'swinging gate' phrases, usually heard early morning and evening.

Conservation Partnership Projects

Kokako vanished from the Waitakere Ranges as pest predators increased, some time in the 1950s. The Ark in the Park (AIP) project, led by Forest and Bird and supported by the regional Council, has gradually increased intensive pest control in the Cascades area to more than 2300 ha with the help of a dedicated team of volunteers.

Translocations of Kokako to the Ark in the Park project area in the past few years have now re-established a small breeding population that is closely monitored. Despite pest pressures, a small relict population of Kokako hung on in the Hunua Ranges to the south, and this has formed the nucleus of the present population there. In 1994, there was a remnant population of 25 Kokako in the Hunuas, but only one breeding pair. Now the small population supports many more breeding pairs with birds from other regions providing genetic diversity and vigor.

Island Populations

Tiritiri Matangi Island has become a valuable tool in the management of relict populations of North Island Kokako, where

the genetic diversity of a small breeding population can be protected.

Another Kokako population in the Hauraki Gulf on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island, thrives in isolation, but islands have limited carrying capacity, and protected mainland populations are vital to the species' survival. (Visits to Hauturu require a DOC permit).

Management of the species by DOC's Kokako Recovery Group over the past 20 years has ensured that there are many small breeding populations of Kokako protected throughout the North Island, from Northland to Wellington regions.



Tiritiri Matangi Kokako

The partnership between DOC and the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SOTM), has ensured an increased public profile for the Kokako and a precious breeding population on this island close to the Auckland mainland.

Each week, hundreds of visitors to the island learn about the plight of the Kokako and the threats to this species from pests throughout the North Island.

The lucky ones get a glimpse of these special birds, or hear their call, as the birds forage in the island's restored forest.

There are about 20 adult Kokako on the island, including six breeding pairs this season and three newly fledged chicks from three different nests. Territories are spread across the island, but probably the best known breeding pair are Te Koha Waiata (TKW) and Cloudsley Shovell, who have been on Tiri since 1997 and have raised 22 chicks, mostly in the vicinity of the Wattle Track.

(Continues page 4)

Kokako in Auckland

Continued from page 3

Photo: Suzi Phillips



Other newer breeding pairs can often be seen around the top of Kawerau Bush, along the Ridge Track and down by the Wharf pond.

Kokako in the Hunuas

The intensive pest management over 1100 ha of the Hunuas, (funded by Auckland Council and carried out by contractors and volunteers), protects nesting Kokako from possums, rats, stoats and ferrets, and regular goat control ensures rainforest restoration.

Volunteering for the Kokako monitoring team or to help with pest control is the best way to see or hear Kokako in the Hunua Ranges. Volunteers are needed from early spring until after the last chicks have fledged, usually between January and March.

Volunteer days are held every Tuesday and on the second Saturday of the month and the work involves checking and filling bait-stations, clearing tracks or checking traps. Most of the activity is based around the Kohukohunui Track that traverses the main ridge to the highest trig point in the region at 688 metres.

Volunteers leave from Clevedon about 8am and return about 4.30pm, and need to be at least moderately fit and confident in the bush, as the Hunuas are steep and the management area is within the 17,000ha of protected forest. Training, first aid and maps are provided and newcomers are paired with experienced volunteers.

Significant Breeding Success

During the 2009/10 season there were at least 20 Kokako breeding pairs inside the 1100 ha of managed Hunua habitat and about 60 young have fledged since 1994. Between 2006 and 2010, the Department of Conservation carried out five releases of 29 kokako from populations at Mapara, Waipapa and Tiritiri Matangi Island. During some of the latest releases, recorded kokako calls were played for a two week period after release to anchor the new birds close to the release area. This sound anchoring was successful, because after the releases most of the new birds remained in or near the managed area.

During the 2006-07 summer a mixed Hunua/Mapara pair successfully produced a chick, and during the following two seasons at least half of the offspring were of King Country genetic origin.

Ark in the Park in the Waitakeres

In September last year, AIP celebrated the successful reintroduction of Kokako to the Waitakere Ranges with three fledglings added to the translocated birds that came mainly from Pureora and Mapara forests in southern Waikato, and from Tiritiri Matangi Island.

More recently, an indication of the increasing numbers of Kokako thriving in the habitat at AIP might be when team leader Andy Warneford saw six Kokako in one tree. Five pairs are known to have established, and last year's first known breeders have produced another chick this season.

Indications are that from 26 birds released at the Ark, at least 15 have been identified at 'Kokakoville' (a favoured area), plus the three locally bred birds, says Ark chairman, Dr John Sumich.

A recent Auckland Council region-wide biodiversity study showed that the Ark area was more complex with more plant species than anywhere else in the region, even Hauturu/Little Barrier Island, he said. The Kokakoville area of AIP is reputed to be "a step up again botanically" and possibly the reason why Kokako are flocking to the forest there.

Contacts for Kokako Projects

To volunteer help with Kokako projects around Auckland, please contact the following;

Ark in the Park Kokako Team Leader

Contact Andy Warneford, ph 021 644 853m, 09 810 8133w, 09 810 7220h. Or email andywarneford@orcon.net.nz

Hunua Kokako Volunteers Organiser

Contact Mags Ramsey, ph 09 536 7012 or Mags.Ramsey@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Tiritiri Matangi Island Kokako

Contact Morag Fordham, ph 274 1828 or email tieke@clear.net.nz

Motuihe Island Meanderings by Ken Bond

On a very fine day (January 19th), Gillian Eller and I boarded the 10am sailing on the 360 Harbour Cruise ferry for Motuihe Island.

It was indeed a harbour cruise and included a comprehensive commentary sailing around the Viaduct and the Naval Base, stopping at Devonport and Rangitoto Island, before dropping us at Motuihe.

On our arrival we were greeted by a pair of Variable Oystercatchers who had the temerity to nest on the very populated beach by the wharf.

Fortunately they were surrounded by yellow tape and had somehow managed to hatch two very new chicks, despite the close proximity to a large number of curious onlookers.

After a little refreshment we set off to walk to the far eastern end of the island past the extensive nursery to Calypso Bay and other long beaches which unfortunately we didn't have time to explore. As we hadn't been to Motuihe since the 1970s we noticed a huge difference in the landscape.

Formerly farmed, it is now being replanted by volunteer labour and is regenerating to native bush. There are some patches of the original bush, including some very fine pohutukawa and puriri specimens. We were able to eat our lunch in one such

grove watching and listening to Saddleback, Kakariki, Bellbird and Tui among others. We counted 33 bird species on and around the island. A wonderful day's outing and highly recommended.

Here is our list of birds in no particular order: Brown Quail, Pukeko, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Saddleback, Rosella, Kakariki, Bellbird, Tui, Fantail, Kingfisher, Skylark, Harrier, Myna, Blackbird, Thrush, Sparrow, Gannet, Pied Shag, Red-billed Gull, Black-backed Gull, Grey Warbler, VOC and 2 chicks, Welcome Swallow, White-fronted Tern, Caspian Tern, Mallard Duck, Starling, Kereru, Rock Pigeon, Magpie.

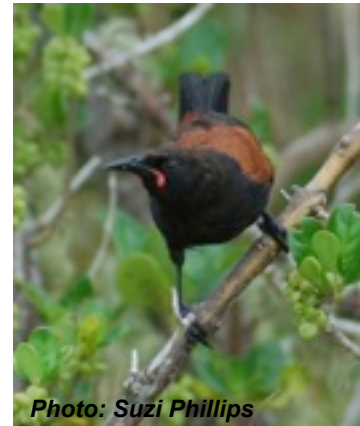


Photo: Suzi Phillips

Kokako Inspire Artistic Celebrations

An exhibition of Kokako inspired artworks will feature as part of the Kokako Celebration Week on Tiritiri Matangi Island from March 7th to 11th.

The event is organised by the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SOTM), in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and with sponsorship from 360 Discovery.

Ten invited artists with an interest in bird conservation were hosted on Tiri in 2011 and spent time observing Kokako to gain an insight into their ecology, behaviour and history, before producing an art work for the exhibition in March.

The project aimed to inform and inspire artists to be involved in the conservation of Kokako, and help to raise public awareness about the species at a national and international level.

The exhibition will include paintings, photography and ceramics, and many of the artists will be on Tiri for the Celebration Week to help promote their work. All profits will go towards supporting SOTM's Kokako conservation work.

Artists and artisans involved include Bob Steiner, Ingrid Anderson, Jane Aldridge, Celia Allison, Reuben Price, Geoff Beals, Sue Bancroft, Sandra Whyte, Pieter Huisman, Simon Fordham and Kay Milton.

A Jazz and Blues Concert at the Island's Visitors Centre, will be held at the end of the Kokako Celebration Week.

The fundraising concert in the evening of Saturday 10th March includes jazz and blues musicians, Jonas Julio on guitar and Russell McNaughton on double bass. Ferries will leave Auckland at 5.15pm and Gulf Harbour at 6pm for the concert, returning from the Island with a 10pm departure. (Normal ferry prices apply).

Concert tickets are \$20 and limited to 60 people. Bookings can be made by emailing or phoning Tiri guiding and shop manager Mary-Ann Rowland, on 09-476-0010 or sotmmanager@clear.net.nz For more information, go to www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz and for ferry bookings, www.360discovery.co.nz

Consolidated Results - Motutapu Island Surveys

Survey Year	2007	2008	2009	2010		2007	2008	2009	2010	Comment
Species	Overall Total	Overall Total	Overall Total	Overall Total	Trends	Overall Average	Overall Average	Overall Average	Overall Average	
Bellbird	0	0	0	15	New	0	0	0	0.5	
Blackbird	43	19	7	46	↑↑↑↑	1.8	0.7	0.3	1.6	
Chaffinch	23	40	5	40	↑↑↑↑	1.0	1.4	0.2	1.4	
Cuckoo - Shining Cuckoo	0	0	0	9	New	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	
Dotterel - New Zealand Dotterel	10	12	2	4		0.4	0.4	0.1	0.1	
Dove - Spotted Dove	0	0	0	10	New	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	
Duck - Grey Duck	7	5	0	2		0.3	0.2	0.0	0.1	
Duck - Mallard	30	52	2	0		1.3	1.8	0.1	0.0	
Duck - Paradise Shelduck	67	160	44	11		2.8	5.5	1.6	0.4	
Fantail	40	48	66	91	↑↑	1.7	1.7	2.4	3.1	
Gannet	3	3	6	2		0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	
Goldfinch	133	187	412	419		5.5	6.4	14.7	14.4	
Greenfinch	16	2	3	48	↑↑↑	0.7	0.1	0.1	1.7	
Gull - Black-backed Gull	55	217	39	23		2.3	7.5	1.4	0.8	
Gull - Red-billed Gull	42	14	51	0		1.8	0.5	1.8	0.0	
Harrier	24	19	8	9		1.0	0.7	0.3	0.3	
Heron - Reef Heron	1	2	0	0		0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	
Heron - White-faced Heron	4	11	10	5		0.2	0.4	0.4	0.2	
Kingfisher	45	49	52	79	↑↑	1.9	1.7	1.9	2.7	
Maggpie	29	29	13	8		1.2	1.0	0.5	0.3	
Morepork	0	0	0	0		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Myna	99	82	40	55		4.1	2.8	1.4	1.9	
Oystercatcher - Variable Black	70	75	45	16		2.9	2.6	1.6	0.6	
Parakeet - Red-crowned Kakariki	0	0	6	42	↑↑↑	0.0	0.0	0.2	1.4	
Penguin - Little Blue	1	1	1	0		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Pheasant	0	0	0	2	New	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	
Pigeon - New Zealand Pigeon	14	9	6	23	↑↑↑	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.8	
Plover - Spur-wing Plover	7	13	9	20	↑↑	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.7	
Pukeko	184	485	8	72	↑↑↑↑	7.7	16.7	0.3	2.5	
Quail - Brown Quail	0	0	0	13	New	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	
Rosella - Eastern	11	4	14	13		0.5	0.1	0.5	0.4	
Shag - Black	0	1	1	1		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Shag - Little	5	7	2	1		0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	
Shag - Pied	6	5	5	2		0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	
Silvereye	98	112	105	104		4.1	3.9	3.8	3.6	
Skylark	22	18	15	15		0.9	0.6	0.5	0.5	
Sparrow - Hedge Sparrow	3	4	0	0		0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	
Sparrow - House Sparrow	274	342	15	321	↑↑↑↑	11.4	11.8	0.5	11.1	
Starling	36	106	128	93		1.5	3.7	4.6	3.2	
Stilt - Pied Stilt	1	2	0	0		0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	
Swallow	75	33	52	27		3.1	1.1	1.9	0.9	
Tern - Caspian Tern	4	1	1	0		0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Tern - White-fronted Tern	0	0	0	2		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	
Thrush - Song Thrush	9	12	9	26	↑↑↑	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.9	
Tui	4	23	58	104	↑↑	0.2	0.8	2.1	3.6	
Turkey	20	66	0	2		0.8	2.3	0.0	0.1	
Warbler - Grey Warbler	59	87	91	115	↑	2.5	3.0	3.3	4.0	
Yellowhammer	2	63	27	51	↑↑	0.1	2.2	1.0	1.8	
Total Number of Birds Counted	1576	2420	1358	1941						



Bird watchers viewing waders from the new hide built in December by Miranda Naturalist Trust volunteers at the Miranda Wildlife Refuge. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).

Spotless Crake Establish On Motutapu

The fifth annual OSNZ Motutapu Survey took place in October with seven participants completing 31 counts in the selected coastal, wetland and forest/planted areas of the island.

The highlight of this survey week-end (1-2 October 2011), was the discovery of Spotless Crake which (with the translocations), takes the Motutapu checklist total to 53 birds.

Two crake records were obtained from the dam and wetland by the Causeway – W1 area, and the third was from the wetland close to the Education Camp – our W3 area.

We presume the crakes have self-introduced from Tiritiri Matangi Island where there is a thriving population, but limited habitat which prompts such expansion. The Crakes introduced themselves to Motuora Island three years ago and are now breeding there. The wetland areas on



Spotless Crake (Photo: Simon Fordham)

Motutapu are far more extensive than those on Tiritiri Matangi or Motuora, so the species should thrive in this new environment.

The total number of birds counted was five percent less than last year in spite of us doing two more counts, says organiser Mike Graham. Results like this are typical of such field survey work and illustrate the value of a long term commitment to the data collection.

This year the results were firstly influenced by poor weather conditions; overcast and showery with very strong winds. It makes it more difficult for observers to see and hear the birds that also tend to stay more in cover.

Last year around 40 percent of the total count was made up by large flocks of finches feeding on the flowering grasses of the Home Bay camping area. Over 400 Goldfinches were counted along with big numbers of House Sparrows, Greenfinches and Yellowhammer.

This year the grass had been left to grow long which limited the food supply and attracted far fewer birds – just 16 percent of the total and predominantly House Sparrows.

Kowhai and Rewarewa in the bush remnant where we found the first Kakariki were not nearly as prolific in flowering this year and as a result there were fewer Tui, but overall both Tui and Bellbird numbers were up across the island.

Silvereye followed the trend with many birds seen feeding in the flowering Karo and Rewarewa. All three species will further benefit from the planted flax which will be in full flower this summer.

On the Rotary Track in particular, the Grey Warbler population continues to thrive and Fantail numbers have increased across the island by roughly a third. The Fantail data from Tiritiri Matangi shows fluctuations up and down over the 25 year period, so it will be interesting to see if that pattern is repeated on Motutapu.

Kakariki numbers were down slightly from last year, but they were seen regularly across the southern part of the island. Some were seen commuting between Rangitoto and the Islington Bay / Nursery area.

Paradise Duck and Pukeko are gradually increasing, along with Brown Quail, Blackbird, New Zealand Pigeon, Song Thrush, Spur-wing Plover, Welcome Swallow and the feral Turkey population. As with Tiritiri Matangi the bird survey data has been influenced artificially with the first translocation exercise. Takahe data is not regarded as being relevant to this survey, so will not be included, but Saddleback is included for the first time as we collected 18 records from the Rotary bush transect and the Pump House wetland area.

Brown Teal have previously been recorded on the island, but this is the first time we have one included in the survey data. A lone male bird was seen with a pair of Grey Duck hybrids on the Pump House dam. A random arrival like this is typical of the roving nature of the species in the Hauraki Gulf area and can be expected again in the future. **Mike Graham**



Caspian Terns at Manukapua (Big Sand Island), off the Okahukura Peninsula near Tapora on the Kaipara Harbour. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).

Research into Auckland Caspian Terns

Studies of Auckland's Caspian Tern colonies go back to the 1970s when banding at Kaipara South Head was initiated by Malcolm Waller.

The 1978-79 season saw the start of colour banding, when a total of 279 young birds were fitted with a blue band in addition to their unique metal band, which led to interesting sightings and recoveries in later years.

Over the next five summers the Caspian colonies at both South Head on the west coast and Mangawhai on the east were subject to such cohort banding with a particular colour combination for the site and the year.

An impressive number of sightings were then logged in the region's 'Caspian Tern Book.'

The last such records are of a bird with Green - Metal bands (the Mangawhai 1982-83 code) spotted at Waipu beach by Gwenda Pulham on 30/12/97, one with Red over White – Metal (SKH 1982-83) seen by Bev Wooley at Port Waikato on 31/1/98, and one with Blue – Metal (the very first code employed) seen at Taramaire, Firth of Thames on 17/5/98 by Tony Harbraken.

This last record is notable as this Caspian was almost 20 years old when seen.

The current OSNZ investigation of Caspian Tern breeding is being coordinated nationally by Mike Bell and will run for three seasons.

During this present summer results have been gathered for the three colonies now active in the Auckland region.

Of these, the Kaipara colony which shifted some years ago to Rat Island off Shelly Beach is the largest with 171 nests when visited on 11/11/11. The Mangawhai beach colony held 28 nesting pairs in October while a colony of more recent origin in the Whangateau harbour near Omaha was of similar size.

Caspian Terns are rather unusual in that a few pairs choose to nest in isolation, well away from the main colonies and these are also being recorded.

Such pairs have been reported from Pakiri river mouth, Waiwera spit, Tiritiri Matangi, Awaawaroa Bay on Waiheke and Green Bay on Ponui in the Hauraki Gulf, Shoal Bay and Traherne Island in the Waitemata Harbour.

Thanks are due to all those who have gathered these records for transmission to Mike Bell.

Additional records are welcome and these should be sent to Michael Taylor, Ph 09 524 9234, or email taylor.mjk@xtra.co.nz

Bird Sightings from Waiwera Oxidation Ponds and Straka's Wetland Refuge

On 17th January, Kathy Barrow, Peter Woods and Michael Taylor visited Straka's Refuge and the Waiwera oxidation ponds. Both sites were well used by water birds. At the refuge, besides plenty of Mallard/Grey Ducks, the following were noted: Dabchick, x3 adults & x1 young; Black Swan, a pair with two young; Paradise Shelduck x65; Scaup x1; Little Black Shag x8; Little Shag x1. The two oxidation ponds had attracted: one Dabchick, White-faced Herons x3, Grey Teal x6, a few Mallards, a Caspian Tern, a Spur-winged Plover and Welcome Swallows. Afterwards we stopped for tea in Orewa, noticing the local speciality, Barbary Doves. **Michael Taylor.**

Recent Auckland Region Sightings

Ten kite surfers disrupted wader watching at Papakanui Spit Wildlife Refuge at South Kaipara Head in January. Gwenda Pulham reported to Birding NZ that "it was looking good at the Bombing Range roost on Waionui Inlet and in the inlet itself from 12 noon till 2:45 pm", (high tide was at 3:47pm), on 15th January 2012. She recorded NZ Fairy Tern x 2, Red-necked Stint x 6, Great Knot x 1, Turnstone x 35, NZ Dotterel x 8, Sanderling x 2, Red Knot x 223- 300 (foraging), Pied Stilt x 20, Wrybill x 1, Banded Dotterel x 40, Bar-tailed Godwit x c100, VOC x 2, SIPO x 80, with Caspians Terns, Red-billed Gulls, and Black-billed Gulls coming and going. "Then the kite-surfers arrived x 10, swooping along the western estuary edge. Needless to say none of the birds stayed at the roost site or in the area! Lucky for me I got there early or it would have been a wasted trip up from Auckland."

New Zealand Dotterel and Variable Oystercatchers were territorial near the coastal wetlands at Turanga Creek Stewardship Reserve recently, reports Chris Bindon.

"I did a pass by the wetlands owned by Bev McConnell (Ayrilies Gardens) in Whitford on 8th January, though didn't have my telescope with me. I saw: Grey teal x7, Scaup x4, Black Swan x9, Mute Swan x2 (introduced to site via Ducks Unlimited), Canada Geese, Mallard/Grey (not countable), 200 + Paradise Shelduck (moulting in various stages), Dabchick x1, Little Shag, Little Black Shag (I believe

though the scope would have helped confirm), Pukeko, and Welcome Swallow. "Opposite Ayrilies coastal wetlands is the Turanga Creek stewardship reserve area of the Clifton marginal strip. Here at the end of the short road past the car park was a pair of NZ Dotterel nesting on a small headland past the road end, plus a possible VOC nest, as they were getting a little upset when I approached the fenced off area. Though I couldn't see a nest or any chicks, I quickly backed off!"

Tawharanui Regional Park on Saturday 21st, (sunny and warm). An hour's walk about 400m, mainly along the stream before it enters the forest proper by **Erik Forsyth**. Fantastic to see all the fledglings from several species, appears to have been a good breeding season. Birds recorded: Buff-banded Rail - a single bird bathing in the left lagoon 300m from the entrance, Brown Teal x10 or so in the same lagoon and x3 along the stream, NZ Kaka - 3x flyovers by single birds, Bellbird - many fledglings calling for food, Tui - several recently fledged birds seen, NI Robin - an adult feeding a fledgling 100m along the stream, Grey Warbler - only 2 heard singing, Whitehead- a birding calling from the pines at the beach carpark and x2 family groups with adults feeding young 150m along trail, (x2 birds seen without bands including a singing male). Grey Fantail- several groups feeding young, Laughing Kookaburra- a single bird on the wires between the park and Sandpiper Lodge.



This Australasian Bittern was seen roadside near Sandpiper Lodge on the Takatu Peninsula, in August last year. The Lodge is within the buffer zone of pest control done to support the open sanctuary at Tawharanui Regional Park. Photo and sighting report from Christine Rose.



One of the delightful and popular bays on Rotoroa Island. (Photo courtesy Rotoroa Island Trust).

Restoration Success At Rotoroa Island

Three Auckland OSNZ members did a bird survey of Rotoroa Island in December and recorded 28 species.

Rotoroa Island is located east of Waiheke, between Pakatoa and Ponui Islands, in the Hauraki Gulf. It was used by the Salvation Army as an alcohol and drug addiction treatment centre until 2005.

Conservation Bequest

A generous bequest from the Plowman family resulted in the island opening to the public as an Arts, Heritage and Conservation Estate in February 2011. It is administered by the Rotoroa Island Trust for the Salvation Army and landing fees go towards the Island's upkeep.

Walking tracks have been built around the island and over 200,000 native trees recently planted.

The excellent Exhibition Centre tells the story of the island's natural history, its Maori and early European occupation, and the Salvation Army's work to transform lives damaged by alcohol and drug addiction.

State of the Art Design

This state of the art information and exhibition centre received a highly commended in the 2011 NZ Timber Design Awards and featured on the cover of Architecture NZ.

The visit by Sharen Graham with Chris and Peter Thompson on 3rd December 2011, produced a bird list of 28 species.

"One of the first birds to greet us on the island was a family of weka", says Chris Thompson.

After sending the bird list to the Rotoroa Trust, Chris received an email from the Trust's ecologist, Jo Ritchie, who asked if

OSNZ would be interested in doing a periodic Grey Faced Petrel survey, and a regular comprehensive bird survey. There is a workers house on the island that accommodates 12 people.

Survey Opportunity

"I have been involved with the project since 2009 and it is an extraordinary and exciting project to work on," said Jo. "We have undertaken a targeted rat control programme on the island in the last year and this in combination with the re-vegetation has led to a corresponding and quite noticeable increase in both the numbers and diversity of bird species on the island in recent months."

"In particular the Weka have thrived and there are a lot of twins and triplets around and a much noisier dawn and evening chorus as they serenade each other across the island," she said.

Species Diversity

Species list for Rotoroa Island Survey on 3rd December 2011.

Observers: Sharen Graham, Chris Thompson, Peter Thompson
Gannet, Pied Shag, Paradise Shelduck, Mallard, Weka, Variable Oystercatcher, New Zealand Dotterel, Spur-winged Plover, Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Kingfisher, Skylark, Blackbird, Welcome Swallow, Song Thrush, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Silvereye, Tui, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Starling, Myna.

Ferries from 360 Discovery visit Rotoroa on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays via the Coromandel ferry service.



Auckland OSNZ Activities Programme 2012

Feb 7 Monthly meeting 7.30pm: Ornithological potpourri - Members' reports/short talks & regional roundup. All welcome !

Feb 18 Saturday 9.15am, Muriwai beach patrol: contact Alan Morris (4800252).

Mar 6 Monthly meeting 7.30pm: **Brian Gill (Auckland Museum), 'New Zealand Cuckoos - specialised parasites & spectacular migrants'. All welcome.**

Mar 10-16 NZ dotterel post-breeding flock counts - counts of key flocks (probably midweek to minimize people/vehicle disturbance?): contact Gwenda Pulham (4805535).

Mar 10 Hauraki Gulf boat trip: contact Chris Thompson (4789781)

Mar 17 Saturday 9.15am, Muriwai beach patrol: contact Alan Morris (4800252).

Apr 3 Monthly meeting 7.30pm: **Mark Bellingham (Forest & Bird) 'Are banded rails our only mangrove bird?' All welcome.**

Apr 14 Saturday 9.15am, Muriwai beach patrol: contact Alan Morris (4800252).

Apr 25 South Kaipara Lakes Dabchick Survey: contact Judy Bendall (09-4202734).

May 1 Monthly meeting 7.30pm: **Sandra Anderson (University of Auckland), 'The Cinderella Syndrome: recognising the fit between bird pollinators and flowers in NZ'. All welcome.**

May 5 Saturday 9.15am, Muriwai beach patrol: contact Alan Morris (4800252).

June 2-4 ANNUAL AGM and SCIENTIFIC DAY, Tauranga (Queen's Birthday weekend).

Jun 5 Monthly meeting 7.30pm: **Dr Diane Fraser (Unitec), 'The Indian house crow – an unwanted species in NZ'. All welcome**

Jun 9 Saturday, Mangawhai wader census: contact Gwenda Pulham (4805535).

Jun 10 Sunday, Firth of Thames wader census: contact Adrian Riegen (8149741).

Jun 16 Saturday 9.15am, Muriwai beach patrol: contact Alan Morris (4800252).

Jun 23 Saturday, Kaipara wader census: contact Adrian Riegen (8149741).

Jun 24 Sunday, Manukau wader census: contact Adrian Riegen (8149741).

Jul 3 Monthly meeting 7.30pm: **TBC**

Jul 14 Saturday 9.15am, Muriwai beach patrol: contact Alan Morris (4800252).

For the latest information on contacts, speakers, and venue locations - contact Mel Galbraith: by email mgalbraith@unitec.ac.nz or phone 4801958 (AH), 8154321 x 7320 (W) or on 027-3879720 (MOB).



Auckland Area DOC Ranger Susan Thomas helps count dead prions at Muriwai in July. (Photo: Frances Hall)

Record Prion Wreck In July

The prion ‘wreck’ of July 2011 will be one for the record books.

Severe weather patterns forced many seabirds onto the western coast of both North and South Islands with a resulting mortality of extreme proportions.

Although final analysis of the event is still to be published, it is clear from the Auckland experience that this wreck will exceed all previous ones.

In Auckland, members responded as individuals and in collectives to the national call for beach patrols, covering many west coast stretches not normally covered by our regular monthly beach patrol.

Muriwai, our main ocean beach, was patrolled over three days through a cooperative effort involving teams from

Auckland Council, Department of Conservation, Unitec Institute of Technology Natural Sciences staff and students, and South Kaipara Landcare. The results of the Muriwai patrol is shown in the table below.

From observations and anecdotal reports, we are aware that the beach patrol data under-represents the magnitude of the wreck – large numbers of prions were reported from forests and farms inland from the coast, and even retrieved from east coast locations.

Clearly, the broad-billed prion flocks were a case of “wrong place, wrong time”. The significance of the mortality on this species may emerge over coming years as researchers visit and assess breeding colonies in the southern regions.

Mel Galbraith

Species	
broad-billed prion	8484
Salvin's prion	441
Antarctic prion	407
fairy prion	266
thin-billed prion	551
fulmar prion	1
prion sp	58
diving petrel	64
Hutton's shearwater	3
fluttering shearwater	12
blue petrel	2
white-headed petrel	1
NZ white-capped (shy) albatross	2
black-browed albatross	2
blue penguin	1
pled shag	2
song thrush	1
TOTAL	10298

KakawatchNZ Network



Report your Auckland region Kaka sightings to kakawatchnz@gmail.com including date, time, location, behaviour, and tree species.

For the latest news on Kaka nutrition go online to <http://bit.ly/xEIW4A>
www.kakawatchnz.org