

The Wrybill

**Newsletter of the Canterbury Region,
Ornithological Society of New Zealand**

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February 2015

Ramble to Kaituna Lagoon and Prices Road bush (Banks Peninsula)

On November 11 a group of members went on one of Bev Alexander's "Rambles" to Kaituna Lagoon to look for the visiting Little Egret and to the bush remnant up Prices Road to look for the resident population of Sulphur Crested Cockatoos. It was a successful half-day on both counts. The Egret was feeding with a group of 12 White Faced Herons and, although a little smaller than the herons, the Egret was quite protective of its social distance from them. Both species seemed quite tolerant of our presence and we were able to watch them for a good 30 minutes or so. Sightings at Kaituna Lagoon / Lake Ellesmere included: Little Egret (1), White Faced Heron (15), Paradise Shelduck (2), Pied Stilt (8), Canada Goose (2), Bar Tailed Godwit (1), Black Swan (30+) and Royal Spoonbills (2).



At Prices Valley Road we were out of the wind and so the raucous calls of the cockatoos were very much in evidence. The bird in the photo was particularly noisy and seemed to be calling in alarm at our presence. We could see a probable nest hole in the tree below its perch. Sightings at Prices Valley Road included: Sulphur Crested Cockatoo (9), Kereru (3), Grey Warbler (1), and Kingfishers (2). A Shining Cuckoo was calling nearby. We were surprised not to see any fantails.



On the way home we stopped at Kaituna Stream where we saw one Crested Grebe, two Scaup and one very surprised Black Swan. The group comprised Bev Alexander, Udo Beneke, Eleanor Gunby, Sandra Wallace, David Thomas, Patrick Aldwell, Sheila Petch, Peter Wilson, Marion MacBeth, Yvonne Curtis and Peg Norris.

Text and photos by Patrick Aldwell.

The Wrybill - February 2015

Recent Sightings

Contributors

AB – Angelique Brown; AC – Andrew Crossland; AR – Aalbert Rebergen; DC - David Chamberlain; DH – David Hallett; DMc– Dale McEntee; DR – Rowey; DT – David Thomas; EF – Erik Forsyth; GBL - Grahame Bell; JW – Jan Walker; KR – Kenny Rose; NA – Nick Allen; NM – Niall Mугan; PC – Phil Crutchley; PW – Peter Wilson; SA – Steve Attwood; SW - Steve Wratten; TR - Tim Rumble

November 2014

Australasian Bittern, 1, Bexley Wetland, 2/11, AC
Bar-Tailed Godwits, 1110, Charlesworth Reserve, 3/11, AC
Kaka, 3, Andrew's Stream, 8/11, AC
Long-Tailed Cuckoo, Andrews Stream 1km from road, 8/11, AC
Long-Tailed Cuckoo, Binser Saddle, 2km from road, 8/11, AC
Rock Wren, 7, Otira Valley, 10/11, TR
Long Tailed Cuckoo, 2, Dracophyllum Creek Track, 14/11, AC
White Heron, 1 (plus 11 Royal Spoonbills and 40 Bar-Tailed Godwits), Bexley Wetland, 16/11, GBL
Black-Tailed Godwit, 1, Lower Selwyn Huts, 29/11, JW + DMc
Spotless Crake, 1, Lower Selwyn Huts, 29/11, PW
Gull-Billed Tern, 6, Kaituna Lagoon, 29/11, SA
Little Egret, 1, Kaituna Lagoon, 29/11, SA

December 2014

White-Winged Black Tern, 1, Waimakariri

River, 4/12, AC
Pectoral Sandpiper, 1, Travis Wetland Backwater Lagoon, 4/12, AC
Australasian Bittern, 1, Travis Wetland, 4/12, CCC rangers – reported AC
Long-Tailed Cuckoo, 2, Mt Cheesman Skifield Rd/Texas Flat/Dracophyllum Trail area, 5/12, AC
Australasian Bittern, 1, Bexley Wetland/Avon River mouth, 7/12, AC
Mollymawk, 15+ (also Northern Royal Albatross, 1 and Giant Petrel, 3), Goughs Bay, 8/12, AC
Cooks Petrel, Grey-Faced Petrel, Short-Tailed Shearwater, Fairy Prion, Bar-Tailed Godwits, 20, Kaikoura Pelagic, 13/12, AC, PC, KR, NM
Little Tern, 1, Arctic Tern, 1, Pomarine Skuas, 2, plus plenty of Turnstones, Kaikoura Peninsula, 13/12, AC, PC, KR, NM
Albatross (including Southern Royal, Northern Royal, Wandering, Salvins and White-Capped), 40+, Huttons Shearwaters, 200+, plus several Sooty Shearwaters, Giant Petrels and Gannets, Stony Bay, 16/12, AC
Long-Tailed Cuckoo, 3, Lyndon Saddle Track, 16/12, DT
Pacific Golden Plover, 23, Bar-Tailed Godwit, 1, Wrybill, 1, Banded Dotterel, 41, Pied Stilt, 19, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, 3, Lake Ellesmere (between Jarvis and Embankment Roads), 19/12, JW
Wrybill, 3, Bar-Tailed Godwit, 1, Yarrs Bay, 21/12, SW
Australian Bittern, 3 (including 1 on a nest), Crested Grebe, 12, Royal Spoonbills, 100, Mute Swan, 1, Harts Creek, 23/11, SA
Lesser Knots, 43, Bar-Tailed Godwits, 13, Yarrs Bay, 23/12, SW

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Leucistic Fantail, 1, Lake Ohau, late December, DC
Gull-Billed Terns, 2, Wrybill, 7, Banded Dotterel, 5, Lake Ellesmere (between Jarvis and Embankment Roads), 31/12, JW
White-Winged Black Tern, 2 (a breeding pair with four eggs), Mackenzie Basin, AR (This nest has since been preyed on).

January 2015

Pied Stilts, 500, Banded Dotterel, 6, Yarrs Flat, 1/1, SW
Curlew Sandpiper, 7, Red-Necked Stint, 2, Gull-Billed Tern, 2, Kaitorete Spit tip, 1/1, AC
Lesser Knot, 3, Bar-Tailed Godwit, 73, Banded Dotterel, 51, Pied Stilt, 117, Kaitorete Spit (Aggie Price's), 1/1, AC
Wrybill, 146, Banded Dotterel, 41, Bar-Tailed Godwit, 5, Red-Necked Stint, 5, Pectoral Sandpiper, 1, Pied Stilt, 279, Yarrs Bay, 2/1, AC
Bar-Tailed Godwit, 1, Wrybill, 3, Royal Spoonbill, 1, plus Banded Dotterels and Terns, Crescent Island/Big Island, 2/1, DR
Oriental Cuckoo (possible), 1, Mangamanu Farm Park, north of Kaikoura, 3/1, AB
Pied Stilts, 60, Banded Dotterel, 8, Wrybill, 9, Bar-Tailed Godwit, 1, Yarrs Flat, 3/1, SW
Yellow Crowned Parakeet, 4 seen well, also Tomtits, Robins, Brown Creeper, Bellbirds, Fantails, Riflemen, Hawdon Valley, 4/1, NA
Back-Fronted Terns, 6, Banded Dotterels, 3, SIPO, 8, Song Thrush, 20, Black-Billed Gulls, 5, Cora Lynn, 4/1, NA
Kea, 4, Otira Valley Car Park, 4/1, NA
Kea, 3, Arthur's Pass Village, 4/1, NA
Kea, 2 (plus another two heard), Death's Corner Lookout, 4/1, NA
Australasian Bittern, 1, Avon Rivermouth, 7/1, AC
Australasian Bittern, 1, Charlesworth

Reserve, 9/1, AC
Grey-Tailed Tattler, 1, Sanderling, 1, Eastern Curlew, 2, Whimbrel, 1, Ruddy Turnstone, 1, Red Knots, 9/1, AC
Marsh Crake, 1, Taranaki Steam Wetland, 9/1, AC
Australasian Bittern, 1, Travis Wetlands, 10/1, GBL
Mottled Petrel (recently dead, probably died ashore), 1, between Waimari and Spencerville Beaches, 13/1, AC
Red-Necked Stints, 3, Kaitorete Spit, 13/1, SW, SA
Crested Grebe, 2, plus two chicks, Kaiapoi Ponds, 16/1, Byrd
Salvin's Prion, 1, Bottle Lake Forest, 17/1, reported by AC
Banded Dotterel, 12 (including two juveniles), Black-Billed Gulls, 2, Grey Duck, 9, Lake Lyndon, 21/1, DT
Northern Royal Albatross, Southern Royal Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, White-Capped Albatross, Wandering Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Westland Petrel, White-Chinned Petrel, Bullers Shearwater, 1, Short-Tailed Shearwater, 1, Sooty Shearwater, Flesh footed Shearwater, 1, White-Faced Storm Petrel, 1, Fairy Prion, 18/1, Kaikoura Pelagic, EF
Arctic Tern, 1, SW Banks Peninsula, 18/1, NM
White-Winged Black Tern, 1, Ruataniwha Wetlands, 25/1, AR
Curlew Sandpiper, 9, Pied Stilt, 204, Banded Dotterel, 131, Wrybill, 3, White-Fronted Terns, 1190 (adults and mostly-fledged chicks), Pomerine Skua, 1, Arctic Skua, 9, 26/1, AC
Franklins Gull (possible), 1, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, 27/1, DH
Bar-Tailed Godwit, 14, Red Knot, 36, Curlew Sandpiper, 1, Pied Stilt, 307, Banded Dotterel, 37, Gull-Billed Tern, 1, Grey Teal, 696, Crescent Island, 29/1, AC

Droppings from the RR

My last dropping in July was about the annual Birds NZ Conference 2014. 2015 is the 75th anniversary of the formation of OSNZ and the Conference and AGM will be in Blenheim at Queen's Birthday weekend, 30th May to 1st June inclusive. It would be really good if lots of Canterbury people attended this one. You can book at www.osnz.org.nz or give me a ring if you haven't got internet and I will send you a form to make an application.

These conferences are packed with talks, workshops, fieldtrips, friendly people, nice food and everyone likes birds. If a few of us want to go, carpooling is possible and maybe cheaper accommodation could be arranged. It was a wet spring, followed by a slow start to summer and now very hot dry conditions. The wet early on meant great fruiting from most berry-bearing plants and lots of insects around. Birds did exceptionally well breeding and juveniles have been abundant. Our garden had Thrushes [3 nests], Blackbirds [1], Dunnocks [? but lots of juvs visited], Bellbirds [? but several very young juvs and these are still around], Chaffinch and Greenfinch juvs too. A Kingfisher sat on the washing line, searching for skinks and cicadas and baby Fantails have visited. Shining cuckoos tuu-eed from the gum tree.

Breeding at Lake Ellesmere has also been good, to the detriment of the visiting migrant waders, it would appear. This is the third year the lake level has been really low, leaving waders hardly any suitable feeding areas because the mud exposed from deep in the lake has no invertebrate food in it. On the other hand opening the lake

in spring, while bad for waders, means an influx of small fry, whitebait and smelt, young eels etc. The low water level left a number of areas safe for large colonies of Spoonbills, Caspian Terns and White-fronted Terns. It is unclear how well the Spoonbills and Caspians did but the White-fronted Terns have fledged many young, now flying with adults.

Of course it is a balancing act, very dependent on weather, but it should be possible to only lower the lake enough to let access for young fish and for birds to have dry breeding sites while still allowing sufficient mudflats for migrant waders. Unfortunately it isn't possible to close the lake once it is opened and I would like to see it left unopened in those spring periods when it is already low. The eel fishery would suffer a little but most years the lake could be opened and then the young fish might make up for the year when it stayed closed. If climate change is getting worse, then the east of the S Island is predicted to get drier, while the west gets wetter. In this case a major decision is necessary about the future of lake openings. Maybe they will only be possible in the winter at times of high level.

Worldwide, habitat for migrant birds is getting scarce and NZ needs to carefully conserve the best areas it has. Lake Ellesmere is possibly the most species-rich wetland in the country, over 180 species of birds have been recorded there since records began early in the 20th century. It cannot be allowed to degenerate into a barren desert like the Aral Sea.

By Jan Walker

Extracts From a Birder's Notebook

Part of the enjoyment of birding is the thrill of the chase – hunting down the rare migrants. But there is also much enjoyment to be had from watching more common species going about their daily lives.

Kaiapoi Lakes No. 2 Lake. 11 December 2014

– Shining Cuckoo heard singing from the willow trees. Pied Cormorants nesting – eggs, chicks and immature birds seen.

NCF Reserve, Kaiapoi. 19 December 2014 –

New Zealand Scaup with six ducklings. Heard Spotless Crake from side of lake under thick growth. Made unusual calls and soft warning noises. Managed to see glimpses. Black appearance. Skulking.

Ashley River Mouth/Waikuku Beach. 11

January 2015 – Arctic Skua in pursuit of Whited-fronted Terns. Flew over beach out to sea. Ducking and diving method.

Taranaki Stream. 13 January 2015 – 4 Little Black Shags – 2 adults and 2 juveniles. Three Caspian Terns hunting for food – fish etc.

Ashley River Mouth. 13 January 2015 - 2 Variable Oystercatchers (all black) – 1 adult and 1 juvenile. 1 male Variable Oystercatcher – smudgy.

Kaiapoi Lakes No. 1 Lake. 17 January 2015 – Good breeding season for Australian Coot. Two young chicks fed by parents. New Zealand Scaup with 3-4 ducklings.

Kaiapoi Lakes No.2 Lake. 17 January 2015 – Pair of Crested Grebe with two young chicks. Chicks riding on female's back. Suddenly she shook them off. She then started to feed them. The chicks were a similar size to Little Grebes and coloured whitey cream with brown spots/blotches. Male bird seemed darker than his female mate.

By Peter Wilson

Meetings of Interest

Monday 2nd March. Travels with Godwits by David Melville. 7 - 8.30pm at the South Brighton Community Centre in Beatty St., New Brighton. David is one of the experts who banded most of our banded birds in the estuary, starting in 2004. He will be talking about Godwits and the issues they face due to human development in their migratory range. Organised as part of Seaweek by Avon Heathcote Estuary/Ihutai Trust and Forest and Bird.

Tues 14th April. Forest and Bird monthly meeting. WEA Gloucester St. 7.30pm. Living Water - the Fonterra/DOC Partnership. Working together to care for five key catchments in New Zealand. Nicola Toki (Fonterra) and Robin Smith (DOC) will talk about opportunities and achievements in the Ararira/LII sub-catchment, Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

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What's on at OSNZ Canterbury: February to May 2015

Indoor Meetings

Evening meetings take place at 7.30 pm on the last Monday of the month at Mahaanui Area DOC Office, 31 Nga Mahi Road, off Blenheim Road, Sockburn. Plenty of parking is available.

23 February – Members night. Short talks by local birders about their birding experiences.

30 March – Short AGM. Then John Dowding talking about '80 degrees north: birds and mammals of Svalbard'. We are calling for nominations for the usual office holders, RR, Secretary, Recorder, Treasurer, Editor, Committee. Please get all nominations for anyone new to a member of the Committee at least two weeks before the AGM.

4 May – Patrick Aldwell, talking about 'North America, predator birds of Ice, Mountains and Desert'.

Field Meetings

Thurs 19th Feb, 5pm **Farewell to the Godwits** at the end of Rockinghorse Rd., South Brighton. Bring your scope and show the public views of the birds before they depart for Arctic breeding grounds. Contact Jan 03 322 7187

Sat 21st Feb. **Big Bird Count of Lake Ellesmere**. This is the most important count we probably do during the year. More knowledgeable birders are requested to put their names forward, please. Meet at Springston South Hall, Days Rd, at 8.30am for a briefing. If you would like transport from the DOC office in Sockburn let Adrienne know. For those interested, there will be a skills training session, led by Andrew Crossland on Sunday Feb 15. Let Adrienne know if you would like to go. For any questions email Adrienne Lomax at manager@wet.org.nz.

Sat 21st March. **Joint KCC [junior Forest and Bird] / Birds NZ trip to Brighton Spit** for a Godwit programme, starting at 4pm. Can we please have some telescopes available on Saturday 21st March? The children come with parents and KCC helpers and are very well-behaved. They play 'godwit games on the sand' and we show them the birds through scopes and binoculars. It will be a short trip. Meet at the end of Rockinghorse road, South New Brighton, 4pm. Contact Jan 03 322 7187

Sat 18th April. **Trip to Orton Bradley Park**. More details in the next newsletter.

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Rambles

Feb 10th - Bexley Wetlands, meeting 9:30am.

Mar 10th - Styx Mill Reserve, meeting 9:30 am.

Apr 14th - Avon Heathcote Estuary (depending on tide etc), meeting 9:30 am.

All welcome. Those wishing to go on these Rambles please contact Bev Alexander : email - birdiebev@xtra.co.nz or ph 03 313 7009.

Next Issue

The next Wrybill will hopefully be sent out in early April. Please send any contributions to the editor by 20 March.



Barbary Dove. Photo by Eleanor Gunby

Bird Calender

Barry Giles, the Canadian birder and photographer who talked to us last February, has produced a calendar of New Zealand birds, with some amazing photos. It is available for sale on Lulu.com. Search for New Zealand Birds on the site or follow this link - <http://www.lulu.com/shop/barry-giles/new-zealand-birds-2015/calendar/product-21934245.html>

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CANTERBURY SUMMER WADER COUNT DEC 2014

Species	Waipara RM	Ashley/Swate r Crk Est	Brooklands Lagoon	Waimakariri Bridges	Travis Wetland	Avon- Heathcote Estuary	Lyttelton Harbour	Port Levy	Pigeon Bay	Okains Bay	Goughs Bay	Akaroa Harbour	Lake Forsyth	Kaitorete Spit Tip	Crescent Island	Remainder Kaitorete Spit	CCC Reserve	Aggle Price's	Kaituna Lagoon	Halswell Flats B	Halswell Flats A	Osbornes	Greenpark Huts Bay	Greenpark Huts - Jarvis Road
Counters/NC		BA	AC	AC	AC,KR,JS	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	NM	PC	PC	PC	AC/PC	AC	AC	MR/TH/RC	AC	SP/GB/CP	SP/GB/CP	SA/EG/SW
Notes													lake v high										nil count?	
Date counted		6-Dec	1-Dec	4-Dec	4-Dec	4-Dec	9-Dec	9-Dec	9-Dec	9-Dec	9-Dec	9-Dec	8-Dec	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov
Aus Crested Grebe													3							1				
Mute Swan																								
Muscovy Duck																								
Black Shag																							1	12
White Heron		1																						
Australasian Bittern																								
Royal Spoonbill		4	12			20	2							5	1	6	5	12		396	2	5		1
Spotless Crake																								
Pied Oystercatcher		78	49	4	1	594	45	24		1		34				1								
Variable Oystercatcher		6	19			48	2	2	2	6	2	8												
Hybrid Oystercatcher		3	1																					
Pied Stilt		15	37		19	57	15			2	6	2	32	7	19		6	113	202	253	12			
Black Stilt																								
Hybrid Stilt		1																						
Banded Dotterel		7		4	1									25	14	20	52	16	11	56	25	3		18
Black-fronted Dotterel																								
Wrybill														2										
Pacific Golden Plover																								
Spur-winged Plover		2	34	124	36	24	26	7		16	4	61	6	6		2	4	10	1	15	4		14	
Turnstone																								
Lesser Knot														1										
Curlew Sandpiper														8										
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper																								
Pectoral Sandpiper					1																			
Red-necked Stint														1										
Eastern Curlew		1																						
Whimbrel																								
Bar-tailed Godwit		109				1513	334								11			61						
Black-tailed Godwit																								
Black-billed Gull		2												27	2	14	5	8		116				5
White-winged Black Tern				1																				
Black-fronted Tern		2		5																				
Caspian Tern		3	3			10	2	1					2	14	7	1	3	5	2	9	1			213
Gull-billed Tern														1					1	2				
White-fronted Tern		5	85	5		55								3000	2					2				
Site totals	0	239	240	143	58	2321	426	34	2	25	12	105	43	3097	56	44	75	225	218	849	44	9	0	263
Wader totals	0	222	140	132	58	2236	422	33	2	25	12	105	38	50	44	23	62	200	214	324	41	3	0	32
wader % of total count	0.00	4.14	2.61	2.46	1.08	41.69	7.87	0.62	0.04	0.47	0.22	1.96	0.71	0.93	0.82	0.43	1.16	3.73	3.99	6.04	0.76	0.06	0.00	0.60
# wader species at site	0	9	5	3	5	5	5	3	1	4	3	4	2	7	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	1	0	2

Counters

Sheila Petch = SP Grahame Bell = GB Colleen Philiip = CP Nick Allen = NA Pieter de Groet Boersma = PD Brian Darlow = BD Grant Bawden = Gba Steve Attwood = SA Eleanor Gunby = EG Sandra Wallace = SW Bev Alexander = BA Peter Wilson = PW
 Jan Walker = JW Dale McEntee = DM Andrew Crossland = AC Matt Rose = MR Tom Hitchom = TH Rosie Campbell = RC Phil Crutchley = PC Kenny Rose = KR John Skilton = JS

Lake level 0.62m on 28/11/14 and closed. Much of Greenpark Sands dry with sandy shore and unsuitable for waders. Pied stilts at Harts Creek were to left of hide where normally very wet.

CANTERBURY SUMMER WADER COUNT DEC 2014

Species	Jarvis-Embankment-Yaris	Yaris Bay	LII Pools	Lower Selwyn Huts	Rennies Bay	Irwell RM	Drain Road	Harts Creek	Lake Road/Lakeside	Johnstons Rd	Lake Road S	Fisherians Pt	Subtotal Lake Ellesmere	Coopers Lagoon	Rakaia RM	Ashburton RM	Rangitata RM	Opihi RM	Washdyke Lagoon	Caroline Bay	Ki-Wairarapa	TOTAL
Counters/NC	BD/GBA	SP/GB/C	JW/DM	BA/PW	BA/PW	NA/PD	NA/PD	NA/PD	BA/PW/SW/EG	NA/PD	n/c	BA/PW/SW/EG		BA								
Notes																						
Date counted	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov	29-Nov		29-Nov		30-Nov								
Aus Crested Grebe									1				2									5
Mute Swan	2								2				4	29								33
Muscovy Duck													0									0
Black Shag			1										14									14
White Heron								2					2									3
Australasian Bittern													0									0
Royal Spoonbill			26-Jan	6	5	5	1	45					521									559
Spotless Crake				1									1									1
Pied Oystercatcher									1				2									832
Variable Oystercatcher													0									95
Hybrid Oystercatcher													0									4
Pied Stilt	4	47	8			19		79		72	420		1261									1446
Black Stilt													0									0
Hybrid Stilt										1			1									2
Banded Dotterel	66	38	14		2								360									372
Black-fronted Dotterel													0									0
Wrybill	9	2	1										14									14
Pacific Golden Plover													0									0
Spur-winged Plover			32	1	1			16		3			109									449
Turnstone													0									0
Lesser Knot		7	15										23									23
Curlew Sandpiper													8									8
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper													0									0
Pectoral Sandpiper													0									1
Red-necked Stint	19	6											26									26
Eastern Curlew													0									1
Whimbrel													0									0
Bar-tailed Godwit		31	26							5			134									2090
Black-tailed Godwit			1										1									1
Black-billed Gull			3	1	1	1							183									185
White-winged Black Tern													0									1
Black-fronted Tern													0									7
Caspian Tern		3	2	2	1	2		3		2			270									291
Gull-billed Tern													4									4
White-fronted Tern											2		3006									3156
Site totals	100	135	128	11	10	27	1	149	77	426	0	2	5946	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9623
Wader totals	98	131	97	1	3	19	0	96	75	426	0	0	1939	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5364
wader % of total count	1.83	2.44	1.81	0.02	0.06	0.35	0.00	1.79	1.40	7.94	0.00	0.00	36.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
# wader species at site	4	6	7	1	2	1	0	3	2	3	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15

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