

The Wrybill

Newsletter of the Canterbury Region, Ornithological Society of New Zealand

Regional representative: Jan Walker
305 Kennedys Bush Road, Christchurch 8025
Ph 03 322 7187. Email: shesagreen@gmail.com



April 2015

What's on at OSNZ Canterbury: April - June 2015

Evening 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.

4th May - Patrick Aldwell, talking about North American Predator Birds of Ice, Mountains and Desert.

25th May - Andrew Crossland and his birding pals will do a chat about their intrepid exploration of parts of the Solomon Islands.

29th June - Bruce McKinley, Vice-President of OSNZ, from Dunedin, will talk about 'Shorebird Priorities for New Zealand'.

Rambles

14 April - Avon/Heathcote Estuary, meet 9:30am south end of Rockinghorse Road.

12 May - Pegasus Wetland.

16 June – To be confirmed.

For all rambles please contact Bev Aelxander (birdiebev@xtra.co.nz or 03 313 7009) to confirm details on where to meet, weather etc.

Field Trips

Sat 18th April - Trip to Orton Bradley Park for bird spotting. Meet 9am Halswell Bowling Club carpark opposite the junction of Lillian St and Halswell Rd. Bring picnic lunch and drink and suitable clothing for any weather. Rough tracks. Walking sticks. Should be lots of bush birds. Contact Jan.

Sat 16th May - Trip to Russell Langdon's Riverbridge Centre beside the Ashburton River. He breeds quite a few native species and has mudfish that he can show us. We need to start fairly early as it's more than an hours drive each way. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Not a lot of walking involved. Contact Jan.

Sat 13th June - Winter Wader Count, Lake Ellesmere. Meet 9.30am at junction of Embankment Rd and Davidsons Rd to get into teams to cover the shoreline of the lake. Only waders and a few other species this time. Contact Jan.

Breeding Attempt by Glossy Ibis

Otago birders Mary Thompson, Peter Schweigman and Sue Galloway discovered the first breeding attempt of a Glossy Ibis in New Zealand. The discovery was made at Wainono Lagoon on New Years Day this year. Wainono Lagoon, near the turnoff to Waimate on State Highway 1, is in the southern part of the Canterbury region.

While visiting to check on a Royal Spoonbill nesting colony the three birders were surprised to discover a Glossy Ibis sitting on a nest. Two other ibises in breeding plumage were roosting nearby. No attempt was made to check the nest for eggs for fear of disturbing the birds. However, the nesting bird was seen to periodically stand, change position and use its bill to “adjust eggs” before sitting again. A return visit was made three weeks later. Chicks were not observed but the larger bird (most likely the male) stayed on the nest for most of the day, periodically standing and looking into the nest before resettling. In the early evening, a changeover was observed. The two smaller birds flew in and one engaged in an apparent greeting display before roosting and preening nearby. After an hour, the male left the nest and this female moved on to the nest and soon settled down.

At this stage it is not known if chicks did actually hatch or fledge but a breeding attempt, even if unsuccessful, is still significant. Canterbury birders travelling south this summer might like to check Wainono Lagoon themselves to see if the Glossy Ibises make another breeding attempt.

More detailed accounts of this breeding attempt can be found in the March 2015 edition of *Birds*

New Zealand and the February 2015 issue of the Otago newsletter which can be found online at <http://osnz.org.nz/regnews.htm>.

Priority Alert for Rare Birds

Did you know you that BirdingNZ.net offers a priority alert system for sightings of rare and interesting birds? The online forum address is www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewforum.php?f=16. You can receive messages directly to your cellphone. Simply text “follow birdingnznet” to 8987. Bev Alexander used this system to try and quickly spread the word after she spotted a Japanese Snipe at Pegasus Wetlands. If you don't want to miss out on rare and unusual sightings consider signing up today. It only takes one quick text.



Japanese Snipe - photo by Eleanor Gunby

February and March Happenings

The first evening meeting of the year featured talks by two of our youngest members. Eleanor spoke about her experiences at the Miranda Field Course, while William presented photos he had taken on Stewart and Ulva Islands. Ann then showed some delightful photos of European

passerines. The evening concluded with a fascinating, though longer than expected, video "Saving the Spoon-Billed Sandpiper", courtesy of Sue. March's meeting began with a very brief AGM. John Dowding then entertained us with his tales from Svalbard, featuring Walruses, Polar Bears and Arctic Foxes as well as Ivory Gulls, Barnacle Geese, Kittiwakes and other birds.

Bev's rambles have been very well attended this year, with around a dozen members attending the two held to date. The highlight of February's trip to Bexley Wetland was undoubtedly the sighting of two Australasian Bitterns. Some very young Australasian Coots, three recently fledged Black Swan cygnets plus a number of very grey looking Mallard/Grey duck hybrids were of special interest in March's rain delayed visit to the Styx Mill Walkway.

We've also managed three field trips so far this year. Thanks to those members who shared their scopes and knowledge at the Christchurch City Council "Farewell to the Godwits' event and also at the Kiwi Conservation Club meeting at Southshore Spit. Sadly there were not a lot of godwits to be seen at the latter meeting, but at least our scopes let the children enjoy closer views of those that could be seen. Nearly twenty OSNZ members assisted with the annual all-bird count at Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. Thanks to everyone who participated. Nearly 48,000 birds were counted in total, almost 13% lower than last year. The low lake level was undoubtedly the major cause of this, especially for waterfowl. However, wader numbers, especially Banded Dotterels, were up on the previous year. More information including a complete spreadsheet is available at the Waihora Ellesmere Trust site -

<http://www.wet.org.nz/projects/2015-te-waihoralake-ellesmere-bird-count/> .

By Sandra Wallace

Recent Sightings

Contributors

AC – Andrew Crossland; BA – Bev Alexander; CCCR – Christchurch City Council Rangers; DM – David Melville; DT – David Thomas; IMc – Ian McHenry; JW – Jan Walker; KH – Keith Harrison; KiR – Kieran Rowe; KR – Kenny Rose; MT – Mary Thompson; NA – Nick Allen; PC – Philip Crutchley; PS – Peter Schweigman; PW – Peter Wilson; SA – Steve Attwood; SG – Sue Galloway; SP – Sheila Petch; SW – Steve Wratten.

January (In addition to those in February's Wrybill)

Glossy Ibis, 3 (one on nest), Wainono Lagoon, 1/1, MT, PS, SG.

February

Wrybill, 26, Black Stilt, 1, Gull-Billed Tern, 1, Yarrs Bay, 1/2, SW.

Black Stilt, 1, near Kaikoura, 1/2, Bedsowales. Little Black Shag, 1, Westlake Reserve, 3/2, JW. Galah, 1, Ensors/Opawa Roads, 3/2, AC. Grey-Tailed Tattler, 1, Ashley Estuary, 7/2, KiR. Australasian Bittern, 2, Bexley Wetlands, BA, PW plus others on ramble.

Marsh Crake, 1, Travis Wetlands, 10/2, contractors.

Marsh Crake, 1, Travis Wetlands, 11/2, AC.

Spotless Crake, 1, Travis Wetlands, 11/2, KR.

Australasian Bittern, 2, Travis Wetlands, 11/2, CCCR.

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Sanderling, 1, Curlew Sandpiper, 1, Red-Necked Stints, 5, plus several Wrybill, Jarvis Road, 12/2, AC.

Black-Tailed Godwit, 1, Bar-Tailed Godwit, 28, Grey-Tailed Tattler, 1, Black-Fronted Tern, 1, Ashley Rivermouth, 15/2, PW.

Long-Tailed Cuckoo (heard), 1, Dunsandel Forest Plantation, 15/2, PW.

Sharp-Tailed Sandpiper, 2, Red-Necked Stint, 5, Wolfes Road, 15/2, SP.

Orange-Fronted Parakeet, 3, Hawdon Valley, reported by Mxyzptlk on 16/2.

Fiordland Crested Penguin, 1, Akaroa, The Press, mid to late February.

March

Glossy Ibis, 1, Travis Wetlands, 1/3, JW.

Marsh Crake, 1, Lake Aviemore, 2/3, Old Fossicker.

Little Egret, 1, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, 3/3, DM.

Little Black Shag, 2, Taranaki Creek Wetlands, 8/3, NA.

Little Black Shag, 2, Kaiapoi Ponds, 8/3, NA.

Marsh Crake, 1, Grey Duck, 5, Waimakariri River Valley, 12/3, DT.

Little Tern, 1, Lake Ellesmere, 15/3, SA.

Australasian Bittern, 1, near Tippings Road, 20/3, KH.

Black Stilt, 1, Ashley Estuary, 21/3, SA.

Little Egret, 1, Lake Forsyth, 23/3, PC.

Australasian Bittern, 1, Charlesworth Reserve, 26/3, PC.

Australasian Gannet (juveniles), several, Waikuku Beach, 27/3, IMc.

Japanese Snipe, 1, Pegasus Wetlands, 28/3, BA.

Canterbury Region Contacts

Regional Representative: Jan Walker
305 Kennedys Bush Rd, Christchurch 8025
Ph 322 7187

Email: shesagreen@gmail.com

Secretary: Sandra Wallace
31 Westmont Street, Christchurch, 8041
Ph 358 5706

Email: sandraw67@gmail.com

Regional Recorder: Bev Alexander
63 Golding Ave, Rangiora 7400
Ph 03 313 7009

Email: birdiebev@xtra.co.nz

Treasurer: John Allen
67 Clifton Terrace, Christchurch 8081
Ph 326 4966

Email: johnruth@xtra.co.nz

The Wrybill Editor: Eleanor Gunby
31 Westmont Street, Christchurch, 8041
Ph 358 5706

Email: eleanor.gunby@gmail.com