

The Wrybill

Newsletter of the Canterbury Region,
Ornithological Society of New Zealand

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August 2015

What's on at OSNZ Canterbury:
August to October 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.

August 31 - Alan MacDonald from the Department of Conservation will talk to us about DOC partnerships with other groups, and about platforms for Crested Grebe in Kaituna River.

September 28 – Michelle Crowell from the Department of Conservation will talk to us about Kea-proof 1080 bait. Nick Allen will then give a talk on Korea and its insatiable need for land.

November 2 – James Ross from Lincoln University will be talking on the developments, relative efficacy and pros and cons of new mammalian pest control tools.

Field Trips

Saturday September 12 - Plantout at Lake Ellesmere. Meet in Prebbleton outside the dairy at 9am. We will take part in the plantout at the mouth of the L2, doing some vital conservation

activities which will benefit the lake in the long run. OSNZ will pay the registration fee, and you can stay for the whole day, a half day or less. You have to be registered to go, so please let Jan know if you are coming. Otherwise she can't book you in.

Saturday October 10 - Bushwalks around McHugh's Forest, near Darfield, and Kowhai Bush, near Waimakariri Gorge.

Rambles

Wednesday 16 September – Travis Wetland. Meet in the Beach Rd. carpark at 9:30 am.

Wednesday 14 October – Ashley Estuary. Meet at the Belfast Hotel car park at 9am to carpool, or else at 9:30 in Waikuku.

Please make sure you let Bev know if you intend to come. It is important for organisation and so we know to contact you if the ramble is cancelled for any reason. Contact Bev on: home phone - 03 313 7009; mobile - 027 3184 713; email - birdiebev@xtra.co.nz.

Kaki Reintroduction Plan

When discussing indigenous birds that breed on our braided rivers, we like to talk about seven rare and endangered species. The six species to which we refer most often are the Ngutupare (Wrybill), Tarapuka (Black-billed Gull), Tarapiroe (Black-fronted Tern), Poaka (Pied Stilt), Torea (South Island Pied Oystercatcher) and Tuturiwhatu (Banded Dotterel). It is not difficult to show visitors all six of these threatened species. The seventh species is the Kaki (Black Stilt), but it is not often mentioned and even less often seen, as it is most often not present. Well, this could be about to change not far north of Christchurch.



A Kaki at the Ashley Estuary by Steve Attwood

Consideration is being given to reintroducing Kaki in an area of around 2000ha involving the lower Ashley-Rakahuri, the Ashley/Saltwater Creek estuary, and Tuhaitara Coastal Park. The park runs behind the Pegasus Bay foreshore from just south of the estuary at Waikuku, through to Kairaki just north of the Waimakariri estuary. Since 2009, a plan to restore it to its former prime wetland state has been vigorously pursued.

On July 15, representatives from Ngai Tahu, the Tuahaitara Coastal Park and the Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group met with DOC to look at progressing the exciting possibility of a Kaki

reintroduction.

Only 100 years ago, Kaki used to be the dominant stilt species within New Zealand, with a widespread presence in both the North and South islands. The Poaka was by far the rarer species. But today, it is exactly the opposite. Poaka are often seen alongside areas of shallow water all over the country, while the Kaki has steadily retreated to its last stronghold in the Mackenzie Basin. Up there it is maintained by a captive breeding programme developed by DOC over the last 30 years. This has been very successful in taking eggs from 'wild' nests, and captive pairs, hatching them and raising chicks in aviaries, for release back into the field when they are two-years-old.

Why has there been such a decline in Kaki numbers? The main reason is that Kaki are very prone to predation by introduced predators such as stoats and wild cats. The Kaki evolved without such threats, and have proven to be slow to adapt to predation. This is in contrast to the Poaka, which hundreds of years ago self-introduced from Australia, where predators are a more natural feature of the environment. The Poaka has also taken more readily to new habitats created by humans – such as farmland.

By 1982, there were just 23 Black Stilts in existence, all in the Mackenzie Basin. Thanks to the captive breeding work, a 'wild' population of around 70 adults now exists, but all of these birds have been raised in an aviary before release back into the wild. So the first step of avoiding Kaki extinction has been successful thanks to human intervention via the artificial hatching of eggs and raising of chicks. But with 'all eggs currently in the Mackenzie basket', maintaining a wild population remains tenuous

at best. This has led to the current moves exploring the options for establishing other populations elsewhere.

The lower Ashley-Rakahuri river and estuary, together with the adjacent wetlands being developed in the Tuhaitara Coastal Park, offer a range of attractive habitats for Kaki. In addition, the threat of predation could well be lower than in the Mackenzie Basin. Trap-catch data over recent years indicates fewer mustelids (ferrets, stoats and weasels) and rats, and less aerial threat from the likes of Karearea (falcons), Kahu (Harrier Hawks), and Karoro (Black-backed Gulls).

Consequent to the July 15 meeting and inspection of the potential new site for Kaki, DOC is weighing up the pros and cons of a new release of Kaki north of Christchurch. If the decision is positive, the process of reintroduction is likely to take place over a number of years. The reintroduction attempt will likely be viewed initially as a trial. The first three years may see approximately 30 - 40 sub-adults released annually and if post release survival rates are good, and ongoing monitoring indicates good survival rates and breeding attempts, further liberations are likely to occur as the wild population really needs to be composed of hundreds in order to be self-sustaining. It is exciting to think that in a few years time, the presence of Kaki could allow us to show visitors all seven rare and endangered braided river bird species, and not just the six that are present today.

By Nick Ledgard

June and July Rambles

Our June ramble saw nine members enjoy a walk at Roto Kohatu Reserve (north end of Sawyers Arms Rd). The area is managed by Christchurch City Council and consists of two large lakes and some wide open grassland areas. The lakes are used for water sports and fishing. There were a number of people walking their dogs or just enjoying the open space and views. A total of 28 bird species were seen during our two hour walk. The highlights were seeing two adult and one juvenile Crested Grebe, a very friendly Muscovy, a number of fantails, both pied and black phases, and a large flock of Yellowhammers feeding among the grain. We looked hard to find a Cirl Bunting but no luck.



Paul Scofield showing a specimen to Peter Wilson on our July ramble.

In July we had the opportunity to visit the 'back room' of the museum and see specimens of those beautiful birds we have lost – the Laughing Owl, South Island Kokako, Huia, Piopio and Chatham Islands Bellbird to name a few. Thanks to Paul Scofield for giving us the privilege to see at close hand what our early ornithologists were able to see and collect. For any young bird watcher starting out, a visit to the Bird Hall is a must. It gives you the opportunity to see and study at close quarters all our local birds (they don't fly away so it gives you a good chance to get your field guide out to check the ID).

Photo and text by Bev Alexander

June and July Meetings and Field Trips

In June, Bruce McKinley, OSNZ's Vice- President, gave a talk on New Zealand's shorebird priorities. He gave an insight into our relationship with international partners as well as looking at how we can and should honour international agreements such as the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership ourselves. Before the meeting several of us joined Bruce at a local noodle house for an informal discussion and catch-up. James Fraser from With a Nose for Conservation, who specialises in locating threatened species using dogs, spoke at our July meeting. He focused especially on work involving Great Spotted Kiwi on the north branch of the Hurunui river . The dogs sniff out the birds which are then measured and sexed and frequently have transmitters attached so they can be monitored. This area has seen a population decline of around 1.56%. This seems disheartening but is at least less than the national average. While the talk was interesting, I think everyone was disappointed not to get to see the dogs themselves!

Both field trips this month involved bird counts. In June, fifteen hardy OSNZ members, along with Christchurch City Council rangers, braved a freezing wind to participate in the annual winter wader count at Lake Ellesmere. Over 1000 Banded Dotterels and more than 700 Pied Stilts were counted. Of special interest were two Wrybill, one Black-fronted Dotterel and two Red-necked Stints. A complete copy of the wader count results for the whole of Canterbury can be found at the end of this newsletter. To help with formatting and readability those areas that were not counted or that had no waders present have not been included. If you would like the complete spreadsheet (with 0s and blank

columns included) please ask. The Ashburton Lakes waterbird survey was held in July and several members travelled south to assist with this. The good news as that the forecast snow did not arrive and the weather remained calm but cool. The bad news was that many of the lakes were totally frozen. On others, like Lake Emma which was about 30% frozen, the birds were huddled in the middle of the lake, making identification difficult. Sixteen Crested Grebes were counted on Lake Heron but the overall count was the lowest in recent years.

By Sandra Wallace

Kaikoura Birding News

Our resident leucistic sparrow is doing very well. Lindsey Rowe has paid it a visit and is happy that it is indeed a sparrow despite its colour. We're really enjoying getting to watch sparrow behaviour, as this little bird is so distinctive. The others in the flock treat it like any other sparrow. If it stays alive until the breeding season, it will be interesting to to see if it mates as we don't know what sex it is.



The leucistic sparrow at Kaikoura

We now have a permit to band the Banded Dotterels, so we will be following nests opposite the race course as soon as the birds begin nesting. About two years back, we did monthly bird surveys of Rotoroa and Rotoiti (Little Kaikoura lakes inland Kahuatara), but we haven't had enough time to continue. A good population of grebes are there, and we were particularly interested in the article on rafts for grebes in Wanaka. We've had permission to set up one as a trial

The red gums are bringing a little Tui activity onto the peninsula. Tui are usually pretty infrequent here, so it's nice to see them around.

We are surprised to see that the very best real estate for Spotted Shags is already frequented at Ohau Point. Nesting behaviour is full on there, but hasn't yet spread along the coast. I'm guessing there are about a dozen nests being constructed and defended as of yesterday. I'm looking forward to checking on a few more nest sites in the next few weeks.

We've had several pairs of Black-fronted Terns cruising the skies which have been seen in passing.

The return of the Hutton's Shearwaters is coming closer. A celebration hasn't been worked out yet but it will be on the weekend of September 19th. The Hutton's Trust is working hard on updating the strategic plan now the peninsula colony has become established.

Photo and text by Ailsa Howard (17/7/15)

Bird Books to Give Away

Sheila Petch is kindly giving away some bird related books. The books listed below are free to a good home. If you'd like any of them, please contact Sheila on 348-1889.

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America

Birds of Peru

Nature Guide Birds of Australia

Where to Find Birds in Australia by John Bransbury

Chatham Islands Ornithology

The AA Explorers Guide to China

Monterey Birds by Don Robertson

The Waterbirds of Australia. National Photographic Index

In Search of Birds in New Zealand by Ross McKenzie

More New Zealand Portraits by M. F. Soper

Recent Sightings

Contributors

AC – Andrew Crossland; AE – Albatross Encounter; AH – Ailsa Howard; BA – Bev Alexander; CG – Carolyn Gambold; CP – Colleen Philip; EG – Eleanor Gunby; JW – Jan Walker; MS – Michael Szabo; PL – Peter Langlands; SW – Sandra Wallace

June

White Heron, 1, Crested Grebe, 2, Lakeside Domain (Timberyards Point), 9/6, JW and BA.
Cattle Egret, 10, Drain Road/Lake Road Junction, 9/6, JW and BA.

Black Shag, 7, Spotted Shag, 1, Selwyn River, 9/6, JW and BA.

White Heron, 1, Halswell Quarry Park, 9/6, JW.
Gull-Billed Terns, 5, Lower Selwyn Huts, 13/6, JW and CP.

Red-necked Stint, 2, Wrybill, 1, Jarvis Road to Embankment Road, 13/6, EG and SW.

Cirl Bunting, 2, Woodend Motor Camp, 18/6, BA.
Sparrow (Leucistic), 1, Kaikoura, 27/6, AH.

July

Tomtit, 1, Victoria Park, 7/7, AC.

Tui, 1, North Loburn, 7/7/15, reported by CG.
Stewart Island Shag (beach wrecked), 1, Te Oka Bay (Banks Peninsula), 15/7, PL.

Silvereye (Leucistic), 1, Mount Pleasant, 21/7, McGoo.

Turnstone, 1, Ashley Estuary, 14/7, BA.

Southern Giant Petrel (White Morph), 1, 25/7, Kaikoura, reported by MS.

Australasian Bittern, 1, White Heron, 3, Pegasus Wetland, 26/7, BA.

Antarctic Fulmar, 2, Kaikoura, 30/7, AE.



Spur-Winged Plover Nest by Bev Alexander. This photo was taken on July 16, and the eggs hatched on August 10.

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CANTERBURY WADER COUNT JUNE 2015

Species	Tip of Kaitorete Spit	Kaitorete Spit	Birdlings Flat A	Birdlings Flat B	Kaituna Lagoon	Halswell Flats B	Halswell Flats A	Osbornes	Greenpark Huts-Jarvis Road	Jarvis-Embankment Rds	Embankment Rd	Yarri Flat	LII RM to Selwyn Huts	Rennie's Bay	Inwell RM	Boggy Creek	Drain Road	Harts Creek	Timberyard Point	Lake Rd South	Lakeside Flats	Subtotal Lake Ellesmere
Counters/NC	PC	PC	AC,MR	AC,MR	AC,MR	JS,RH	KR,NM	PS,VDP,SS	PS, VDP, SS	EG,SW,D&U&WH	BD,GB	BA, PW	JW,CP	BA,JW,PW,CP	BA nil wader	BA nil waders	BA,JW,PW,CP	BA nil waders	BA,JW,PW,CP	BA nil waders	BA	BA
Notes								incl in -->														
Date counted	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	13-Jun	17-Jun	17-Jun	13-Jun	17-Jun	13-Jun	17-Jun	17-Jun	
Aus Crested Grebe					2		1					1	2							2		8
Mute Swan									2		9	2			3							17
White Heron					1	1									1			1				4
Little Egret																						0
Cattle Egret																	10					10
Australasian Bittern																						0
Glossy Ibis																						0
Royal Spoonbill		1			2	22	25															50
Pied Oystercatcher			8		2																	11
Variable Oystercatcher																					1	0
Hybrid Oystercatcher																						0
Pied Stilt	32		62		40	169	16		236	50	47	7	59	3							5	726
Black Stilt																						0
Hybrid Stilt												1										1
Banded Dotterel	41	6	297	170		49	15		57	334	110		7								2	1088
Black-fronted Dotterel												1										1
Wrybill									1	1												2
Pacific Golden Plover																						0
Spur-winged Plover	9	4	17	19	12				3				8				14				9	95
Turnstone																						0
Lesser Knot																						0
Curlew Sandpiper																						0
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper																						0
Pectoral Sandpiper																						0
Red-necked Stint										2												2
Eastern Curlew																						0
Whimbrel																						0
Bar-tailed Godwit																						0
Black-billed Gull	4				1				2			2			4					10		23
White-winged Tern																						0
Gull-billed Tern													5									5
Black-fronted Tern	4								1	3												8
Caspian Tern	7	4					1		1		2	2			5					1		23
White-fronted Tern																						0
Site totals	97	15	384	189	60	241	59	0	302	388	171	16	81	12	4	0	25	0	13	0	17	2074
Wader site totals	82	10	384	189	54	218	31	0	297	387	157	9	74	3	0	0	14	0	0	0	17	1926
% of total count	1.23	0.15	5.78	2.85	0.81	3.28	0.47	0.00	4.47	5.83	2.36	0.14	1.11	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.26	28.99
# wader species at site	3	2	4	2	3	2	2	0	4	4	2	3	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	8

Counters

Nick Allen = NA Brian Darlow = BD Grant Bawden = Gba Eleanor Gunby = EG Sandra Wallace = SW Bev Alexander = BA Jan Walker = JW Andrew Crossland = AC Matt Rose = MR Phil Crutchley = PC Kenny Rose = KR John Skilton = JS Peter Wilson = PW Joy & Paul Sagar = J&PS Colleen Pearson = CP Duane,Una & William Harland = D&U&WH Paul Scofield = PS Vanesa De Pietri = VDP Sue Stubenvoll = SS Nigel Morrill = NM Robbie Hewson = RH

Lake Ellesmere level 12/6/15 = 0.95 m, close

Species	Waipara RM	Ashley/Swatter Creek	Taranaki Creek paddocks	Waimakariri Bridges	Brooklands Lagoon	Travis Wetland	Avon-Heathcote Estuary	Lyttelton Harbour	Port Levy	Pigeon Bay	Okains Bay	Le Bons Bay	Lake Forsyth	Coopers Lagoon	Spider Lagoon	Ophi RM	Washdyke Lagoon	Ki-Wainono	TOTAL	
Counters/NC	NA	NA	NA	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	BA	J&PS	J&PS	J&PS	J&PS		
Notes															water high	water high	tide high	water high		
Date counted	24-Jun	17-Jun	17-Jun	15-Jun	15-Jun	23-Jun	15-Jun	9-Jun	9-Jun	9-Jun	9-Jun	9-Jun	1-Jun	17-Jun	25-Jun	25-Jun	12-Jun	29-Jun		
Aus Crested Grebe		1											19	1					29	
Mute Swan															2				19	
White Heron					2		2						1						9	
Little Egret													2						2	
Cattle Egret																			10	
Australasian Bittern																			0	
Glossy Ibis						1													1	
Royal Spoonbill		3					lost count	2					1						56	
Pied Oystercatcher	1	151	1		28	5	2694	232	81	49	75			1	1	1	2	6	3339	
Variable Oystercatcher		7			2		103	4	8	4	14	2	1					16	2	163
Hybrid Oystercatcher		10			1															11
Pied Stilt	2	38	28		92	32	111	73			8	2	18	24	2	3	63	5	1227	
Black Stilt																				0
Hybrid Stilt		3																		4
Banded Dotterel		16			98		52						2			2	4		1262	
Black-fronted Dotterel	2															3			6	
Wrybill																		1	3	
Pacific Golden Plover																			0	
Spur-winged Plover		1	10	2		30	48	55	15	41	33	2	14				2		348	
Turnstone																			0	
Lesser Knot																			0	
Curlew Sandpiper																			0	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper																			0	
Pectoral Sandpiper																			0	
Red-necked Stint																			2	
Eastern Curlew																			0	
Whimbrel																			0	
Bar-tailed Godwit		23					244	11											278	
Black-billed Gull		54												124		18	7		226	
White-winged Tern																			0	
Gull-billed Tern													1						6	
Black-fronted Tern		19																	27	
Caspian Tern		7					11	1	9	1	2	2	10						66	
White-fronted Tern		18																	18	
Site totals	5	351	39	2	223	68	3265	378	113	95	132	8	69	152	3	27	95	13	7112	
Wader site totals	5	249	39	2	221	67	3252	375	104	94	130	6	35	25	3	9	88	13	6643	
% of total count	0.08	3.75	0.59	0.03	3.33	1.01	48.95	5.65	1.57	1.42	1.96	0.09	0.53	0.38	0.05	0.14	1.32	0.20	100.00	
# wader species at site	3	8	3	1	5	3	6	5	3	3	4	3	4	2	2	4	6	3	76	