



**THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)**

## **Wellington Region Newsletter**

**March 2011**

[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz) and [www.notornis.org.nz](http://www.notornis.org.nz)

### **Message from the President, David Lawrie – Christchurch Earthquake**

*"Following the Canterbury earthquake and with both of our editors and the printing company being based in Christchurch, our March posting of 'Notornis' and 'Southern Bird' will be delayed. Our hearts go out to our Canterbury members and all those who have been affected by the disaster."*

*David Lawrie (OSNZ President).*

The editor's of 'Southern Bird' (Nick Allen) and 'Notornis' (Jim Briskie) and their families are fine, although understandably are shaken up by the recent earthquakes. The printing company, Caxton's, is located within the cordoned off area in Christchurch. There has been some damage to the ground floor with cracking and broken windows. Documents and equipment are scattered about. As soon as Caxton's can gain access to the building the directors will make a decision about resuming printing at their premises after a building clearance, or whether the business will need to be re-located. We will be kept updated on progress.

### **New Regional Representative for Wellington Region**

At the Annual Meeting of the Wellington Region held on 7<sup>th</sup> March Dr. Susan Waugh of Wellington was elected as a Regional Representative for Wellington Region, to take effect from January 2012. Susan has a diverse background in ornithology and has worked as an independent consultant in ornithology for several years. Susan was recently appointed as Senior Curator for Natural Environment at the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa.

Stephen Sharp was re-elected Treasurer for Wellington Region for 2011/2012.

A draft Annual Report for the Wellington Region for 2010 was circulated. Further comments on this from members are welcome and copies of the report are available from the RR.

### **Monthly Meetings in Wellington City**

**Wellington Region meetings are now held at Turnbull House, lower Bowen St, Wellington.** Access to Turnbull House through the front door is available from 7 pm and meetings commence at 7.30 pm. The digital screen in the entrance hallway will guide you to

the room. The society now needs to pay for room hire so as a matter of regular practice we would appreciate all members and visitors attending making a gold coin donation to cover the \$70 cost of room hire. A collection basket will be on the front table. Car parking is available on nearby streets (The Terrace and by the Courts). City bus stops are nearby on Lambton Quay.

## Programme from April to December 2011

**4<sup>th</sup> April:** *“Marine Important Bird Areas for New Zealand”*. Dr. Susan Waugh, recently appointed Senior Curator for Natural Environment at the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa and formerly a consultant ornithologist. Susan will explain a project being undertaken by the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society that examines sites of particular significance for bird species in New Zealand. Seventy six seabird colony locations and eight marine areas have so far identified that qualify as Important Bird Areas (IBA). Information gained will assist in defining further potential IBA sites.

**2<sup>nd</sup> May:** *“Listening and Learning: kiwi research from call”*. Dr. Andrew Digby, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington. Andrew will discuss the conservation applications of kiwi vocalisations beyond call counts, presenting results of vocal identification, dialect measurement, and using microphone arrays to monitor little spotted kiwi.

**June** – no local meeting. The national society conference and AGM is being held in Lower Hutt between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June.

**4<sup>th</sup> July:** *“Bird Monitoring and Conservation on Greater Wellington Regional Council Managed Lands”*. Mr. Nikki McArthur, Conservation Officer, Greater Wellington Regional Council. Nikki will talk about efforts to maintain and improve native bird diversity on lands managed by Greater Wellington Regional Council. He will describe how the council's biodiversity staff measure trends in the abundance and diversity of native birds in Wellington's regional park network and how local OSNZ members might be able to contribute to this work.

**1<sup>st</sup> August:** *“In the Footsteps of Edgar Stead”*. Dr. Colin Miskelly. Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrates, Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa and OSNZ Councillor. Colin will describe his recent biographical studies on the life and accomplishments of Edgar Stead – ornithologist, engineer, horticulturist and marksman.

**September:** – Instead of a local meeting a tour of the archived bird collections at Museum of New Zealand – The Papa Tongarewa is being arranged on the evenings of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> September. Maximum 30 people (members only), 10 members on each of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> September. A registration list will be circulated by the RR in August.

**3<sup>rd</sup> October:** *“Studies on Kereru and their role in Forest Ecology (or a related title)”*. Ms. Monica Awasthy, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington. Monica will discuss aspects of her recent post-graduate research on kereru (wood pigeon) and the important role of this species in forest ecology.

**7<sup>th</sup> November:** *“Auckland Island merganser - an unraveling tale”*. Dr. Murray Williams, OSNZ Councillor, former Dept of Conservation scientist and former Associate Professor of Conservation Biology, Victoria University of Wellington. Murray will describe his recent research in Europe on some aspects of the biology of the extinct Auckland Island merganser.

**5<sup>th</sup> December:** *“An overview of bird watching in UK, New Zealand and Australia”*. Mr. Jim Murray. A keen Wellington member/birdwatcher. As the year ends Jim will provide a colourful and light-hearted review of some of his bird-watching adventures in New Zealand, Australia and in the UK.

Offers to lead or assist with field trips and suggestions and ideas for meetings would be appreciated.

#### **Field activities:**

1. **“Mist-netting and passerine banding”** at Wellington Zoo and elsewhere in Wellington. Sessions are usually held on Saturdays or on Sunday if the weather is too wet on Saturday. Peter Reese advises that the next session at the zoo will be on 26 March.
2. **“Monitoring of shore plover”** on Mana Is. and at adjacent mainland sites, including Green Point. Regular monitoring of the movement of birds will continue during the year. Contact Barry Dent for details.
3. **“Kapiti Island Bird Survey”**. Led by Dr. Colin Miskelly. A long-term survey of forest birds on parts of Kapiti Island will continue until 2012. Overnight stays on the island are necessary – always comfortable and with pleasant company. The next survey is planned for mid-April. More volunteers are welcome but remember the work is physically demanding.
4. **“Little Penguin studies on Matiu/Somes Island”**. Led by Reg. Cotter. Breeding success and tagging studies to better understand the biology of little penguins in Wellington Harbour are conducted.

## White heron at Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve

A white heron (kotuku) (*Ardea modesta*) was seen and photographed at the Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March. It was confused with being a little egret at the time but the long neck (longer than the body), black soles on the feet, yellowish bill, black line of the gape extending beyond the eye and its large size suggested that it was white heron. It may be an immature bird and appeared to be timid but it was approached closely enough for Donald Laing (a non-member) to photograph it on the “twin ponds”.





## Results of the Mana Bio-blitz (February – March)

A Mana Bio-Blitz 2011 was conducted between 6 February and 6 March. It aimed to identify and record all marine and terrestrial species of flora and fauna in the study zone extending from Mana Island eastwards to the mainland and the sea area in between. It also included Whitireia Park, Titahi Bay and Stuart Park (southern edge of Titahi Bay). Three OSNZ members contributed to the survey, part of which was conducted from a boat between Paremata and Mana Island. The Bio-Blitz was coordinated by the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society.

28 bird species were recorded by OSNZ members, as follows:

Black swan	Paradise shelduck	Little penguin
Flesh-footed shearwater	Buller's shearwater	Fluttering shearwater
Australasian gannet	Pied shag	Little shag
White-faced heron	Australasian harrier	Pukeko
Variable oystercatcher	Pied stilt	Shore plover
Arctic skua	Southern black-backed gull	Red-billed gull
Caspian tern	Black-fronted tern	White-fronted tern
Rock pigeon	Yellow-crowned parakeet	Whitehead
Welcome swallow	New Zealand Pipit	Common starling
House sparrow		

Note: Bird names follow the "Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand", Fourth Edition. OSNZ, 2010.

## National Conference and Annual General Meeting – Lower Hutt, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> June

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held in Lower Hutt during Queen's Birthday weekend 2011. Meetings of Council and Regional Representatives will take place at the Angus Inn, Waterloo Road. The scientific days will take place at 'The Dowse Art Museum' Conference Centre, Laing's Road, Lower Hutt. Details and Registration Forms are being mailed in the next issue of Southern Bird and are also available on the OSNZ website or by contacting the RR. A wide range of presentations for each of the two scientific days are being received.

### 3 June 2011 (Friday) – Angus Inn, Waterloo Rd

Council and RR Meetings.

### 4 June 2011 (Saturday) – The Dowse Conference Centre, Laing's Rd

8 – 9 am Registration  
9 am – 5 pm Scientific Day  
7 pm Informal dinner  
8.30 pm Annual General Meeting.

### 5 June 2011 (Sunday) – The Dowse Conference Centre, Laing's Rd

8 – 9 am Registration  
9 am – 5 pm Scientific Day  
7 pm Conference dinner & guest speaker.

### 6 June 2010 (Monday)

9 am – 4 pm. Three options:

- Zealandia - Karori Sanctuary
- Kapiti Coast, Waikanae and Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve, Porirua
- Matiu/Somes Island and Wellington Harbour

## Notable and Recent Bird Sightings

### New Zealand falcon at Otari/Wilton's Bush:

Ros Batcheler advises on 13 March that birdlife at Otari/Wilton's bush is steadily improving. Kakariki, kaka, bellbirds, wood pigeon and now NZ falcon are being seen regularly. Ros says that Otari staff think two birds are present and suspect there was a nest in the area below the fernery, judging by activity and loud calling from there recently. On Thursday 10 March a falcon landed in an olearia tree, about three metres from where Ros and staff were working. The bird was watched at eye-level for about 15 minutes as it sat and surveyed them all. It appeared to be a juvenile with grey legs and dark plumage with minimal barring, and it showed some fluff on the chest. It flew silently past Ros and others along the path. The birds favour a large ngaio tree near to the end of the Cockayne Lawn, and the large olearia tree just below the ngaio. Two birds are often seen here. Susan Waugh also reports a **NZ falcon** at Otari/Wilton's Bush on 5<sup>th</sup> March

**Shore plover:** Igor Debski posted on 'Birding-NZ' that on 13 March an immature **shore plover** was seen at Otaki, on the pond on the north side of the Otaki River mouth. About a dozen **banded dotterel** were also present. Although the shore plover was banded Igor is uncertain of the colour combinations because "the bird was wallowing in mud (very un-shore plover like!)" ; he suspects yellow/red on the left leg and white/blue on the right leg.

**Australasian Bittern:** Don Stracy reports watching one bittern for 30 minutes on 19 February at Waimeha Lagoon, near Waikanae Beach. Australasian bittern was not recorded as a species in the Wellington Region in the 2007 *Atlas of Bird Distribution of NZ*.

**Red-crowned parakeets:** Barry Dent reports an unbanded red-crowned parakeet in the company of three banded red-crowned parakeets in Plymouth St, Karori on 6 March.

**White heron:** see note and photographs on pages 3 and 4 of a white heron seen at

Pauatahanui Inlet on 13 March.

## First-Aid Kits, Telescope and HANZAB for Loan

Our branch has some first-aid kits if members want to use during OSNZ field trips. The telescope belonging to our region is stored by Ian Armitage at home for safe-keeping; it is always available to be borrowed by members. We own five volumes of the "Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds" – Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks; Volume 2: Raptors to Lapwings; Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons; Volume 4: Parrots to Dollarbirds; Volume 7: Passerines (divided into two books); these can be borrowed for a while by any member. Contact the RR if you wish to use of any of these items.

## Wellington Region Contacts

<u>Regional Representative</u>	Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470 <a href="mailto:ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz">ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz</a> from January 2012. Dr. Susan Waugh <a href="mailto:susan@closeburn.org">susan@closeburn.org</a>
<u>Regional Recorder</u>	Delia Small (04) 475 7526 <a href="mailto:delia@paradise.net.nz">delia@paradise.net.nz</a>
<u>Southern Bird Regional Roundup</u>	Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929 <a href="mailto:geoffrey.delisle@agresearch.co.nz">geoffrey.delisle@agresearch.co.nz</a>
<u>Mist-netting and passerine banding</u>	Peter Reese (04) 387 7387 <a href="mailto:ruth.peterr@actrix.co.nz">ruth.peterr@actrix.co.nz</a>
<u>Kapiti Island Bird Counts</u>	Dr. Colin Miskelly (04) 381-7301 <a href="mailto:hakawai@paradise.net.nz">hakawai@paradise.net.nz</a>
<u>Little penguin studies, Matiu/Somes Is</u>	Mr. Reg. Cotter (04) 568-6960 <a href="mailto:reganne@clear.net.nz">reganne@clear.net.nz</a>
<u>Wellington Region Newsletter production</u>	Sally Truman (04) 388 2242 <a href="mailto:sally2001@hotmail.com">sally2001@hotmail.com</a> Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470