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OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Otago Region Newsletter 3/2011 April 2011

Day trip to Enderby Island, Auckland Islands



On my way to Antarctica this February, the “Spirit of Enderby” spent a day at Enderby Island which is located at the northern end of the Auckland Island Group, about two days steaming south of Bluff. With the ship at anchor in Sandy Bay the passengers were landed by zodiac and assembled near the New Zealand Sealion research team huts. Bellbirds were going crazy along the bush-edge gorging themselves on rata flowers. Tomtits were flitting about whilst the chatter of the red-crowned kakariki or a flash

of green was ever present. Meanwhile giant petrels and skuas occupied the beach looking forlorn now that sealion breeding had finished for the season. Also present were a couple of Antarctic terns fishing in the bay.

The party crossed over penguin alley and proceeded to the board walk which crosses the island. Nearby in a creek I spied two Auckland Island teal quietly paddling to cover. The boardwalk crossed out of moderate height scrub to heathland and southern Royal albatross nests could be seen in the distance while over head albatross and skua wheeled around on the breeze. More bellbirds were to be heard.

A gentle stroll of about 40 minutes brought us to the northern cliffs where we were rewarded with views of light mantled sooty albatross with chicks sitting on a ledge. Off shore were southern royal albatross wandering albatross and giant petrel were wheeling about.

We started walking along the northern coast towards Derry Castle Reef. Auckland Island shags were present in large numbers taking advantage of the ledges in the volcanic cliffs. These birds had completed breeding with the exception of one or two large chicks still present. On the grass sward were numbers of pipit mostly in pairs but also the occasional single.

At Derry Castle Reef Auckland Island banded dotterel were present in good numbers. I counted 18 in half an hour. Redpolls were in small groups eating the seeds out of sedges. The weather continued mild with high cloud and a light breeze. Along the Eastern and Southern shore the occasional yellow-eyed penguin was seen sitting around. Most of them looked as if they were about to enter the moult. Auckland Is shags continued to be present wherever there was space on a cliff to roost. Offshore groups of sooty shearwaters were to be seen foraging and roosting in groups of various sizes.

Whilst we waited for the last people to arrive back at the pickup point I sat and watched the view over Sandy Bay. As the afternoon progressed yellow-eyed penguins came ashore at both ends of the beach and sat preening in the afternoon sun before heading up into the forest behind the beach. The Antarctic terns had been replaced with a small flock of white-fronted terns. The skuas and the giant petrels were still sitting on the beach waiting for something to happen. After the last boat party had assembled

we headed back to the “Spirit of Enderby” and set course for an overnight trip to Carnley Harbour.



Bruce McKinlay

Maia to A0

Maia is the yacht skippered by Mark Hammond, crewed by Fran and toddler Mathew. A0 (A Zero) is the disposal site, the size of South Dunedin, identified for the dumping of dredgings from the deepening of Otago Harbour proposed by Port Otago. The hearings have just finished (see Otago Daily Times over the last two weeks) and included over 90 submissions opposing or criticising the scheme from organisations and individuals as disparate as Forest & Bird, local fishermen, the taipori committee surfers and Southern Clams.

The birdwatchers: Graeme Loh, Murray Efford, Lala Frazer, Hiltrun Ratz, Keith Payne, Kalinka Rexer-Huber, Craig MacKenzie, Petra Hass, Dean Nemana, Paul Gasson, Christina Gibb and Cushla Manning.

The date: 19 February.

The weather: low cloud, occasional light drizzle, 1 metre swell, winds light, east to south-east.

“Left Carey’s Bay at 8am and then a pickup of peninsula people at Portobello Lab.

Reached Taiaroa Head about 9:15 - Blue Penguin, dark phase Arctic Skua harassed by two juvenile Black-backed Gulls and a few Spotted Shags. Seals were surprisingly common in the early part of the voyage.

2km off Taiaroa Head - 4 Dusky Dolphins, single Hutton’s Shearwater, Cape & White-chinned Petrels, a couple of Gannets and Southern Royal Albatrosses and a cloud of Titi and mollymawks about 2km east of us.



A Pterodroma with pink feet, white belly and white underwings with slight black tab shot past (even Craig wasn't quick enough to get a photo?)

At A0 – a few more Hutton's and Titi, a couple of Southern Royals and Stewart Island Shags, single Buller's Mollymawk & White-chinned Petrel. 2km east of A0 at 33m depth, we floated with sails up, rudder to neutral and fed out our 20 kg of sole frames from Harbour Fish Supplies in Sawyers Bay. (We chopped them with a paper guillotine. It worked very well, though the "mollies" took a while to decide they were all right)

Some were put into a drifting bread crate, so they didn't immediately sink. Attracted were: Southern Royal Albatross 4, Salvin's Mollymawk 8, Buller's Mollymawk 2, Shy/White-capped Mollymawk 35, Northern Giant Petrel 1, Cape Pigeon 20, White-chinned Petrel 3, Titi 2, Hutton's Shearwater 1, Red-billed Gull 5, Black-backed Gull 5 and a Northern Royal banded left white/orange/green, right metal.

Finished feeding 3km NE of A0 where Stewart Island Shags were heading east and a Pterodroma came by again. On the way back to A0 we passed a juvenile Black-fronted Tern and back at the disposal site 63 Shy Mollymawks awaited a feed.



On the return, near landfall beacon there was a strong tide line workup, maybe 400m north to south, with 100s of Red-billed Gulls, 10s of White-fronted Terns, 20s of Hutton's Shearwaters, 5s of Titi, 2 pale phase Arctic Skuas and lots of jumping Barracouta.

1km off Aramoana Mole: more titi, 30 White-fronted Terns, 5 Hutton's, a couple more Gannets and Skuas.

Returned to Carey's Bay at 13:15 in time to let Paul off to be Best Man at Mike's wedding.

Graeme Loh photos Craig MacKenzie

Otago Wader Count 13 Feb 2011

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour	Papanui Inlet	Hooper's Inlet
Pied Oystercatcher	5	790	162	571	292	67
Variable Oystercatcher	15	36	4	57		
Banded Dotterel	63	55				
Bar-tailed Godwit	103	540	348	135		350
Pied Stilt	18	57	1	40	12	56
Spur-winged Plover		25	4	9		5
White-faced Heron			1	16	14	
Caspian Tern			6	13	4	
Royal Spoonbill	4				11	6

The winter count will be carried out in conjunction with the harbour survey on 12 June.

Peter Schweigman

Ornithological Snippets

A **Royal Penguin**, first spotted by crew on the Monarch was ashore at Aramoana by the harbour entrance on the weekend of 2-3 April but couldn't be found on the Monday.

NZ Falcons were seen near Roxburgh on April 6 by Roy Smith, a visitor from Canada and Derek Onley saw one fly over the Waitati A&P show on 2 April.

Hawksbury Lagoon Survey

Eight surveyors and 3 telescopes were lured out to Hawksbury by the beautiful calm, sunny autumn weather of 3 April. It was even dry and warm enough to sit on the bank over lunch and watch the spoonbills feeding in the creek – a rare event this year.

	17 April 2010	3 April 2011
Black Shag	1	
Little Shag	3	3
White-faced Heron	1	13
Royal Spoonbill	0	27
Black Swan	13	157
Paradise Duck	22	51
Canada Goose	62	3
Domestic Goose	12	12
Hybrid Goose	3	1
Mallard x Grey Duck	47	500
N.Z. Shoveler	139	310
Grey Teal	242	188
NZ Scaup		2
Pied Oystercatcher	1	
Spur-winged Plover	1	10
Pied Stilt	72	8
Black-backed Gull	42	10
Red-billed Gull	6	
Black-billed Gull	20	
Caspian Tern	1	2
Welcome Swallow	2	4

Compared with last year there was a substantial increase in counts of Black Swans, Mallards and Shovelers, a decrease in Grey Teal while the 2 Scaup first seen in the January count were still there. There were 27 roosting and feeding spoonbills, none last year and a mere 8 Pied Stilts compared to 72 last year. Hard to equate this simply to a higher water level.

Derek Onley & Mary Thompson

Orokonui Tieke Update

A greater number of founders and yearlings (jackbirds) disappeared over the winter than we expected, possibly due to the unusually harsh winter conditions. More fledglings were produced this season than last season, but due to the lower over-winter survival, the population size ultimately remained the same (14 individuals). If a greater proportion of adults and fledglings survive this coming winter, we expect the population to increase substantially by this time next year. One of this season's fledglings has been observed since February with the only surviving yearling from last season, potentially forming a new pair bond. Monitoring will resume again next season. Feasibility of a follow-up release will be assessed at the end of next season.

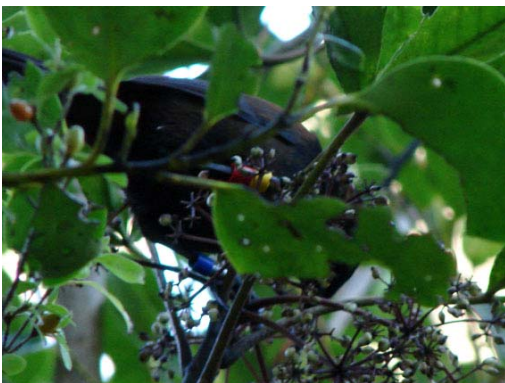
Bryce Masuda & Ian Jamieson

At the end of last season (March 2010) there were 14 birds in the Orokonui: 7 of the 38 originally released and 7 fledglings. Overwinter all but 5 birds disappeared, so the population in spring consisted of 3 originals and 2 of the previous years young, one banded and one unbanded. This season, 2 pairs produced 9 young so the latest count appears to bring the numbers back up to 14, the same as at the end of last year. Of these 14, 9 are colour banded and 5 remain unbanded.

For those of you who might venture into or near the Orokonui the colour combinations are, right/left:

WM/OG♂ & OW/WM♀ produced BM/RY, BM/RB, BM/BY, BM/BB & one unbanded chick

WM/OW♂ & WM/OY♀ produced BM/RO and 3 unbanded chicks and there is one other unbanded jackbird which may well now be moulting into adult plumage.



W=white; O=orange; G=green; B=blue;
R=red; Y=yellow; M=metal.

If you have any queries or see any tieke/saddlebacks please contact Bryce at brycemasuda@gmail.com

Summary Derek Onley

Update on the Andersons Bay inlet and bird families

The group of pied stilts, four adults and a juvenile that adopted the roost in the first week of January, stayed around until mid- February but I have not seen them since. Their faith in the roost may have been disturbed by a particular dog which had no trouble at all in running over the low tide mud flats, and could clear the roost of birds like a canine tsunami.

The paradise ducks, two adults and one fledgling, have continued to graze the low tide weed beds, though the male was often away during February and March. They and the spoonbills ignored the dog entirely. The paradise pair, presumably the birds that raised one fledgling, clearly do not feel territorial any more about the upper inlet, and whereas previously the drake would try to drown any mallard that landed on the mudflats, the latter are now tolerated. The Paradise pair may have left, since I have not seen them in the last two weeks of March, and there were 12 mallards sound asleep on the roost today (28 March). It is a real change over of species - paradise ducks and hardly a mallard in sight during spring and early summer, and then a solid presence of mallards from the end of January.

The spoonbill family have maintained a regular presence - one juvenile and two adults - which feed separately rather than in a group as visiting adults do. They sleep on the roost about 2 metres apart, and the last time I saw a territorial type of chase was the one I described in February (5th). This seems sort of reasonable, if you think in terms of the parent spoonbills defending the inlet as a desirable feeding ground on which to raise the juvenile, possibly motivated by the presence now of a safe roost.

But I have no idea how to explain the white-faced heron behaviour over the last three months. When I did 100 counts in 2008 (pre-roost) I saw single herons on six occasions over 12 months, and they were jumpy. From the spring of 2009, I saw a single bird about twice a month and from winter of 2010 there were two or three birds two or three times a month. These birds have been much calmer and less likely to fly off when approached. They like to feed close to the roost and stand preening on the edge rocks rather than on top. On 22 Jan of this year, there were three herons scattered across the low tide flats, but one chased another right off the Hospital corner flats, away towards Tomahawk and then came back. I thought it might have been a juvenile being told to find its own space. Last week (24 March), one heron was feeding peacefully by the roost when a second flew

on to the mud flat 30 metres away. The first bird took complete umbrage, flew over and attacked the second with real determination. The second flew away a few metres to the Larnach Street delta and was set upon even more vigorously. The fighting went on for at least two minutes which is a long time for something feathered, until the second bird flew off, followed by the first into the far distance.

It is difficult to believe that an adult would attack its own juvenile so strongly, and defence of feeding territory seems a better explanation, but March seems a very odd time to be doing this. Even the bad-tempered paradise ducks have mellowed. Admittedly I have seen only the three spoonbills, which could be two parents and their juvenile, and I have not seen the groups coming in and feeding close together as I did during the pre-roost counts - 21 on one occasion! Possibly the spoonbills are still defending the inlet as feeding space for the juvenile.

Has anyone else seen white-faced herons having a real fight, not just a displacement shoo-away sort of gesture?

Jill Hamel

Newsletter reaches Poland

Thanks to Michael Benjamin for the following: "I am a kiwi lad, who grew up in Cromwell and Glenorchy. I am currently in Warsaw, Poland. I have been reading your newsletters online. Very interesting. I would like to report that I saw two Great Crested Grebes on lake Wakatipu between Pigeon and Pig Islands around December 15th of 2010. From what I can see from your February 2009 survey you don't appear to have seen any on that part of the lake.

Notices and Business

Request for Blue-eyed shag samples for DNA analysis.

We have a Genetics honours student working on Blue-eyed shags with us in Zoology this year. We are looking to increase the number of samples we have for this study, and wondered if anyone held any frozen (or ethanol preserved) samples of Stewart Island shags, or if you could think about us if you ever happen across any reasonably fresh beach wrecked Stewart Island shags (any birds would be passed onto DoC or the Museum, if they want them, after we took a small piece of tissue for the DNA work).

We (well, Rob Schuckard really!) have finally got a sample from the King Shag, so we want to add more Stewart Island shag samples to compare it with.

If you happen to have any samples, or if you happen to come across some on your travels, please contact Martyn Kennedy, Department of Zoology, University of Otago (martyn.kennedy@otago.ac.nz).

Thanks for any assistance you can provide.

Martyn Kennedy

Field Trip to Styles Creek Reserve, Broad Bay, Sunday 8 May at 1.00 pm

Frank Pepers has invited members of OSNZ to visit their covenanted piece of peninsula remnant bush. They have been controlling rats and possums religiously for 10 years after being initially disappointed with bird life. They have a dawn chorus now that can be deafening. There are also geckos and skinks.

He is keen for us to compile a list of species that are present in and around the area.

This is a great opportunity to visit this special area.

We will meet at the top end of Matariki Street, Broad Bay at 1.00pm on Sunday 8th May. Frank will meet us and show us where the tracks start. For car pooling, please phone Mary 464 0787.

Advance Notice: Weekend Field Trip to Awarua Bay and Waituna Lagoon, 12/13th November, 2011

This area of Southland is a hot spot for a variety of migratory waders (stint, turnstones, golden plover, godwits, etc) and also NZ Dotterel. Many Fernbirds are also in the area. It has been a while since our last trip down there so I have checked the tides and this weekend in November is suitable; the high tide is 4.30pm so we should head out about lunchtime. This means we could leave Saturday morning from Dunedin. The plan is to stay Saturday night at Beach Road Holiday Park, which has tourist flats and cabins that seem adequate. Members of Southland OSNZ may be available to guide us. I have also invited Dunedin Forest and Bird members to join us on the trip. Please let Mary (464 0787) know if you are likely to be interested in coming.

Welcome to New Members

We look forward to meeting the following new members at our Indoor Meetings and on fieldtrips: John Douglas, Jenny Juengel, and Debbie Young.

Should OSNZ survey the Nevis Valley?

The following suggestion was received from John Douglas, Alexandra:

“Should OSNZ to have a bird survey of the Nevis - from The Crossing in the Lower Nevis right through to climb out Upper Nevis. Both high country valleys have had no irrigation and though the valley vegetation has had some minor modification, it still provides good breeding and feeding habitat. Most of the native birds are found in the Lower Nevis - about a dozen while the Upper Nevis at the most six. From my own observation of other Central Otago valleys, the Nevis valley is one of the least affected sites due largely to its altitude, remoteness and harsh climate. One complication for a survey in the Lower Nevis is getting access permission from Pioneer Generation. At the moment they have a "no" to granting access.”

Any comments please, Mary

Mapping hide tide roosts and breeding sites in Otago Harbour

I have been re-reading Jill Hamel's 1991 report on Birdlife in Otago Harbour, which reviewed the data from the OSNZ counts of 1977-78 and 1988-89; our 2010-11 data will be able to be compared with those. Jill made the comment that it might be useful to map the major high tide roosts fairly regularly (say every 5 years) as inevitably these sites will change over the years. Mapping for 2011 could be done during the harbour survey by marking maps with roost sites-we have such a map for 1988.

The hope would be when any major work is done in the harbour or along the shores that any disturbance to these sites is minimized, and that maybe roosting trees should be protected. Also should we be involved somehow in improving roosting areas?

Mary

OSNZ Annual General Meeting, Queens Birthday Weekend, Lower Hutt

It is not too late to think about attending the OSNZ AGM though early bird registration closes 28th February. This year the meeting is from Saturday 4th June to Monday 6th June. There will be scientific sessions on both Saturday and Sunday (Bruce will be presenting some of our Harbour survey results); on the Monday there are three field excursions to choose from. Mary will be attending as Regional Representative and Bruce as Council member; it would be great to have others from Otago come with us.

All registration details, including schedule and map are also available online: <http://osnz.org.nz/osnzagm.htm>

Email Newsletters are in glorious colour!

Many of you will have received a pdf copy of this Newsletter by email as well as mail. It is quite a big job to photocopy, collate, address and post the newsletters so if you are happy to receive the newsletter **only by email**, or if you would like to but do not, please send your email address with your request to: mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Mystery Bird

No photo this time but an account of a strange bird that is just one of the regular and possibly more interesting tasks hard working regional representatives have to deal with.

Mike McVie was fishing on 9 April on the Omarama stream upstream from the main road and township when: “we found a small bird 20cm tall thrush coloured plumage, red eyed relatively long slightly curved beak greenish tinge, very large wader type feet but not overly long legs . It was trapped in a fyke net on the streamside, we freed it and sat in the sun to dry and warm. I’ve seen wekas before but this was quite lightly built Do you have any idea's what it may have been?”

(and what is a fyke net?)



photos Craig MacKenzie

Programme 2011

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street at 8 p.m.

Please be on time: the door will be locked after 8 p.m.

Wednesday 27 April	Indoor Meeting Derek Onley Paraguay Burning
Sunday, 8 May	Survey of Styles Creek Reserve, Broad Bay Meet at Matariki Street, at 1.00 pm. Phone Mary (464 0787) for car pooling.
Sunday 15 May	Harbour Survey start 11.46 am
Wednesday 25 May	Indoor Meeting Edward Waite Biodiversity in Dunedin
Sunday 12 June	Harbour Survey start 11.46 am
Wednesday 22 June	Indoor Meeting Georgina Pickerell Effect of predators on braided river bird habitats
Sunday 3 July	Hawksbury Lagoon Survey start 10.30am
Sunday 10 July	Harbour Survey start 9.19am
Wednesday 27 July	Indoor Meeting Eduardo Santos Dunnock behaviour in the Botanic Gardens
12 and 13 November	Weekend Field Trip. Awarua Bay and Waituna Lagoon. Contact Mary Thompson, 464 0787

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Many thanks to all who contributed.
Final date for copy for next newsletter 17 May