



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



PO Box 834 Nelson osnz.org.nz

Alan Baker
Regional Recorder
48 Pacific Street
Dunedin 9010

Mary Thompson
Regional Representative
197 Balmacewen Road
Balmacewen
Dunedin
03 4640787

03 4675180

Otago Region Newsletter 7/2013 August 2013

White Heron Watch



Who's watching who?

The group of White Herons at Tomahawk Lagoon has generated a lot of interest. A number of dedicated members have been keeping a regular watch on them every day since mid July. Some days there are more

watchers than herons! So some very convivial conversations have taken place. Five White Herons were first seen there by Dave York on 4 May and by 7 July the number had increased to 7. These seven have been seen every day until 25th July and since then there seems to have been a lot more comings and goings or they have figured out where to conceal themselves, with some days none showing themselves, then up to 5. Five seems to be the maximum number over the last week so maybe 2 have moved on. Update on current numbers at next Indoor Meeting.

They are often seen roosting and preening on the dead tree on the west side of the big lagoon, and then feeding along the far edge or even up by the outlet near the road. With strong NE winds the preferred place now seems to be among the bulrushes between the two lagoons and 6 have been seen feeding in the small lagoon. We have records of the times seen so this may show a pattern of daily movements when analysed. Most of the birds have some plumes and close-up some observers think the bills have tinges of black - indication of breeding. Several people have witnessed the whole flock fly up and circle around in response to a harrier hawk flying overhead. Does this indicate an 'Aussie' sensitivity to birds of prey; do our white-faced herons react when a harrier flies over? Seagulls have been seen harassing the white herons as well.

There have been reports of other groups of 5 to 9 white herons at various places around the country this winter – Lake Ellesmere, Ahuriri (Napier), Manawatu.

All this suggests an influx from Australia as the white herons from Okarito disperse widely and are typically seen only in ones or twos and by August should be headed back to Okarito. It will be interesting to see what 'our' white herons do; if they are new birds to NZ, they won't know about heading to Okarito, so what will they do? Hence our project to watch them every day to see if and when they move on. There are some very nice trees to nest in by the lagoon! Look out for stick carrying or other breeding activities.

Mary Thompson

Ornithological Snippets



Amanda Keogh, one of Murray Efford's reliable correspondents of banded **Tui** and Bellbirds, rang DoC and sent in photos of a Tui with a bent bill turning up at her feeder in Wakari in July. Not only is its lower beak deformed but the tongue seems to be sticking out all the time. Presumably it is an injury, but other things may be the cause of the deformity. No matter, it has reached maturity successfully and looks "in the pink". Photos have been sent to the wildlife health centre in Massey for their record.



Cedric Woods has been seeing a **Tui** with a pale cape at his feeder in Broad Bay. No need for banding that one either!

Other than the usual half a dozen **White Herons** at Tomahawk Lagoon on 6 August, there was also a single **Coot** and a **Scaup** on the upper pond.

The only waders over high tide at Aramoana on 7th were 84 **Pied Oystercatchers** and 3 **Pied Stilts** but a **Fernbird** was calling from the salt marsh alongside the boardwalk. It is not clear if **Fernbirds** have been recorded regularly or indeed at all at Aramoana so it would be interesting to hear of any other recent records.

There were several sightings of what was most likely a **Cattle Egret** around the Karitane/Waikouaiti area in late July to early August and one definite sighting amongst cattle at Seacliff around 1 June. Also in Waikouaiti, a **NZ Falcon** was up to its usual suburban tricks over the early winter months; eating pet pigeons.

Notices and Business

Creating urban bird lists for New Zealand Birds Online

OSNZ Council seeks the assistance of members nationwide to prepare bird lists for all New Zealand cities and towns, for loading on the New Zealand Birds Online website. Preparation of the lists is a desktop exercise.

The main reason for doing this is that these lists will be a helpful entry point for beginner bird watchers as they try to learn the common birds of their neighbourhood. At the moment, NZ Birds Online is mainly focused at experienced bird watchers. These lists will assist beginners to take a knowledgeable interest in the birds around them, and we hope that this will lead to greater interest in OSNZ/Birds New Zealand and our activities.

The urban lists will also assist overseas birders learning the birds of their port of entry before venturing further afield.”

The lists for the Otago regional towns are underway with Zuni, Richard and John working on checklists for Oamaru, Balclutha and Alex., respectively. So can we have a couple of people to get together to work on the checklist for Dunedin City.

Colin Miskelly

Contact Mary for detailed information and Excel spreadsheet.

Moreporks in Urban Dunedin

Moira Pryde from DoC Canterbury is coming down to Dunedin especially to talk to us about her research on Moreporks and give us pointers about how to monitor numbers from call counts. So it would be great to have a good turnout for the next indoor meeting, next Wednesday 28th.

Each month Murray Efford and Mary Thompson have been setting up the automatic acoustic recorders in several sites around Dunedin (Booth Road, Signal Hill, Chingford Park) to collect morepork calls throughout the night for a couple of weeks spanning the full moon. We now have about 4000 hours of recordings so analysing them may turn out to be a mammoth task; we hope to determine if there is a seasonal pattern to call rate and whether there is a set pattern of calling during the night. And most importantly, whether 2 hours after sunset is a good time for listening for calls.

Royal Spoonbill breeding colonies in Otago.

Draft Plan of Census 2013/2014

A national census of all the Royal Spoonbill colonies and a count of active nests is to be undertaken this coming breeding season. Otago and Southland is a HOTSPOT for spoonbill colonies, at least 12 at last count. We need to put a good deal of thought into how the count is to be done as many of our colonies are fairly inaccessible and may need boat access.

Peter Schweigman has put together a draft plan; please contact Peter (peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz ; phone 455 2790) if you can help (manpower, know someone with a boat, are very fit and able to tramp to out of the way places, if you are interested in helping somehow, suggest likely areas that should be checked).

Breeding is usually in full swing early December till end of January. It would be ideal if colonies could be inspected, say twice in that period, mid December and mid January.

Maukiekie Island. It would be ideal to have permission to enter the private property opposite the island. A telescope is essential.

Taiaroa Head. Arrangements with DOC at Taiaroa to do a count.

Green Island. To do justice here, a visit to the island and count the two colonies from above would be nice. We would need to hire a zodiac to get onto the island. Failing that, a sea kayak circling the island is an option, but this will not be an accurate nest count.

Taiari Island. If the nests are on the base of the taupata on the eastern side, they can be counted by sea kayak. If the colony is higher up, close to the top, it is more difficult to get an accurate figure. A climb to the top has to be considered. A walk to island depends on tides.

The Nuggets and the Catlins. Hopefully Richard and Fergus can tackle this area with the assistance of Dunedin members. These two areas could be covered during a field trip in December or January along with Southland OSNZ.

Wainono Lagoon. A kayak/canoe to inspect all maimais is the only option, with a party on the shore with telescope. Cellphone contact would be good and GPS readings nice for future surveys. It is important not to go too close to occupied maimais, to avoid young ones to try and escape and drown as a consequence.

If others know of colonies in other areas, or likely areas where there may be colonies that should be checked, please let Peter know.

For all these colony/nest counts it is essential that while in or close to colonies that disturbance is kept to a minimum. The birds come first!

Peter Schweigman.

Regional recorder's position

For some time I have been wondering if the position of regional recorder is of any use, now that Classified Summarised Notes are a distant memory. During the Queen's Birthday Weekend conference, I attended the eBird workshop, where I found out that the position is now very much linked with eBird. In particular, the present eBird reviewer, who assesses any records referred to him by the system as needing confirmation, would like regional recorders to take on that task. That is not something I want to do, as I don't have a home computer. Would anyone reading this like the position? We were assured that it would not be onerous. Presumably the requirements are a computer and a good knowledge of Otago birds.

Please contact Mary if you are interested.

Alan Baker

Banded Tui and Bellbirds

Murray Efford has been busy again this summer and autumn and has banded another 100 tui and bellbird at his place in Helensburgh. It is crucial for the project that re-sightings are made and recorded. The tui and bellbirds will be starting to come to feeders soon so keep a good look out. Please send information of any banded birds to Murray Efford email murray.efford@otago.ac.nz; or leave phone message on 476 4668 or post to 60 Helensburgh Road, Dunedin 9010. Include location, date, time, left leg: colour over metal; right leg: top colour over bottom colour. Also take a digital photo if at all possible.

YEPT 25th Anniversary Conference 17–18 October

Pre-conference workshops on 16 October.

Registration is open for the conference and spaces are filling fast. We recommend that you register soon to be sure of participating at the event.

You can register on-line at

www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz/conservationinc/register-online.

Remember, let us know as soon as you can if you'd like to display a poster or require space to exhibit your cause and work.

Conference programme

An outline of the conference programme is now available. You can see what's in store at

www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz/conservationinc/programme-outline.

We will post the finalized programme itself closer to the time, once we are sure that we have allowed for the inevitable change.

Abstracts

Speakers are now submitting their abstracts. We will include all of them in the conference booklet. But we will also post them on-line as we receive them. Look now for those we have on the website.

The conference venue

Want to see where the conference will be held? We are privileged to be using Dunedin's newest conference facilities in the centre of town and only just completed. Take a peek at www.dunedinvenues.co.nz

Got time to hang about before the conference?

DOC's irrepressible Graeme Loh, whom many of you will know, has offered to lead a tour to his inspiring fairy prion conservation project on Dunedin's coastline. The cliff-top predator fence is an engineering feat in itself. But if you are up for it, Graeme will abseil you down the cliffs to see the prions themselves and the work his team has done to augment their cliff-ledge breeding opportunities. Either way, you won't forget what you see. Graeme's tour is scheduled for the Wednesday afternoon preceding the conference. So, if you are not attending one of the pre-conference workshops on 16 October, and would like to see community-anchored conservation at its very ambitious best, contact Graeme directly at gloh@earthlight.co.nz.

Programme 2013

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

Wed. August 28	Moira Pryde	Morepork Research
Wed. Sept. 25	Kate Hand	Important Bird Areas, Otago
Sunday Oct. 13	Hawksbury Lagoon Survey Meet Stewart St. 10.30am. Contact Derek Onley 482 2831	
Wed. October 23	Bruce McKinlay	Alaskan Birds.
Sun. Nov.17	Summer Wader Count High tide Dunedin 16.29hrs Height 2.1m. Contact Peter Schweigman	
Wed. Nov. 27	Nic Rawlence	Ancient DNA research on Moa

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for copy for next Newsletter 19 September.