

Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 2/2017 February 2017

Sinclair Wetland Summer Survey, 28th January 2017



The team with photo taken by Derek.

Fifteen people turned out on a perfect summer's day – perhaps the only summer day of January – for the survey of Sinclair Wetlands. We welcomed 3 new people to the survey team. The total number of waterfowl was still low with only 165 (compared to 262 last summer). Paradise duck were absent this year, whereas Paradise duck made up 33% of all birds seen last year. It seems that they have moved elsewhere to moult. Scaup (55% of all) and Canada geese (27% of all) predominated with a few ducks and black swans. In the replanted native bush on Ram Island silvereye and redpolls were most common. Brown Creeper were seen at 3 count sites with up to 5 in one 5 Minute Bird Count. A rifleman may have been heard – the first for survey. The 1 km transect through the fernbird habitat revealed a total of 14 fernbirds; fernbird calls were noted to be “

louder and more frequent when planes flew over”. Also in this habitat there were “huge numbers of redpolls and yellowhammers”

Species	Total	Aver/5min
kereru	1	0.1
magpie	7	0.6
eastern rosella	0	0.0
rifleman	1	0.1
tui	0	0.0
bellbird	12	1.0
grey warbler	5	0.4
brown creeper	12	1.0
fantail	0	0.0
tomtit	0	0.0
skylark	0	0.0
welcome swallow	3	0.3
fernbird	12	1.0
silvereve	66	5.5
blackbird	9	0.8
song thrush	1	0.1
starling	0	0.0
dunnock	3	0.3
pipit	0	0.0
yellowhammer	3	0.3
chaffinch	3	0.3
greenfinch	2	0.2
redpoll	69	5.8
goldfinch	2	0.2
house sparrow	3	0.3

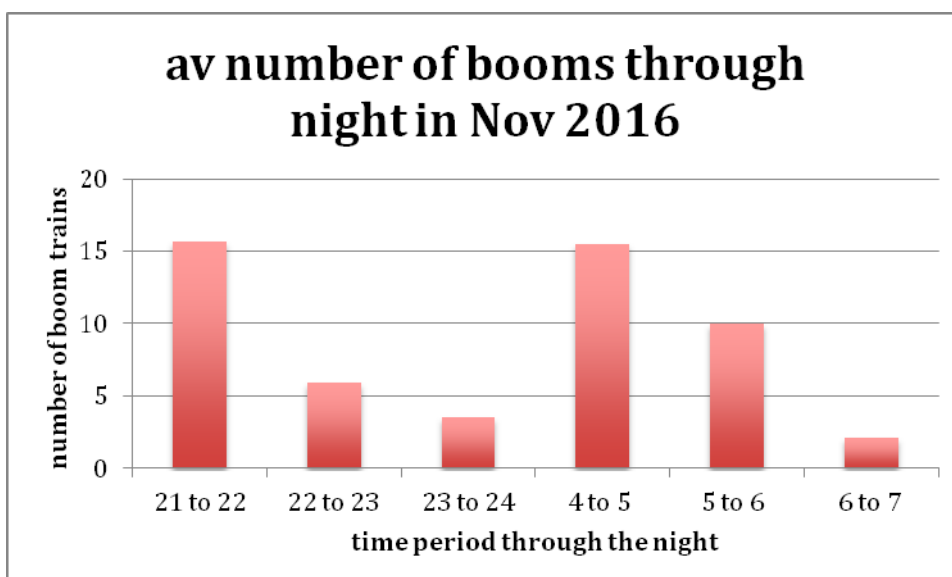
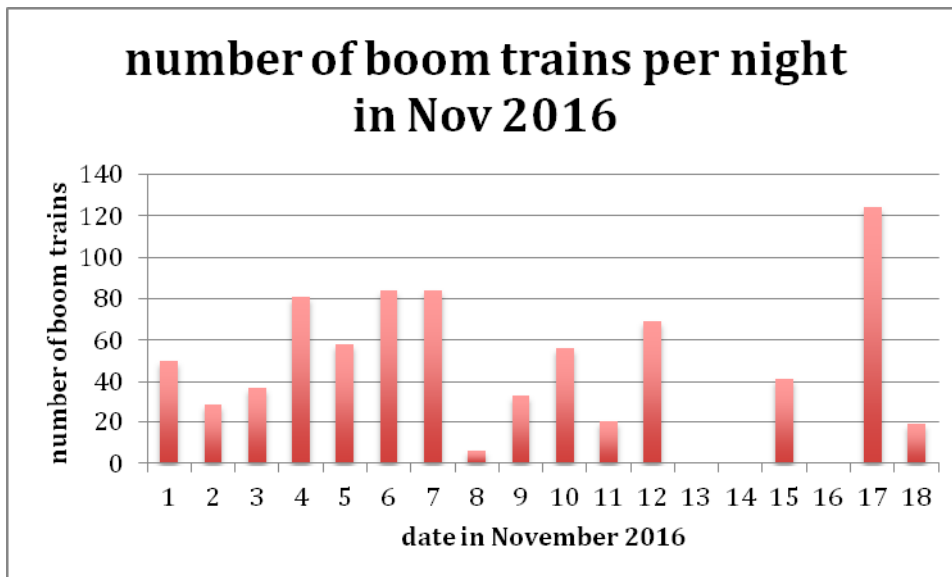
Results from 12 5 minute count sites on Ram Island

Mary Thompson

Bittern at the Sinclair Wetlands

This is the 6th year of monitoring for the presence of bitterns in the Sinclair Wetlands. Recorders have been placed on Ram Island each year and have picked up booms each year. Two bitterns have actually been seen in the area in 2016, the latest in November on the Loop Track.

This season the recorders were out from 15th October to 19th November. Most nights produced recordings of usable quality and bittern booms were recorded on 78% of those nights. In November the average number of boom trains per night (6 hours of recording) was 50. On the 17th November, which was a warm evening, booms continued throughout the night with over 60 consecutive boom trains lasting for about 3 hours. The boom trains were repeated very 1 or 2 minutes. In fact, there seemed to be



two calling patterns, one with an average time between booms of 1.18 minutes and another with 2.42 minutes, suggesting the presence of two birds. The pattern of when the booms occurred during the night indicated most numbers of booms 1h after sunset and 1h before sunrise.

Mary Thompson

Jim Wilson

It is with sadness that I report the unexpected death of Jim Wilson on Saturday 28th January 2017. Sincere condolences have been sent from Birds NZ to his family.

Jim has been a member of the Otago branch for over 30 years. He was actively involved in banding 100s of silvereye at his property in Wakari Road during the mid 1990s. Jim also initiated the banding of tui and bellbirds (1999-2002). Last year one tui that Jim had banded in 2002 was seen again, alive, making it the oldest documented tui. In the 1980s Jim regularly counted birds on Hawksbury Lagoon and this inspired us to repeat the surveys in 2005-2010 for comparisons to be made. Jim was part of the original group that initiated the setting up of Orokonui ecosanctuary. When Jim's health restricted his active field birding, he took on the task of Regional Recorder in 2014, ensuring rare bird sightings were reported correctly. Recently he was the Otago Region moderator of eBird checklists.

Jim enthused many of us by passing on the pleasure he had from studying and watching birds. He will be greatly missed.

Mary Thompson (Regional Representative)

Ornithological snippets

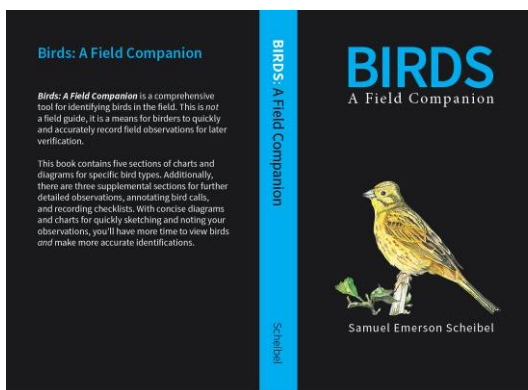
Little reported this time except:

Janet Ledingham saw last **month's Mute Swan** on the far side of Andersons Lagoon (Palmerston coast) on Jan 5th; presumably on its way south, and a visiting Australian birder, Wayne Merritt reported a **Marsh Crake** with a small chick at Sinclair Wetlands on 18 January.

A New and Different Bird Book by our new member, Sam Scheibel

Birds: A Field Companion is a comprehensive tool for identifying birds in the field. Not a field guide, it is a means for birders to quickly and accurately record field observations for later verification. The book contains five sections of charts and diagrams for recording observations of specific bird types, including shorebirds, seabirds, waterfowl and more. Additionally, there are three supplemental sections for further detailed observations, annotating bird calls, and recording checklists. With concise diagrams and charts for quickly sketching and noting your observations, you'll have more time to view birds and make more accurate identifications.

The book is 274 pages in paperback format and is small enough to fit in a coat pocket or backpack, so it can be carried on your next trip into the field.



EXAMPLE for PERCHING BIRDS

First Impressions
 Date / Time / Location: 4 January 2018 New Upinya forest path
 Habitat / Perch: small orchard in wooded area
 Distance / Duration: approx. 1 metres, flew into woods after 2 min
 Behavior: one bird alone moving through low tree branches
 Size / Shape / Posture: throat tucked, big head
 Best Guess: type of streak

Call Pattern
 [Diagram showing a call pattern with a grid and a line graph above it.]
 [Diagram showing a flight pattern with a grid and a line graph above it.]

Head and Bill
 Crown: brown/olive cap, yellow eyebrow
 Eye: black, no ring
 Bill: darker tip, grey base, black tip
 Face: fine white streaks over white malar
 yellow patch at jaw

[Diagram of a bird's head and bill with labels 'wh' and 'y']

Notes: red wing patch seen when flying
 Identification: Redwing (adult male)

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Rear View

[Diagram of a bird's rear view with labels: 'wh', 'w', 'p', 't']

Uppers: dull olive brown nape, mantle
 W. Coverts: paler brown
 Wings: white tips tertials, dark tips to primaries
 Tail: shortish, very slight fork, same colour wings and back

Front View

[Diagram of a bird's front view with labels: 'wh', 'p', 'f']

Front: heavy brown streaks on white throat and breast
 Underside: flanks very rufous, belly and vent white
 Legs: dark, pinkish

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Sam will have a copy for you to view at the February meeting.

Sam is kindly offering members of Otago Birds NZ a discounted price on his book, at **\$15** (a discount of 58% on Amazon price + postage), so if you want to take advantage of this please add your name to the list at the February Indoor Meeting and pay \$15 cash to Sam or email Sam directly a.widget@gmail.com for order and direct banking account details **by March 1**.

Birds: A Field Companion is also available through [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and [Createspace.com](https://www.createspace.com) if you miss out but more expensive! The book has its own Facebook page.

Notices and Business

NZ Bird Conference and AGM, Te Anau, Queen's Birthday Weekend, 3 – 5 June 2017.

The 2017 New Zealand Bird Conference and Annual General Meeting of Birds New Zealand will be held in Te Anau, Southland during Queens Birthday Weekend. It is great to have this conference right on our doorstep again so hopefully a goodly number of Otago folk can make it. This should be a fantastic weekend of birds and birding.

The conference again aims to continue the fine work of previous conferences in making this the premier New Zealand event for the communication of new research findings on New Zealand birds, with two days largely being devoted to scientific presentations, while also providing opportunity for discussion and networking and between bird researchers and birders in New Zealand.

A variety of workshops are planned for the Sunday morning, which include banding, wader identification, use of eBird, and reporting unusual birds.

The Field Trips on the Monday look very exciting with a choice of a visit to Lake Orbell and Takahe Valley, exploring the Milford Road, tramping the Kelper to Iris Burn(and back) and to Awarua Bay. Register early to hopefully get your first choice. Early Bird Registrations close 31 March. Register online at <http://www.osnz.org.nz/node/841> or ask Mary Thompson for a print version if you don't have computer access.

Student Support for NZ Bird Conference, 2017

The Otago Branch of Birds NZ is awarding grants-in-aid of up to \$200 for Otago student members to attend and present a research paper at this year's NZ Bird Conference, in Te Anau over Queen's Birthday Weekend, 3 - 5 June, 2017.

We are keen to encourage as many local students as possible to attend this conference since it is on our doorstep and we want to showcase what we do in Otago. It is a great opportunity to get your work noticed and presented to an audience focussing solely on ornithological research. In addition, it will give you the opportunity to meet ornithological researchers

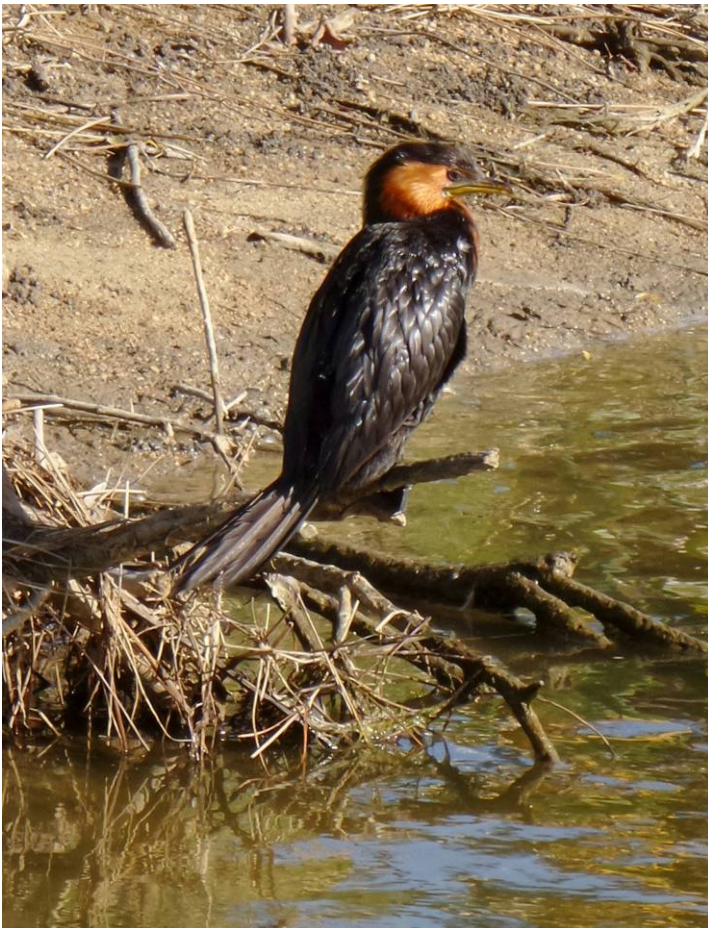
from a variety of organizations including DOC and other government agencies, universities, as well as those involved in private and community restoration projects throughout NZ.

Application details can be obtained form regional representative, Mary Thompson, maryt@actrix.co.nz. Applications close 1 March 2017.

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2017 – reminder!

The annual membership subscriptions were due 1 January 2017. It is all too easy to overlook this during the Christmas New Year period, and there are quite a few of us who have forgotten to pay. Remember that you can pay subs online. Or ask your RR for a printed form. Thanks.

Mary Thompson Regional Representative



Yet another shag species?

Programme 2017

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed Feb 22nd** Indoor Meeting. Aalbert Rebergen. Life on braided rivers. All is not well; an upper Waitaki perspective.
- Sat Feb 25th** Field Trip to Okia Reserve, Otago Peninsula, to follow two of the 1km transects to count birds for Peninsula Biodiversity Group and to look for fernbirds. Bring lunch, etc. Meet at the end of Dick Road at the start of the Pyramids/Okia walkway for a 9 am start. Carpool leaves from Anderson's Bay Inlet carpark in Shore Street at 8.30 am. For more details contact Lala Frazer lala.frazer@gmail.com
- Wed March 22nd** Indoor Meeting. Kalinka Rexer-Huber. Latest seabird research.
- Sat April 8th** Sinclair Wetlands Autumn Survey. Carpool leaving Dunedin 9.00am. Backup Sunday April 9th. To join the survey teams and for information contact Mary Thompson 464 0787, maryt@actrix.co.nz
- Sun April 23rd** Tomahawk lagoon guided birdwatching. 10am -12 This is our contribution to the Wild Dunedin Festival. Meet by the large Tomahawk Lagoon just after the bridge on Tomahawk Road. We aim to have telescopes to let the public see birds close-up and to help identify them, etc. Contact Andrew if you can help; phone 454 5830
- Wed April 26th** Indoor Meeting. Sophie Fern. What does the public know about some of our native birds?
- Wed May 24th** Indoor Meeting. Thomas Mattern. Ecology and breeding biology of Tawaki, Fiordland Crested Penguin.

- Jun 2nd to Jun 5th** NZ Bird Conference and AGM. Te Anau.
- Wed June 28th** Indoor Meeting. Bruce McKinlay. How to discover new things about our birds using eBird data.
- Sun July 2nd** Winter Wader Count. High tide Dunedin 10.54 hrs. Height 1.9m. Counters needed at Aramoana, Hoopers & Papanui Inlets. New counters welcome. Contact: peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz
- Sat July 15** Sinclair Wetlands Winter Survey. Carpool leaving Dunedin at 9.00 am. Backup Sunday July 16. To join the survey teams and for information contact Mary Thompson 464 0787, maryt@actrix.co.nz
- Wed July 26** Indoor Meeting. Helen Taylor. “Bird sperm quality in the wild: what, how, and why?”

Please give Mary suggestions for speakers or topics Indoor Meetings later in the year.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for next newsletter please by 16th March.