



# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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## **Cruising on the Caprice**



Top left clockwise: Hutton's Shearwater? Northern Giant Petrel, Prion ? Fairy/Antarctic, Southern Royal Albatross. photos Craig McKenzie

On 8 July, Graeme Loh, Graham MacArthur, Deb Wilson, Debbie Hogan, Penny Dawson, Hiltrun Ratz, Craig McKenzie, Glenda Rees, Sarah Fairhurst and Janet Downs headed out from Deborah Bay in Alan Anderson's Caprice.

Approaching Wellers jetty there were 20 White-fronted Terns feeding on the Weller's wall overfall with Little Shags and a 3 Gannets. A few Stewart Island and Spotted Shags were feeding off Pilots Beach. Off Taiaroa head Graeme concentrated on planning precarious routes for dealing to the remaining boxthorn and noted that the sheep were still in titi covenant. Spotted Shags were well coloured up and crested and were mating and displaying but nest building had not begun.

A Hector's Dolphin joined in at the Harbour entrance but after Taiaroa there was little activity besides a couple of Buller's Mollymawks, a few Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls, 4 Gannets and a single Hutton's or Fluttering Shearwater. Turning seaward towards a group of about 10 Dusky Dolphins they found about 20 Hutton's/Fluttering Shearwaters and 15 White-fronted Terns feeding around them plus a Cape Pigeon, Buller's Mollymawk and Southern Royal Albatross looking on.

Allan talked about pot fishing for red cod the day before attended by a couple of hundred Cape Pigeons and the usual noisy mollymawks. He reckoned the Giant Petrel ruled the roost and robbed the Royal Albatrosses by jumping on their backs when their crops were full, forcing them to regurgitate. Graeme saw one Giant Petrel accost a White-capped Molly that was mouthing a cod head, otherwise it hung around the periphery.



Allan hove to bow into the wind, engine off, sun out, and we fed out 20 kg of red cod heads that had been caught on Friday, collected Saturday morning and kept overnight outside on a cool night. The mollymawks were fussy - not fresh enough. Still the birds came in and built up to 8 Buller's, 5 White-capped and a single juvenile Black-browed Mollymawk, 3 Southern Royal Albatross, 20 Cape Pigeon, 1 Giant Petrel 1, 5 Hutton's/Fluttering Shearwater, 1 Fairy Prion 1, 8 Red-billed Gulls, 3 Black-fronted Terns, 4 White-fronted Terns and a juvenile Spotted Shag hanging around the edge. Two Buller's Mollys did proper dives over a metre to get scraps but came up looking wet. . One thing Craig noticed that he did not recall from other trips was the albatross, several species, vigorously shaking their bills under the water as if giving them a good clean.

At 11am we put Janet on the helm and sails were raised and we headed towards land. The return trip passed a work up of several hundred gulls, and Spotted Shags plus 5 more Black-fronted Terns, 20 Cape Pigeons, the usual Mollymawks wheeling around and a Northern Royal heading to Taiaroa Head.



So what species were this prion and this shearwater?

**Graeme Loh**

## Ornithological Snippets

Continuing the seabird theme, similar species to those on the Caprice trip were seen closer inshore. On 15 July off the Mole at Aramoana Hamish Spencer saw a **Buller's Mollymawk** flying right into the Otago Harbour entrance, almost up to the Aramoana Beach, while just off the Mole were also a single **Cape Pigeon**, a couple of **Giant Petrel** sp., as well as a few **Northern Royal Albatross**. On 6&9 July at the Mole, Derek Onley recorded **Little Penguin**, **Buller's Mollymawk**, **White-capped Mollymawk**, **Northern Giant Petrel**, **Australasian Gannet** & **Black-fronted Tern**, while off Huriawa, Karitane on 29 June there were in addition **Southern Royal Albatross**, **Cape Pigeon**, **Fluttering Shearwater** and a couple of adult **Black-browed Mollymawks**.

Hamish Spencer had at least 16 **Tui** (maybe as many as 20) at and near his sugar-water feeder in Northeast Valley on 14 July. The **Bellbirds** barely got a look in and the **Silvereyes**, nothing!

On 1 July at the Moeraki lighthouse peninsula Craig McKenzie saw two **Pied Shags** resting on rocks on the land side of the peninsula at about 3:30pm. On his way home from the Caprice Cruise on 8 July he saw a **Crested Grebe** in Broad Bay at 4:30pm very close to where he saw one two winters ago but this time the plumage looked much more adult.

On the afternoon of 16 July just after high tide the viewing platform at the end of the board walk at Aramoana provided an excellent view of the waders moving out to feed as the tide receded. As well as 220 **Pied Oystercatchers**, 153 **Bar-tailed Godwits** and 120 **Banded Dotterels** there were also 10 **Black-fronted Terns** and a single **Siberian Tattler**.



As well as the usual **Dunnock** or two right at the end of the Aramoana Mole, on 9 July there was also a small group of **Silvereyes**, searching through the tree mallow.

## Hawksbury Lagoon

	3 July 2011	1 July 2012
Black Shag	1	1
Little Shag	12	
White-faced Heron		
Royal Spoonbill		
Black Swan	5	3
Paradise Duck	12	2
Canada Goose	5	2
Domestic Goose	8	4
Hybrid Goose	6	11
Mallard x Grey Duck	630	219
N.Z.Shoveler	289	213
Grey Teal	72	11
Spur-winged Plover	1	2
Pied Stilt	48	4
Black-backed Gull	10	15
Red-billed Gull	3	11
Black-billed Gull		
Welcome Swallow		1

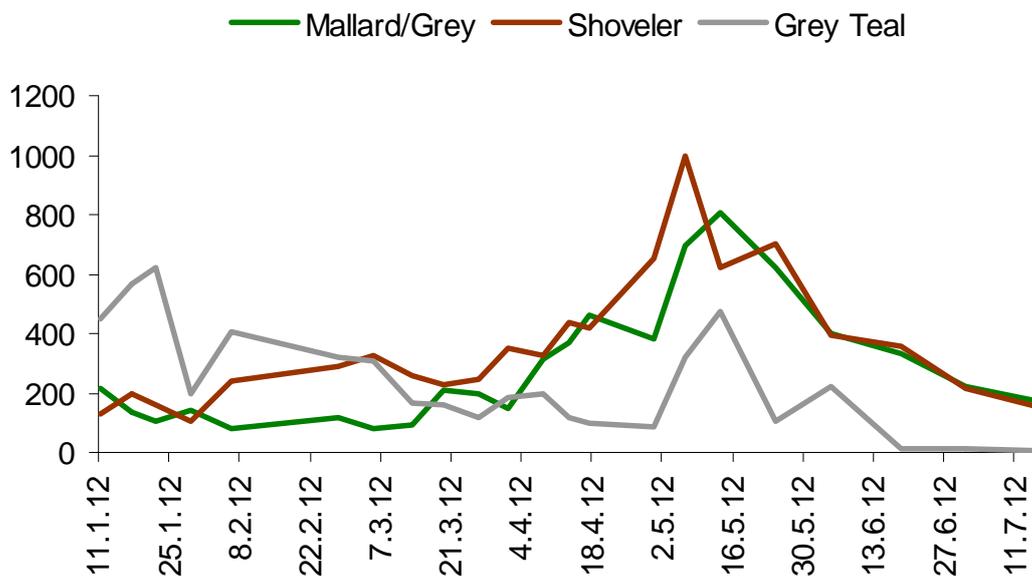


It was lucky that over half of the ponds at Hawksbury were frozen over on the OSNZ visit on 1 July for the prospect of counting over 1000 ducks with only 3 surveyors, Derek Onley, Francie Beggs and Anne Charlotte in distinctly cool if calm conditions was daunting. As it turned out only Mallard and Shoveler numbers reached 200 so we didn't feel too aggrieved at the lack of support especially as the sun came out and temperatures reached double figures.

The water levels were high, 20cm higher than last year which may not seem a lot but over such shallow ponds this means that

little or no mud is exposed, accounting for the lack of Pied Stilts this year and also quite likely for low numbers of Grey Teal which often feed in very shallow water along the edge of the mud.

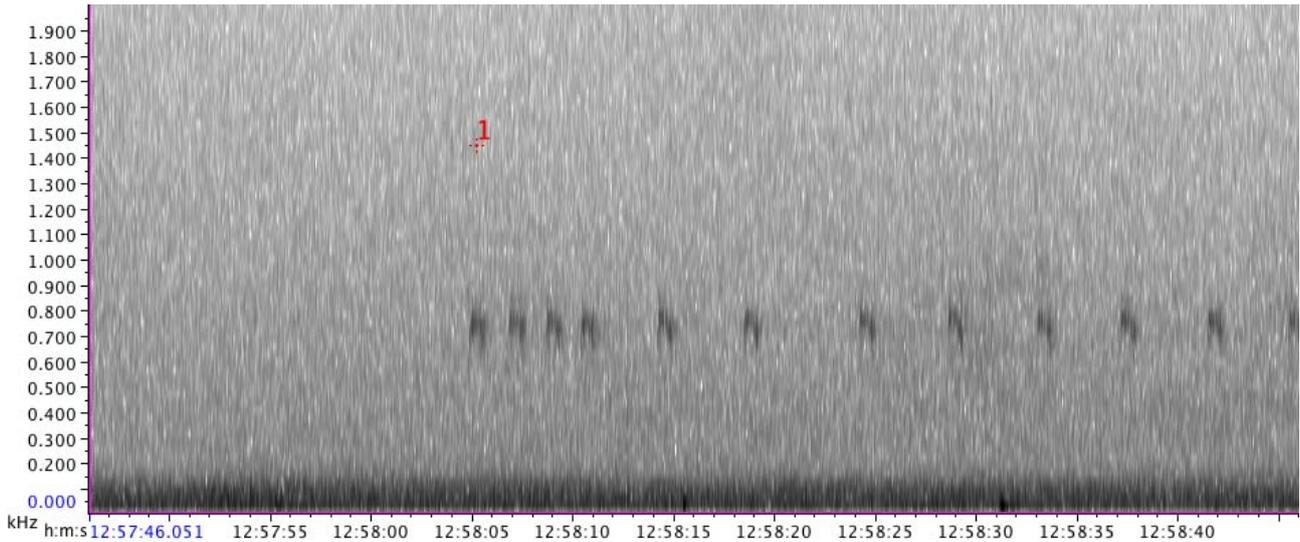
Derek has been surveying the lagoon regularly this year in order to gain a better idea of what effect proposed changes to the through-flow of water might have on the birdlife. The high water levels have been a feature of this autumn and winter and as the graph below shows, duck numbers have declined steadily since May.



## Derek Onley

### Moreporks and Acoustic Monitors – human and digital.

I placed an automatic acoustic recorder at a friend's place in Booth Road, which is very near the McGoun's Track and Ross Creek Reserves. We recorded for 4 hours in the evening and 1 hour at midnight. Very loud and persistent 'Morepork' calls were picked up on the moonlit nights of 7th and 8th July. One train of calls was 96 calls about 5 seconds apart. The picture is of part of the sonograms that are obtained. No 'cree' calls were picked up. The people at Booth Road also heard Morepork calling on the same nights, but the recorder did pick up very distant calls, which were not heard from inside house. With further analysis it may be possible to distinguish calls of different birds to get a count of numbers."



The Otago Branch has just received its own set of 4 of the latest model acoustic recorders for use in our bird monitoring projects. The first highly successful use of this method was the confirmation of a small population of Australasian Bittern in the Waihola/Waipori wetlands. OSNZ members are encouraged to come up with ideas for other projects; talk to your RR.

**Mary Thompson**

## Notices and Business

### Graeme's Green Flash Seabird Tour



Saturday 18 August 2012 6:50 am

Backup Day Sunday if Saturday foul weather.

The 'Caprice' catamaran of Allan Anderson is booked for a dawn seabird cruise. Start at Weller's Rock 6:50 am.

Objective See the seabird day starting off Taiaroa Head at Sunrise (7:35am), then cruise towards the seabird rich ocean mixing zone off Cape Saunders for 5-6 hours. We are particularly interested in recording the feeding areas of Stewart Island Shags and Black-fronted Terns. Mollymawks are guaranteed to take an interest.

Shared cost of about \$100- \$120 each.

This will be a warm up trip for a later excursion to the continental shelf edge in October. Weller's Rock Jetty is the one the Monarch uses, just before the Harrington Point settlement.

if you are keen .....

Email Graeme Loh at [gloh@earthlight.co.nz](mailto:gloh@earthlight.co.nz) or txt 0211322436

and if you need further encouragement here's a couple more photos from the Polaris on 19 July – Grey Petrel and Grey-backed Storm Petrel



## Programme 2012

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

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|------------------|---|
| Wed 25 July      | Indoor Meeting Robert Schadewinkel<br>Radiotracking of translocated robins in Orokonui.             |
| Sun 12 August    | National Royal Spoonbill Census<br>contact Peter Schweigman. 4552790<br>peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz |
| Sat 18 August    | Green Flash Seabird Tour – see ad above<br>contact Graeme Loh                                       |
| Wed 22 August    | Indoor Meeting Bryce Masuda<br>Consequences of brodifacoum operation on Ulva.                       |
| Wed 26 September | Indoor Meeting Kerry Weston<br>Rock Wren  |
| Wed 24 October   | Indoor Meeting Craig McKenzie<br>Photographing Birds  |
| Wed 28 November  | Indoor Meeting Sue Odlin<br>Bird encounters in UK and Japan.  |

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Many thanks to all who contributed.  
Final date for copy for next newsletter 15 August