



Birds New Zealand  
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*Birds New Zealand*

*Otago Region Newsletter 7/2018 July 2018*



### **Sinclair Wetland Winter Survey**

A team of 12 of us completed the 3 years of seasonal surveys of the Sinclair Wetlands on Saturday 7th July. The day started out a little problematic with passing rain showers and rainbows en route, but upon arrival the rain cleared, the sun came out and midday temperatures reached 17°C, amazing for mid-winter!

Song thrushes were singing from all corners of the wetlands but the blackbirds were still quiet. Scaup dominated the lagoons as usual. Fernbirds were keeping their secrets and only 4 were heard on the 1km transect, although that team thought they heard a marsh crake call. Twelve 5 minute bird counts were done on Ram Island.

A report for the Sinclair Wetlands Trust will be compiled and the collated data provided for use as a baseline for comparison with future surveys to assess biodiversity of the wetlands as restoration progresses. All the data has also been entered on eBird as another permanent record of all our observations. A huge thank you to all the folk that have been involved, especially to those who have been present for surveys for the whole 3 years.

We are hoping to have an overnight field trip to the wetlands one weekend in October so we can look and listen for crakes and bitterns late afternoon, evening and early morning. Please let Mary know if you are interested in joining this trip as it will help with planning.

**Mary Thompson**

### **Ornithological Snippets**

There have been 2 reports of **Great Crested Grebe** in the last month. Tom Waterhouse came across 2 at Katiki Reservoir on 21st June, while an account of one in the upper Otago Harbour on 9th July, including a photograph, was featured in the ODT. Russell Cannings from Waikato (and formerly of Dunedin) proved the value of getting out and about, with several interesting reports, as follows. A **Red Knot** was at Evansdale Creek Delta, Blueskin Bay, on 17th July, while the following day an equally unseasonal dark phase **Arctic Skua** was hassling the gulls off Taiaroa Head. Earlier, on 14th he found an **Eastern Rosella** at Tawanui, in the Catlins. The only previous eBird record in the area was at Puerua Valley almost exactly a year earlier. At Hinahina, also on 14th, he observed a pre-roost gathering of 1000 **Starlings**, and lastly (for this report) he saw a female **Cirl Bunting** by the road at Macraes Flat on 17th July.

Finally, Lala Frazer sighted a **Silvereeye** on 26th June with a lesion on the side of its eye. She's hoping it is not a forerunner of the previous outbreak that she believed decimated numbers, just as they are beginning to recover.

Any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

compiled by **Richard Schofield**

## Notices and Business

### **Possible New Event: Guides Needed!**

#### **Guided Bird-watching Walk at Dunedin Botanic Garden, 10–11am Sunday, 9th September**

I am giving the monthly Friday lunchtime Hort talk at the Botanic Garden on 7th September, on “What Bird is That?”, giving tips on how to identify birds and I hope I can also put in a good plug for Birds NZ surveys. It occurred to me that with this captive audience it would be good to have a follow-up session of actual guided bird-watching. I suggested this to Clare Fraser, the Adult Education coordinator and she has got back to me saying that the Botanic Garden people also think this would be a good idea and are happy to promote it with newspaper advertising as well as Facebook etc.

If this event is to go ahead, Birds NZ needs to front up with at least 5 guides, as we would have groups of 10-12 per guide. Given the lack of booking, this will necessitate enough guides coming to cover the possibility of about 40 visitors. This should be a fun activity and I am sure many of us know our birds well enough to be a guide – just around the lower garden for up to 1 hour, helping people to spot birds and identify them. Please let Mary know by 26th July, if you are happy to help on this day. [maryt@actrix.co.nz](mailto:maryt@actrix.co.nz) or phone 464 0787

If this event is a success and popular, then the Botanic Garden is likely to include in their programme 4 seasonal Bird-watching Walks lead by Birds NZ. This could be an excellent way to increase our profile and enthuse more people about birds.

**Mary Thompson**

### **EBird news**

In an earlier article I talked about adding extra information to your checklists in step 2 “Date and Effort”. In the step 3 “What did you see or hear?” there are numerous ways to supplement the basic count information, some of which are more obvious than others. Firstly, if you click “Add Details” a “Details” box appears in which you can say anything you like about the specific observation, for instance the behaviour of the

bird(s), or perhaps a more specific location. Below this is a box where you can upload photos (or audio) of the bird(s) concerned. Images do not have to be top notch, though it's obviously good if the quality is reasonable, but they do have to show the actual bird(s) referred to in the checklist, and not one taken elsewhere of the same species. It's especially beneficial to have a photo of a species whose identity may otherwise be questioned. Media can be uploaded either by dragging the file to the box, or by clicking "Search" and locating the relevant file.

At the bottom of this area are three more boxes. Clicking on "Age & Sex" gives you the option of showing a breakdown of the age & sex of birds of that species. Note that the sum of all the numbers in the boxes must equal the total quantity you have entered for the species count (otherwise you will have to add them up again!)

Now that we are nearing the breeding season (or already into it, in some instances) the "Breeding Code" section is becoming more relevant. Clicking on this gives a dropdown list of the various codes relating to possible, probable, and confirmed breeding. Just click on the highest category that you recorded. Mostly this section is used for more obvious signs of breeding, like an occupied nest, or adults feeding young, but in fact you can use it for any degree of possibility during the breeding season, and if you scroll right down to the bottom you will find "Flyover". This can be used when the species is not interacting with the habitat referred to in the checklist.

For more information, see

<https://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/1006850>

**Richard Schofield**

## **Notes from Otago AGM**

Finances were reviewed (See belated Financial Report below. Oops, left it out last time. Hopefully we won't be struck off the Charitable Society register for lack of compliance with AGM rules. ed.) Some of our project money is to be spent on one or two new Bluetooth speakers for call playback, initially for the robin project. Accumulated funds may be used to sponsor Student Travel Award-waiting to hear if this is to become

administered by Council on a national basis before committing to this. Science Fair prize for 2019.

\$50 to reimburse for refreshments at meetings.

Suggestion that binoculars should be purchased for use on field trips.

### **Projects:**

Sinclair Wetland 3 year seasonal survey will be completed this July.

Wild Dunedin Festival-lagoon bird watching successful with 40+ participants.

National Wader counts- expertly coordinated by Peter Schweigman; will continue.

### **Newer Projects**

Robins on Mopanui; coordinator Georgina Pickerell; purchase of Bluetooth speaker; field days beginning August. Let her know if you want to be included on email list for notifications.

**Town Belt Survey;** coordinator Bruce McKinlay; runs throughout October/November at 10-12 5 minute bird count stations in Town belt; still exploring idea of web-based interface to record data (QR code?)(contacts with Polytech students/ Craig? Need follow-up). Offer from interested person to enter data into spreadsheets would be appreciated.

**Pied Shag Breeding in Otago?** With the number of pied shag sightings increasing we are wondering whether they may breed in Otago; please check out Little Shag colonies for pied shags as they are likely to nest beside them rather than alone.

**Marsh and Spotless Crake at Sinclair Wetland;** use call playback to see if present in wetlands; suggest overnight stay at wetlands centre to allow for late evening and early morning surveys; Mary to check out feasibility for this for early October. Much interest expressed.

Suggestions for other project in future: another Harbour survey; another Morepork survey?

### **Regional Representative**

Mary Thompson nominated (and elected un-opposed) for 2019.

An Advisory Group that Regional Rep can meet with to discuss projects, programme, other issues and future plans. This will meet 4 or 5 times a

year. The group consists of Bruce McKinlay, Natalie Forsdick, Georgina Pickerell, Sue Odlin, Richard Schofield, Derek Onley, Nick Beckwith and Graeme Loh, which is a great spread of interests and expertise.

Huge thankyou to everyone who help in all sorts of ways, contribute to the programme and newsletter, participate in surveys and watch birds and record their sightings in eBird.

**Mary Thompson**

### **Contributions to this Newsletter**

With digital technology rattling along at a pace the likes of facebook averse, aged editors like myself struggle to keep up with, my outdated, so I'm told, email has recently had a familiar "senior moment" and refused to have anything to do with contributions, especially photos, over 1mb. Heaven knows why when yahoo can stream so mundane events as the demise of the English soccer team at the world cup, the latest on the Trump tweets or the royal babies at the drop of a hat. So please, in order to keep email traffic to a minimum and ensure this newsletter comes out before the following week's talk, can you please either check that contributions, especially photos, are less than 1mb or send them by dropbox. Alternatively we could look for a younger editor.

**Derek Onley**

# Ornithological Society of New Zealand

## Region: Otago

Annual Accounts: 1 January 2017 - 30 December 2017

Current Account: 03 0903 0392455-00

	2015	2016	2017
<b>Balance as at 1Jan.</b>	1814.18	1777.46	1366.44
<b><u>Income:</u></b>			
Interest	0.00		0.00
Capitation	350.00	350.00	350.00
Donations	103.87	65.99	148.60
Transfer from closed conferenec account			
Transfer from Bonus saver for projects/grants			600.00
OSNZ Project assistance Grant			
Beca consulting		230.00	
Waitaki District Council-travel for survey			113.88
Sinclair Wetlands Trust-survey		400.00	400.00
Sale of cards and books	25.00	70.00	93.00
	<b>478.87</b>	<b>1115.99</b>	<b>1705.48</b>
<b><u>Expenses:</u></b>			
Transfer to savings account	12.00	12.00	12.00
Bank fees	5.00	5.00	5.00
Room hire	0.00	0.00	105.00
Envelopes, stamps, photocopyin	193.94	161.85	224.19
Speaker Gifts	99.90	197.87	30.00
Book prize-Science Fair	0.00	30.00	9.90
Bittern/morepork study	143.75		0.00
Spoonbill/redbilled gull study	0.00	639.00	0.00
Sinclair Wetlands survey		360.00	300.00
Posters and publicity			153.52
Student travel grants			450.00
Miscellaneous	61.00	121.29	160.35
	<b>515.59</b>	<b>1527.01</b>	<b>1449.96</b>
Income less Expenses	-36.72	-411.02	255.52
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>1777.46</b>	<b>1366.44</b>	<b>1621.96</b>

## Breakdown of Accounts

### Running Expenses

Balance brought forward	576.62	
Income	556.60	
expenses	589.61	
Balance		<b>543.61</b>

### Other Projects

Balance brought forward	480.00	
Income	204.70	
Expenses	110.35	
Balance		<b>574.35</b>

### Sinclair Wetlands

<b>Balance brought forward</b>	40.00	
Income	400.00	
Expenses	300.00	
Balance		<b>140.00</b>

### Project Account-acoustic

Balance brought forward	55.82	
Income	-	
Expenses transfer to other proj	55.82	
Balance		-

### Spoonbill/gull Project

Balance brought forward	214.00	
Expenses		
Balance		214.00

### Student travel

Income-transfer from Saver	600.00	
Expenses	450.00	
Balance		150.00

Total **1,621.96**

### Bonus Saver account 0309030392455-25

Balance brought forward	1867.12	
Interest	1.32	
Transfers from cheque	12.00	
transfer for projects	600.00	
Balance		<b>1280.44</b>

## Programme 2018

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

- Wed July 25** Indoor Meeting. Graham Parker on his research on our local falcons, “The Otago falcon project; the why, what and how, with early results.”
- Wed August 22** Indoor Meeting. Bruce Robertson on “Why we are banding silvereye in the Botanic Garden.”
- Wed August 29** Special Indoor Meeting. Steve Kelling and Jessie Barry from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, on “The eBird Enterprise- Engaging the Global Birding Community for Science, Conservation, and Fun.”
- Wed September 26.** Indoor Meeting. Nic Rawlence on “Taxonomy and biological heritage of NZ birds.”
- Wed October 24.** Indoor Meeting. Denise Martini on “Evolution and conservation of the endangered New Zealand Kaka.”
- Wed November 28.** Indoor Meeting. Luke Easton on “Anti-predator behaviour of NZ Robins.”
- Sun December 2** Summer Wader Count. High tide 12.42pm. Counters are needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui Inlets and Blueskin Bay. Please confirm participation with [peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz](mailto:peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz)

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the next newsletter by 16th August please.