



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Otago Region Newsletter 5/2011 June 2011

Ornithological Snippets

The Balclutha area now seems one of the few places **Cattle Egrets** turn up regularly. Richard Schofield reports “There appear to be two flocks of **Cattle Egrets** around Balclutha. On Inchclutha, a single bird seen on 23rd April and then there were 5 on 14th May and 12 by 22nd.

A party of 10 were reported from Benhar on 12th May; I saw one there on 14th and four on 22nd May, presumably different birds to those at Inchclutha, as they were seen almost simultaneously. Also on Clutha River (Koau branch), 7 **White-fronted Terns** on 22nd May, down from 35 on 23rd & 30th April (hopefully not mistaken for ducks!). By 15th June the Benhar flock was seen regularly through the week and had apparently stabilised at 12 birds, though I haven’t been able to confirm numbers on Inchclutha recently.”

The single bird at Karitane reported in last month’s newsletter was seen on 7th May and apparently soon moved on.

On 3rd May, Phil Garside saw a juvenile **Crested Grebe** at the Kaikourai Estuary. It was feeding near the bridge. This is the fourth year running that crested Grebes have turned up in coastal Otago in winter.

Also unusual for the Dunedin coast were an adult and an immature **Pied Shag** at Karitane on 12th June.

Falcons continue to be reported regularly. On 15th June, Richard Schofield watched a male **NZ Falcon** perched on the windbreak alongside the Tokoiti

cemetery before embarking on an impressive hover in the stiff breeze and Ed Waite's office mate (Konnie) reckoned she saw one flying over the DNI sports field on 27th May.

Report of OSNZ Conference and AGM, Queen's Birthday Weekend, Lower Hutt

A contingent of four of us from Otago went to the OSNZ Conference; Mary as Regional Rep., Bruce as Vice-President, Sue Odlin and Cody Fraser. The conference attendance was reported to be the largest ever. The venue at the Dowse Art Gallery was very suitable with good facilities for the powerpoint presentations and excellent food.

Regional Rep Meeting.

13 regional reps. met for 4 hours on Friday and discussed a variety of issues:

Format of the conference; scientific days and AGM scheduling; moving the Conference to Labour weekend seemed more problematic than at Queens Birthday.

Suggested to Council that Southern Bird be further up-graded to include more articles on current bird study in NZ.

Regions encouraged to undertake local promotion of OSNZ such as displays at libraries, and articles, photos and ads in community newspapers.

Up-coming National Projects: Caspian Tern nest survey, 2011-2012; North Island NZ Dotterel census, 2011; total winter Royal Spoonbill census, 2012(to be coordinated by Peter Schweigman and Mary Thompson); more banding of godwits, Otago 2011.

Please continue to report interesting bird sightings to Regional Recorder.

Encouraged to also use e-Bird.

Scientific Days

Both Saturday and Sunday were filled with 28 talks about NZ bird study from the big names to amateurs and all were of a high standard. On the Sunday there was a choice of two workshops: seabird ID and measurement or moult recording (large selection of wings provided to practise our newly learned skills on).

There were several talks about techniques and outcomes of translocations to sanctuaries and new sites, and especially highlighting the importance of monitoring survival, breeding success, population growth. 70% of translocation proposals are now from community groups.

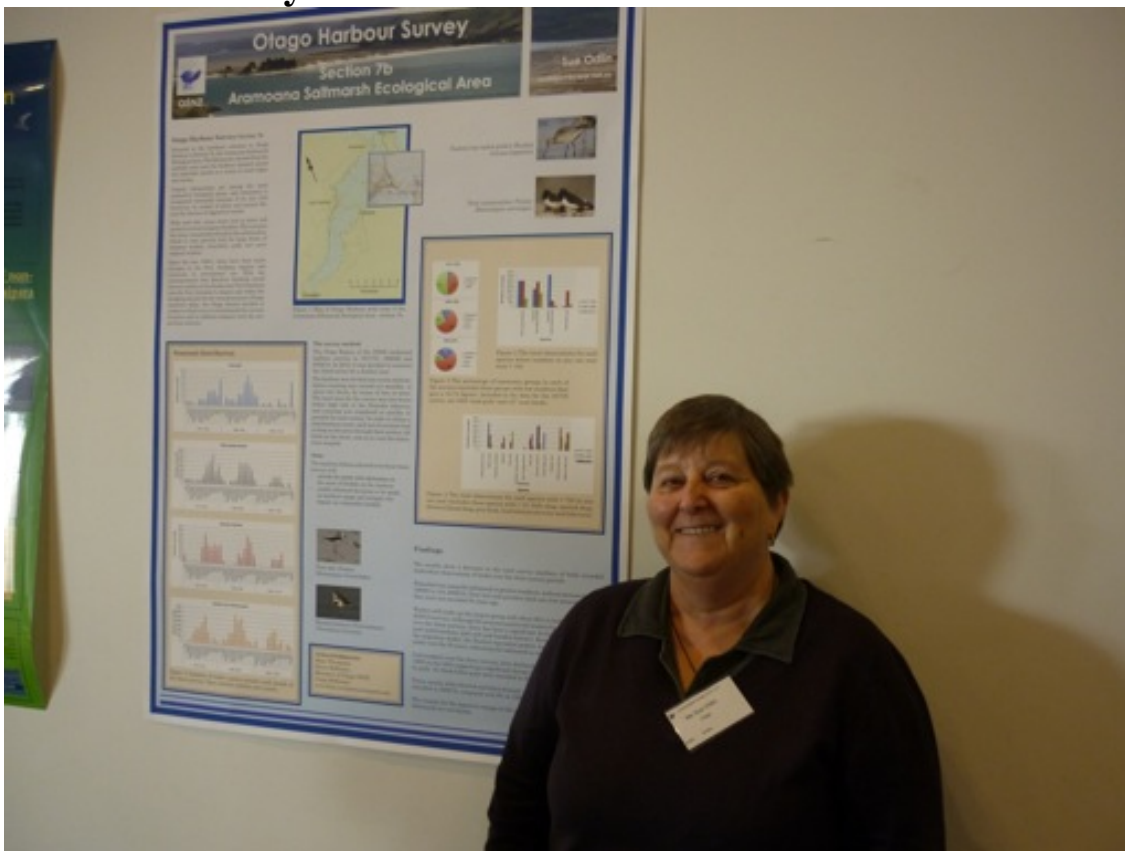
- Karori Sanctuary has had 14 bird species transferred there since 2000.
 - Whiteheads and robins very successful
 - Tomtits now all outside sanctuary
 - Problem maintaining female bellbirds
 - Robins outside sanctuary do not survive
 - Hihi breed successfully, but population constant
 - From 14 kaka in 2003, now over 80 (problem with them eating fruit, walnuts, vegetables of sanctuary neighbours!)
- Cape Kidnappers, privately owned sanctuary; 9 species translocated; tomtit, robins, kiwi prefer the pine forest.
- Translocation of 30 Snares Island Snipe to replace extinct Stewart Island Snipe to island off Big South Cape; now estimated pop. over 500 after 6 years.
- North Island Brown Kiwi now back in Rimutaka Forest Park after absence of 100 years.
- First Chatham Island Tomtits transferred back to main Chatham Island (last sighting 1975)
- NZ Shore Plover, world's rarest plover with total population about 250, are being captive bred and then transferred to island sanctuaries; on Mana Island increase from 1 breeding pair in 2008 to 10 breeding pairs.

Exciting new information about bird biology, especially movements and migration are now being obtained using the new tracking and monitoring technologies:

- Chatham Island Taiko; at sea 5 months between breeding seasons and travel all over the south Pacific.
- Westland Petrels during breeding season take 2 to 10 day trips off the coast and round as far as Kaikoura.
- Automatic Acoustic recording to monitor difficult areas (Fiordland for kiwi at a cost of \$3/h compared to \$230/h if by people listening) or cryptic species (is bittern possible?)
- Intensive monitoring showing great success and little by-kill with use of 1080 with new modified methods
- Breeding success of Little Blue Penguins on West Coast is high whether stoat control or not - main mortality factor is roadkill.

Banded Godwits; flags, colour bands, geolocators and satellite tags used to track movements; 90% of resightings of NZ birds at Yalu Jiang, Yellow Sea; 45% of Australian Red Knots refuel at Bohai Bay; both these bays are being actively reclaimed for industry and no other sites are known; the numbers of godwits and other waders in these refueling grounds are dramatically decreasing; our NZ November and February wader counts provide extremely valuable data on what is happening; prospects for future look grim.

Harbour Surveys



Sue Odlin prepared a splendid poster that analysed some of the trends at Aramoana.

Bruce McKinlay's presentation on the changes in bird numbers and usage of the Otago Harbour over the three surveys we have done in the past 35 years was a highlight of the scientific session-from a biased perspective. It was very interesting to also have a talk on the trends seen in the Wellington Harbour over a similar time period. Otago recorded 76 species, Wellington 72. Otago has seen a decline in Black-billed Gull and Banded Dotterel; Wellington now has absence of Albatross and Giant petrel and decrease in

gulls and reef heron. Otago has seen the arrival of Paradise and Shoveler ducks, increased numbers of Grey teal and Variable Oystercatchers and Spur-winged plover and swallows are now using the harbour. Wellington has increased Mallards, Pied and Spotted Shags.

Field Trips

There were 3 trips to choose from and at least one Otago person on each trip. Mary and Bruce went to Zealandia/Karori Sanctuary; despite the drizzle we enjoyed the experience of seeing dozens of hihi, some of the kaka, a saddleback, 2 brown teal, 2 robins, 2 bellbirds(which are extinct in the Wellington region!), and 1 takahe and the new educational display was excellent. Some Island and Kapiti Coast trip reports hopefully next newsletter!

Mary Thompson

Notices and Business

Otago Peninsula Bird Survey – a new initiative

Members of the Otago branch of OSNZ have kindly provided expert advice on bird monitoring to the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group (OPBG). This group of local landowners is working to enhance biodiversity on the Otago Peninsula by removing pests. Possums are the initial focus and the intention is to reduce possum numbers to such low levels that they are no longer a threat to the Peninsula's natural values. Both vegetation and bird monitoring will be undertaken to evaluate the long term effectiveness of this pest control programme. It is anticipated that regular bird monitoring over a number of years will identify trends in bird numbers and their distribution.

Twenty four 1 k transects have been identified in a variety of terrain, on both public and private land on the Otago Peninsula. The procedure involves 1 or 2 people walking a transect, identifying and recording the birds seen and heard as they go. Monitoring results go to Sharyn Broni, who has been collating the data since the first transects were set up in November 2011. Several transects are on walking tracks e.g. Leith track, Bacon St, Camp Rd, McTaggart St, Greenacres St, Karetai Road, Ridge Rd and in the Sandymount and Okia Reserves.

The interest from local residents has been very pleasing. A total of 23 people have come to the training sessions and offered to take responsibility for individual transects. The majority of our local volunteers have some knowledge of birds, but have not previously undertaken any formal bird survey work.

Many thanks are due to Derek Onley and Marcia Dale for the enjoyable and instructive training sessions, providing the recording sheet and mapping the transects. The OPBG appreciates their expertise and time in setting up the Otago Peninsula Bird Survey.

A map of the Peninsula showing the transects on public land will be published in the August OSNZ newsletter, before bird counts start again. If any OSNZ members would like to help with this survey, your skills would be most welcome. I can email you the descriptions of each transect and the Excel recording sheet.

Moira Parker (for the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group)
email moiraparker @clear.net.nz

Next Indoor Meeting

Georgina Pickerell's talk on the Effect of Predators on Braided River Bird Habitats (Wednesday 22 June) will be followed by a short AGM and discussion of new projects. So start thinking

Mary Thompson

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 that we don't normally see on Otago (stint, turnstones, golden plover, sandpipers, etc) and also NZ Dotterel. Many Fernbirds are also in the area. The tide this weekend in November is suitable for observing roosting birds; the high tide is 4.30 pm so we would head out to the bay about lunchtime. This means we could leave early Saturday morning from Dunedin (some participants may like to travel down on Friday evening). The plan is for us to stay for the Saturday night at Beach Road Holiday Park, which has tourist flats and cabins that seem adequate. (Alternatively, participants could arrange their own accommodation.).

On the Sunday there would be several possible trips depending on interests: Waituna Lagoon, which is under threat of “flipping” because of high nutrient levels (bittern have been seen here) and walkways at Daffodil Bay on Sandy Point, the new lagoon at the former refuse site, Bluff Hill for seabirds or in any of the many reserves in the area. There is certainly plenty to interest everyone so would be great to have a goodly number come along, and for the weather to cooperate. We have invited the Dunedin Forest and Bird to join us on this field trip. Members of the Southland OSNZ will be guiding us.

Please contact Mary Thompson (464 0787) maryt@actrix.co.nz if you are likely to be interested in coming so that arrangements can be put in place, especially for accommodation.

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

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

There are differing views on the identity of last month's mystery bird so here it is again. I would be interested to hear your opinions.



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.

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| Wednesday 22 June | Indoor Meeting Georgina Pickerell
Effect of predators on braided river bird habitats |
| Sunday 3 July | Hawksbury Lagoon Survey start 10.30am.
Contact Derek Onley, 4822831 |
| Sunday 10 July | Harbour Survey start 9.19am |
| Wednesday 27 July | Indoor Meeting Eduardo Santos
Dunnoek behaviour in the Botanic Gardens |
| Sunday, 14 August | Final Harbour Survey start time 14.12 pm |
| Wednesday, 24 August | Indoor Meeting Kat Manoo
More about the Fairy Prions at St Clair |
| Wednesday, 28 Sept | Indoor Meeting Bruce McKinlay
Bird experiences in the Sub-Antarctic. |
| 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 19 July