



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Otago Region Newsletter 2/2011 March 2011

Fiordland Crested Penguins nesting in Otago

Cheryl Pullar writes from the Catlins, “While undertaking the annual Yellow-eyed Penguin Catlins nest survey in October 2010 at Long Point, we found a Fiordland-crested Penguin sitting on 2 eggs in a nest bowl that is usually inhabited by Yellow-eyed Penguins.

The Fiordland-crested had paler than usual colourings, in that it was quite slaty grey through the dorsal plumage, and appeared larger than 'normal'. The head plumage was quite dark and distinctly Fiordland-crested looking. But it piqued our interest.

The eggs measured 73 and 77mm, no girth measure was taken, but these length measures are at the larger end of the scale for a Fiordland-crested.

Initially we were interested to see who the mate was, as an interaction between a Yellow-eye and Fiordland-crested could have been quite intriguing. I set up a motion detecting video camera (kindly loaned by Pete McClelland - Southern Islands Area) on 8 November and checked the footage every four to five days. We were also interested to know if the eggs were viable.

Unfortunately no mate came home (that was detected by the video anyway).

A dead Fiordland-crested was found washed up at Purakaunui Bay (just to the north of Long Point) in early November - this could have been the mate.

One chick hatched on or around 17 November and the resident Fiordland-crested sat and sat and sat...

The nest was abandoned on 23 November, as the chick had died and the resident adult had given up hope.”

Cheryl Pullar Ranger - Biodiversity Assets/Community Relations Owaka.

Ornithological Snippets



Photo Craig McKenzie

me a couple of times then flew off to cache the prey so he could concentrate on defence. The other chick was seen well hidden and close to fledging so hopefully it was successful.”

While walking up the Bullock Track from Woodhaugh to Maori Hill, on 1 March, Paul Sorrell observed a pair of **Brown Creepers** feeding on mahoe berries, calling noisily and continuously and moving around in a lively fashion. Up to 4 **Brown Creepers** also turned up in gardens in Waitati from late February to early March.

At sea off Karitane on 15 March there were huge flocks, maybe thousands, of **White-fronted Terns** and **Sooty Shearwaters** feeding over shoaling fish. Along with them were small numbers of **Hutton's Shearwaters**, a couple of **White-capped** and **Buller's Mollymawks** and at least 5 **Arctic Skuas** harassing the terns. On the spit on the same day there were about 800 **Black-billed Gulls**, 100 or so **White-fronted Terns** and a couple of juvenile **Black-fronted Terns**. There were even more **Sooty Shearwaters** on 14 March down at Curio Bay where they were passing by at a rate of 85/minute, - over 2,500 in half an hour of watching.

Rob Schuckard counted 59 **Banded Dotterels** at Catlins Lake on 4 March and there were over 60 at Warrington in February and March.



Part of the flock of Black-billed Gulls at Karitane – photograph them and count them on your computer – they don't fly away half way through and you discover a couple of juvenile Black-fronted terns as a bonus.

Coastal Otago Bar-tailed Godwits



Bar-tailed Godwits feeding amongst piles of kelp on Karitane Beach, February.

The summer wader count for Otago last year on 21 November gave a total of 813 godwits.

A nationwide follow up in February 2011 was not very successful locally because of a very low high tide of 1.7 m. The godwits at Hooper's Inlet were too far away to come up with an accurate figure. We estimated 350. The godwits at Blueskin Bay were also too far away and spread out to count properly. Karitane was counted and with a total of 103 spread out over the Merton mudflat, Karitane and estuary. Aramoana was done as part of the harbour count and had 348 godwits.

A few areas were checked later on at higher tides. 175 were present at Karitane on 2 March, decreasing to 63 by 15th including 14 in bright breeding plumage that presumably had yet to leave.

Blueskin Bay had 540 on 18 Feb, and 614 on 3 March; a substantial decrease from the highest number of 1113 counted in December and the 900 present in January.

Aramoana was also checked for numbers of banded godwits. On 17 February a total of 663 were counted with 23 in full breeding plumage and 10 banded and flagged birds. Unfortunately all of these had only one leg visible. On 27 February numbers had dropped to 532 with 7 banded.

There were several reports of godwits circling around gaining height and disappearing in a Northerly direction. Rob Schuckard's observation of a flock leaving Blueskin Bay northwards along the coast on 3 March was heralded as the earliest departure ever – temperatures in Korea, the first stop, were +2 to -7 at the time. Over the next 3 days

(when tides were high enough to count with some confidence) 38 were seen to depart on 4th, 24 on the 5th and numbers dropped from 580 to 440 and 200 by 6th although there were still a good 50 or so in breeding plumage on that date.

Down south Catlins Lake held 365 godwits on 5 March and Waikawa still had 87 on 15 March.

Peter Schweigman & Derek Onley

Black Shags at the Andy Bay Bird Roost

"I am intrigued. I have a whopping great black shag in residence on the Andy Bay roost. I have seen it there three times in the last 10 days, and today it was asleep lying down on the ground at the far end. It also likes to roost standing tall like a post beside the end stone. Perhaps the stone gives it a sense of company.

I see that Black shags proper have turned up regularly in 1s and 2s in the present run of harbour surveys. They used to be really uncommon. Looking back through my own files, Bob Smith saw one at Port Chalmers in December 1977, and Peter Schweigman saw one at the Boat Harbour April 1978. And that was the lot for the 1977-78 survey. When Bruce McKinley comes back from Antarctica, I must get him to pull the figures out of the later surveys. There were three at the boat sheds on the south side of Hooper's Inlet when I was there yesterday for the first time in years. Does anyone else think they are moving out to the coast more?"

Jill Hamel

Notices and Business

Delays in OSNZ posting and earthquake damage

"Following the Canterbury earthquake and with both of our editors and the printing company being based in Christchurch, our March posting of Notornis and Southern Bird will be delayed.

Our hearts go out to our Canterbury members and all those who have been affected by the disaster."

David Lawrie (OSNZ President)

More marked birds to look out for

Two nights ago Julia Melville, Dave Bell and myself caught 24 Black-fronted Tern at the Wairau Lagoons (Marlborough). These birds have a metal band on the left leg, and a white band on the right leg which is engraved with a letter and two numbers. They have all also been marked on the breast with Picric Acid, which shows up as dull yellow.

Please keep an eye out for these birds, or any of the birds banded last year (with white engraved flags) or chicks from the Wairau River (also with the new white engraved

bands). Note these birds will not be dyed yellow, so you need to check all Black-fronted terns for leg bands.

We know very little about Black-fronted tern movements in NZ so all sightings will be valuable. We plan to do more night mist-netting, so I will keep you up to date with how numbers go.

Mike Bell

Welcome to new members: Jeremy Beck, Sarah Fisher, Cody Fraser, Craig McKenzie, Andrew Nikkel, Emma Richardson. Hope you can become involved in some of our regular activities – see Programme.

Proposed National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity.

The Ministry of Environment (MfE) has recently released a proposed National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity. The objective is “to promote the maintenance of indigenous biological diversity by protecting areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, and to encourage protection and enhancement of biodiversity values more broadly while:

- supporting best practice of local authorities
- recognising the positive contribution of landowners as guardians/kaitiaki of their land
- recognising that the economic, social and cultural well-being of people and communities depends on, amongst other things, making reasonable use of land.”

In terms of this policy, significant indigenous vegetation or significant habitat of indigenous fauna means: a) the naturally uncommon ecosystem types listed in Schedule One of the policy; b) indigenous vegetation or habitats associated with sand dunes and wetlands; c) Level IV land environments (as defined by Land Environments of New Zealand in 2003) that have 20 per cent or less remaining in indigenous vegetation cover; and d) habitats of threatened and at risk species. The last of these means species that, under the New Zealand Threat Classification System, are classed as nationally critical, endangered or vulnerable species, or whose populations face a longer-term risk of extinction in the wild because of naturally small populations or marked declines in numbers (for birds, see Miskelly et al. 2008. Conservation status of New Zealand birds, 2008. *Notornis* 55: 117-135).

The OSNZ is looking to make a submission on behalf of its members on a number of issues. If anyone who has read the policy and who has concerns pass them on to Peter Frost (acting on behalf of Council). He will then collate these and circulate them to Council before David L. submits them on behalf of the OSNZ. Nevertheless, in case OSNZ does not represent individuals’ views in exactly the way they want, and also for

strategic reasons (several well-argued submissions on a point are likely to carry more weight than just one), we'd encourage individuals or local groups to make their own submissions, even if the points raised, for or against, are mirrored in the OSNZ or any other group's submission.

Peter Frost pghfrost@xtra.co.nz

OSNZ Annual General Meeting, Queens Birthday Weekend, Lower Hutt

It is not too soon to think about attending the OSNZ AGM as early bird registration closes 28th February. This year the meeting is from Saturday 4th June to Monday 6th June. There will be scientific sessions on both Saturday and Sunday (Bruce will be presenting some of our Harbour survey results); on the Monday there are three field excursions to choose from. Mary will be attending as Regional Representative and Bruce as Council member; it would be great to have others from Otago come with us.

All registration details, including schedule and map are also available online: <http://osnz.org.nz/osnzagm.htm>

OSNZ Subscriptions

Members of OSNZ will have received just before Christmas their Invoice for the 2011 year, so this is a reminder to pay subs in case you have overlooked them during the holiday season.

New members are always welcome and this is a good time to join as new members will receive a complimentary copy of Atlas of Bird Distribution valued at \$90.

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

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.

Sunday 20 March	Harbour Survey	start time 3.15pm
Wednesday 23 March	Indoor Meeting	Graeme Loh Experiences in the Galapagos
Sunday 3 April	Hawksbury Lagoon Survey	start 10.00am
Sunday 17 April	Harbour Survey	start 1.00 pm
Wednesday 27 April	Indoor Meeting	Derek Onley Paraguay Burning
Sunday 15 May	Harbour Survey	start 11.46 am
Wednesday 25 May	Indoor Meeting	Edward Waite Biodiversity in Dunedin
Sunday 12 June	Harbour Survey	start 11.46 am
Wednesday 22 June	Indoor Meeting	Georgina Pickerell Effect of predators on braided river bird habitats
Sunday 3 July	Hawksbury Lagoon Survey	start 10.30am
Sunday 10 July	Harbour Survey	start 9.19am
Wednesday 27 July	Indoor Meeting	Eduardo Santos Dunnock behaviour in the Botanic Gardens

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Many thanks to all who contributed.
 Final date for copy for next newsletter 19 April