



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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Operation Tuakitoto - acoustic recording at Lake Tuakitoto



Lake Tuakitoto near Balclutha is a possible habitat for Bittern and Marsh Crake. OSNZ Otago decided to monitor for bittern using acoustic recorders (left). Ten of us have been down on 5 trips since 24 October. We placed recorders right around the lake at about 500m intervals and recorded for several days from 20:00 to 23:00 and from 4:00 to 7:00.

Special thanks to OSNZ member Richard Schofield from Balclutha, who did the initial recce, and covered the north-west sector by bike. (left)

The sonograms have been scanned but do not appear to have picked up any bittern booms, although there are some low frequency sounds that haven't been identified yet. The recordings are still to be analysed for Marsh Crake calls.



Exploring this wetland was a bonus for those involved and a total bird list of 28 species was seen, which included most of the waterfowl, Fernbird, a Royal Spoonbill and 9 Cattle Egret on 14th November. There was a lot of evidence of breeding and also a small colony of Black Shag.

Left: George and Kerry in the swamp setting up recorder.

The recorders are now at Sinclair Wetland to confirm the continued presence of Bittern that we found there last year. **Mary Thompson**

Polaris



Giant Petrels. Left: Juvenile Southern, right: Juvenile Northern.

Graeme Loh went out on the November Polaris water sampling trip:- Summer conditions are bringing out the range of species. The day was misty with very light winds so no large flocks and few feeding aggregations were seen. Salvin's Mollymawks were the predominant albatross with Southern Royals and Shy, a few Buller's, two Black browed Mollymawks and one Gibson's Wandering Albatross at 50km offshore. Notable features were the 32 spoonbills on the Taupata on the east side of Taiaroa Head, the four encounters with feeding pairs of Yellow-eyed Penguins between two and 5km off Taiaroa. Individual Mottled Petrels were seen quite frequently. At 35 kilometres a strange event happened: a

godwit circled the boat twice and wandered off northeast. Despite this observation it was not added to the 26 seabird species seen at sea outside the harbour. Three birds were not satisfactorily identified.



One of the Salvin's Mollymawks



Mystery photo? Graeme's title WCP escapes LFPwhales
Graeme Loh

Prions on the Chathams

I had the privilege of going to Rangatira Island in the Chathams to put geolocator data loggers (recording daylight and sea temperature) on Broad-billed Prions in late October. These loggers will broaden basic knowledge of their movements. It is thought that the Chathams Broad-bills did not suffer in last year's storm which killed tens of thousands of prions. I managed to fit data loggers on both partners in 13 burrows so as well as describing the nest attendance pattern, the riddle of the sexes of many petrels having different feeding grounds can be explored. In contrast to Otago's marine world, the coastal voyages in the Chathams are quite poor in seabird numbers and species. The voyages across Pitt Strait had the northern version of Buller's Mollymawks and yes it does look darker and different to the one that frequents our waters. Cape Pigeons were the other bird always in view along with some Giant Petrels. Pitt Shags were seen on the way out and some Chatham Shags on the way back. Red-billed Gulls, Black-backed Gulls and White-fronted Terns were in patches around reefs. A few Titi were seen and for a while on the way south we went through Fairy and Broad-billed Prions and two species of storm petrels. One Royal albatross cruised by. Such a contrast to the expectations created by being surrounded by the main breeding grounds for so many species. It was a thrill approaching Rangatira and seeing the bright white dots of Shore Plover on the rock flats. They were all around us as we portered our gear across the flats. **Graeme Loh**

Ornithological Snippets

A **NZ Dotterel** was at Catlins River Estuary on 26 October, the first Richard Schofield had seen there. Also present a single **Knot**, not that common either and 12 flagged **Bar-tailed Godwits**, including a Catlins marked bird which has been resighted in China and Queensland. An adult **Gannet** was plunge diving in shallow water well up the estuary and another **Gannet** was diving close inshore at Willsher Bay, near Kaka Point, shortly before. 9 **Cattle Egrets** were still around on the 14 November on west side of Lake Tuakitoto, along with a single **Royal Spoonbill** and on 13th a late adult **Black-fronted Tern** was seen by Suzanne on the river in Balclutha by the airfield,



A survey of the Manuherikia River above Falls Dam on 30 October came up with 120 **Pied Oystercatchers**, 32 **Banded Dotterel**, 118 **Black-fronted Terns** and 275 **Black-billed Gulls**. Oystercatchers, dotterels and terns had both eggs and young (some oystercatchers were already fledged) but the **Black-billed Gulls** looked as though they had yet to nest or had been washed out by recent flooding. Also noted nesting were **Spur-winged Plover**, **Paradise Duck**, **Pied Stilt** and of course **Canada Geese**, some 230 of them. The 3 **Pipits** were somewhat outnumbered by over 100 **Skylarks**.

On 18 November, Graeme Loh and several OSNZ members joined with Forest and Bird as special guests of Perry Reid's at Nature's Wonders Hautai Hill and visited the titi covenant at dusk. As we settled into the marram a large flock of **titi** were foraging out at sea in the 30 knot southerly. Three **Northern Royal Albatrosses** were sitting in the lee of the land until it darkened more when they left. At 9:20 the first **titi** went overhead and soon they were landing all around and started calling from their burrows. A great evening.

On 22 November at 10pm, **Titi** were flying into their burrows on the cliffs above Graeme Loh's prion fence at St Clair. Encouragement to press on with the fencing project.

Notices and Business

Otago Summer Wader Count



rescheduled to 25 November

After the disappointing cancellation of the 11th, we are lucky to have another day available in November, the 25th. High tide for Dunedin 1433, with a predicted high of 2 m. If available please contact Peter Schweigman on 455 2790 or peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz

Progress Report: New Zealand Bird Conference, 1-3 June, 2013, Otago Museum

This will be the first OSNZ Conference to be held under the banner of the New Zealand Bird Conference, and the Otago Branch has been given the task of organising it. OSNZ is planning to make this the premier New Zealand event for communication of new research findings on New Zealand birds, discussion and networking for birds and birders in New Zealand. Also this will be the first time for a number of years that Society members have come together in the south with the opportunity to see penguins and albatross on the field trips, so we are hoping this will attract a good number of members from up north to attend.

Most importantly, this is a great opportunity for Otago OSNZ members to get to go to a conference on their doorstep as it only comes around every 15 years or so. So please set aside Queen's Birthday weekend, 2013 in your diaries now. We would like to see as many Otago members as possible at this conference.

Two days of the conference will be largely devoted to scientific presentations, Saturday 1 June and Sunday 2 June, at the Hutton Theatre, Otago Museum. A choice of workshops will be available on the Sunday morning. The Conference will incorporate the Society's AGM and also the launch of a new internet based encyclopaedia about New Zealand Birds, called NZ Birds On-line. There will be lots of opportunities for socialising with an informal dinner on the Saturday night at the Polytech Training restaurant 'Technique' and the Conference Dinner on the Sunday, which will be held at Cargill's Quality Hotels. Field trips to the Catlins, the back rooms at the Otago Museum, Orokonui and the Otago Peninsula have been organised for Monday 3 June.

Conference Organisation

A small organising committee under the excellent chairmanship of Bruce McKinlay has been busy behind the scenes, meeting monthly for much of this year, choosing the best venue, organising accommodation concessions, venues for the dinners, planning workshops and field trips, and setting up facilities for online registration, etc.

As it comes closer to the conference we will be after members for a variety of jobs: conference satchels, registration desk, front of house, poster session co-ordinators, people who know about running computers with powerpoint, and general support to make the conference go well. If you are interested in being part of the support crew for next year's conference then let Bruce McKinlay know so we can include you in the planning (454 4555 Bruce McKinlay bruce.mckinlay@osnz.org.nz).

Call for Abstracts for Scientific Presentations and Posters at NZ Bird Conference, 2013

We hope to have a good representation of speakers from our region, so if you have some interesting results from your bird studies, please consider writing them up for the conference. This would be a good opportunity for students to participate in a conference, and we have some top-rate research happening here as we have heard at our Indoor Meetings this year.

The conference will have both themed and general sessions on the study, understanding and enjoyment of birds in New Zealand. Theme sessions that we have identified so far include: bird conservation, Otago ornithology, ecotourism, penguins, beech forest birds, and community contributions to ornithology. More details and Abstract Submission forms can be obtained from Sue Odlin, Scientific Sessions Coordinator (473 8898 waitapu1@clear.net.nz).

OSNZ Subscriptions

Just to remind you that you will have received from the Membership Secretary notification of Annual Subscriptions with payment due by 1 January. It is easy to overlook this with the rush of Christmas. The easiest way to pay is online.

2013 Indoor Meeting Programme

Suggestions and offers of Speakers for next year's Indoor Meetings would be greatly appreciated. Let Mary Thompson know (464 0787 maryt@actrix.co.nz).

Programme 2012-13

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

- Sun 25 November Summer Wader Count, 2.00 pm
Contact Peter Schweigman 455 2790
peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz
- Wed 28 November Indoor Meeting Sue Odlin
Bird encounters in UK and Japan.
- Sun 20 January Hawksbury Lagoon Survey
Meet Stuart St end 10.30am
Contact Derek Onley

Suggestions and offers of Speakers for next year's Indoor Meetings would be greatly appreciated. Let Mary Thompson know (464 0787 maryt@actrix.co.nz).

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.
Contributors are allowed a rest over Christmas but the editor expects lots of copy about your holidays for the January newsletter.
Final date for copy 23 January.