

## BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

### THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

# Wellington Region Newsletter

July 2013

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

[facebook.com/OrnithologicalSocietyNewZealand](https://www.facebook.com/OrnithologicalSocietyNewZealand)

With considerable trepidation I have accepted the nomination for the OSNZ Regional Representative for Wellington. Fortunately a number of members have already offered their support which will be crucial for me to successfully carry out the duties of RR. My thanks to Susan Waugh for her offers of help - the support of Te Papa is very much appreciated, including the use of their facilities for our monthly meetings.

One of the first tasks as RR will be to organise speakers for the monthly meeting. My goal is to organise speakers in advance so that they can be advertised in the regional newsletter. I plan to produce a minimum of 3 newsletters per year. This is the first and what you can be assured of is that the content and style of the newsletter will evolve with time.

I would very much appreciate your comments and thoughts on the following;

- (1) The newsletter – what you like, dislike and what additional content you want. Most importantly, contributions will be greatly accepted. These can be in the form of short articles or photographs.
- (2) Speakers you wish to hear at our monthly meetings. I will continue the tradition of having a speaker for each of the 10 monthly meetings which will be held on the first Monday of the month. There will be no meeting in January or the month of the OSNZ AGM.
- (3) Field trips and local studies. I have one or two ideas for new local studies which I am investigating. Once these ideas have matured I will contact you for your feedback and willingness to participate. In the meantime details of current projects are listed below.

Geoff de Lisle

## Field Activities

1. *Pauatahanui Inlet Survey*. A two year study where a census is taken once a month of all the birds on the inlet. The survey usually takes place on the first Sunday of each month. Please contact Ian Armitage if you are interested in participating in this survey.
2. *Mist netting and passerine banding at the Wellington Zoo*. The next session is planned for the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. Please contact Peter Reese for details.

Check out the blog for mist netting in Wellington – lots of great photographs and a summary of recent activities. <http://wgtznbanders.blogspot.co.nz/> .

3. Zealandia / Karori Sanctuary five minute bird counts. These counts are being carried out every 3 months. This is a great opportunity to learn the five minute bird counting technique. Please contact Colin Miskelly for details.

## Report from the NZ Bird Conference, Otago Museum Dunedin 1-3 June, 2013

A number of Wellington members of OSNZ migrated south to attend what was a highly successful meeting. Fortunately the snow from earlier in the week had disappeared by the time of the conference

Highlights of the conference included

- A day and a half of talks covering a wide range of different topics.
- The launching of NZBirdsonline. <http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/>



### **New Zealand Birds Online**

The digital encyclopaedia of New Zealand birds

OSNZ members are encouraged to look at NZBirdsonline as it contains not only lots of information but some wonderful photographs. Colin Miskelly is to be congratulated on producing this major contribution to New Zealand ornithology. A number of Wellington OSNZ members contributed photographs, text and inputting vast amounts of data.

- Workshops covering a range of different topics from mist netting, photography, E-bird and drawing birds. The last being taken by Derek Onley, the artist noted for his pictures in Heather and Robertson and the Helm Field Guide, Albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters of the world.
- Field trips to Orokonui Sanctuary, Tairoa Head, the Catlins and a behind the scenes tour of Otago Museum. ....



Orokonui Visitor Centre



Sandfly Bay, Otago Peninsula– public beach where yellow eyed penguin can be seen

## Report of Monthly Meeting

### 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013. Matiu / Somes Island investigations

Ros Batcheler summarised the findings of the recent studies of Little Penguins on Matiu / Somes Island. Details of these studies were presented in the June 2013 issue of Southern Bird. Shane Cotter described progress in the transfer of fluttering shearwaters from Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds to Matiu / Somes Island. Two groups of 80 fluttering shearwater chicks have been transferred. The first was transferred in January 2012, and the second the following year. The birds were transferred to artificial burrows and spent approximately 3 weeks on the island before fledging. There have been a small number of recoveries of transferred birds, including one in Melbourne of a bird that left Somes 23 days previously. A sound system has been established on the island and since 2010 non-transferred adults have been on the island. These included 6 known age birds which were banded as chicks on Mana Island. The final transfer of chicks will occur in January 2014.

The final talk by Susan Waugh summarised the results of two sets of bird counts. First series of counts were conducted between 2002 and 2005 and the next, 5 years later. An interesting observation was the counts of spotted shags which nest on the island. Counts taken from a boat were significantly greater than those taken from the island. Importantly, there was no evidence of a decline in the number of spotted shags between the two series of counts.

## The Big Storm

While there is argument over whether Wellington's southerly in June was the biggest since the Wahine storm in 1978, the resultant destruction has been very extensive and widespread. Large numbers of trees, especially macrocarpa and pine trees were flattened. Amongst the casualties were the two macrocarpas on the foreshore on Mana Island on which pied shags nested. Zealandia had numerous trees flattened and some damage to the fence. Rapid repairs were made to the fence



Mana Island, 2009-12. Peter Reese, NZBirdsonline.

and a programme instituted to see if any predators entered the sanctuary. At the last OSNZ meeting Raewyn Empson reported that so far no evidence of predators has been detected. Evidence of the big storm was littered on Petone beach where Reg Cotter found 6 penguin nest boxes, 4 rat bait stations and 4 tracking tunnels. In addition he found 3 gannets, 6 diving petrels, 1 grey-backed storm petrel, 1 white capped mollymawk and 1 black-browed mollymawk.

## Summary of storm Damage – Vince Waanders

A total of 195 penguin burrows were checked for Storm Damage over a two day period on Matiu/Somes Island. Thirty four burrows were found to have been effected by the storm event that occurred on 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013.

All the storm damaged burrows were within the coastal 'absolute maximum' high tidal zone on the beaches. The main area of damage was in the southern coastal Light House area, followed by North Point and Wharf Area.

	<b>Destroyed:</b>	<b>Swamped:</b>	<b>Lid Off:</b>
<b>LIGHT HOUSE:</b>	11	8	2
<b>NORTH POINT:</b>	1	5	1
<b>WHARF AREA:</b>	0	6	0
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3</b>

**Swamped** = Sea surged in/around burrow.

**Lid Off** = Lid completely off box. Does **not** include lids partially off.

I ran out of time to check the West Coast burrows. The burrows in this West Coast area are confined to one bay, and a high percentage of the burrows are above the maximum tidal zone. A few losses could be expected in this area.

All other areas checked above 10m above sea level on the Island and within the bush areas, were relatively unaffected by the storm.

The bush areas on the island have suffered a significant 'shake up'. Many large trees have been uprooted and large branches have come down in the Nursery area, and smaller planted trees are leaning over partially uprooted. Large areas of the tree canopy over the island have most of their leaves 'sucked' off, and any remaining leaves have been severely salt burnt. Despite this storm damage we found nothing that was adversely affecting the penguin burrows beneath the canopy.

Mokopuna Island or Makaro Island has not been checked during our storm assessment trips. We still have 2x boxes that were found on Petone beach that came from Mokopuna Island.

No further trips are planned. Much of the storm damaged boxes in our study area have been fixed.

We are now at least aware of what damage has been done due to the storm and don't have to speculate on just the findings of the 3x penguin boxes, 4 tracking tunnels and 4x bait stations that were found washed up on Petone beach. And more importantly we have recorded valuable data that can be used if any significant anomalies occur in his seasons breeding season.

Thanks to all who responded to the call for volunteers at such short notice. Appreciate the frustration many of you had in not being able to break away from other commitments.

## **Pauatahanui Survey - data supplied by Ian Armitage**

The current Pauatahanui Survey has reached the half-way point. Counts are carried out each month, generally on the first Sunday of the month. Members who wish to participate in this survey should contact Ian Armitage. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> series of counts, the first being conducted in 1982. The following table is a summary of the combined June and July counts and a comparison with the 3 previous sets of counts. Interesting points to note are;

- A major decrease in the total number of birds seen between the current counts and those in the 1980s and 1990s. Much of this decrease is due to the large reduction in the number of black-backed gulls.
- The total number of species has not changed.

- Major decline in the number of black-backed gulls, red-billed gulls, black shags and Caspian terns.
- Major increases in the number of Pied shags, Pied and Variable oystercatchers.
- Pied shags are now nesting in the inlet.
- The appearance of new species including Royal spoonbills, Bellbirds and Canada geese.
- A notable increase in the growth of the plantings by Forest and Bird in the DOC reserve.
- A new walkway of the shore of the inlet by Gray's Road.

Data summarised here compare bird counts made in **July** and **June+July** (combined) over a 40 year period, June 1983 to June 2013, in Pauatahanui Inlet, Porirua Harbour.

Species	June & July 1983	June & July 1993	June & July 2003	June & July 2013
BELLBIRD	0	0	0	1
BLACKBIRD, European	8	19	18	34
CHAFFINCH	60	35	18	24
DOTTEREL, Banded	8	12	13	46
DUCK, Grey	0	4	2	0
DUNNOCK	0	4	0	1
FAINTAIL, Pied	4	5	8	20
GANNET, Australasian	0	0	1	0
GODWIT, Bartailed	0	0	0	0
GOLDFINCH, European	12	28	27	11
GOOSE, domestic	0	5	4	0
GOOSE, Canada	0	0	2	54
GREENFINCH	5	10	0	2
GULL, Black-backed	2253	2361	166	531
GULL, Red-billed	193	129	56	88
Gull, Black-billed	0	7	4	0
HARRIER, swamp	4	4	1	0
HERON, reef	0	0	0	0
HERON, white-faced	22	34	12	22
KINGFISHER, sacred	19	29	7	35
MAGPIE, Australian	22	8	0	0
MALLARD / Mallard x Grey Duck	761	505	155	154
OYSTERCATCHER, Variable	21	21	48	46
OYSTERCATCHER, Pied	22	52	37	105
yPIGEON Feral / White Dove	0	0	8	0
PIPIT, New Zealand	0	0	0	0
PLOVER, Spur-winged	6	42	45	84
PUKEKO	47	57	48	9
REDPOLL, Common	0	0	0	1
ROSELLA, Eastern	0	0	0	1
SHAG, Black	52	37	36	7
SHAG, Little	149	63	31	33
<b>SHAG, Little black</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2</b>
SHAG, Spotted	0	0	0	0

SHAG, Pied	0	0	0	49
SHELLDUCK, Paradise	4	6	58	31
SHOEVELER, Australasian	0	33	4	23
SILVEREYE	30	4	23	22
SKYLARK	17	7	4	0
SPARROW, House	75	40	6	36
SPOONBILL, Royal	0	0	13	15
STARLING, Common	30	31	26	18
STILT, Pied	48	60	34	53
SWALLOW, Welcome	9	7	25	20
SWAN, Black	121	62	125	42
TEAL, Grey	0	2	0	22
TERN, White-fronted	0	8	0	0
TERN, Caspian	15	16	11	3
THRUSH, Song	3	10	2	11
TUI	0	0	0	4
WARBLER, Grey	0	3	2	2
YELLOWHAMMER	10	4	9	4

<b>Total number of Birds</b>	<b>4036</b>	<b>3985</b>	<b>1181</b>	<b>1666</b>
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<b>Total number of Species</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>
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The new walkway on Grays Road



Pauatahanui Inlet



## Jo McLean – Ceramicist

<http://cuckoo.co.nz/>

Unlike many artists Jo McLean has turned her creative endeavours to a wide range of bird species, especially those that have received little or no attention by others.

Check out her website to see some examples of her work.

## 14-20 January 2014 The Miranda Field Course

Now in its fifteenth year the Miranda Field Course is perfect for any naturalist. Topics covered in past courses have included geology, botany, and entomology, but with a focus on birds, identification, catching, and details on ecology of some of our shorebirds. For details of the 2014 course [click](http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Miranda-Field-Course-2014.jpg) on link below or contact the Centre on 09 2322781.

<http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Miranda-Field-Course-2014.jpg>

*Note: This course comes highly recommended and a number of Wellington OSNZ members have attended previous courses.*

## Little egret & white herons at Lake Wairarapa

**Posted by Nikki McArthur on BirdingNZ » Sun Jun 09, 2013 3:53 pm**

*Hi All,*

*Last Thursday Hugh Robertson, Lynn Adams, Annette Harvey, Susanne Govella and myself carried out a count of shorebirds and (selected) waterfowl spp. along the eastern shoreline of Lake Wairarapa. Highlights of the day included 1 little egret, 4 white herons and an Australasian bittern all seen at the same location at a lagoon behind Willow/Jury Island. Two more bitterns were also encountered, one near the Oporua Floodway and another just south of the Tauherenikau Delta. Numbers of some shorebird species (particularly pied stilts, banded dotterels and black-fronted dotterels) were lower than usual, most likely because much of the mudflat habitat usually available to them was under water. The other unusual feature of this count was that Canada geese far outnumbered black swans, something I never thought would be possible based on the results of previous surveys! A complete summary of the birds encountered is given in the table below. Note that some waterfowl species (namely mallard, shoveler and grey teal) were not counted due to time constraints.*

*Regards,*

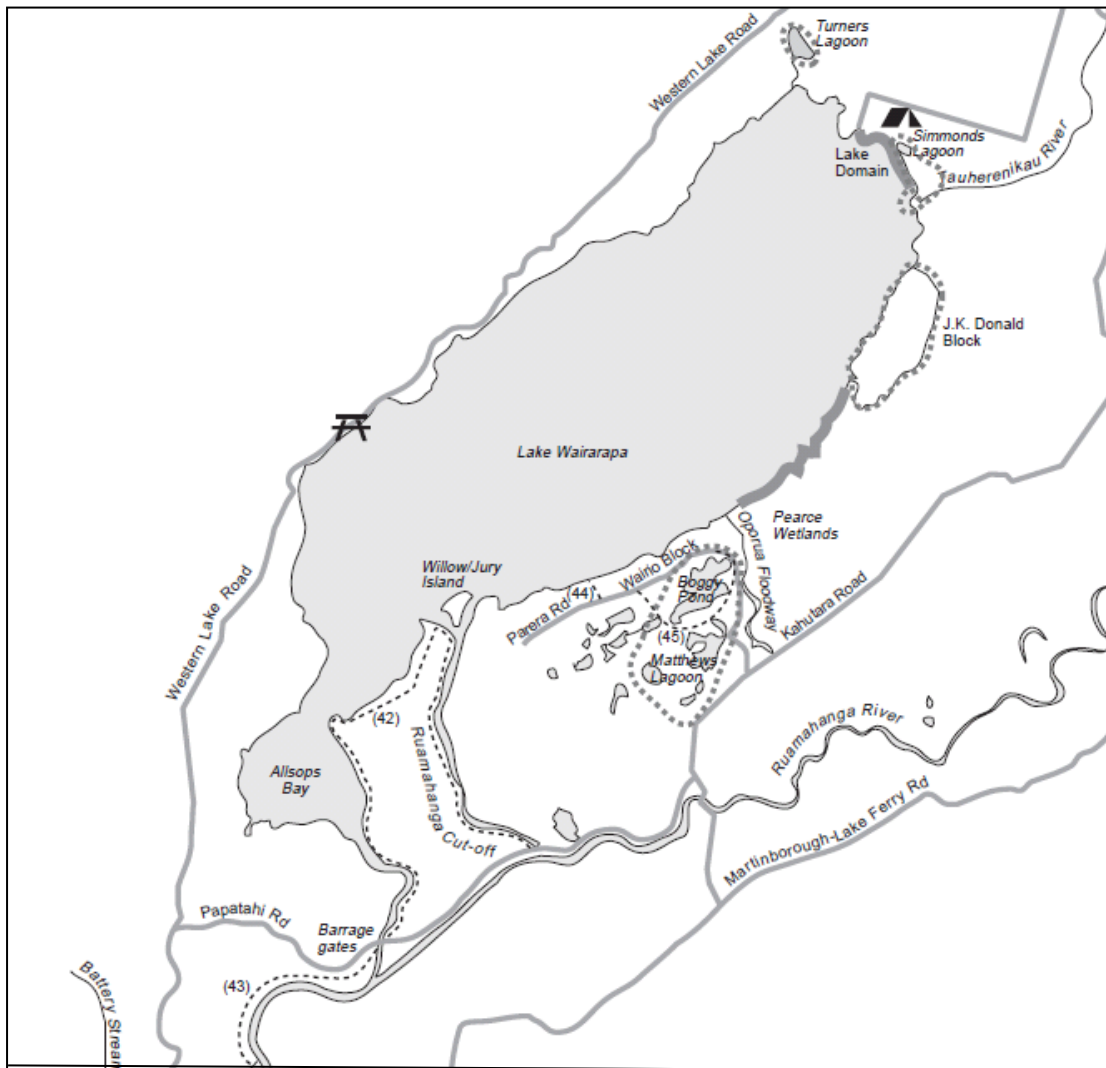
*Nikki*

### **Summary of shorebirds and waterfowl counted along the eastern shoreline of Lake Wairarapa, June 2013**

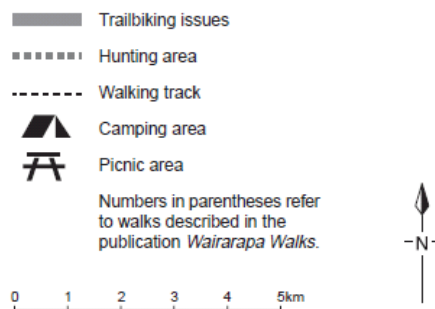
Species / Number counted

Dabchick	117	Bittern	3	Variable Oystercatcher	4
Black Shag	93	Royal Spoonbill	16	Pied Stilt	448
Little Black Shag	174	Black Swan	1899	Banded Dotterel	72
Little Shag	71	Canada Goose	2768	Black-fronted Dotterel	29
Pied Shag	1	Feral Goose	168	Spur-winged Plover	26
White-faced Heron	31	Paradise Shelduck	17	Black-backed Gull	197
White Heron	4	Pukeko	3	Black-billed Gull	282
Little Egret	1	Pied Oystercatcher	9	Caspian Tern	9

Total 6442



MAP Source: Department of Conservation.



## Monthly Meetings

**August 5** The August meeting will have a veterinary flavour. A wildlife veterinarian, Sarah Michael will present a talk on the activities of The Nest, Wellington Zoo's animal hospital and centre for native wildlife and Wildbase, the wildlife health centre at Massey University. A feature of these two wildlife veterinary centres is their close working relationship, with wildlife interns from Massey working on rotation at the Zoo.



**September 2** Colin Miskelly will talk on NZBirdsonline. This talk will include how local OSNZ members can help with additions to the website.

**Where and when:**

Meetings are held at Te Papa's collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up the steps and across the parking area to the door.

Starting 7.45.

Phone Sue on 029 770 6498 if you get there late and can't get in!

## Wellington Region Contacts

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Southern Bird Regional Roundup	Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929 <a href="mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com">osnzwelly@gmail.com</a>
Pauatahanui Inlet Survey	Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470 <a href="mailto:ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz">ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz</a>
Mist netting and passerine banding	Peter Reese (04) 387 7387 <a href="mailto:ruth.peterr@actrix.co.nz">ruth.peterr@actrix.co.nz</a>
Zealandia 5 minute counts	Colin Miskelly <a href="mailto:Hakawai@xtra.co.nz">Hakawai@xtra.co.nz</a>

