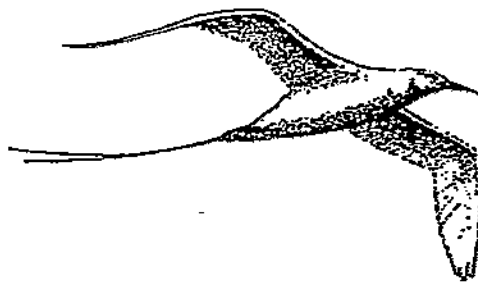


AMOKURA



Newsletter
of the Northland Region
of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand

October 2011**Amokura 102**

Published in February, May and October of each year

MEETINGS of the Northland Branch of the O.S.N.Z. are held each month on the second Thursday, for the period FEBRUARY to DECEMBER.

TIME: 7-30p.m.

VENUE: Founders Room, Alzheimers Society, 321 Western Hills Drive, Whangarei.

COST: A donation of \$3-00 per meeting is requested toward the cost of hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

ALL WELCOME

PROGRAMME TO DECEMBER 2011

- OCTOBER 8 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
11 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
13 NO MEETING THIS MONTH – N.Z. DOTTEREL SURVEY!
15/16 DOTTEREL SURVEY
- NOVEMBER 5 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
8 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
17 FIELD TRIP – PORT WHANGAREI – Be at end of road at 7-00p.m. with scopes and binoculars to observe Royal Spoonbills and Wrybills.
- DECEMBER 7 POT LUCK CHRISTMAS GATHERING at the Alzheimers Society Rooms, 321 Western Hills Drive at 6-30p.m. *Note change of date to avoid "Carols in the Park".*
17 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
20 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:	David Crockett	435-0954
TREASURER:	Den Carter	435-1650
SECRETARY:	Ruth Crockett	435-0954
REGIONAL RECORDER:	Tony Beauchamp	436-2224
REGIONAL REPORTER:	Claire Burt	435-1166
AMOKURA EDITOR:	Kevin Hayes	437-6470

THE WHITE BIRDS

On 24th September 2010, Claire and I headed North via the West Coast for a relaxing weekend, staying at Dargaville, Trounson Park and Rawene. At the Kai Iwi Lakes we parked near some dead mangroves in a swampy area to have our lunch and observed a busy colony of Little Shags in the dead mangroves and counted 38 birds and 32 occupied nests.

We went for a guided night-time walk at Trounson Park where we heard Morepork and Kiwi and saw a Pigeon asleep in a tree high above us on the walkway. In a large hollow log there were Cave Weta's and a live rat which scuttled away when it saw the torches. In a small stream, "Colby" a tame eel (who likes cheese!) and Koura were lurking in the shadows. We also saw Glow-worms, the shells of Kauri Snails and a huge live Kauri Snail gliding slowly along a dead log.

Back on the Rawene road and heading for our Cabin we anticipated stopping at the Rawene sewage ponds where birds often congregate, but what a disappointment this time, as the ponds were overgrown with some sort of weed and were very smelly! A few years ago we saw a White Heron there among lots of other birds, but this time there were only 3 Black Shags and didn't stay long at all.

Monday 27th September was another beautiful calm day and we headed for Horeke where we had counted many birds on previous visits. We stopped by the Horeke Wharf for our picnic lunch and watched the children playing in the full tide, but there were no birds in the area. As we drove a few kilometres down Motukiore Road and past the Mangungu Mission station we saw a large white bird, high in a mangrove tree.

Stopping as quickly as possible, we got out the telescopes and binoculars, but the bird flew over the road in front of us and landed on a water trough in the paddock where it displaced a White-faced Heron. We looked at this white bird for ages but couldn't decide what it was. I dictated to Claire while I scanned the bird and she busily made copious notes as we started our quest to identify it. It looked like an all-white White-faced Heron in its size, shape and actions. On our return to Whangarei, we contacted Tony Beauchamp, our local scientist, who suggested that it was a White-faced Heron Morph. We agree with him, but were still curious and excited about finding something different!

October 23rd to 25th saw us off north again to see if the white bird was still around. YES! there it was, same road – just a bit further along, sitting high up in the same mangrove tree on the roadside, on the Hokianga Harbour shoreline near a gate with the number 393 on it. We observed it again for about two and a half hours as it sat preening in the sunshine. There was a greyish-white bird roosting beside the white bird. The second bird was also white, but had grey blotches amongst the white feathers all over his body and it took off, just minutes after we arrived. The birds are the same size as a White-faced Heron and have a similar style of flight. So now there are TWO white birds!

We went back to Horeke on 25th March 2011, six months after our first sighting and sure enough, there was still one bird in the same area, only closer to the road this time where we viewed it clearly and for some time. This white bird chased away two White-faced Heron when they came too close to him before returning to preen in the sunshine. We then noticed a second white and blotchy grey bird in a nearby tree, but too far away to get any more details.

Apparently we still have two White-faced Heron Morphs. Did they hatch here? Have they come from another area in New Zealand? Have they come over from Australia? Roll on springtime 2011. We will return to Horeke....

Janet Snell & Claire Burt.

BIRDING IN THE FAR NORTH

During August 2011 I spent three weeks in Pukenui on the Houhora Harbour and enjoyed spending some quality time bird watching in the Far North. On my way North on July 30th, I called at Motukiore near Horeke, to check on the WHITE BIRDS that we saw on a previous trip. On this sunny, calm morning, I saw them in the same place.

The blotchy grey/white bird has developed beautiful long grey plumes. He was stepping cautiously along a drain right beside the car, dabbling his feet to disturb little creatures in the water. The other white bird was again sitting in the tall mangrove tree beside the road where he continued to preen himself as I watched him through the telescope.

North of Awanui, at the Unahi Wharf, on the same day I counted 80 Royal Spoonbills standing together at the edge of the tide which was about half out. Two days later, my birding mate from Pukenui - Annie-Mae Crene, and I counted 35 Royal Spoonbills in the top of the old macrocarpa trees just in front of the Houhora Tavern. Near the Te Kao School we saw Brown Quail and 2 Green Finch on the side of the road.

Travelling on to Tapotupotu Bay where we saw very few birds – only a few Red-billed Gulls and 1 Pipit, but what we did discover that excited us was, at the southern end of the camping area, a new boardwalk that winds around the edge of the muddy area before taking you across the stream by way of a wooden bridge. Thank you! Department of Conservation – good work!

At the southern end of Spirits Bay, at Kapowairua, there were once again, very few birds seen - 6 Skylarks, 1 N.Z. Dotterel, 4 Variable Oystercatchers, 2 Big Black Shags, 2 Mallard Ducks, 1 Pied Shag and 4 Pukeko. The small Pied Shag colony in the Pohutukawa tree at the back of the camping area has gone. At Te Hapua we saw many Royal Spoonbills feeding on the mudflats at low tide, but it was by now quite cloudy and the birds were a long way from where we were standing, preventing a decent count so we abandoned the idea.

On Friday 5th August Annie-Mae Crene, Coe Hopkins (another local) and I went up to Rarawa Beach. On either side of the Rarawa Road the paddocks had been churned up by cattle and we counted over 1000 Red-billed Gulls that were in flocks (feeding or standing) scattered throughout the paddocks. The sun was shining and the Gulls showed up brilliantly white. What a sight! Down at the Beach at the southern end, we counted 18 – 21 N.Z. Dotterel, many of which were highly coloured. This seems to be one of their favourite places to nest, so let's hope that there is not too much easterly weather this Spring.

The afternoon of 8th August saw us off to Paua to check for birds in the paddocks on Te Pua Road. At first glance we thought that once again, there were not many birds around but after a while scanning 160 SIPO through the telescope, we counted over 208 Banded Dotterels - very highly coloured. Some were sitting in the grass and others were feeding, all spread out over a large area. On our way home we stopped again at the grassy area beside the Houhora Tavern and counted 47 Royal Spoonbills, 380 Pied Stilts and 2 Caspian Tern, all standing on the edge of the high tide.

On my way back to Whangarei on the 18th, I called in to the Unahi Wharf at Awanui where the Royal Spoonbills were flying from the top of the old Macrocarpa trees to the flat paddock across the road. They sat in a tight bunch when they landed, but I counted 200 more that joined the main group that were already in the paddock proving that a large number of these birds still like to "hang-out" at Unahi. There were also 230 Red-billed Gulls and 80 Black-backed Gulls on the water by the wharf. The highlight of my visit this year was the presence of the Banded Dotterel at Paua as I have never before seen so many together at one time.

Janet Snell.

JUNE MEETING

Pete Mitchell, Ranger for the Bream Head Trust presented a well designed "Powerpoint" illustrated talk to our June meeting. Pete was previously the Ranger on Matakahe (Limestone) Island opposite Onerahi in the Whangarei Harbour for four years and he explained that there are at Bream Head, two significant areas of forest; the Bream Head ridge and the Manaia ridge which are under the joint care of the Bream Head Trust, D.o.C and the Whangarei Landcare Forum.

These two areas are fine examples of Northland coastal broadleaf forest, of which, a core area of 180 hectares in two valleys with large remnant trees, is intensively managed. Pest trapping is done over a large area and 40 Kiwi have already been released there. The nearby offshore Hen and Chickens Islands have a high diversity of bird life and Kakariki, Kaka and Bellbirds visit all year round. There are resident Tui, Kukupa, Tomtit, Fantails and Warblers and Reef-heron, Cook's Petrel, Pycroft's Petrel and Grey-faced Petrel have been noted along the shoreline. Also recorded are Long-tailed Bats and the southernmost population of Superb Land Snail (*Powelliphanta superba*) and Flax Snail (*Placostylus species*). The Auckland Green Gecko, Pacific Forest Gecko and Common Gecko are present as are Copper and Shore Skink and Giraffe Weevils.

The local community takes an active part in this project with 4000+ young trees planted each year. Field-days have been held where local archaeologists, botanists and educators have guided groups of about 60 visitors around the features of the site. Evening talks have been given on Lizards and invertebrates and six local school groups have visited during the past summer. A major school curriculum programme is being evaluated and should be released shortly. It was exciting to hear of the substantial progress made by the Trust in such a short time, in an ecologically and visually important area.

Our July speaker was Wade Doak, the well known diver, author and conservationist who has written 18 books about the marine environment, including introductory books for children. Since the age of fourteen years in Christchurch, Wade has been passionate about diving and he even moved to live in Northland to be close to the Poor Knights Islands which he regards as having international significance.

Wade films underwater among sharks, bottle-nosed dolphins and many other species including the Coral fish (with its long white feelers) that picks "nits" off other fish. These nits even get into the gills and at times there are queues of fish waiting for their treatment. Some time ago, when looking at plants growing on the cliff-face at the Poor Knights, he saw a native orchid for the first time. This sighting led to an enthusiastic interest in the birds and plants of the above-water environment.

Wade and his wife Jan live on a 44 acre block near Ngunguru, a great part of which is covered in regenerating native bush, home to Kiwi, Grey Warblers, Shining Cuckoo and Long-tailed Cuckoo among others. Predator control is paramount, but rats are a continuing problem. Wade says "It is necessary for the whole community to become involved with the problem of the SILENT BUSH". "We must take time to closely observe what is around us."

Thank you Wade for a passionate and stimulating talk that was enjoyed by all.

Our August Meeting was devoted to a discussion about the programme for the balance of the year. Members indicated that they prefer a mix of the following activities: A survey of Banded Rail would require three evenings - possibly in October. The proposed national Caspian Tern Survey - Query our ability to complete fieldwork in the light of our commitment to the NZ Dotterel survey. Comment was made that Caspian Tern appear to only nest at Mangawhai and Knight Island (off Matakahe Is. in the

Whangarei Harbour). Can we survey Wrybill/Spoonbill at Port Nikau – old Harbour Board reclamation? Guest speakers and Video/DVD presentations with a birding bias.

N.Z. DOTTEREL SURVEY: Organisers to be Kevin Hayes, Tony Beauchamp, Audrey Williams, Dale Calvert, Den Carter.

FAIRY TERN TRUST: Audrey asked for volunteers to assist at the Museum Open-day on Sunday 11th September and also at the Planting day on Sunday 18th September at Uretiti

RECENT SIGHTINGS WERE:
Pauline Smith and Kevin Hayes counted 24 N.Z. Dotterel and 80 VOC at Ngunguru on 22nd May and when visiting the area again on 9th July, saw 27 N.Z. Dotterel and 38 VOC.

The Whangarei Harbour survey on 19th June produced 142 Royal Spoonbills and 1 Glossy Ibis.

Janet Snell and Claire Burttt disturbed two Australasian Bittern on a pond beside the track to the hide at Portland where there were 20 Wrybill on the roost on 19th June.

A big wreck of Little Blue Penguins was reported on the East Coast where 247 were counted between Ruakaka and Uretiti on 24th July.

At Onerahi, Katrina Hansen and Gerard Pilon observed 20 Tui feeding in a Taiwanese Cherry tree on 28th July.

Recent media attention has been on the Prion wreck on our northern coasts. While most of the birds were on the West Coast, a lesser number were counted on the East Coast beaches. On July 17th between Omamari and Kai Iwi stream, 2142 Prion were counted in a distance of 4.75km. In a random sample of 100 birds, 73% were Broad-billed Prion, 13% Fairy Prion, 7% were Lesser Broad-billed Prion and 7% were Antarctic Prion.

On 23rd July at Ocean Beach, Whangarei Heads, Janet Snell and Claire Burttt found 48 Fairy Prion, 1 Broad-billed Prion, 3 Lesser Broad-billed Prion, 16 Diving Prion, 1 Giant Petrel and 1 Buller's Mollymawk. On the same day at Pataua North, Karen Miller and Dale Calvert walked the beach and numbers were 39 Fairy Prion, 4 Broad-billed Prion, 5 Lesser Broad-billed Prion, 1 Antarctic Prion, 19 Diving Petrel and 1 White-headed Petrel.

Claire Burttt

SEPTEMBER MEETING

We welcomed Hilton ward of the Ngunguru Group to our meeting where we spent most of our time helping Tony and Kevin to co-ordinate coverage of the coastline of our territory for the NZ Dotterel survey. After supper we watched a DVD (supplied by Audrey Williams) that featured Australian coastal wildlife. Thanks Audrey!

100 issues of AMOKURA – What was hot and what was not!

In November 1977 the first issue of the revamped newsletter **AMOKURA No.1** was issued. Members were urged to forward information to Sandy Edgar for inclusion in the re-activated mapping scheme and mention was made of the Provisional Atlas which is to be issued to members at a cost of \$2-00. The format of AMOKURA changed from foolscap to A4 following the metrication of measurements.

Issue 3 in May 1978 mentions the arrival during the preceding 5 – 6 years, of Australian water birds including Cattle Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Hoary-headed Grebe, Australian Little Grebe and Nankeen Kestrel, while the August 1979 issue offered the chance to attend a talk by Geoff Moon the celebrated photographer.

Number 10 recorded the deaths of Rose and Lyndsay Burgess on the ill-fated Air New Zealand Erebus flight. Issue 11 reported the rare find of a White-tailed Tropic Bird near Maunganui Bluff by Alistair and Audrey Gordon. Murray Quinn was awarded the "Young Ornithologist of the Year" at the O.S.N.Z. AGM in 1980. Issue No.14 recorded the passing of A. H. Watt (1887 – 1980) in Kaitaia. Many of his observations are summarised in the article "*Birds of Parengarenga Harbour and the Farthest North*" (See Notornis Vol2, No.5)

Issue 15 of June 1981 reported that Sandy Edgar was lightening his workload: he was the R.R. for Northland & the Far North from 1966 - 1972, Secretary of the OSNZ Council from 1962 – 1967 and organiser of the National Recording Scheme from 1966 – 1979; a truly notable contribution!

By issue 17 in November 1981, AMOKURA had recorded the appearance of the Yellow-nosed Mollymawk (*Diomedea Chlororhynchos*) in Northland waters and the second N.Z. record of the White-necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*) near Houhora. The colour banding of Black-backed Gulls (*Larus dominicanus*) was scheduled for the week prior to Christmas near Uretiti Beach. Gerry Clark of Kerikeri reported hearing a shining cuckoo singing at night and Ossie Secomb confirmed that Spur-winged Plover were breeding at Lake Ohia.

(These items were skimmed from issues 1 – 30 during an indexing exercise. More to follow!)

CONVENORS:

WEST COAST BEACH PATROLS:	Prue Cozens	437 7760
EAST COAST BEACH PATROLS:	Claire Burt	435 1166
WHANGAREI HARBOUR CENSUS:	Tony Beauchamp	436 2224
KAIPARA HARBOUR CENSUS:	David Crockett	435 0954
LIMESTONE/MATAKOHE ISLAND:	Gerry Brackenbury	437 7532
BIRD RECOVERY CENTRE	Prue Cozens	437 7760
SUPPERS:	Pauline Smith	437 6470
	Marie Smith	437 0214

To ensure that our group reflects the interests of our members, please let David or Ruth know if you would like us to pursue a particular guest speaker/video or DVD for one of our meetings, or perhaps you know of a particular area to visit that would make an interesting field trip? We look forward to hearing from you.

For details on joining the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, please contact us. The publications NOTORNIS and SOUTHER BIRD enhance your knowledge of our unique birdlife!

EAST COAST BEACH PATROL – SUMMARY – Code NE
 Compiled by P. R. SMITH – Period JANUARY to JUNE 2011

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	TOTAL
FROM	Mair Road	Kauri Mt.	Marsden Pt.	Surf Club	Surf Cl.	1km Nth Uretiti	
TO	Waipu River	Waipu R.	Waipu Tip.	1km Nth V	Waipu R.	1km Nth Waipu R	
DISTANCE	10km	11.5km	12km	7.5km	7.0km	7.5km	
PATROLLERS	C. L. Burt M. Smith	A. Williams J Snell	P. Cozens J. Hudson				
Wandering Albatross							
Royal Albatross							
Black-browed Mollymawk							
White-capped (shy mollymawk)							
Grey-headed Mollymawk							
Buller's Mollymawk							
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross							
Flesh-footed Shearwater	4		1		1		6
Buller's Shearwater	2		1	1			4
Sooty Shearwater	1						1
Short-tailed Shearwater							
Fluttering Shearwater	21		5				26
Hutton's Shearwater		NO					
Little Shearwater		PATROL					
Common Diving Petrel	3	THIS					3
Black Petrel		MONTH					
White-chinned Petrel							
Kerguelen Petrel							
Cape Pigeon	1						1
Antarctic Fulmar							
Northern Giant Petrel							
Fairy Prion	3						3
Thin-billed Prion							
Antarctic Prion							
Broad-billed Prion							
Lesser Broad-billed Prion							
Prion sp	1						1
Blue Petrel							
Pycroft's Petrel							
Cook's Petrel	1			1			2
Black-winged Petrel							
Mottled Petrel							
Grey-faced Petrel	5				1		6
White-headed Petrel							
White-faced Storm Petrel							
Blue Penguin	49		33	4	7	1	94
Australasian Gannet	5		1				6
Pied Shag	1					1	2
Paradise Shelduck					2		2
Tui			2				2
Variable Oystercatcher							
Southern Black-backed Gull					1		1
Red-billed Gull							
Caspian Tern							
White-fronted Tern	1						1
Black Swan							
Myna	1						1
Southern Skua							
TOTALS	99	Nil	43	6	12	2	162

WEST COAST BEACH PATROL SUMMARY – Code NW
 Compiled by Prue Cozens – Period JANUARY to JUNE 2011

MONTH	15-01-11	13-02-11	12-03-11	11-04-11	07-05-11	11-06-11	
FROM	Mahuta Gap	3.5k Nth Bay	Mahuta Gap	Mahuta Gap	Mahuta Gap	Mahuta Gap	Mahuta Gap
TO	3k Nth.Bayle	Mahuta Gap	3k Nth.Chase	3k Nth.Chase	3k Nth.Chase	3k Nth.Chase	
DISTANCE	11.5km.	11.5km.	10km.	10km.	10km.	10km.	TOTAL
PATROLLERS:	<i>K. Miller</i>	<i>D. Calvert</i>	<i>P. Cozens</i>	<i>H. vanWeirir</i>			
Wandering Albatross							
Royal Albatross							
Black-browed Mollymawk							
White-capped (shy mollymawk)							
Storm Petrel Sp.							
Buller's Mollymawk							
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross							
Flesh-footed Shearwater							4
Buller's Shearwater	1	3					4
Sooty Shearwater		4					
Short-tailed Shearwater							4
Fluttering Shearwater	2	2					
Hutton's Shearwater							
Little Shearwater							
Common Diving Petrel							
Black Petrel							
White-chinned Petrel							
Kerguelen Petrel							
Cape Pigeon			NO	NO		NO	
Antarctic Fulmar							
Northern Giant Petrel							
Fairy Prion			PATROLLE	PATROLLE		PATROLLE	
Thin-billed Prion							
Antarctic Prion			AVAILABL	AVAILABL		AVAILABL	
Broad-billed Prion							
Fulmar-billed Prion							
Prion sp							
Blue Petrel							
Pycroft's Petrel							
Cook's Petrel		1					1
Black-winged Petrel							
Mottled Petrel							
Grey-faced Petrel		1					1
White-headed Petrel		1					1
White-faced Storm Petrel							
Blue Penguin		2					2
Australasian Gannet		3					3
Pied Shag							
Paradise Shelduck							
Mallard duck							
Variable Oystercatcher							
Southern Black-backed Gull		4					4
Red-billed Gull							
Magpie					2		2
White Fronted Tern		1			1		2
TOTAL	3	22	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	28

WHANGAREI HARBOUR SURVEY

DATE 19th JUNE 2011

Compiled by Tony Beauchamp.

	North shore	Portland	Skull creek	Takahawai	Marsden Point	Port Whangarei	Waipu	Ruakaka	TOTAL
Pied Shag	6				1			4	11
LB Shag	1								1
L shag		1							1
WF Heron		27	19				5		51
Reef Heron							1		1
Spoonbill	8		22	90			28		148
NZ pied oystercatcher	70	50		30		37	173	0	360
Variable oystercatcher	29		66		116	7	32	80	330
Pied Stilt	11	65	159	16	44		40	2	335
NZ dotterel							21	2	23
B Dotterel	22		1	50	1			21	95
Wrybill		20							20
Spur-winged Plover	16	12			2				30
Bar-tailed Godwit	1		21	3					25
BB gull	40	30				14		43	127
RB gull	50	3		1	6	2		0	62
Caspian tern	5	2	21		4	5	4	10	51
White-fronted tern	26					17		8	68
Black swan							20		20
Glossy ibis				1					1
TOTALS	285	210	309	191	174	82	341	168	1760

Counters: Tony Beauchamp, Margaret & Peter Hutchinson, Audrey Williams, Dale Calvert, Karen Miller, Pauline Smith, Prue Cozens, Jean Hawkins, Claire Burt, Janet Snell, Katrina Hansen