



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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Otago Region Newsletter 1/2014 February 2014



Anne Marris & Pete Hodgson found this adult Nankeen Night Heron on their property at Sawyer's Bay back on 13 December last year. The report eventually reached Mary through NZ Birds Online - "We have a creek running behind our property, Thompson's creek and my wife disturbed a bird that flew into our Rewarewa tree, about 6 m above the ground, at dusk. I later identified it via 'NZ birds on line'. It is now nearly dark and the bird is feeding in the creek, presumably on koura as that is the main species present." Although breeding in the Wanganui River for some years this appears to be only the third sighting in Otago.

NZ Birds Online was also the source of this report of Cape Barren Geese in Central Otago.

On 25 January David Palmer reported, "Last winter two Cape Barrens Geese took up residence at our property. One disappeared, then probably about October, the other also went.

They are now back again. We live on a large rural residential property with lots of ponds and some open grazing between Queenstown and Arrowtown."



There were no sightings recorded nearby during 1999-2004 Atlas surveys though they are regularly present near Christchurch and there have been a couple of fairly tame ones at Hokitika Sewage Ponds for several years though by last Christmas there apparently was only one (left). From rare birds we continue with mere

Ornithological Snippets

On 11 January Alan Baker saw a **Falcon** flying along Wallace Street, on the edge of the Dunedin Town Belt.

His first sighting this season of a young **Shining Cuckoo** being fed by **Grey Warblers** was in the Dunedin Botanic Garden on 23 November. On 20 December there was one in his own garden in Roslyn. and his most recent at Ross Creek reservoir on 18 January and 1 February in the Botanic Garden.

On 8 February Alan walked along the West Harbour Cycle/Walkway. "A modest-sized macrocarpa tree near Burkes decorated with 14 **White-faced Herons** was a striking sight. As the tide began to fall, **Spoonbills** were among the birds which flocked to the newly exposed banks in the middle of the harbour. Off Maia was a group of 9 **Spoonbills**. Other birds I saw from the walkway included **Stewart Island, Black, Spotted** and **Little**

Shags, Pied and Black Oystercatchers, Black Swan and White-fronted Tern."

And lastly Alan saw a **Kaka** fitted with an aerial in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens on February 15, presumably one of several attempting to return "home" from the Orokonui Ecosanctuary.

Scott Jarvie and Alison heard **Sooty Shearwater** calls over top, southern end of the Orokonui Ecosanctuary on the night of 25 January.



Fernbirds are doing quite well up there as well. Left, a photo of 4 fernbird chicks in a *Carex secta*, just below the eel pond.

On 19 February, Ian Jamieson, Shinichi Nakagawa and Hamish Spencer were looking for **Fernbird** on Coult's Gulley Road, where it crosses the

wetland behind the beach south of Taieri Mouth, when they saw an **Australasian Bittern** walk across the road in full view. They did not see a **Fernbird**, even though we heard their call.

On 5 February Rob Schuckard and Willie Cook spotted a **Grey-tailed Tattler** among 513 **Bar-tailed Godwits** in Blueskin Bay near Dunedin. This is the third year running the/a bird has been present.



Not a lot has been reported at sea, partly no doubt because Graeme Loh is on the Galapagos. Derek Onley braved a southerly gale at Shag Point on 17 January hoping to see a bit more than the usual 30 **White-capped Mollymawks**, a couple of **Northern Royal Albatross** and **Gannet**, a single **Cape Pigeon**, a couple of 100 **Sooty** and half a dozen **Hutton's Shearwaters**. Over 500 **Red-billed Gulls** were still at the breeding colony but only 13 **White-fronted Terns** were present. Either they did not nest this year or had finished.



Bruce McKinley forwarded a couple of photos by Mike Wakelin. The 2 **Turnstones** at the end Aramoana Mole on 17 January are far from usual in the area and the bird (below left) at Deborah Bay is surely a contender for White-necked not Heron or similar rarity that will provide the ebird adjudicator with something to do.



Wainono Lagoon Fieldtrip, 30 November

A dozen or so Dunedinites plus a few others from Oamaru and points north of Otago managed to meet up at Lake Wainono, or more precisely the convenient cafe opposite the turn off to the wetland, at a reasonably early hour on 30 November. The water level in the lagoon was very high and at first glance there appeared to be little else except Black Swans. Undaunted, several boats and kayaks were launched and set off to investigate the maimai and dead willows in search of Royal Spoonbill nests. Barely five minutes after the expeditions set out, the wind turned southerly and the temperature dropped by 10 degrees. However, the worst of the rain squalls held off until everyone was as far from shelter as possible.

Species	West Shore Main Lagoon	Northern Arm
Greylag Goose	35	180
Canada Goose		300
Black Swan	1750	20
Paradise Shelduck	320	60
Mallard x Grey Duck	650	300
Australian Shoveler	3	80
Grey Teal	20	60
New Zealand Scaup	120	
Black Shag	6	
Little Pied Shag	3	
Royal Spoonbill	10	15
Australasian Harrier	6	2
Pukeko	1	20
Eurasian Coot	55	
Pied Stilt	10	270
Pied Oystercatcher	5	
Spur-winged Plover	500	50
Banded Dotterel		5
Bar-tailed Godwit	1	
Black-billed Gull	1	21
Red-billed Gull	1	
Black Backed Gull	8	21
Gull-billed Tern	1	
Black-fronted Tern	6	1
White-fronted Tern		25
Skylark	6	10
Welcome Swallow	40	6
Blackbird		1
European Starling	2	200
Dunnock		1
Yellowhammer	2	2
Redpoll	1	10
Goldfinch		4

The expedition reconvened at the cafe to dry out. Otherwise the day was successful, and as well as at least 10 Spoonbill nests, a Gull-billed Tern was briefly seen before the weather deteriorated.

On 20 December, Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway returned to Wainono lagoon with canoe on a fine, relatively calm day to have a closer look at the Royal Spoonbill colony that had been discovered on the OSNZ field trip on 30 November. "The isolated willow at the north end had 9 spoonbill roosting and we saw 3 nests and confirmed one with 3 eggs. The main colony was in dead willows overhanging the lagoon where the Hook River enters the lagoon and was very secluded from the main lagoon. A total of 43 spoonbill were seen together in one count so estimate at least 50 birds using the lagoon (on the previous trip 6 of the maimai had spoonbills in attendance and nests confirmed in most cases). 23 nests were seen at the main colony. Two birds were seen bringing nesting material back to the nests. No chicks were seen.

Roosting with the spoonbill were two smaller dark birds, which through the telescope were identified as Glossy Ibis-beautiful magenta head and neck plumage and glossy green/black wings and with down-curved bills. During the day one flew off towards the southern end of the lagoon and returned about 40 minutes later; the two birds did not do any greeting ceremony but roosted close together.



While we were watching the spoonbills, Sue thought she saw a harrier behind the trees, then, no it's just a heron, then, it's a brown heron! And there flying across the swamp was a Bittern. Sue's first and Mary's second in 45 years.

A Mute Swan was seen as well as all the usual water birds."

Derek Onley and Mary Thompson

Not the Best Sort of Banding Recovery

A banded Royal Spoonbill unfortunately crash-landed into a wheelie bin in a small backyard in Oxford St, South Dunedin, at approx 12am Thursday 16 January 2014. It was collected by local SPCA and held overnight, and picked up at 9.30am. It was taken to the Vet for assessment and it was euthanized by Dr. Tony Malthus due to extensive breaks to bones in left wing.



The bird, band number: 0-27594, was banded by Peter Schweigman on 17 December 1998 as a chick on Green Island; a female, it was 15 years old. On capture it regurgitated 4 small fish so had been feeding quite late at night and was probably heading back to Green Island.

The colour bands were faded, worth remembering when you see them in the field. It looks like Left leg is red/green and Right leg is blue/yellow. The blue is very faded on outside but the inside of the band was clearly blue.

Pipits and Juvenile Shining cuckoos feeding on magpie moth caterpillars on ragwort beside the Millennium trail near Beaumont.

On 11 January 2014 about 7 pm in warm sunny conditions, Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway stopped to watch about 8 pipits flitting about the open ground near the start of the track. We wondered why there were so many together and concluded they had come for the bugs on the ragwort. They consumed their prey on a nearby rock and performed their characteristic tail wags. Another bird was observed that looked a bit different and through binoculars identified to be a juvenile shining cuckoo with its stripes nearly formed but still dull grey head and only a few iridescent green patches on its wings. Further observation revealed another juvenile shining cuckoo close by (were they siblings?); they were fending for themselves, collecting woolly bear caterpillars from the ragwort,

returning to a rock and consuming the meal; then off to find another caterpillar, consuming it as fast as they could. This continued for 10 minutes or so, then one flew away to native scrub quite some distance away and the other further up the hill. They did not call and no grey warblers were seen in the area. But we had heard several shining cuckoo whistles further up the track.

Notices and Business

Library Additions

The following items of ornithological interest were added to Dunedin Public Libraries' collection in 2013. These are the recently published items, but the library also benefited from a donation of older books from the collection of Alan Wright.

Birds and people, by Mark Cocker

Birds of New Zealand : a photographic guide, by Paul Scofield and Brent Stephenson

Call of the Kokako, by Jeff Hudson

Catlins birds : a pocket guide, by Craig McKenzie, Richard Schofield and Fergus Sutherland

Fascinating Birds, by Markus Varesvuo

Looking for the Goshawk, by Conor Mark Jameson

Moonbird : a year on the wind with the great survivor B95, by Phillip Hoose

Owls, by Marianne Taylor

Owls of the World : a photographic guide, by Heimo Mikkola

Penguins : natural history and conservation, edited by Pablo Garcia Borboroglu

Penguins : spy in the huddle [DVD]

Penguins : their world, their ways, by Tui De Roy, Mark Jones and Julie Cornthwaite

Sirocco : the rock-star kakapo, by Sarah Ell

Tui : a nest in the bush, by Meg Lipscombe

The Unfeathered Bird, by Katrina van Grouw.

Alan Baker

Dead Shags and Penguins

When people are out and about please look out for any dead shags or penguins (all species, including feathers, bones and eggshell), especially from areas south of Dunedin (Taieri Island, Catlins). The samples will be used for genetic analysis in Martyn Kennedy, Hamish Spencer and Nic Rawlence shag and penguin research. We have a DoC holding permit and samples can be collected for us without a permit; we just inform DoC (the system we have been using as approved by Bruce McKinlay).

If remains are good it would probably be a good idea to place in plastic bag, seal, label! and put in freezer. Contact Nic and he will arrange pick-up.

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Live Shags

Some of you may have contributed records directly and/or through OSNZ to Mike Bell for his review of Pied Shags. The DOC report is now available at:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-conservation-services/reports/pied-shag-population-review-final-report.pdf>

OSNZ Subscription Renewal Notices

Membership Renewal notices have been sent out by email or in Southern Bird posting. This is just a reminder not to overlook this over the busy holiday period as subscriptions are due 1 January 2014. Please figure out a way to remind yourselves to pay.

Indoor Meetings and Activities for 2014

Any suggestions of speakers or topics or offers to speak for the Indoor Meetings next year would be greatly appreciated.

Also suggestions for field trips or offers to organise a birding weekend away would also be greatly appreciated.

Contact Mary Thompson 464 0787 maryt@actrix.co.nz

Programme 2014

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

Note change of time to 7.30 p.m.

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| Wed. Feb. 26 | Jennifer Bannister
Birding in Madagascar |
| Wed. March 26 | Mary Thompson.
Royal Spoonbills: what we have learned about
our Otago birds |

Any suggestions for further speakers will be welcome.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for copy for next newsletter 19 March.