

Birds New Zealand

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Otago Region Newsletter 9/2014 November 2014

Otago 'Summer' Wader Count 16 November

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Otago Harbour	Hooper's Inlet	Catlins	Total 2014	Total 2013
Pied Oystercatcher	2	101	57	119	71	65	415	587
Variable Oystercatcher	2	2	4	58	10	11	87	104
Pied Stilt	51	5	4	2	39	1	102	47
Banded Dotterel	1					5	6	5
Spur-winged Plover	5		2	4	4	6	21	36
Lesser Knot					2		2	2
Bar-tailed Godwit	93	250	720		2	273	1438	1992
Terek Sandpiper						1	1	
Red-necked Stint						1	1	
Ruddy Turnstone								1
White-faced Heron	20	4		29	2	9	64	42
Royal Spoonbill		10	1	17	6	26	60	35
Black Shag				1	1		2	n/c
Little Shag		3	52	240		9	304	n/c
Spotted Shag					1		1	n/c
Stewart Island Shag						1	1	n/c
White-fronted Tern				4			4	n/c

This wader count was carried out in rather unpleasant conditions. A few showers at the start, partly cloudy later on with a very strong southerly. Very tiring. Unfortunately we had not enough backup counters this time and as a consequence Papanui Inlet was not covered. Hopefully future

wader counts will not have this problem. Godwits were down 500 on last year, possibly due to the lack of coverage or the weather. Richard Schofield was once again the lucky one with a couple of rarities - Red-necked Stint, the 2nd for the Catlins and a Terek Sandpiper, the first for the Catlins and Otago. Two Knot returned to Hooper's Inlet.

Peter Schweigman

Ornithological Snippets

Lesley Gowans, Sue Galloway and Mary Thompson travelled to Manapouri at Labour weekend. On the 24th October between Gore and Mossburn we checked out rivers on the way for **Black-billed Gull** colonies. At least 5 colonies were found. The first on the Mataura just out of Gore – 400+; Oreti at Lumsden bridge -1500+; Oreti at Mossburn bridge -1500+; Mararoa 100+ and evidence of 2 others on Oreti but which couldn't be seen from the road. The gulls were incubating eggs and there was no evidence of chicks yet. **Black-fronted terns** were nearby the large colonies but did not appear to be nesting yet.

Audrey Eagle reported that on 23rd October her daughter saw a **NZ Falcon** flying around Chain Hills Road – the first they have seen in this area.



As well as the 2 "regular" Hooper's Inlet birds seen in the wader count there was a single **Lesser Knot** amongst the godwits at Aramoana on 31 October. Photo by Jason Wilder.

The colour banded godwit appears to be one that was banded at Warrington Spit in 2007 and has been seen several times since at Aramoana or Warrington.

In addition to the **Terek Sandpiper** in the Catlins, there have been a couple of other rarer birds in the area this month. Bruce McKinlay found "*what looks to me like an **intermediate egret***" at Tomahawk Lagoon on the evening of 7 November. A check the following day failed to find it but ever optimistic, he thought it might be back. Jason Wilder checked the lagoon on the 9th and found instead a **White-winged Black Tern**.



photos Jason Wilder

Returning the following day, he failed to see the tern but found and photographed what he was sure was a **White Heron**.



He was quick to add that is "*not to say that it's the same as the individual in the (Bruce's) eBird report!*"

The tern stayed around until at least the 16th.

Intermediate Egret

For anyone tempted to look out for Intermediate Egrets here are a few comparative photos. White Heron left, Intermediate right



Tomahawk Lagoon May 2013 Derek Onley



Waiatarua Auckland May 2007 Detlef Davies



Not surprisingly Intermediate Egrets are quite a bit bigger than Cattle or Little Egrets and considerably smaller than White Herons. They have a shorter neck that lacks the obvious kink often seen in White Heron and a rounder head not unlike a Cattle Egret.

Close up, the gape of a White Heron extends back past the eye while that of Intermediate ends level with the eye.

A word of warning however. Apparently the Australian White Herons that turned up in New Zealand last year - there were 7 at one time at Tomahawk Lagoon - are smaller than the New Zealand ones that breed at Okarito. So much so, that some New Zealand birders sent photos of the Lake Ellesmere 2013 birds to Australia wondering whether they might in fact be Intermediate Egrets. Not so said the Aussies. I've not heard how disappointed the more ardent listers were.

Derek Onley

Notices and Business

Indoor Meeting Wednesday 26th November Cancelled

Franny Cunninghame is unfortunately unable to talk this Wednesday but hopefully will be able to tell us about her work with the rare Galapagos Mangrove Finch next week. Keep an eye on your email for further details.

Weekend Field Trip 14 – 15 February, 2015

Otago Branch of Birds NZ has been kindly invited on this joint trip with Dunedin Forest and Bird. It will be led by Janet Ledingham. The aim is to explore the botanical and bird life of the Upper Taieri scroll plain and Canadian Flats wetland area. We will travel via Old Dunstan Road to Patearoa on Saturday and stay overnight there. On Sunday, we will go up to the Canadian Flats wetland. Please give Janet Ledingham, 4672960, an indication of whether you are likely to join this trip and nearer the time we will need to confirm numbers to organize accommodation. Please put this in your 2015 diary as we won't be having an Indoor Meeting before this event.

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2015

Those of you on email will have received notification that the annual membership subscriptions are due 1 January 2015 and others will have received notices via Birds NZ mailing.

Next year seems a long way off and it is all too easy to overlook this during the Christmas New Year period so please figure out a way of reminding yourselves. Remember that you can pay subs online. Thanks Mary Thompson, Regional Representative.

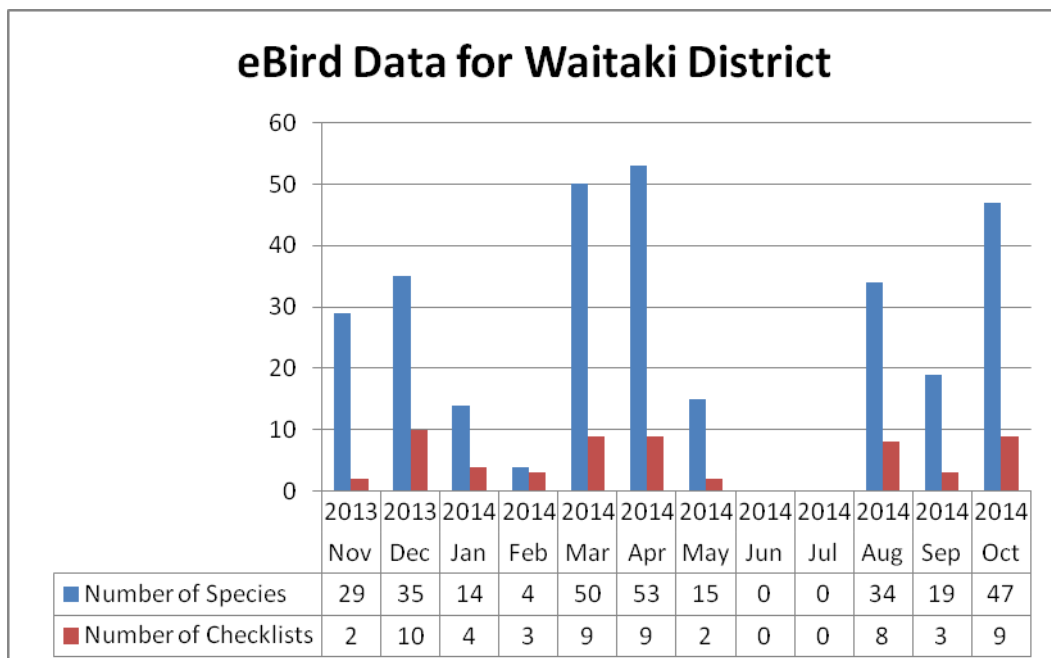
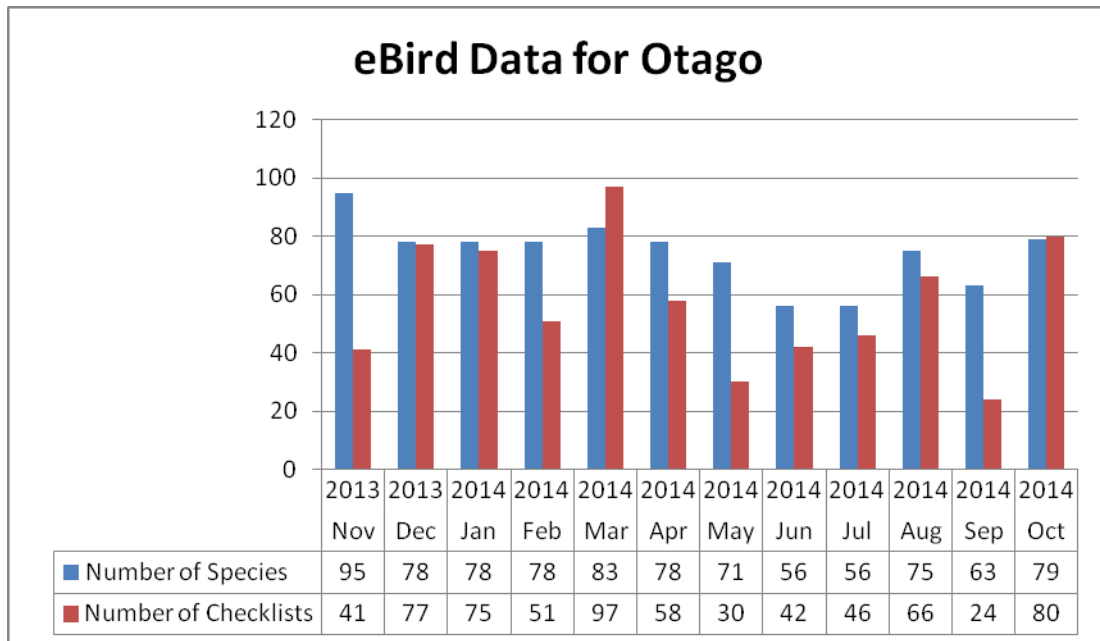
Programme for 2015

Mary is asking for speakers or topics for next year's Indoor Meetings. If you would like to talk at an Indoor Meeting or if you have suggestions please let Mary know. Ideas for field trips, especially if you are willing to act as a leader/organiser, would also be greatly appreciated.

Mary

Regional Recorders eBird Report

Thank you to those of you who submitted to eBird the 79 check lists in October 2014. Once again I have included the data for Otago. It is great to see the level of birding activity in the Waitaki district although there are gaps in the Waitaki District observations for the full year.



Jim Wilson

Red-billed Gull Colony National Survey: volunteer coordinator needed

Birds NZ is undertaking a nationwide survey over the next 2 breeding seasons of red-billed gull colonies, with the aim of answering if numbers have declined overall, and/or if redistribution of the population is occurring, and to determine the sizes of colonies. The basic proposal has two parts. First, a scoping survey, to be carried out during this year's breeding season, between October 2014 and January 2015, aimed at locating all current red-billed gull colonies. At this stage we are concerned with determining the location of these colonies, with only a rough estimate of the numbers of pairs. Determining the size of these colonies forms the second part of this proposal to be undertaken in 2015/16 season.

The information from this survey will allow the Department of Conservation to evaluate more precisely the specie's conservation status.

At present, the red-billed gull is classified as Nationally Vulnerable, based on a predicted decline of 50–70% over three generations despite an apparently large population of 20 000–100 000 mature individuals.

Lyndon Perriman and Chris Lalas have recently published a study of red-billed gull colonies in the Otago region (*Notornis* 59: 138–147 2012); this means our knowledge of the colonies in Otago is very up-to-date and little probably needs to be done this 2014/15 season. However, we would like to confirm the presence of colonies and approximate size at these sites and look for any additional ones. These need to be entered in the national database.

Mary would be very pleased to hear from someone willing to plan and coordinate this survey in our region, plan the logistics for counting breeding pairs in the 2015/16 breeding season, maintain the database and liaise with DoC and the Birds NZ National Coordinators.

Black-billed Gull Colony Survey.

Rachel McClellan is proposing a 3 year aerial survey of rivers throughout the South Island, to photograph and count black-billed gull colonies. So far funding has been obtained for Canterbury Rivers and hopefully funds will eventuate for Otago and Southland Rivers. Rachel is looking for volunteers to fly over (I imagine as passenger) and photograph colonies and count birds in the photos. If anyone is interested please let Mary know (464 0787) in first instance to get further information.

Programme 2014

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

Wed November 26 Direct from the Galapagos
Franny Cunninghame **CANCELLED**

Hopefully rescheduled for next week. Further information by email.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

The next newsletter will not come out until January. All holiday observations, reflections, requests and future events by 20 January.