

Birds New Zealand

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Otago Region Newsletter 1/2015 January 2015



photos Jason Wilder

A **White-winged Black Tern** was first seen on Tomahawk Lagoon by Jason Wilder on 9 November . Here's more from Andrew Austin.

White - winged black tern visits Tomahawk Lagoon

An immature white - winged black tern reported at Tomahawk Lagoon in November was seen several more times before Christmas.

On 14 December the small tern, an uncommon Asian migrant, made repeated spectacular swoops through northeast wind gusts. The bird was clearly a small tern, with a white body and greyish wing tops. The wings were thin and sharp pointed, and angled back for swooping. There was a grey - black smudge like mark on top of the head, and a darker black dot mark behind the eye, and a small sharp black bill. The straight edged tail, not forked, was light grey. It was hawking insects over an inlet that is

encircled with tall raupo reed, rushes and other vegetation. There are lots of flying insects at the inlet, and the tern circled over the area into late evening, flying into the wind before swooping down at the water and flying up again. Most of the flying was rapid soaring up on wind gusts and swooping down at the water, and a few times a fluttering hover just over the water when the wind speed dropped. The best views were just above raupo reed as the tern pulled up out of dives at the water, and as it flew slowly beside a hill before swooping down again.

The bird was identified as an immature white - winged black tern after checking Heather and Robertson, *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* and Simpson and Day, *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Bruce McKinlay photographed the same tern at Tomahawk Lagoon.

On 23 December, fine weather and more open surroundings allowed easier observation of the tern at upper Tomahawk Lagoon. The tern flew in a light floating way, with slipping sideways direction changes, and sudden swoops at the water, then pulling up above the water for a fluttering flight up to regain height and swoop down again. It was hawking insects just above the water, but it never touched the water. On 24 December the tern flew slowly over the raupo inlet, but I have not seen it again.

Andrew Austin

Ornithological Snippets



Greg Kerr saw this **Kotuku** at Hawksbury Lagoon on 13 & 15 December. "It appeared to have a silver band on its right leg but it wouldn't come out of the water far enough to get a good look."

Chuck Landis saw a **Chukor** on 20 November 2014, "on a rocky ridge above the west shores of Lake Tekapo, downhill and northeast of the Mt John summit and above the DOC walking track. The bird was calling from a schist outcrop and markings were quite clearly visible. There might have been a second bird calling in the distance."



Derek Onley found an **Arctic Tern** at the end of Aramoana Mole on 5 December. Graeme Loh saw a greyish tern that may have been the same species off Heyward Point a week or so later amongst the large numbers of **Red-billed** and **Black-backed Gulls**, **White-fronted Terns**, **Spotted Shags** and **Hutton's** and **Fluttering Shearwaters** that have been feeding off Aramoana and the adjacent coast this December and January. Also amongst them have been several **Arctic Skuas** and Jason Wilder photographed what is most likely a **Pomarine Skua** off Kapiti Point on 13 January.

See <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=4096> for photos.

Closer to town Alan Baker reports a **Coot** on the Ross Creek Reservoir on 3 January

Hutton's/Fluttering Shearwaters

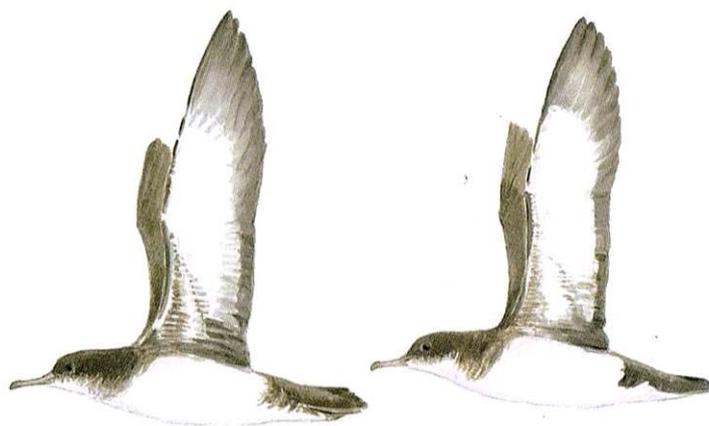
For anyone tempted to try and sort out the small shearwaters off Aramoana and the Dunedin coast at the moment there is an interesting if inconclusive discussion on the Birding NZ website :-

<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=4096>

Here are a few further thoughts/complications.



The traditional view is that Hutton's have darker underwings and a dusky throat and upper breast that gives them a hooded appearance, like the bird on the left in Graeme Loh's excellent photo above, and you would be pretty safe to conclude that any bird obviously sporting these features is a Hutton's. So does that make the righthand bird with whiter underwing and a hint of paler throat, a Fluttering Shearwater?



Immature Hutton's

Darker Fluttering

When I was researching the Helm guide to Albatrosses etc of the World I found that museum specimens of young Hutton's, you can tell all but a very few apart by measurements, were often paler than adults and that some Fluttering Shearwaters could look as dark (left).



Add to that the fact that many of the birds out there are moulting (left -photo Jason Wilder) and the views aren't always the best, the safest thing to conclude seems to be that the darkest birds are Hutton's Shearwaters and the rest could be either species though it's likely that some are Fluttering Shearwaters. Catching and measuring them would answer the question. (You do need a permit!)

This may all seem a bit nerdy and obscure but, if there are a lot of Hutton's Shearwaters out there, it's worth remembering that these are one of the rarest and most threatened seabirds in the world which makes the seas off the Otago coast an important feeding ground at this time of year.

oops a bit big

Photos Graeme Loh & Sue Machurin

Derek Onley

New Bird Books and DVDs in Dunedin Public Libraries

Birds New Zealand : beauty like no other, by Paul Gibson.

The birds of London, by Andrew Self.

Eagles of the world {DVD}

Flying dinosaurs : how fearsome reptiles became birds, by John Pickrell.

The Galapagos : a natural history, by Henry Nicholls.

H is for hawk, by Helen Macdonald.

The kea, by Corey Mosen.

Land of birds : an illustrated tribute to the birds of New Zealand, by Niels Meyer-Westfeld.

A message from Martha : the extinction of the passenger pigeon and its relevance today, by Mark Avery.

My garden and other animals, by Mike Dilger.

Native birds of New Zealand, by David Hallett.

Otago Peninsula birds : a pocket guide, by Richard Schofield et al.

Owls, by David Tipling & Jari Peltomaki.

The penguin king : the epic journey of one special penguin [DVD]

Professor Penguin : discovery and adventure with penguins, by Lloyd Spencer Davis.

The thing with feathers : the surprising lives of birds, and what they reveal about being human, by Noah Strycker.

The world of birds, by Jonathan Elphick.

Alan Baker

Notices and Business

Combined Forest and Bird and Birds Dunedin trip to Canadian Flats, Upper Taieri - leader Janet Ledingham

February 14th, Saturday, day trip, leaving from Botany department carpark, cnr of Gt King and Union St, at 8-0am sharp. Bad weather fallback day Sunday Feb 15th

We will go over Old Dunstan Road to Styx and then slowly up valley to Canadian Flats and beyond looking at the extensive Taieri River wetlands/oxbows on the way.

Some of these areas are DOC reserves and the PNA report on Upper Taieri Wetlands has this to say about birds:-. The wetlands associated with the Taieri River are an important wildlife habitat providing the needs for a variety of waterfowl and wading birds...there are several species present which may be classified as uncommon, of limited distribution pattern, or as having specific habitat requirements such as grey teal, shoveler, scaup, coot, bittern and marsh crake...27 species dependent on the wetlands have been recorded in the area. The full report is available from Janet.

Some time will be spent exploring the Canadian Flats ponds and the river banks. Return trip can be either Old Dunstan Road or via Patearoa-Waipiaata,-Middlemarch. 4WD vehicles are needed, but it is not difficult driving. Please advise Janet as soon as possible if you plan to come and indicate whether you have 4WD transport or not.

Janet Ledingham, jledingham@xtra.co.nz 467 2960, cell 027 623 4948

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.

Free to a Good Home

Bruce McKinlay has a copy of "A Field Guide to the Birds of Korea" 2nd Edition 2005. A5 format soft cover and unused

First in first Served. Comment I have been given two of these in the last three months so suspect that a new edition is in production.

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.



Black-billed Gulls, Hawksbury Lagoon, 14 January.

Programme 2015

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

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| Wed February 26 | Bruce McKinlay
Birding experiences around the world. |
| Wed March 25 | Hamish Spencer
Classification of the World's Cormorants and Shags. |

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for contributions to next newsletter: February 19.

Mary is still asking for speakers or topics for this 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