



Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 7/2017 July 2017

Sinclair Wetland Winter Survey 15th July.



Photos by Warren Jowett

An enthusiastic team of 14 of us headed out to the wetlands on the fine, frosty Saturday (how lucky after the snow during the week). Fog was enveloping the wetlands, which lifted by about 11.00, but it gave us mysterious views of harriers and oystercatchers appearing out of the mist and eerie blackbird and thrush songs. Little troops of redpolls seemed to be enjoying themselves 'walking on water', foraging on the frozen ponds. Overall, the numbers of birds seen was fewer than usual - I think most were still feeling the cold. We all did hear and see fernbirds and bellbirds were out on the flax bushes too.

Mary Thompson

Gull roost in Balclutha

On 29th June Suzanne informed me that a gull roost was becoming established near the airfield in Balclutha. She was walking the dog around sunrise and noticed large numbers of small gulls on a gravel island, with groups starting to disperse to the daytime feeding areas. Glutton for punishment that I am, I headed down there with my camera at dusk the same day, with the intention of photographing the birds as they came in, to (hopefully) enable easier counting. The theory was good, but I had assumed they would be mainly Black-billed Gulls, and in the gathering gloom that's what the birds on the island appeared to be. However, on checking the photographs, many of them were Red-billed, though in the poor light it was difficult to specifically identify many of them. I counted approximately 1700 in total, though as I left more were still arriving, including a flock of about 500. These latter birds were presumably Black-billed, as they had flown from upriver. I also counted about 50 Black-fronted Terns on this occasion.

I returned early on 1st July, and realised that many more birds were present compared to 36 hours earlier. I estimated maybe 3-4000 birds, along with at least 98 Black-fronted Terns. I tried photographing them again the following morning, and from the photographs I counted a total of at least 2700 birds, though obviously could not tell how many may have already departed. Due to the low light, identification of a lot of the birds was difficult, but there appeared to be approximately equal numbers of Red and Black-billed Gulls. So potentially there were perhaps 1500 Red-billed Gulls at the roost, which seems a large number away from the coast. Attempts to do further counts were hampered by high river levels over the subsequent week, and dispersal of the roost to other (unknown) areas.

Richard Schofield

Ornithological snippets

An unexpected find by Mary Thompson was a **Great Crested Grebe** fishing at Katiki Reservoir on 25th June; this species is rarely seen on the coast so far south. A banded **Black Stilt** was seen by David Wilson at Kakanui on 13th July, and a single **Caspian Tern** was among the gulls in Balclutha on 2nd June.

Alan Baker proved the value of attending OSNZ meetings; in addition to learning all about eBird on 28th June, he heard a **Morepork** on Wallace St while walking home afterwards; he also reported another on the corner of Queen's Drive & Cobden Street on 30th June.

Roy & Jan Johnstone saw an **Eastern Rosella** near their home in the Puerua Valley, Southland, well outside their usual range, on 13th July, while Suzanne Schofield found 2 **New Zealand Pipits** by Balclutha airfield on 4th July, with 3 there 2 days later.

Please send any noteworthy sightings to richard@pcconnect.co.nz
Compiled by **Richard Schofield**

Coastal Otago Winter Wader Count 19 June 2016

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Total 2017	Total 2016	Total 2015
Pied Oystercatcher		425	22	229	78	4	3	262	1023	1192	1210
Variable Oystercatcher	7	21	4	23	65	5	2	3	130	112	143
Pied Stilt	7	20	3		12	3	16	4	65	232	197
Banded Dotterel			35					1	36	268	169
Spur-winged Plover	7	70	2	2	16	11	2	18	128	281	58
Bar-tailed Godwit			106				55		161	208	183

Compared with previous years the birds are not doing well. The Banded Dotterels surely should not have left for their inland breeding ground. Same with the Pied Oystercatchers. We have to wait for the November count to check the numbers of the Bar-tailed Godwits. Again many thanks to the observers
Peter Schweigman

Yet Another Otago Pelagic

Graeme Loh tells me that 10 species of albatross were seen from the Polaris on 14 July. Mathias Dehling managed to photograph two of the more unusual ones:-



Grey-headed (closely followed by a White-capped) and best of all:-



Light-mantled Sooty.

along with:



Blue Petrel



The Polaris; 14 July; east of Taiaroa Head. All photos Mathias Dehling

Notices and Business

Notes for AGM Wednesday 26th July

Following the talk from Helen on Wednesday 26th we will have a short AGM to review our projects and plan for new studies. Please think about what you would like to have as field trips, bird surveys, and meetings for next year and bring your ideas to the meeting. Any offers to plan and organize trips would be great.

Some ideas for projects (volunteers to take on coordinating any of our surveys would really be appreciated):

Robins outside the Orokonui fence – looking for successful breeding on Mopanui.

Town Belt 5 minute bird counts for DCC biodiversity monitoring.

One-off bird diversity-Coutts Road Swamp, Quarantine Island.

On-going; Sinclair Wetlands, Waders, Tomahawk Lagoon.

Ornithological Society of New Zealand

Region: Otago

Annual Accounts: 1 January 2016 - 30 December 2016

Current Account: 03 0903 0392455-00

		2013	2014	2015	2016
Balance as at 1Jan.	\$	845.75	1614.94	1814.18	1777.46
Plus Income:					
Interest		\$0.00	0.00	0.00	
Capitation		\$350.00	350.00	350.00	350.00
Donations/local subs		\$50.00	98.60	103.87	65.99
Transfer from closed confereneec account			3.74		
OSNZ Project assistance Grant		\$953.00			
Beca consulting					230.00
Sinclair Wetlands Trust-survey					400.00
Sale of cards and books		\$0.00		25.00	70.00
		\$1,353.00	452.34	478.87	1115.99
Less Expenses:					
Transfer to savings account	\$	12.00	12.00	12.00	12.00
Bank fees		\$0.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Room hire		\$0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Envelopes, stamps, photocopying		\$196.68	107.19	193.94	161.85
Speaker Gifts		\$80.91	83.92	99.90	197.87
Book prize-Science Fair		\$44.99	24.99	0.00	30.00
YEP Trust sub		\$0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00
Bittern/morepork study		\$118.76	0.00	143.75	
Spoonbill/redbilled gull study		\$100.00	0.00	0.00	639.00
Sinclair Wetlands survey					360.00
Miscellaneous		\$30.47	0.00	61.00	121.29
		\$583.81	253.10	515.59	1527.01
Closing Balance	\$	1,614.94	1814.18	1777.46	1366.44

Breakdown of Accounts

Running Expenses			
Balance brought forward	618.64		
Income	485.99		
expenses	528.01		
Balance		576.62	
Other Projects			
Balance brought forward from Falcon	250		
Income	230		
Expenses			
Balance		480.00	
Sinclair Wetlands			
Income	400		
Expenses	360		
Balance		40.00	
Project Account-acoustic			
Balance brought forward	55.82		
Income	0.00		
Expenses			
Balance		55.82	
Spoonbill Project			
Balance brought forward	853.00		
Expenses	639.00		
Balance		214.00	
Total		1366.44	
Bonus Saver account 0309030392455-25			
Balance brought forward	1848.15		
Interest	6.97		
Transfers from cheque	12.00		
transfer for projects	0.00		
Balance		1867.12	



eBird Workshops

Saturday, 12 August; 10.00am to 12 noon and 1.30 - 3.30pm.

As you already know, eBird is the premier website for recording and archiving all bird observations. Birds NZ is keen to increase the awareness and use of eBird. If you already enjoy birdwatching and like recording what you see, then eBird is for you. By adding your observations you can contribute to further knowledge about bird distribution and abundance that can help conservation efforts. In addition, you can use eBird to store and retrieve your own bird observations (better than a notebook which you could lose) and use its tools to analyse your data, and also use it as a source of information on where to spot birds.

Birds NZ is sponsoring two, free, hands-on workshops in Dunedin; "An Introduction to using eBird." (morning) and "Advanced eBird: extracting and using data for conservation."(afternoon). Nikki McArthur will be coming down to present these workshops; he is an expert and enthusiastic user and an excellent presenter so I hope as many of us can take advantage of these workshops. If you are new to using eBird or would like a refresher, then the Introductory session would be the one for you. If you want to find out how to access the data and build distribution maps, etc then the afternoon, advanced session is for you.

Both workshops are already $\frac{3}{4}$ full, so please Register ASAP by emailing maryt@actrix.co.nz and I'll send you further organizational information.

EBird news

Using eBird - the review process

As you will probably be aware, anybody can submit records to eBird. Therefore, in order to maintain the integrity of the data, all submissions are subject to a two level check for accuracy. Firstly there is an automatic system, whereby all records are run through a filter to pick out rare or out of season birds, or abnormally high numbers. For example, if you report up to 50 Little Shags on a checklist, there will be no questions asked; but if you claim more than that, you will be prompted for further details when you try to submit the list. With any rare bird (for the respective region, at the time of year) you will likewise be asked for more information.

Any records that go through this stage are withheld from public view while they are assessed by the regional reviewer. If there are sufficient details included with the submission, then the reviewer will validate the record. If not, you will receive an email from the reviewer requesting further information. From the reviewer's point of view, it is helpful if you can actually describe the bird itself, or at least the salient features, rather than just the circumstances of the sighting, or what you had for lunch! Once you have done this, click 'complete'.

Filters can be reset at any stage, and so you may be asked about records that were not picked up by the filters when the record was originally submitted. For this reason it is a good idea to include further details of any slightly unusual records while they are still fresh.

It should be noted that the filters are a relatively crude tool, and are set at a provincial level. This means that a species which is common in one area but scarce in another may not be automatically flagged for review, but you may still be contacted for further details if you report it in an unlikely area.

For much more information about the review process, check out <http://help.ebird.org/customer/en/portal/articles/1055676-understanding-the-ebird-review-and-data-quality-process?t=401194it>.

Richard Schofield

Programme 2017

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

- Wed July 26** Indoor Meeting. Helen Taylor.
"Avoiding conservation by numbers: how genetics can help save threatened bird species".
Followed by AGM
- Wed August 23** Indoor Meeting. Claudia Mischler on "From the High Arctic to the sub-Antarctic and a little in-between: life as a biologist amongst the seabirds in some of the remotest parts of the world"..
- Wed Sept 27** Indoor Meeting. Fergus Sutherland on 'Te Rere, thirty-six years helping penguins and other birds on the remote Catlins Coast.'
- Sat October 7** Sinclair Wetland Spring Survey. Carpool leaving Dunedin at 8.30 am. Backup Sunday October 8th. To join the survey teams and for information contact Mary Thompson 464 0787, maryt@actrix.co.nz
- Wed October 25** Indoor Meeting. Francesca Cunninghame on 'The future for Darwin's rarest finch - lessons learnt from 10 years conservation management of the Critically Endangered mangrove finch.'
- Wed Nov 22** Indoor Meeting. Mel Young on 'Foraging Ecology of Yellow-eyed Penguins'.

Sun Nov 26

Summer Wader Count. High tide Dunedin at 10.10am, 1.8m. Counters needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui. New counters very welcome to join the teams.

Contact: peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for next newsletter please by 17th August.

Can contributors please send any photographs separately from text as it makes compiling and formatting the newsletter much simpler and retains picture quality better. Thanks.