



# MATUKU

## WAIKATO REGION NEWSLETTER

Ornithological Society of New Zealand

April, 2009

### Regional Representative

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### Regional Recorder

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### Programme

- 15 April – Evening meeting. David Bradley, University of Waikato. "A visual and acoustic tour of the birds of Costa Rica".
- 26 April – Arboretum, Hamilton. Picnic lunch, easy day under nice trees.
- 20 May – Evening meeting. Sandra Valderrama, University of Waikato. "Saving a Colombian endemic species: the story of the Niceforo's Wren".
- 23 May – Te Aroha Wetlands. Easy day with lots of waterfowl hiding from the hunters. Contact Geoff Foreman, 07 889 4228.
- 6 or 7 June – Aotea and Kawhia census. Early start for a nice day on the harbours. Contact Laurie Hoverd, 07 871 8071 or Bruce Postill, 855 1187 (home) or 850 8368 (work).
- 13/14 June – Tiritiri Matangi Island. Overnight bunkhouse accommodation. \$60. Limited numbers. Contact Ashley Reid, 07 871 5729.
- 17 June – Evening meeting. Lucy Bridgman, Landcare Research. "Interactions between two invasive rodent species in New Zealand: the house mouse and the ship rat".
- 15 July – Evening meeting. Graham Saunders, University of Waikato (ex Queens University, Belfast). "Birds of Ireland (and differences in the avifauna between Ireland and Britain)".
- 26 July – Maungatautari. Easy day with Maungatautari expert Chris Smuts Kennedy (0274 172 267). Mid Winter Dinner. Details to follow.
- 23 August – Hamilton Gardens. Picnic lunch at Rose Garden section and a wander looking at garden birds.
- 19/20 September - Overnight Pureora Forest. Staying in DOC cabins. One of the best sites in NZ to visit beautiful native forest with Kaka, Kokako, Robins, etc. \$15 a person, bookings required to Bruce Postill 850 8368 (work) or 855 1187 (home).
- 11 October – Miranda 'Welcome to the Birds'. 10am. One of the highlight events at Miranda with guest speaker.

7 November – Bird census, Kakepuku. Lunch & boots required. Contact Jan & Laurie Hoverd, 07 871 8071.

21 or 22 Nov Kawhia and Aotea Harbour Census. Summer census of shorebirds. Contact Laurie Hoverd, 07 871 8071 or Bruce Postill, 855 1187 (home) or 850 8368 (work).

Christmas Do. Details to follow.

All monthly evening meetings are at the DOC Area Office, Northway Street, Te Rapa, starting 7:30pm.

## **Leaving on a jet plane**

It is with some sadness that I announce that I am stepping down from the position of Regional Representative (and Recorder). Sarah and I are going to move to somewhere in the UK to live and work for around two years. Where we will go – we are unsure; what we will do – we do not know yet. However, we feel that this is a good stage of our lives to experience something new (despite the ‘global recession’), and we are looking forward to it greatly. I have been the RR for two years and the Recorder for around six, and have enjoyed these positions; although, I must admit a fair degree of stress trying to keep up with some of the demands when study and later work kept me extremely busy. Luckily, the Waikato Region has a great committee that has been very supportive. My work takes me away from home a fair amount of the time which means that I am often absent from monthly meetings. Thanks to the committee members, these meetings still occur.

Generally, I feel that my time as RR has been productive and monthly meetings have included talks from some outstanding researchers from here and even abroad. I sincerely thank all of those people who did not get too annoyed by me pestering them and subsequently agreed to give up their time to come and talk to the group. It is these monthly talks (and cups of tea afterwards) that I have enjoyed the most about the OSNZ, and it is what keeps me most interested in the Society.

Hearing about bird research on a monthly basis and talking with other members (not to mention receiving Notornis and Southern Bird) should mean a strong membership (in my opinion!). However, it can not be denied that our membership base has remained stagnant for the last couple of years. Several reasons may contribute to why this may be so. Firstly, the University only sporadically has students involved with ornithological research. I moved to Hamilton from Christchurch where both Lincoln and Canterbury Universities had a strong involvement in ornithology, and monthly meetings were always attended by several students. Perhaps, however, the biggest reason for our stationary membership is that we do not have very many field trips. We do a lot of census work, but with the Atlas work completed, many of the field trips that took place in the past to ‘count squares’ are no longer needed, and nothing has taken their place. I must also take a proportion of the blame here too, as my work keeps me away a lot of the time so miss many events, and it is up to the RR to try and actively participate in these. Fortunately, the committee (largely led by Bruce Postill) have formulated a field trip agenda for the whole of 2009, so a few more active bird outings are on the cards, which is going to be great and will hopefully attract some fresh faces.

With this one small issue aside, I will leave with very happy memories of my time in the Waikato Branch. I have met a number of great people through the Branch with such enthusiasm for ornithology that it cannot help but be contagious! I wish you all well for the future.

Dai Morgan

## **Stitchbirds return to Maungatautari**

Hihi (stitchbirds) have now been translocated to Maungatautari. In the first week of March a team of 11 people caught 64 hihi in less than 48 hours on Tiritiri Matangi, and kept them in aviaries on the island for a further four days awaiting disease screening results. They were given the all clear, and 59 were chosen for translocation (the other five were released back on Tiri). On Saturday 7 March those 59 made the one-hour helicopter flight to Maungatautari where they were successfully released into the Southern Enclosure. The sex ratio is close to 50:50.

All are colour-banded, and these Tiri birds have purple over metal on one leg and a unique combination of two colours on the other. Teams of volunteers are monitoring each of the six feeders twice-weekly for an hour at a time. They are recording the colour band combinations of any birds that use the feeder as well as any observed natural behaviour such as aggression or interactions with other species. This

monitoring will continue for around five months. So far hihi have been either seen or heard near most of the feeding stations and have been observed feeding at three of the six stations. Members of the public have spotted hihi near the summit which is interesting and valuable information as we start to build a picture of the dispersal of the released birds. Any sightings will be gratefully received by Chris Smuts-Kennedy (027 417 2267) or Gemma Green (027 675 3012) - and the actual colour combinations will be especially useful if recorded. Any additional observations e.g. feeding records will also be useful (they have already been seen feeding on five-finger fruit and nikau nectar).

On 25 March the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust also released 60 colour-banded whiteheads, with a further 20 hihi, from Little Barrier Island, a few days later. Any records of whiteheads on the mountain will also be gratefully received.

Chris Smuts-Kennedy and Gemma Green

### **Recent Bird Sightings**

**Red-legged Partridge**, 2 at Pirongia on 28 December (Bev and Bryan Woolley). David Lawrie reports these may be from a local who has been breeding and releasing these birds.

**Arctic Skua**, 20+ off beach beyond Port Waikato on 5 January in association with several hundred Gannets, Fluttering, Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters. Also 5 Maui Dolphins including 1 immature (Dan Brown).

**Falcon**, 1 heard at Lake Rotopounamu on 16 January (David Riddell).

**Brown Teal**, 9 at Coromandel Wastewater Treatment Ponds on 23-24 March (David Riddell). Jason Roxburgh says there are now big numbers of brown teal at Port Charles, Waikawau Bay, and Big Bay (where the road splits north of Colville) in Jan-April, with the biggest recorded flock being 228 at Waikawau Bay.

**Spotted Dove**, 1 at Coromandel Wastewater Treatment Ponds on 24 March (David Riddell).

**Cook's Petrel**, 1 on 24 March at the front door of IT Services at the University of Waikato. Sent to Bill Smith, of Bird Rescue. It seemed in good shape, vigorously biting at fingers. Its tail feathers were well worn yet the primaries were in good shape (David Bradley).

### **More Bird Sightings, Please!**

The number of bird sightings that have come in has slowly getting fewer and fewer, and currently I have only a couple for 2009. This may be because the CSN was abandoned so members felt that there was not as much need for bird records, or that the Atlas scheme finished so people were not birding quite as much. Whatever the reason is, please send them in again?! The National Committee is going to use bird records from Regions to produce the New Zealand Bird Report. This is going to be little different from the old CSN.

This main difference is going to be that the information on the birds presented in the report is going to have a little more context. Under the old CSN, you often saw a record like "three kaka; Whatawhata". Under the new format more information would be given: e.g., "tree kaka flying over Whatawhata township, the first record of this species here". They also want more information on the more common species too. For example, if you are noticing that you are not counting as many sparrows or blackbirds in an area, then put this in. Furthermore, new records of common species in areas will be welcome too. Obviously this may increase the amount of information the Recorder will have to process, and not everything will make the reports; however, those sightings will be recorded and held on a database, providing important information in years to come. So please start sending in more bird sightings- it is always interesting to hear about what is around the traps at any given time.

Dai Morgan

### **Hamilton Lake Census Annual Report 2008**

This report covers the 12 months January 2008 to December 2008.

Our natural local lake provides an environmental and recreational reserve on the doorstep of our busy city. Since 1982 our society has been officially keeping a record of the various species of birds on and around the lake. We also observe and monitor changes that may affect the bird life whether they are natural or man-made.

The beginning of the year started with a drought which lasted until March. Despite the lake being controlled by a weir the water level was visibly low with mud flats showing and areas exposed that are not normally seen.

The Mallards had a healthy total of 1,566 in January – this is relatively high for previous months. Following the normal pattern there were 2,837 in May – the shooting season – and down to 226 in September when they leave the lake to breed.

The Coot continue to flourish with 31 chicks/juveniles in January, 40 in February, peaking at 50 in November. The adults and chicks total for that month was 202 – that's the most since we counted 300 in February 1987 before the collapse of the aquatic weeds that led to no breeding.

A hostile environment and lack of browsing food has led to no resident Black Swans on the lake, however we do get them visiting and often they will stay a few months. There were up to 3 between March and September.

Kingfishers were present at seven of our censuses, most notably a family of three in March.

Oddly there were no White-faced Herons seen on our census dates at all this year yet last year they were present. They are still around the river and other lakes in the Waikato.

Pied Shags are also elusive with no sightings this year compared with one last year.

The three species of other Shags are usually present with the Little Blacks being the most plentiful. In May there was a total of 46 Little Blacks.

May also saw the highest number of Feral Rock pigeons – 414 in all.

The Lakeside café closed in May – it is being knocked down and a new function Centre will replace it next year.

There were Canada Geese present at every count with a high of 31 in June. That month there were also 12 Spur-Winged Plovers and our only sighting of Pied Stilt – five of them.

In October we heard shouting and saw a scuffle. A white Domestic Goose was having an argument with a Pukeko. The goose grabbed hold of the Pukeko and threw it to one side. The goose rejoined her pal – a Canadian Goose. They were building a nest together! Nothing came of this liaison but they can still be seen together today.

Some of the other Domestic Geese did breed – they had four goslings bringing the Domestic Goose population to thirteen.

In November we heard the Eastern Rosella and Shining Cuckoo. We had thought we heard a Tui in September at the Lake Census but were not sure. Later that same day I heard it clearly from my garden and also had several reports of a Tui in the area. The reports died out a few months later at about the same time one Tui was found dead at the University.

A fine dead specimen of a Caspian Tern was found in August.

We never know what we may see at the lake next – that is one of the most interesting aspects. It must be remembered that the census is a snapshot of two hours every month that builds into a record of the regular inhabitants. Often there are sightings of visitors not at our census such as Stella and Ralph's observation of four Royal Spoonbills in November.

Thanks to the other six people that have helped this year: Hugh Clifford, Stella and John Rowe, Liz Wang & My family; Sheila Evans and June Friend.

## Hamilton Lake Census 2008

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Coot	113 +31	114+ 40	129+ 13	79+3	115 +1	150	114	183	129 + 4	163 + 30	152 + 50	84 + 48
Mallard Ducks	1566	1596	1397	1499	2837	2722	1145	356	204 + 22	231 + 61	538	826 + 28
Domestic Ducks		1	1	1		1	2	1	5	1	1	1
Farmyard X Ducks	3	4	2	2	2	4	1	3	3	5	8	4
Muscovy Ducks												
Canada Geese	12	7	17	16	23	31	21	15	19	6	2	10
Domestic White Geese	13	13	13	13	8	9	8	10	9	9	9 + 4	13
White Faced Herons												
Kingfishers	1		2+1	1					1	2	1	1
Pied Stilt						5						
Pukekos	85 +27	84 +27	101+ 17	103 + 9	87 + 13	94 +6	81	83	82 + 1	107 + 3	95 + 13	76 + 18
Black Shags (Carbo)	4	3	7	3	2				1	2	3	4
Little Black Shags	3	9	13	12	46	12	3	9	14	2	1	1
Little Shags		4+1	4	8	6	18	16	3	1	2	9	1
Pied Shags												
Black Swans			2	3	3	3	2	1	2			
Welcome Swallows	6		4		1	4	2	3	8	4	10	3
Spur-winged Plovers						12						
Paradise Shelducks												
Grey Teal												
Feral Rock Pigeons	219	240	300	312	413+ 1	152	199	287	257	277	392	313
White Doves	3	3	4	4	1	4	4	1	3	1	1	6

Also heard Eastern Rosella (Nov)  
Shining Cuckoo (Nov)

Other non-lake birds; Blackbirds, Thrushes, Sparrows, Mynahs, Chaffinches, Greenfinch, Magpies, Starlings, Fantails, Grey Warbler, Silvereyes, Yellowhammer & Goldfinches.

Chicks and juveniles figure follows the + sign. Census takes place second Sunday of each month at approx 10am – 12 noon.

Barry Friend

## Te Ko Utu (Cambridge Lake) Census, 14 March 2009

Time: 9.40am – 10.15am.

Weather – Overcast, calm, cool.

Lake species recorded

Coot	21 (including two juveniles)
Mallard/Mallard cross	527
Duck (domestic breeds)	2
Kingfisher	1
Pukeko	7 (including 1 juvenile)
Shag, Black	1
Shag, Little	1
Shag, Little Black	10
Shoveler	6

Hugh Clifford, Zoë Clifford

## Raglan Harbour Census, 3 March 2009

Personnel: H.Clifford C.Annadale

Weather: High Tide Height

fine, light winds 314 3.1m

	1. Bird Bay	2 Ponganui Est. F.B Reserve	3 Narrows	4 Okete	5 Wharf & Bridal Creek	6 Airfield & Estuary	7 Harbour Entrance	8 TeTeko Rck & Upper Harbour	Total
Pied shag		1	2	2	3	1	1	12	22
Little Black Shag	2		1						3
Little Shag					2				2
White Faced Heron			2		1			4	7
Reef Heron					1				1
Paradise Shelduck				110					110
Mallard				1					1
SIPO				250		286		580	1116
Var. Oystercatcher				3		10	4		17
Spur- Winged Plover				20	2	2			24
East.Bar-t.Godwit							437		437
Pied Stilt		21		100				170	291
Black-backed Gull		11	7	7	20	41	4		90
Red-billed Gull					40	172			212
Caspian Tern		1		31			2	30	64
Whitefronted Tern							84		84
Arctic Skua							1		1
Gannet							1		1
Canada goose		200		65				15	280
Feral goose		2							2

## Kawhia Harbour Census, 2 March 2009

Personnel: J.Hoverd B.Postill H.Clifford Z.Clifford G.Hickman  
 Weather: High Tide Height  
 fine 209 3.9

	Oparau River & Ellis Point	OpeOpe Rocks & Shoreline	Ocean Beach & North. Harbour	Mid Harbour	TeMotu Sandbank	Te Motu Island	Total
Pied shag	4	25					29
White Faced Heron	7	43					50
Reef Heron		1					1
Royal Spoonbill	50	18					68
Black Swan		59		150		462	671
Paradise Shelduck	1						1
Mallard				6		29	35
SIPO	850	439	156		4310		5755
Var.Oystercatcher			6		5		11
Banded Dotterel						132	132
Asiatic Whimbrel					1		1
East.Bar-t.Godwit					5050	4	5054
Pied Stilt	500	20	14				534
Black/Hybrid Stilt		1					1
Black-backed Gull	7	19		15	4		45
Red-billed Gull	1	11	15		3		30
Caspian Tern		5	2		20		27
Whitefronted Tern		14					14
Canada Goose	116	92					208

## Aotea Harbour Census, 2 March 2009

Personnel:	L.Hoverd	C.Annadale			
Weather:	High tide		Height		
fine	147		3.9		
	Aotea Lagoon	Upper Harbour	Morrisons Roost	Harbour Entrance	<b>Total</b>
Pied shag			2	3	5
White Faced Heron	1	2	2		5
Reef Heron	1				1
Black Swan		120	98		218
SIPO	1063	974	241		2278
Var.Oystercatcher				4	4
Spur Wing.Plover				7	7
NZ Dotterel				3	3
East.Bar-t.Godwit	1690	64	112		1866
Pied Stilt		7	22		29
Black-backed Gull			7	5	12
Caspian Tern	4	12	8		24
Whitefronted Tern				2	2