

- **Journey to the Arctic Circle**

At the last Branch meeting Paul Shortis gave a very interesting talk on his recent trip to the **Russian Far East** including Wrangel Island and the Chukotka and Kamchatka coastlines, a distance of 4200 nautical miles covered in a month.

Highlights included some amazing photos of “up close and personal” encounters with polar bears and walrus, a vast array of whale encounters and cruising bird cliffs with thousands of guillemots, kittiwakes and puffins.

This is still a frontier region of Russia and relatively hard to visit so he was lucky to be part of Heritage Expeditions trip to these regions. Remarkably, only about 300 tourists get to Wrangel Island in the Russian Arctic each year, most aboard Heritage Expeditions, a New Zealand Company!

Photo taken by Paul of the extremely rare Red-Legged Kittiwake.



- **Queen Elizabeth Park**

Interesting birding is possible in the middle of Masterton:

A pair of coots have built their nest on the lake right next to the boating shed. Despite the mayhem of the long weekend with boat hire, human traffic and the attentions of the general public the two seem oblivious and have been getting on with their lives.

Watching them is quite interesting. The non-sitting partner frequently returns to the nest with gifts of nesting material which is then carefully woven into the fabric of the nest by the

sitting bird (see photo below). Every few hours they swap duties. There appears to be 6 or 7 eggs which is a large brood size for coots.



In addition, between 30 and 45 **Buller's Gulls (Black-billed Gulls)** have been present on the park over the last few weeks especially around lunchtime (they have acquired a taste for junk-food apparently).

Five banded birds were observed there over the last few days (birds banded locally have orange individually-numbered leg bands). It is hoped the birds will again choose to nest on the Ruamahanga River above Te Ore Ore – ideally on the instream island which had improvements made to it by the Regional Council to encourage the birds there.

There are also 2 or three **Dabchicks** present, which may be nesting on the island.

- **October Fieldtrip report– Rewanui Reserve**

6 of us had an enjoyable walk through Rewanui Reserve (east of Masterton), covering both the Matai and Totara tracks. Predominant species - heard but not seen – were Shining cuckoos along with Grey warbler, tui, fantail, kereru and a close-up encounter with 2 bellbirds feeding in kowhai above our heads during lunch.

Robin was not able to join us as he was off rescuing a kereru who had crashed into a window and needed veterinary attention to repair a ruptured crop! Word is that it is recovering well.

- **Riversdale Beach Dotterels**

This year is shaping up to be a successful breeding season as we have 2 NZ dotterels and at least 4 Banded dotterels recently hatched and thriving there. Another clutch of 3 NZ

dotterel eggs is due in a few days and there are more Bandeds on the go too. A Pair of Variable Oystercatchers are sitting on eggs as well.

This is great news as last year was a failure for all the birds there. However, reports of more NZ dotterels along the coast both sides of Riversdale are encouraging, especially as they could be birds bred at Riversdale over the last few years. Remember these birds are classified as “conservation dependent – stable or declining where unmanaged, increasing where managed” SO it is testament to the ongoing efforts being put in by BirdsNZ and Forest & Bird members, also GW, that we are helping this species recover.

- **Onoke Spit Caspian Terns**

An increased predator trapping regime is underway to try and help the Caspian terns successfully breed this year. Breeding has failed now for a few years in a row. The bulk of this work is again being done by Dougal MacKenzie and Colin Shore working with DoC to try and turn this situation around. Note this species is classified as “Vulnerable” and has been



declining since the 1990's. Our colony is the only one recorded in the lower North Island!

- **What's Next??**
- November fieldtrip

We are looking into the possibility of locating 2 nesting shag colonies reported in South Wairarapa and getting a population count of these groups *OR* a visit to the Tauherenikau Delta where interesting wader birds can be seen at this time of year.

- Presentation by ecologist Nikki McArthur (Wildlife Management International) “[The riverbed-nesting shorebirds of the Wairarapa](#)”. This is the presentation which Nikki made to the BirdsNZ conference this year and he has kindly offered to talk to us in late November, when he will be in the region doing coastal bird surveys. *Date to be confirmed*
- Keep **Saturday December 9th** free for our annual end of year do and quiz!!