

Birds New Zealand Autumn 2018

Wairarapa Region Newsletter

Hello all

Our latest trip to **Pounui Lagoons and Paul's Bank** (where the **Ruamahanga River** flows into **Lake Onoke**) truly fulfilled the Society's aims of *fostering the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds!*

We were met onsite by members Denise and Dougal MacKenzie who live just a stone's throw from the lagoons and have a wealth of knowledge the area. Dougal had a beach-wrecked (but in perfect condition) seabird for us to ID. That was indeed a learning exercise for us as we pored over our "birding-bible". Conclusion reached was **Hutton's shearwater**. He then talked to us about the secretive **Australasian bittern** living there and what measures are in place to enhance breeding success.

A walk around the lagoons was the perfect place to use our great **new telescope**. We were able to study **Black shags, Little shags, Little blackshags, dabchicks, pied stilts, shoveller ducks, white faced heron and waterfowl** along the walkway. A bittern was glimpsed in the distance, after being flushed from the reeds.

The end of Paul's Bank was another great spot for putting the scopes to use. In addition to the species seen at the lagoon, we counted a good number of **Pied shags, Black-fronted terns, Caspian tern, Royal spoonbill, Black-fronted dotterel, gulls and many redpoll**.

The enjoyment of all this was enhanced by perfect weather, boiling up the billy for a picnic and along with that, being entertained by a great view of a **Black shag** in a challenging battle to get a large eel down its throat!

Photo Dougal MacKenzie



Photos below Toni de Latour/Paul Curry



left: some intent on bird-watching (others "larking about")
below: end-of-day picnic at Paul's Bank



Our previous trip (in March) was to the eastern shoreline of **Lake Wairarapa** at the mouth of the **Oporua Spillway**. We were hoping to see the **Glossy ibis** spotted there during the February Wader Survey (and the only one seen at Lake Wairarapa since 1992). We were out of luck, but did count a large number of **Banded dotterels**, **Pacific golden plover**, **Black-fronted dotterels**, **Royal spoonbills**, **Black-billed gulls**, **Caspian terns**, **Pied stilts**.

Absent from the wader survey in February were **Pectoral sandpipers** and **Sharp-tailed sandpipers**. It is thought that the high lake levels caused prolonged inundation of the eastern shoreline feeding grounds, making it impossible for the shorter-legged Arctic migrants such as the sandpipers to remain.



Our February trip was to **Matiu-Somes Island** in Wellington harbour. Staying overnight at Education House gave us a great opportunity to explore the island's wildlife and history. The large number of **kakariki** were a pleasure to see. We were interested to observe **Black-backed gulls** feeding on coprosma (taupata) berries on the paths.

A night walk to observe tuatara, geckos and Giant weta was also a delight. (photo: nzbirdsonline)

Looking ahead to the rest of the year.....

- Branch nights.

We are keen to improve our knowledge of the birds in our region and aim to do this through utilising educational material held by the society, quizzes and short talks by members.

Trips

Having a focus on gathering meaningful data is something we are keen to achieve.

Opportunities for this include:

- ~Red-billed gull colony surveys; Black-billed gull colony monitoring
- ~Caspian tern work at Onoke Spit (including camera monitoring)
- ~NZ dotterel monitoring (coastal Wairarapa)
- ~ Banded dotterel nest monitoring (Wairarapa rivers)
- ~ Bittern monitoring (breeding season)
- ~Shag colony surveys

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