

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND
THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington Region Newsletter

March 2014

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

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Greetings

This is the first Newsletter for 2014. There has been a significant amount of ornithological activities over the summer by Wellington OSNZ members. Some of the activities are summarised in this Newsletter, including the third transfer of “fluffy shearwaters” to Matiu / Somes Island. Te Papa staff have been busy with an expedition to the Snares in December. Various reports of this trip are described in the Te Papa blog - <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/> .

The sighting of a buff breasted sandpiper at South Kaipara Head is one of the more interesting records for the summer. This sighting has yet to be “officially” confirmed but looks highly likely there will be an addition to the Official New Zealand bird list.

Members are reminded of the forthcoming annual meeting of the Ornithological Society over Queens Birthday weekend. The “New Zealand Bird Conference 2014” and AGM will be held in Palmerston North from 31 May to 2 June and looks like it will be a fascinating conference.

Geoff de Lisle
Wellington Regional Representative

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

April Meeting

Monday 7 April

Why do Godwits migrate when they do? - Dr Phil Battley, Senior Lecturer in Ecology / Zoology, Massey University, Palmerston North.

WHERE and WHEN:

The meeting is to be held at Te Papa's collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up

the steps and across the parking area to the door.

Starting 7.45pm on Monday 7 April 2014.

Phone Sue on 029 770 6498 if you get there late and can't get in!

May Meeting – Monday 5th Colin Miskelly will talk on his new findings on the life of Edgar F. Stead.

June Meeting – There will not be a meeting in June and is replaced with the NZ Bird Conference in Palmerston North.

July Meeting – Monday 7th Alan Tennyson & Graeme Taylor will jointly present on the

New Zealand Storm Petrel, arguably the most important ornithological discovery in New Zealand this century.

Report of Monthly Meetings

February – Members Evening. Three members gave short presentations on the findings from their recent projects.

Nikki McArthur, from the Wellington Regional Council gave an update of the monitoring of robins transferred in 2013 from Kapiti Island to the Wainuiomata Mainland Island. A large amount of monitoring has been carried out by volunteers, including OSNZ members. Special mention should be made of the time and effort of Annette Harvey in monitoring the robins. The logistics of monitoring the robins were considerable – over 1000 hectares of mature forest. Nikki estimated that ~10% of the Mainland Island has been searched. This was a “good news, bad news” story. The good news is that 4 pairs of robins were monitored and two more pairs found. Of the 12 chicks monitored, 9 fledged. The bad news is that on 56% of the fledglings survived and 2/3 nests predated resulted in the death of an adult. Predation still occurred even though rat numbers were low and being actively controlled.

Peter Reese gave an update of the mist netting and banding activities carried out during the last year. The mist netting sessions held principally at the Wellington Zoo have provided a great opportunity for OSNZ members to be taught mist netting and banding. Furthermore, a number of non-OSNZ members have joined these banding sessions. Over the years large numbers of passerines have been banded as part of this programme. Recaptures have yielded valuable information on

dispersal and longevity of New Zealand passerines. Two of the more notable recaptures have been silvereyes, one banded in Ward and the other in Kaikoura. This provided evidence of the transfer of silvereyes between the South and North Islands.

Ian Armitage gave an update of the current series of monthly counts being carried out on the Pauatahanui Inlet. These are the 4th series of counts carried out on the inlet, with the first being conducted in 1982-84. Ian has written a summary of the counts in the December, 2013 edition of Southern Bird.

Geoff de Lisle gave a brief introduction to a proposed survey of Shags in the Wellington Region. Details of this survey will be sent to members in the next few weeks.

March Meeting - Monitoring & management of banded dotterels at Pencarrow and Baring Heads, 2011-2014, Nikki McArthur, Environmental Scientist, Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Since 2011 Nikki McArthur, Annette Harvey and a number of volunteers have been monitoring the nesting success of banded dotterels at Pencarrow and Baring Heads. The first two years of monitoring showed very low levels of nesting success. Empty nests were found but there was no indication as to the cause of the failures. In the 2012/13 breeding season Scoutguard Trail cameras were used to monitor the nests. The principal culprits were hedgehogs. There was a minor amount of predation from cats and fortunately none by either ferrets or stoats. For the 2013/14 nesting season a hedgehog and cat control programme was instituted. Added protection was accorded the Pencarrow site by the placing a rahui on the site. Nesting success was 19.8% for the 2013/14 season

compared to 3% for the previous two years. For the future consideration needs to be given to further restricting vehicles

and people during the nesting season as well as having an effective predator control programme.

Field Activities

1. *Pauatahanui Inlet Survey.* A two year study where a census is taken once a month of all the birds on the inlet. The survey usually takes place on the first Sunday of each month. If you are interested in participating in this survey please contact Ian Armitage by email. ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz

being very experienced which made for a relaxing day.

We caught 35 birds of 9 species, with most being juveniles and only 4 recaptures. Interestingly all the recaps were reasonably old birds with 3 now aged as 6 or 6+. A bit more info and some photos can be seen on our blog <http://wgtnnzbanders.blogspot.co.nz/>

2. *Mist netting and passerine banding –* Peter Reese reports, March, 2014.

The next session at the Zoo is likely to be on the weekend before Easter 12 or 13 April.

We had a good day's banding at the Zoo on Saturday which was the first for the year at the main Zoo site. Not a huge catch but there was a steady flow of birds for most of the day. The weather was surprisingly good despite the dire warning about the effects of cyclone Lusi and it was almost ideal for banding with an overcast sky and little wind and no precipitation. We had a good turnout of banders with most

3. *Zealandia / Karori Sanctuary five minute bird counts*

These counts are being carried out every 3 months. This is a great opportunity to learn the five minute bird-counting technique. Please contact Colin Miskelly for details. Hakawai@xtra.co.nz

Bird Snippets – Wellington Region

[Birdlife on Field Hut track, Tararuas](#)
[Peter Hodge](#) » Sat Dec 28, 2013, BirdngNZ.net

The other day we went for a walk up to Field Hut, in the southern Tararuas. I was pleasantly surprised by the number of birds we heard and saw, including large numbers of Tomtits and Grey Warblers; considerable numbers of Tui, Bellbirds, Long-tailed Cuckoos, Whiteheads (higher up the ridge, towards Field Hut), and Riflemen; and the occasional Wood Pigeon and Shining Cuckoo.

The highlight was when we saw two Yellow-crowned Parakeets (about five minutes walk below Field Hut), at close range, checking us out.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/restoration-projects/project-kaka-tararua-nature-recovery/>

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/news/media-releases/2013/tararua-pest-control-operation-to-begin/>

[Long-tailed Cuckoo Stokes Valley ledzep](#) » Sat Jan 25, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

I heard a Long-tailed Cuckoo call 7 or 8 times from the ECNZ pylon road above Stokes Valley. I was at GPS -41.179534 175.010621 which is very near the Tawhai St track. The LT Cuckoo was on the Stokes Valley side down the valley, so if you walked up from Tawhai St

in Stokes Valley there would be a very good chance of hearing/seeing it.
I had just heard Whitehead in the trees on the Pinehaven Ridge.

Bellbirds also heard calling from the ECNZ pylon track, and I got excellent views of a male near the Fitzherbert transmitter site. Also California Quail on the track near Wainuiomata.

[Cook Strait seabirds, 7 Feb](#)

[Michael Szabo](#) » Mon Feb 10, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

I took a trip out into Cook Strait (Nicholson trench) on 7th Feb and saw the following seabirds:

Southern Royal albatross - 2
Northern Royal albatross - 3
Black-browed mollymawk - 1 (immature)
Salvin's mollymawk - c50
White-capped mollymawk - 3
Northern giant petrel - 5 (immature)
White-chinned petrel - 6
Westland petrel - 10
Cape petrel - 15
Buller's shearwater - 15
Sooty shearwater - 1
Flesh-footed shearwater - 10
Fluttering shearwater - c100
Hutton's shearwater - 1
White-faced storm petrel - 5
Arctic skua - 5 (2 pale phase, 3 dark phase)
White-fronted tern - c50

[Variable Oystercatchers - Petone Beach](#)

11 Feb, 2014. 58 Variable Oystercatchers
Dallas Bishop, Geoff de Lisle

[Nikau Valley Cockatoo](#)

[ledzep](#) » Sat Feb 08, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

7 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo at the northern end of Nikau Valley (Paraparaumu), Paraparaumu Scenic Reserve. Not afraid of me, one bird flying over several times making lots of noise. Also loads of NZ Pigeon - flock of 30 flying at one time, I saw 50+. Flock of 7 Eastern Rosella's with other singles and pairs. Nice area. I've been told there are Cockatoo

regularly in the area but I've looked many times unsuccessfully. This time I got some good views.



Pictures – Duncan Watson

[Dabchicks, Pharazyn Reserve](#)

Enfys Graham – January 2014

During her January count Enfys recorded 72 dabchicks, along with a good selection of other birds.



Note: Part of flock of Dabchicks, Pharazyn Reserve, 16/2/14. Dallas & Geoff

[Aust little grebe Waikanae](#)

[igor](#) » Sat Feb 15, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

I saw adult Aust little grebe today on the northern pond at Pharazyn Reserve, Waikanae, along with about 50 dabchick, 200+ scaup, and a range of other waterfowl. This site seems to be improving

[Reef heron, Plimmerton](#)

[craigsteed](#) » Sun Feb 16, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

Late afternoon yesterday I wandered along beyond the marae and 15 minutes or so along the gravel road (just beyond the container) was a reef heron, quite close really - good for photos but for whatever stupid reason I'd left the camera in the car (always take your camera!duh). A couple of pipits around as well as a seal rolling around looking very relaxed

[Falcons](#)

Re: Falcons at Lowry Bay + Other sightings
Post by Shane Cotter » Sun Feb 23, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

There is a pair of falcons that bred in York Bay. There is another breeding pair in the butterfly creek area and a further pair breeding above Te Whiti park.

[Canary – most probably a cage escape](#)



Jerry Gorton, Wainuiomata

Thanks to Colin Miskelly for the identification.

Bird Snippets – Just out of Wellington

[Pectoral Sands, WWBTs at Lake](#)

[Wairarapa](#)

[Nikki McArthur](#) » Fri Feb 07, 2014, BirdingNZ.net

Joanna McVeagh, Delia Small, Lynn Adams, Hugh Robertson & myself carried out a shorebird survey along the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa on Monday. Weather

86 black shags
2 little black shags
3 little shags
37 white-faced herons
1 Australasian bittern
30 royal spoonbills
2471 black swans
99 Canada geese
152 feral geese
172 paradise shelduck
1 pukeko
1 SIPO

conditions were perfect & highlights of the day included two white-winged black terns (4th record I know of from the lake & associated wetlands: Previous records from Feb 1974, Jan 1983 and Jan 2014). Four pectoral sandpipers were also seen between the Delta and the Oporua Floodway. A full list of the species encountered is below:

25 VOC
582 pied stilts
457 banded dotterels
12 black-fronted dotterels
23 Pacific golden plovers
145 SWP
4 pectoral sandpipers
86 BT godwits
133 black-backed gulls
239 black-billed gulls
39 Caspian terns
2 white-winged black terns

Lake Omanu

If you are making a trip to see waders at the Manawatu Estuary a short side trip to Lake Omanu is highly recommended. This lake is administered by Fish and Game and is probably best avoided during the duck-shooting season. Check with a Fish and Game Office prior to visiting. Access to the lake is off Palmer Road and is signposted with a Fish and Game notice. The entrance is almost directly due South of the lake. The Lake supports a good variety of waterfowl, including bitterns, fernbirds, dabchicks and others. In June 2013 Sav Saville reported seeing Great Egrets and Little Egrets. On New Year's day 2014, Viola and Phil Palmer, Dallas and I visited the lake. While we did not see any Bitterns, we did manage to see a Great Egret, a Little Egret, spoonbills and a variety of waterfowl.

Geoff de Lisle



Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Kaipara South Head

Fri Mar 21, 2014. Yesterday Gwen Pulham and Helen Smith found a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on the Bombing Range roost site at Waionui Inlet at the tip of South Head. (BirdingNZ.net).

<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=3464&start=10>

The buff-breasted sandpiper has yet to be added to the official New Zealand list. For this to occur, details and images of the bird first seen on 20 March 2014 will need to be submitted as an Unusual Bird Report to the Records Appraisal Committee of Birds New Zealand, and the members of the RAC will have to accept the record unanimously. This page will be updated after the RAC have made a ruling. For more information on this bird see the very new entry on NZBirdsonline. (Colin Miskelly). Image © Bill Abbott by Bill Abbott, NZBirdsonline.



Spoonbills – Kapiti Island

As part of the National Spoonbill survey Dallas Bishop and Geoff de Lisle visited the Kapiti Island spoonbill colony on the 6 December, 2013. The visit was arranged through Genevieve Spargo, the resident Department of Conservation staff member. She liaised with Maori living at Waiorua and we were accompanied to the colony by one of the residents, Amo Clark. The local Maori take great pride in the colony and manage the visits to the colony to ensure there is minimal disturbance. It was not possible to count the nests without causing significant disturbance to the colony which would have been unacceptable to the local Maori and detrimental to the birds.



The colony is on the sea side of Okupe Lagoon and is situated in a dense covering of *Coprosma propinqua* (Mingimingi) and *Muehlenbeckia complexa* (Pohuehue). We have been to the colony out of the breeding season (looking for ticks) and access to the nesting area is difficult. The spoonbill nesting area is situated right next to the main black-backed gull colony on Kapiti Island. They were nesting at the time and some black-backed gull chicks had already hatched.

We counted a total of 71 adult spoonbills, the majority of which were in breeding plumage. No nests were visible from any of the possible vantage points. A conservative estimate (guess) of the number of nests was a minimum of 20.



Photo taken on Sunday 2 March during the monthly Pauatahanui count. This is part of the flock of 26 spoonbills that were present – have they come from Kapiti following the breeding season?

Matiu / Somes Island Fluttering Shearwater Transfer



Alison Balance

The Fluttering Shearwater Project involved the transfer of carefully selected chicks to Matiu / Somes Island where they were looked after until they fledge. The third and final translocation took place in January 2014. Monitoring for their return as adults is the next activity. A total of 77 chicks were transferred from Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds to Matiu / Somes Island. The following are excerpts from the blog which can be found on the following web link. <http://matiosomestrust.weebly.com/1/previous/4.html> . The transfer was managed by Shane Cotter with the help of three teams of volunteers.

The chicks are settled in their new homes

11/01/2014

All 77 chicks made it through their first night in their new homes, are healthy and well, and were given their first sardine smoothies today. We were so busy coming up to speed with the feeding process that few photos were taken - we promise you more over the

next few days. In the meantime this Fluttering Shearwater chick has a rather spiffing hairdo.

They're Off!

24/01/2014

Last night was a big night on Matiu Somes Island. Three of this year's crop of fluttering shearwater chicks fledged and took to the skies on their maiden voyage. Their destination? Seas off the south-east coast of Australia.

Among the first three to leave was Chick 35, who had hung around for nine nights after its burrow gate was taken down, on 15 January. During that time it got in lots of wing flapping practise, and when it eventually decided it had reached an ideal weight and had shed all its down it was time to bid farewell.

All Done and Dusted - Everyone's Gone!

15/02/2014

The chick from burrow 40 went back to the island on Thursday after spending a couple of days at the zoo being checked over. It spent all Wednesday afternoon swimming around their pool showing the vets it was waterproof, and passed with flying colours.

Chick 40, now weighing 400 grams, caught the 2pm ferry back to Matiu Somes on Thursday and was returned to its old burrow. When the DOC ranger checked its burrow yesterday morning it was gone. Yay!

Lets hope that's it, that' it's off to Oz with all its mates and no one else turns up around Wellington to surprise us.

Official Opening of Bird Hide at QE Park

On Saturday the 18 January the newly built bird hide at Queen Elizabeth Park was officially opened. The event was attended by a number of OSNZ members. The hide is located in the Marine Wetlands is the result of a joint project between Greater Wellington and the Friends with considerable assistance from sponsors: Boffa Miskell, Forest and Bird, Paekakariki and Raumati / Paraparaumu Community Boards, Whareroa Guardians and the NZ Ornithological Society. This project



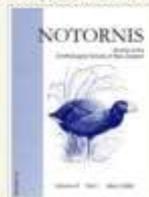
commemorated the 60th Jubilee year of the creation of Queen Elizabeth Park. Wellington OSNZ contributed \$750 to this project. A poster inside the hide shows information on 16 different species of birds commonly seen in the area, including dabchicks, kingfishers, heron, scaup and spoonbills.



Thanks to Ian Armitage for the pictures

Discontinued back issues of journals

Sun, 09/03/2014 - 10:17 — Ingrid Hutzler



Paper copies of back issues of *Notornis* and *Southern Bird* will no longer be available after April this year. With both our journals now available online, there is no further need to store spare copies. Currently stored paper copies will soon be recycled. So if you are keen on early editions get in touch with Roger by mid April - he has back issues from 1st editions onwards! Members will of course continue to receive paper copies of journals in their letterboxes.



Great Eagle – Wellington Airport. The other Great Eagle at the airport was only injured during the last earthquake. These birds are immortal.

Dominions	Valinor , the Undying Lands , Aman
Languages	Quenya , Sindarin , Elvish dialects
Average height	Huge, possibly larger than 100'
Hair color	None
Feather color	Brown-gold-black
Distinctions	Tall, gigantic, agile, graceful, courteous, fair
Lifespan	Immortal
Members	Gwaihir , Thorondor , Landroval

Wellington Region Contacts

Regional Representative Geoff de Lisle (04) 527 0929, osnzwelly@gmail.com
 Regional Recorder Nikki McArthur Nikki.McArthur@gw.govt.nz
 Southern Bird Regional Roundup Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929
osnzwelly@gmail.com
 Pauatahanui Inlet Survey Ian Armitage (04) 232 7470, Ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz
 Mist netting and passerine banding Peter Reese (04) 387 7387, Ruth.peter@actrix.co.nz
 Zealandia 5 minute counts Colin Miskelly, Hakawai@xtra.co.nz