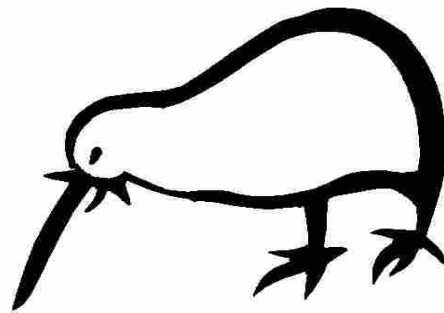


# APTERYX

Issue 19

December 2007



## NEWSLETTER OF THE FAR NORTH REGION OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



Harrier chicks near  
Kaitaia Airport  
Photo: Kevin Matthews

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### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

We have a bumper issue of 'Apteryx' this month with so much going on.

First a belated welcome to Michael Winch to the Society and to Ray & Shelley Wiblin and Adriana Rogowski as recent new members. Prospective members please note that you have until the end of the year to get a free copy of Atlas of New Zealand Birds.

Aroha Island Ecological Reserve in Rangitane Road, one of our well-known local birding places, has reopened to the public, see page 10. Also included are wader count results and beach patrol results. We recently had an event at Bill Campbell's house in Mangonui within easier reach of members living further north.



Wader roosts, Kokota Sandspit & Walker Island (Detlef Davies)

From time to time I circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times and meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email, please give me a phone number so I can contact you with this information.

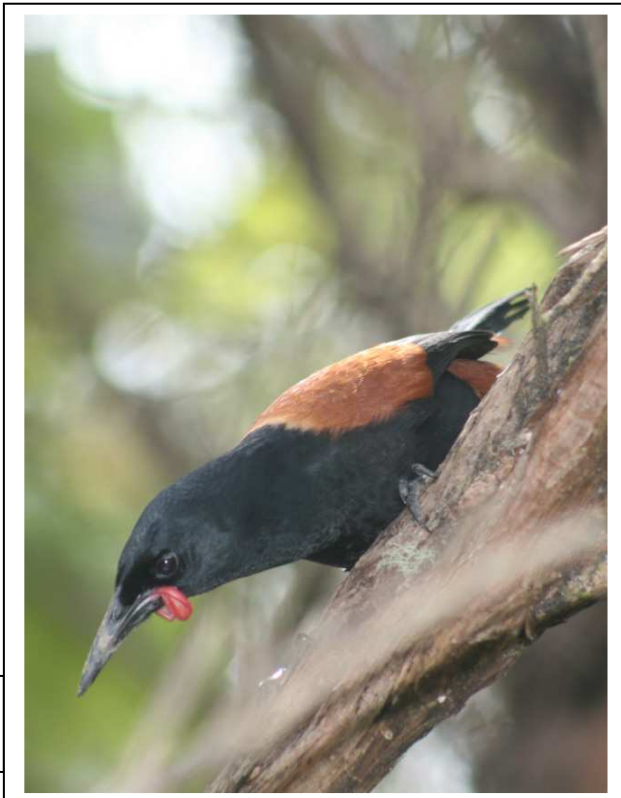


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Saddleback  
Tiritiri Island  
Detlef Davies

## RECENT EVENTS

### PHOENIX ISLANDS and KIRITIMATI

13 members and guests enjoyed Ray Pierce's fascinating talk. These remote islands which straddle the Equator still have extensive seabird colonies but these and the Bokikokiko, Kiritimati's only passerine, are under threat from mammalian predators just like in New Zealand.

### WEEKEND ON TIRITIRI MATANGI ISLAND – 29 to 30 September.

7 Far North members and guests joined a group from South Auckland OSNZ who had an overnight booking on the island. It was a productive trip with excellent sightings of Saddlebacks, Stitchbirds, Kokakos (which have been a little elusive lately), NZ Robins and Red-crowned Parakeets. After dark, we dispersed a little which meant that not everyone saw Little Spotted Kiwis but one group saw three.

Future bookings for the bunkhouse on Tiritiri will need to be made online but please note that OSNZ local groups often have block bookings and we can make enquiries about these.



Whitehead and Stitchbird, Tiritiri Island (Detlef Davies)



## RARE PLANTS OF THE FAR NORTH – 19 October

This was our first indoor meeting outside Kerikeri. Bill Campbell hosted the event in which he and Kevin Matthews gave an excellent illustrated talk on rare plants of the Far North. There was a particular emphasis on orchids which are well represented in our area and many are a challenge to find.

## NOVEMBER WADER COUNT – 8 to 12 November

This was a most successful long weekend at which many people took part. Results, report and band information are on pages 6 to 8.

### RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

This covers the Far North region since August 2007. Prepared by **Lauren Alston**. To avoid repetition this does not include the various sightings during the November Wader Count

Please send all interesting sightings in the Far North to Lauren Alston for inclusion in this section of the newsletter.

**North Island Brown Kiwi** Heard and seen at usual local sites. An egg on Aroha Island hatched in October and the juvenile seen on several dates afterwards.

**Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** One was found alive and uninjured on 90 mile Beach on 7 Oct. See later under Beach Patrols.

**Blue Penguin** Up to 20 feeding south of Moturoa on 24 Aug.

**Little Black Shag** Three at Waipapa Basin, one roosting on yacht crosstree, on 27 Nov.

**White Heron** Four at Kohukohu from 23 Sept.

**White-faced Heron** A strange but beautiful albinistic bird was seen by SH10 south of Pakaraka in October (see Russell's article on page 12). It was seen on 7 Nov but no reports since.

**Australasian Bittern** One at Rangiahua on 20 Sept. One in flight over paddocks beside SH10 just south of Pakaraka on 20 Oct.

**Royal Spoonbill** Two at Maori Pt, Mangonui Harbour 30 Mar. 94 on mud opposite Unahi Road wharf. About 250 at Unahi Rd on 2 Oct.

**Mute Swan** The pair which appeared on the Waipapa River in early August were recaptured by their 'owners' on Sunday morning 9 September.

**Banded Rail** Regular sightings along the Aroha Island causeway recently.

**Variable Oystercatcher** Two pairs at Urupukapuka Bay, 1 pair on Lagoon Beach, Motuarohia on 29 Oct. Nine pairs, 3 nests on Takou Beach, 19 Nov.

**NZ Dotterel** 29 on Karikari Bch, 3 at Waimahana on 23 Oct. One male & 2 juveniles at Pareanui, Orakawa; a pair on Mangahawea, 1 adult & 1 juvenile on Waipaoa, Moturua on 26 Oct. One pair with 1 juvenile, one pair with 2 juveniles at Urupukapuka Bay on 29 Oct. 10 birds at Waiau Bay, Kauri Cliffs on 30 Oct and 2 pairs there on 1 Nov. 7 pairs, 2 chicks, 2 nests at Takou Beach on 19 Nov. A 1 egg nest on Smokehouse Bay, Berghan Point on 28 Nov.

**Arctic Skua** One seen harassing the terns fishing for whitebait in Doves Bay in November.

**White-fronted Tern** Up to 15 flying above and feeding with penguins south of Moturoa on 24 Aug.

**Long-tailed Cuckoo** Heard several times in Kohumaru Rd, Mangonui in Nov.

**Shining Cuckoo** One heard in Riverview Rd on Sept 8 and regularly later, one heard Purerua Peninsula on 16 Oct, heard in Wells Road, Fairburn on Sep 20 and in Kohumaru Rd, Mangonui early and mid-Nov. 1 or 2 present Landing Road / Waipapa River from mid-Sept have been very vocal and are still calling today. . .

**Fernbird** Few sightings along Kawakawa River, one seen on the ground along Aroha Island causeway on 9 Dec, 2 pairs seen there on 17 Dec.

**Robin** One heard singing repeatedly between Otupoho & Waihapuka, Moturua Is. on 28 May

**Tomtit** One near Otupoho, Moturua on 29 Oct.

**Saddleback** Although not known on the Far North mainland, one was reported & seen well in Waipoua Forest recently.

## PROGRAMME

All Far North OSNZ indoor meetings take place at Detlef & Carol's house at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri unless otherwise stated, 7 pm for 7.30. We provide drinks & nibbles but contributions welcome. From now on we hope to make these meetings monthly on the third Friday; we appreciate Bill Campbell's offer to use his home as an alternative for some of our meetings.

### Fri 21 Dec MEMBERS NIGHT / CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

We expect to be distributing this newsletter at this meeting so we hope you will have had the email messages. Detlef will give a short presentation on his recent visit to the Taiko Camp on Chatham Island and CJ Ralph will report on the recent Australasian Ornithological Conference in Perth. Anyone else offering anything, however brief, yes, please! We may show a David Attenborough DVD (of which we have many).

### Fri 18 Jan 2008 BORNEO

Detlef & Carol will give a presentation on their recent trip to Sabah in Borneo, a wonderful tropical rainforest and mountain destination.

### Sun 20 Jan 2008 WAIMA FOREST

This is the event postponed from December through bad weather. Meet in the Warehouse carpark in Kaikohe between 7.45 and 8 am. We will travel south from there to Tutumoe and walk north up the old coach road into Kokako habitat. This is not the best time for calling birds but we will give it a good try. Please let Detlef or Carol know if you would like to come.

### Sat – Sun 23 – 24 Feb 2008 WADER COUNT

Another opportunity to go to Rangaunu and Parengarenga Harbours to see and count shorebirds. Wader experts Adrian Riegen and Keith Woodley will be coming and we also expect John Dowding of New Zealand Dotterel fame.

Fri 21 March SPITZBERGEN & THE HIGH ARCTIC. Ian & June Wilson have been to the global 'Far North' recently & have agreed to give a talk on this exciting experience.

Other forthcoming events:

Fri 30 May to Mon 2 June 2008 OSNZ CONFERENCE & AGM, KAIKOURA

A great location for next year's conference, keep the days free and more details will follow.

## BEACH PATROLS

These take place every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at 90 Mile Beach and less frequently on Karikari Peninsular. More volunteers would be welcome. Please contact Isabella Godbert on 09 407 8058 or John Dawn on 09 407 8658. Here are the 2007 results.

<b>EAST COAST</b>	10-Feb	11-Mar	21-Feb	19-Nov
	Karikari	Karikari	Oke Bay	Takau
Fluttering Shearwater	1			
Diving Petrel			1	1
Blue Penguin	13	5		
Australasian Gannet	1	1		
Little Pied Shag			1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Beach Patrollers:**  
 John Dawn  
 Bill Couper  
 Isabella Godbert  
 Derry Godbert  
 Catherine MacDiarmid  
 Pat Gardner

<b>NINETY MILE BEACH</b>	7th	24th	7th	15th	29th	27th	7th	4th	2nd
	Jan	Feb	March	April	April	Aug	Oct	Nov	Dec
			22 kms	22 kms	23 kms	12 kms	20 kms	20 kms	20 kms
Wandering Albatross							1		
Grey-headed Albatross							1	1	
Black-browed Albatross							1		
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross	1						1		
Shy Albatross						1			
Southern Giant Petrel			1				1		
Buller's Shearwater	1								2
Sooty Shearwater	8		1		2		2	1	3
Short-tailed Shearwater		1							
Flesh-footed Shearwater					1				
Fluttering Shearwater	6	2			1	5	15	4	3
Common Diving Petrel	3								
Fairy Prion	1								
Thin-billed Prion							2		
White-headed Petrel	1								
Grey-faced Petrel							1		
White-faced Storm Petrel									
Blue Penguin	8	1	6	13	1	8	5		1
White-tailed Tropicbird									
Australasian Gannet	13	5	1	1	4	7	6	2	2
Southern Black-backed Gull (ad)	3	7	2	1					
S Black-backed Gull (imm)		1	1				1		
Red-billed Gull									1
White-fronted Tern				1					1
Pied Shag	1								1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>			<b>37</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>



This Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was found alive on Ninety Mile Beach by Pat Gardner and photographed by her on 7 October

Anyone finding bands on beach-wrecked birds should inform Laurie Howell on 09 430 2287

**Ornithological Society of New Zealand - WADER CENSUSES 2004 - 2009**

OSNZ REGION	<b>Far North</b>	MAIN SITE	Parengarenga Harbour, Kowhai Beach, Rangaunu Harbour		
YEAR	<b>2007</b>	COMPILER	Rob Schuckard and Detlef Davies		
MONTH	<b>November</b>	COUNTERS	Rob Schuckard, Detlef Davies, Willie Cook, Ingrid Hutzler, Laureen Aston, Ruth Marsh, Michael Winch, Kevin Matthews, Isabella Godbert, Mike Bryan		
CENSUS DATES	<b>9 - 12 Nov 07</b>				

DATES	09-Nov-07	09-Nov-07	10-Nov-07	11-Nov-07	
TIME >	8:58 - 12:46	8:58 - 12:46	9:15 - 9:41	11:00 - 14:00	
COUNTERS >	RS, IH	WC	RS, IH, WC,	RS, IH	
			LA, RM, MW.		
LOCAL SITES >	Central Kokota Sandspit	Ocean Beach Kokota Sandspit	Ocean Beach Kokota Sandspit	Ocean Beach Kokota Sandspit	<b>Total Kokota Sandspit</b>
SITE TOTALS >	<b>13153</b>	893	4096	5915	5066
Migratory Waders	<b>12912</b>	729	4095	5850	5064
Endemic Waders	<b>241</b>	164	1	65	2

**SPECIES v TOTALS**

Pied Oystercatcher	<b>150</b>
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>74</b>
Pied Stilt	<b>0</b>
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>13</b>
Banded Dotterel	<b>4</b>
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>0</b>
Wrybill	<b>0</b>
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>44</b>
Grey Plover	<b>1</b>
Spur-winged Plover	<b>0</b>
Turnstone	<b>507</b>
Red Knot	<b>5417</b>
Curlew Sandpiper	<b>4</b>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>0</b>
Pectoral Sandpiper	<b>0</b>
Red-necked Stint	<b>22</b>
Eastern Curlew	<b>2</b>
Whimbrel	<b>16</b>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>6899</b>
Black-tailed Godwit	<b>0</b>
Grey-tailed Tattler	<b>0</b>
Wandering Tattler	<b>0</b>
Marsh Sandpiper	<b>0</b>
Terek Sandpiper	<b>0</b>

<b>150</b>		<b>65</b>		<b>150</b>
<b>6</b>				<b>20</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1</b>				<b>1</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>27</b>
<b>1</b>				<b>1</b>
<b>250</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>300</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>3500</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>3500</b>
<b>4</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8</b>			<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>125</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>2200</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2200</b>

**OTHERS**

Paradise Shelduck	<b>0</b>
White-faced Heron	<b>1</b>
Mallard	<b>0</b>
Pied Shag	<b>12</b>
Black Shag	<b>0</b>
Black-billed Gulls	<b>0</b>
Black-backed Gull	<b>260</b>
Caspian Tern	<b>53</b>
White-fronted Tern	<b>250</b>
Red-billed Gull	<b>35</b>
Reef Heron	<b>0</b>
Little Shag	<b>6</b>
Little Tern	<b>22</b>

			<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>3</b>				<b>3</b>
<b>15</b>				<b>15</b>

**MAIN SITE TOTAL > 13153**

Ornithological Society of New Zealand - WADER CENSUSES 2004 - 2009						
OSNZ REGION	Far North					
YEAR	2007					
MONTH	November					
CENSUS DATES	9 - 12 Nov 07					
	DATES	11-Nov-07	11-Nov-07	12-Nov-07	12-Nov-07	
	TIME >	10:30 - 11:00		9.30 - 12.05	9.08 - 12.03	
	COUNTERS>	DD,WC,LA, RM,MW.	KM, IG, MB	DD, WC	RS, IH, LA	
	LOCAL SITES >	<b>Total</b>				<b>Total</b>
		Kowhai Beach	East Beach	Walker Island	East Beach	Rangaunu Harbour
	SITE TOTALS >	<b>1179</b>	3028	94	5674	<b>5778</b>
	Migratory Waders	<b>1160</b>	3016	52	5672	<b>5734</b>
	Endemic Waders	<b>19</b>	12	42	2	<b>44</b>
Pied Oystercatcher						
Variable Oystercatcher		14	30	40		40
Pied Stilt						
New Zealand Dotterel		2	2	2	2	4
Banded Dotterel		3				
Black-fronted Dotterel						
Wrybill			10			
Pacific Golden Plover		17				
Grey Plover						
Spur-winged Plover						
Turnstone		27	86	50	170	230
Red Knot		267	100		1650	1650
Curlew Sandpiper						
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper						
Pectoral Sandpiper						
Red-necked Stint					2	2
Eastern Curlew				2		2
Whimbrel						
Bar-tailed Godwit		849	2800		3850	3850
Black-tailed Godwit						
Grey-tailed Tattler						
Wandering Tattler						
Marsh Sandpiper						
Terek Sandpiper						
OTHERS						
Paradise Shelduck						
White-faced Heron				1		1
Mallard						
Pied Shag				12		12
Black Shag						
Black-billed Gulls						
Black-backed Gull						
Caspian Tern				50		50
White-fronted Tern				250		250
Red-billed Gull				20		20
Reef Heron						
Little Shag				6		6
Little Tern					22	22

**Note:**

Species other than waders were not counted or recorded at all sites and species totals do not include them.

# FLAG CODES IN USE IN NEW ZEALAND

East Asian - Australasian Flyway

(compiled 23/08/2005)

Colour Flag / Metal Band combinations\*

Alaska	nothing	nothing	Kamchatka	Sakhalin Island
USA	RUSSIA	RUSSIA	RUSSIA	RUSSIA
Lake Komuke, Hokkaido	Shunkunitai, Hokkaido	Obitsu	Yatsu Tidal Flats	Kyushu
JAPAN	JAPAN	JAPAN	JAPAN	JAPAN
	Northern Yellow Sea	Chongming Dao	Taiwan	Hong Kong
KOREA	CHINA	CHINA	CHINA	CHINA
Singapore	North Philippines	SW WA	NWA	QLD
SINGAPORE	PHILIPPINES	AUSTRALIA	AUSTRALIA	AUSTRALIA
NSW	Victoria	SA	North Island	South Island
AUSTRALIA	AUSTRALIA	AUSTRALIA	NEW ZEALAND	NEW ZEALAND

\* In most cases, the colour flag(s) is placed on the right leg, and the metal band on the left leg.  
However the leg on which the flag(s) are located is not critical in determining the flagging origin of the bird.

If you do not have the contact details to report a flag sighting direct to the flagging country/flagger please send sightings to [mintons@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mintons@ozemail.com.au)

This will ensure that sightings will be reported to the original flagger promptly, and that no valuable records are lost  
All flag observations will be acknowledged with a formal flag-sighting report



Eastern Little Terns  
& NZ Dotterel chick  
East Beach, 11 Dec  
Kevin Matthews





Rob Schuckard reported on the wader count and the bandspotting as follows:

*Many thanks for contribution to a very successful wader count and band spotting expedition in the Far North. Count went very well with about 12000 waders (plus Kowhai) including about 2% endemic waders. Of the 12 godwits that were banded in Parengarenga, 5 **full** readings were recorded. Of these 5, 2 were recorded in East Beach. It was in particular pleasing that the bird 4RRYR, caught as a juvenile in September 2006 was in good spirit. This bird has the name Nga-te Kuri was in the water during catching and released with some cramp. It obviously recovered very well. Also, a female godwit with a partial bandreading could be traced to Nelson. This bird was banded at 16/11/05 at Rabbit Island . A good assessment of the juvenile godwits was possible at East Beach . Over 3% of the 3850 birds were juveniles. Of interest were two godwits from Yalu Jiang and one knot from Shanghai. A mystery knot with possible yellow over black flag requires some further investigation. This combo belongs to Kamchatka but as far as I am aware, this combo has never been used on a knot.*

Isabella Godbert commented as follows:

*We saw 3 or possibly 4 bands but it was very hard to see any but those in the front row of the main groups as they were very huddled together and the beach fell away so they were partly out of sight. We were sitting up in the dunes behind the beach and excellent place and later we drove up the beach and came back so we could see them from another angle.*

*1 red flag right leg high up above the knee.*

*1 dark green and yellow right leg high up – a rather fleeting glimpse of a moving bird at times it was difficult with the wind.*

*I wide red flag or a double red lower down the leg.*

*Kevin also though he saw one white band right leg - but we did not know if there any white ones.*

## **FAR NORTH of the SOUTH ISLAND**

**Some observations from a couple of weeks in the Nelson /Golden Bay/Blenheim area.**

A couple of years ago the NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust bought a wonderful large area of wetland called the Maungarakau Swamp. To get to it you drive through Collingwood towards Farewell Spit. But instead of turning right to go to Farewell you turn left and get onto the beautiful Whanganui Inlet, a big tidal harbour where in places the bush ends at the sea. At the southern end is the wetland. There is a new field station there that is on about the only mound in the area and has a wonderful view of the wetland . Kitchen and lounge upstairs with big windows and a bunkroom downstairs. It is a 10 bed lodge. Unfortunately we did not have time to stay. But, it's a must for next time. Contact, Joanne Vaughan, ph 03.524.8077

From there to Totaranui on the Abel Tasman Track. A beautiful place on a track of beautiful places. We went down to the beach and behind us heard a bird call we had not heard before. We looked around and saw a NZ falcon (first we had seen) with a welcome swallow in its claws , being pursued by the mate (presumably ) of the welcome swallow victim. Also there, there are an avenue of very mature English Plane trees. Growing in quite a number of them were large very healthy mistletoe? Could someone confirm that for us? If it was, they certainly had the possums under control.

Finally at Marahau at the east end of the Abel Tasman. We followed a well walked track out amongst the tide sands and rushes. The walkers in front of us pointed and said "mind the banded dotterel!" There it was, doing the broken wing act. On seeing that we were not interested in it, (which of course was very wrong) it went back and settled back on its nest with three eggs. It was only about 4 meters away. Obviously familiarity breeds familiarity .

**Kerry & Jane Walshe**

## **HOME TERRITORIES**

**Anthea Goodwin**

I've had great trouble keeping our resident fantail from attacking his reflection in the downstairs windows. In spite of shadecloth stapled along the top and a line of washing permanently strung below it, he still sneaks in occasionally and has a peck at that infuriating intruder.

One morning recently a neighbour was standing at the piano picking out a few tentative notes. Suddenly 'our' Tui zoomed in through the open door, flew over her head, around the room and out the way he had come. He was quite magnificent.

## **AROHA ISLAND OPEN AGAIN**

As most of you will know, Aroha Island Ecological Centre was reopened on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December by the former owner of the land, Dr Colin Little. It was good to see a large crowd present in a great atmosphere and on a dry sunny day. The opening followed many hours of work spanning nearly a year by the newly formed Aroha Island Charitable Trust and a crew of volunteers. Many OSNZ members were there and the Far North Region's invitees included some of those involved at the original opening in 1996. Keith Woodley from Miranda Shorebird Centre who painted the mural in the Visitor Centre, Arthur Cowan, former director of QE2 Trust who opened the Centre the first time and John Bishop, one of QE2's covenanting staff, were unable to attend but we were delighted to welcome Stuart and Alison Chambers who along with John Bishop, did most of the work in setting up the Centre the first time, extending the buildings, pest control and clearing of exotic weeds; they also first found the Kiwis on the Island. Many members of Forest & Bird attended, including the President, Peter Maddison, and Guardians of the Bay and Puketū Forest Trust were also represented.

With the Centre now open, guests can book accommodation at the camp or cottage, walk the trails, and enjoy the wildlife. There is still a vast amount of work to do and volunteers will be urgently needed. In particular, our resident manager, Lorenz Weller, will be away between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January and anyone able to assist during that time, please contact Detlef or Carol.

## **TAIKO CAMP, CHATHAM ISLAND**

**Detlef Davies**

In October I was invited to spend 2 weeks on Chatham Island to help David Crockett with the Taiko project. The period concerned was calculated to be a good time for the birds to be coming ashore for courtship and breeding. In the end, the weather was not as predicted, nights were too light and starry, wind from the wrong direction, so many hours were spent searching for the birds without success.

Most nights were spent at the Tuku 'light site', a cleared area in the bush where a bright vertical beam powered by a generator was used to attract the seabirds close and a hand-held spotlight to bring them to the ground. The commonest bird attracted to the lights was the tiny Grey-backed Storm Petrel which breeds in large numbers in the forest-covered hillsides of south Chatham Island. I found this strange because our sea trip to the Chathams at New Year produced far more White-faced Storm Petrels with which you saw the occasional Grey-backed. Also common were Broad-billed Prions & all 3 of these species were 'grounded' at the lights.

The basic camp provided beds in metal huts, excellent meals & plenty of work with household tasks, maintenance and renovation.



Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Tuku light site (DD)

The story of the Chatham Island Taiko or Magenta Petrel is remarkable. It was discovered in 1867 when a specimen was taken in the mid Pacific by crew aboard the Italian research ship 'Magenta'. There were very few other sightings over the next hundred years and clearly the bird was a rarity. In the 1950s and 1960s it was shown that seabird bones found on Chatham Island were the same species as the original 1867 specimen, and searching for them began in 1973. On 1 January 1978 David Crockett captured the first Taiko and since then an intense research and banding programme started. The total population is not known but may be as few as 50. The breeding area has predators and the terrain does not lend itself to predator-proof fencing. There is now such a fence in a new area to where it is hoped to transfer chicks to create a new colony.

Very recently, PhD student, Hayley Lawrence, who was also at the camp with me discovered a mislabelled Taiko in Canterbury Museum so this is now thought to be second to the 1867 bird. It is not yet known where this came from.



White-faced Storm Petrel & Broad-billed Prion, Tuku light site, Chatham Is, (DD)

Although we were often up for most of the night, I found some time to see other special Chatham birds such as the Chatham Island Warbler & Chatham Island Pigeon or Parea. On the last day a short tour of the centre of the island produced a single juvenile Chatham Shag and one Chatham Oystercatcher. Both these birds are now down to only a few hundred individuals. This won't be my last visit to the Chathams; I still have to see a Taiko!



**Taiko Camp** Reg Cotter, Norm Whitehead, David Crockett, Jenny Wasley, Hayley Lawrence, Rodger Wasley, Shane Cotter

# SIGHTING OF SPECTACULAR ALBINISTIC WHITE-FACED HERON

## A Report by Russell Thomas

On the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007 Ray Pierce had distant sighting of a possible White-necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*) in a field about 1km south of Pakaraka on SH1, Northland. Ray did not have binoculars with him but the long white neck and grey back were quite conspicuous. He reported this to the regional rep Detlef Davies who went there with his wife Carol and myself for a closer inspection on the following morning. The weather was fine and sunny and the unusual heron was sighted quite close by and in the presence of a White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*).

Very good views of the white-necked bird were had through a telescope and many photos taken of it. Superficially it had the main characteristics of a Pacific Heron – total white neck and underbelly plus a grey back. However, this bird was obviously very unusual as the scapulars and wing coverts were almost all white and quite spectacular while it was in flight.

Other features now became apparent that did not conform to a Pacific Heron identity. Namely, this bird has yellow legs, the grey colouring was very pale grey not the 'sooty black with a greenish sheen' as described in 'Simpson and Day' Field Guide to the Birds of Australia and is no larger in any respect than the White-Faced Heron accompanying it. Tim Barnard inspected the bird later in the day and he and some other ornithologists who saw it or photos of it over the next few days, all rejected the Pacific Heron identity and theorised on hybridisation or being outright albinistic. Reference to support this theory is to be found in the Short Note by B.D. HEATHER (NOTORNIS 30, 1983, page 341) regarding four sightings of other albinistic White-faced Herons.

In conclusion, Ray Pierce, Detlef Davies, Tim Barnard and myself all concur.

Photographs appended –  
The heron in flight taken by Detlef Davies  
The heron searching for food taken by Tim Barnard  
The heron 'on guard' taken by Carol Davies

