



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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WELLINGTON

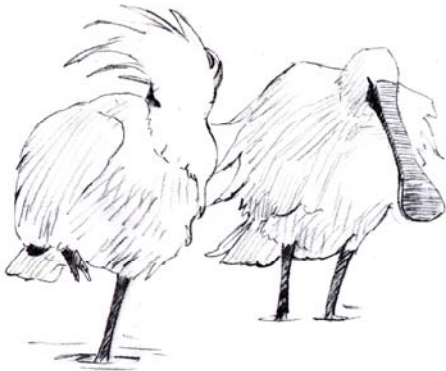
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Otago Region Newsletter 4/2009 April 2009

Ornithological Snippets



On 28 March Rosemary Heather saw a **Royal Spoonbill** flying past at Bendigo, Central Otago. A first, it appears, for inland Otago.

And maybe one of the last? On 4 April, their first visit to Nugget Point for way too long, Suzanne and Richard Schofield were pleasantly surprised to find a **Reef Heron** sitting out the high tide just below the lighthouse. Their first sighting of this species in Otago, despite lots of looking over the years!



A banded **Little Blue Penguin** was found dead at Doctor's Point Beach on 9 April, not, for once, mauled by a dog. An unbanded **Yellow-eyed Penguin** on the bank of the estuary at Karitane on 11 April, in imminent danger of being eaten by Easter dogs, was found to have an abscess on its flipper and was taken into care by DoC.

eBird in New Zealand: Report on March Indoor Meeting.

The speaker was Bruce McKinlay who gave us a fantastic overview of eBird, which is an online web-based database for recording all your bird observations. It means that our own observations will be able to contribute to growing knowledge about bird distribution, changing patterns, abundances, etc., which is not possible if the observations remain in our own notebooks. It will take a bit of effort to get into a routine of entering your data, but from the explanations given by Bruce it can soon be mastered. We had some real-time, online demonstrations of the sort of information you can get from eBird.

Go to <http://ebird.org/content/newzealand>

Mary Thompson

Arctic Waders and Rarities at Aramoana

It is well known that our wader counts hardly ever provide a challenge to identify something else than the native waders or Bar-tailed Godwits. At the right time of the year the Pied Oystercatchers and Pied Stilts turn up with, most of the time, a good number of godwits. Looking at the records, the best places where some rarities might turn up are the Catlins and Inch Clutha, both on, or more or less on, a direct line from say Lake Ellesmere in Canterbury to Awarua Bay in Southland. But should not this be the same situation for Blueskin Bay, Aramoana and the Otago Peninsula Inlets?

Aramoana used to be a better place to see rarities back in the 60s. Golden Plovers, some even in breeding plumage, did turn up. So did the Far-eastern Curlew, admittedly in small numbers. And so did the odd Siberian Tattler, more or less on a regular basis. In the last 20 years no Golden Plovers have been reported, no Curlews, a few sightings of Whimbrel, one or two Mongolian Dotterels, one Large Sand Dotterel, and also very few Knots, despite the very good numbers turning up in Southland. The only sighting of note was 150 in December 1997 while most other reports are of single birds.

Is it possible that something is wrong with the food supply at Aramoana or is there something happening overseas? Maybe a monthly harbour survey might solve the puzzle.

Peter Schweigman

Background reading on the Harbour Survey?

Past harbour surveys were never written up, at least not by and for the OSNZ. but Jill Hamel wrote a lengthy report in 1974 : "Coastal Ecology and Land Use at Aramoana" by G.Hamel and G. Barr, published by Ecology Action (Otago) 1974. A scanned copy is available as a pdf if anyone would like a look.

Another good bit of reference is the Environmental Impact Report for the proposed aluminium smelter at Aramoana.

contact Peter Schweigman

Anti-twitching law passed by Council

DCC bylaw states that no exotic animals are allowed on Council reserves.

Elephants are banned. There will be no Spur-winged Plovers on the Oval nor Silvereyes at Ross Creek. And the Straw-necked Ibis fraternity are to stay away from the Botanical Gardens.

Notices and Business

Report of AGM held at the March Indoor Meeting.

Finance: Louise Foord has kindly agreed to continue looking after our finances. The dispatching of monthly newsletters by email is a good saving in photocopying and postage. Our project account has funds that can be used for reimbursement of expenses for projects.

Newsletter: Derek Onley has kindly agreed to continue producing the newsletter but will keep the number of pages to less than 20! Thanks to everyone who sends in items. The colour photos are great in the email version.

Regional Recorder: This is now officially Alan Baker.

Regional Representative: Mary Thompson is to be nominated again.

Hawksbury Lagoon Survey: This project will continue to do a complete seasonal census.

Winter and Summer Wader Count: Ken Gager will continue to look after this survey; more volunteers are needed to cover all the areas simultaneously so please enter the dates in your dairy and plan to take part. We count all the waders and usually there is something nice to see.

New Projects.

Ross Creek Reservoir: It was agreed to undertake a year-long survey of birds in the Ross Creek reserve. Alan Baker is to be the co-ordinator for this event (see report elsewhere in this newsletter and plan to participate).

Harbour Survey: It was thought that it might be timely to repeat the harbour survey as there are plans afoot that may change the nature of the harbour such as cockle dredging, mataitai, etc. Derek Onley and Bruce McKinlay will be asking for committed volunteers to undertake this on a regular monthly basis.

Mt Watkin Fieldtrip: To be held in spring 2009.

Labour Weekend Fieldtrip: The 2008 trip to Glenorchy/Routeburn was a highly enjoyable birding weekend so there was enthusiasm for a similar trip next Labour Weekend, but we need people to come up with ideas for suitable locations.

Mary Thompson (Regional Representative)

Ross Creek Survey

At the AGM we decided to attempt a survey of the Ross Creek area. Various methods were suggested – 5 minute counts, transects, dividing the area into sections and compiling a bird list for each section and studying particular species e.g. Little Shag or Rifleman. All of these methods would provide useful information and together they would give us a good picture of Ross Creek birds. Although it is not the way we usually organise our surveys, I suggest that participants choose the method or methods which appeals to them.

5 minute counts and transects would give us an idea of numbers and could be valuable contributions to ebird. Counts could be compared with results from other areas e.g. the Town Belt or Orokonui. The challenge for 5 minute counters could well be to find enough suitable sites, because of the popularity of most tracks.

The idea of dividing the area into sections and compiling bird lists for each is to obtain a complete list of birds and show their distribution patterns. It would be useful when searching an area to record any indication of breeding or other observations of interest. Each section should have someone responsible for it to make sure that all are done, however there is no reason why people should do only their own sections – the more lists we have the better our knowledge will be.

Possible divisions of the area are:

- A East of Burma Rd., from Cannington Rd. down to School Creek
- B Between Burma Rd. and the golf course, as far as School Creek.
- C The track north of School Creek to the Burma Rd. crossing
- D Between Burma Rd. and the eastern side of the reservoir, including the reservoir and the grassed areas.
- E Between Wakari and Tanner Rds., north of the reservoir.
- F Between the reservoir and Tanner and Rockside Rds.
- G Along Ross Creek from below the reservoir to the campground entrance.

Maps will be forthcoming.

I suggest that the area be visited in one month each season. If we choose May, August, November and February that would avoid December and January when people tend to be otherwise occupied. Since we are not attempting a count of all the birds in the area, we do not all have to be there at the same time. Participants could choose their own times.

If enough people agree, we could start this May. If you are interested in taking part please let me know what you would like to do.

Alan Baker 03 467 5180

Colour Banded Bellbirds and Tui

Murray Efford is colour banding Bellbirds and Tui in Wakari and would be interested to hear of any sightings. The left leg has a colour over metal band and the right leg two colours. The colours are dark blue and green (not always easy to distinguish), orange and red (can be awkward until you have seen a couple) and an easy yellow. He may add white when he can get some. Murray's phone is 03 4764668

Email Newsletters are in glorious colour!

Many of you will have received a pdf copy of this Newsletter by email as well as mail. It is quite a big job to photocopy, collate, address and post the newsletters so if you are happy to receive the newsletter **only by email**, or if you would like to but do not, please send your email address with your request to:

mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz



Not exactly a standard mystery photo but what is the species and what are the birds doing?

Programme 2009

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street at 8 p.m.
Please be on time: the door will be locked after 8 p.m.

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| Sunday 19 April | Hawksbury Lagoon Autumn Survey. Start 1.00pm
Contact Mary Thompson 464 0787 |
| Wednesday 22 April | Indoor Meeting Steve Lawrence
“Experiences with Falcons” |
| Sunday 10 May | Ross Creek Survey. Meet at 1.00 pm at the end of
Cannington Road.
Contact Alan Baker, phone 467 5180 |
| Wednesday 27 May | Indoor Meeting Dr Bruce Robertson
“The role of genetics in Kakapo recovery” |
| Saturday 20 June | Winter Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.26.
Back up day, Saturday 27 June, with high tide at
14.09. Contact Ken Gager, phone 487 6670. |
| Saturday 25 July | Hawksbury Lagoon Winter Survey. Note date change
from last newsletter |
| Sunday 11 October | Spring survey of Hawksbury Lagoon |
| Saturday 28 November | Summer Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.22. |

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Many thanks to all who contributed,
Final date for copy for next newsletter: 19 May