



THE  
**ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
(INCORPORATED)

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*Otago Region Newsletter 3/2010 April 2010*

**Hawksbury Lagoon Autumn Survey**

The fifth of May 1968 was fine and amongst the OSNZ members led by Jill Hamel was a young Mr Peter Schweigman. They assembled at 9.30 and had finished within the hour having counted 371 Black Swans, 10 Paradise Ducks, 39 Grey Teal, 4-500 Shoveler, the same number of Mallard/Greys (with a higher proportion of grey types than these days), 250 ducks (you wouldn't get away with that these days), 140 Pied Stilts and a single Canada Goose.

42 years later, on 17 April 2010 Peter Schweigman and Jill Hamel returned together to Hawksbury Lagoon. They started half an hour later and the walk across the causeway took an extra 20 minutes. This time they identified all the ducks.

The lagoon was very low, the racecourse end pool being well over half dry. Lucky really, for the community planting day and lakeside picnicking at the old roading yard at that end would otherwise have caused havoc with the roosting waterfowl.



## Hawksbury Lagoon Autumn Count with an additional visit in March .....and 1968

	1 March 2010	17 April 2010	Change from 1968
Black Shag	0	1	
Little Shag	1	3	
White-faced Heron	0	1	
Royal Spoonbill	15	0	
Black Swan	78	13	-358
Paradise Duck	66	22	+12
Canada Goose	2	62	+61
Domestic Goose	12	12	
Hybrid Goose	1	3	
Mallard x Grey Duck	100	47	-c350-450
N.Z.Shoveler	151	139	-c260-360
Grey Teal	308	242	+203
Pied Oystercatcher	0	1	
Spur-winged Plover	6	1	
Pied Stilt	169	72	-68
Black/Pied Stilt	1	0	
Black-backed Gull	8	42	
Red-billed Gull	21	6	
Black-billed Gull	17	20	
Caspian Tern	0	1	
Kingfisher	2	0	
Welcome Swallow	36	2	

If anyone is interested in assisting with the restoration of Hawksbury Lagoon the contact is Shirley McKewen [t.mckewen@clear.net.nz](mailto:t.mckewen@clear.net.nz)

**Derek Onley**

### Wanakaraptor

Graeme Loh forwarded these photos of a couple of raptors up Wanaka way. He thinks they are both harriers but admits the tail is a bit short on the larger one (has it got a tail?) so seeks a second opinion?



## Warbirds over Wakari

Tui have been dominating the skies over Wakari this autumn, tyrannising other species, filling the air with their cries and song, and drawing blood from banders. Murray Efford has colour banded 59 tui in Helensburgh Road since Christmas, considerably more than the 25 banded in a similar period last year. Most tui banded last autumn were resighted over the spring and summer. Numbers of newly banded bellbirds are down (from 75 to 43), possibly because of the tui takeover at feeders. Murray has also seen two extended chases of kereru by tui. Colour-banded tui have been seen across the city (figure), but more records are needed. Sightings should be reported to [murray.efford@otago.ac.nz](mailto:murray.efford@otago.ac.nz). Each bird has a unique combination of three colour bands and one metal band: please record all colours in the order left top, left bottom (always metal), right top, right bottom. Sometimes the colour band on the left leg slips over the metal, hiding it or swapping positions. If you have a feeder that is easy to monitor and have time to make more detailed records then please contact Murray.



Sightings of tui banded in Helensburgh Road, Wakari, Dunedin (white square). Image from Google Earth.

**Murray Efford**

## The Otago banded godwits

An adult male, colour banded Bar-tailed Godwit 1BWRY (that's white flag on left tibia, blue over white left tarsus, red over yellow right for the uninitiated) was seen feeding at Karitane on the afternoon of 9 March. Nine days later it was at Yalu Jiang on the China-North Korea border at the head of the Yellow Sea.

1BWRY was banded at Warrington on 28 February 2006. Four more godwits banded at Warrington were seen in the Yellow Sea in late March and yet another on 12 April. After banding at Warrington 1BWRY was first re-sighted at Aramoana on 18 Sept 2006. As it was an adult it probably went to Alaska but appears to have returned rather early, most birds returning a week or two later at the end of September. It was seen 16 times at Aramoana during 2006, 2007 and 2008. The first sighting at the banding site, Warrington beach, was on 1 March 2007, but it was back at Aramoana the next day. It was not seen at all in 2009.

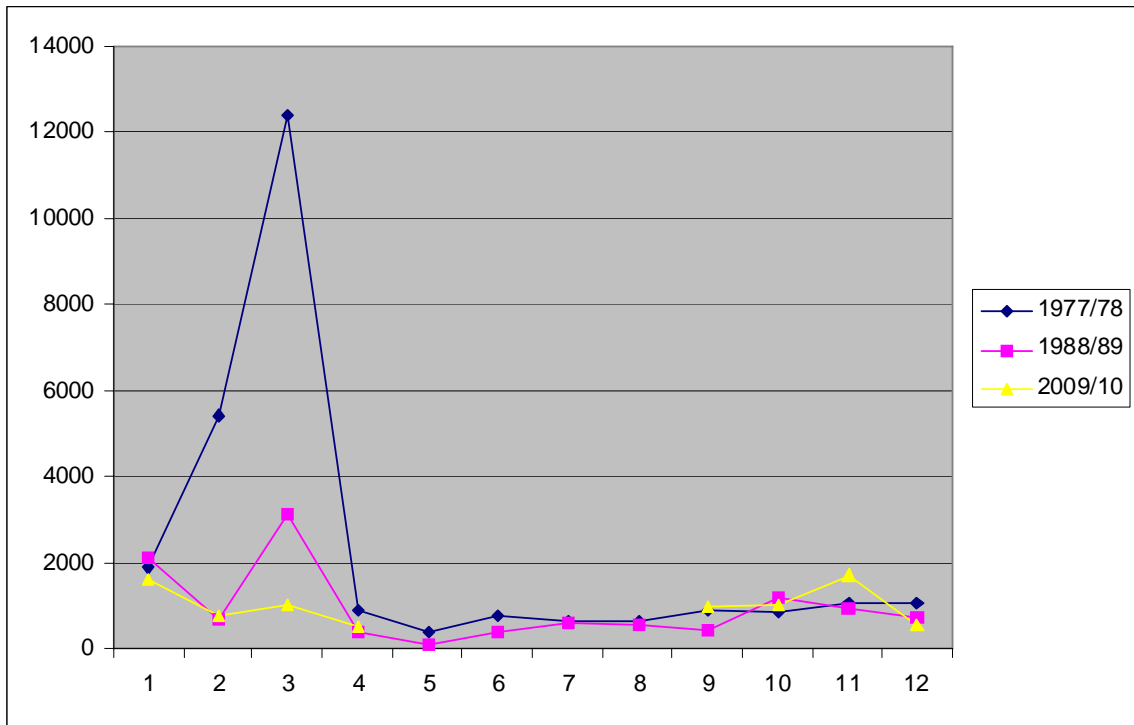
On 11 Feb 2010 it was spotted at Aramoana again, a month or so before its last sighting in New Zealand at Karitane just before setting out to the Yellow Sea.

**Peter Schweigman and Derek Onley**

## Otago Harbour Survey Update: April 2010

Finally a good day!

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
black shag		15				1		16
little shag	24	87	78	97	143	20	13	462
spotted shag	3	16	3	125	2	0		149
stewart island shag			3		9			12
white-faced heron		3		1	1	1	13	19
royal spoonbill				3		0		3
black swan						192	33	225
paradise shelduck	2		4	6	2	3	2	19
feral goose				4	7			11
mallard		76	55	68	196	58		453
grey teal							189	189
harrier					1	1		2
black-backed gull	135	5	7	2	111	7	113	380
red-billed gull	102	49	27	14	56	57	208	513
black-billed gull					16			16
caspian tern							14	14
black-fronted tern							375	375
white-fronted tern	5		3	1		3	236	248
spur-winged plover				2	3	1	2	8
banded dotterel							43	43
piebald oystercatcher		23		14	685	89	292	1103
variable o/catcher	2	6	10		21	42	6	87
piebald stilt						25	8	33
bar-tailed godwit							129	129
bellbird	1							1
grey warbler	1							1
goldfinch	2							2



Looking at both gull numbers and black swan there was something happening in 1977/78 which has not been repeated. Here's the monthly graph for Red-billed Gulls for the three surveys.

I suggested at the last branch meeting that we extend the survey for another year. We don't have to decide this right now but should make a decision around August.

The Port Company intend to deepen the channel by about 2 meters sometime in the next 10 years. Another years data would give a good baseline against which to measure changes but you might want to do some other sort of bird work next summer! Anyway see what you all think.

I'll be in touch for the next survey which is for the 23 May. **Bruce McKinlay**



## Ross Creek Survey March results

Section	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Black Shag				1			1
Little Shag				4			
Paradise Duck				2			
Mallard	S			37			
Black-backed Gull				1			
NZ Pigeon	S	S	S	S	3B		S
Rifleman					S		
Welcome Swallow				3			S
Dunnock	S	S		1	S		
Blackbird	S	S	S	S	1	S	S
Song Thrush	S	S	S		1		
Brown Creeper	S	H				S	
Grey Warbler	S	S	S	H	1	S	S
Fantail	S	S	S	S	3	3	S
Tomtit	S	S	S	S	S		
Silvereye	B	B	B	S	9	S	S
Bellbird	S	S	S	S	2	10+	S
Tui	S	S	H	S	1	S	
Chaffinch	S	S	S	1	H		
Redpoll					S		
House Sparrow				8			S
Starling	S	H		S		1	S
Species Total 26	13	13	10	18	13	8	9

S=seen H=heard B=breeding There is a map of the sections in the June newsletter.

In E block, Len added “lots heard” to his counts of Tui and Bellbird seen. Dependant young of Silvereye and NZ Pigeon were seen.

April is the last month of our survey. Could I please have all results by 7<sup>th</sup> May.

Alan Baker 4675180 48 Pacific St., Dunedin 9010

## Top Predator of Seabirds Dies



This ailing predator was seen at Pacific Scrap Metal Dunedin on 14 April

Graeme Loh

## Ornithological Snippets

Mary saw a **Buller's Mollymawk** (best guess she says) flying in the harbour along Portsmouth drive area 20th April. First seen 8.30am and again watched for 30 minutes at 1.00pm.

There were thousands of **White-fronted Terns** at Aramoana on 14th March. Mary asks: Where do they go from here? Where have they come from?



Photo Gary Blackman

By 11 April Mary, Lesley and Sue O said there were not quite so many terns roosting but thousands out to sea fishing. They also had a close view of a dark phase **Arctic Skua** (possibly juvenile by markings underwing) chasing terns around and across the Mole.

At Karitane there were a mere 108 **White-fronted Terns** but 1620 **Black-billed Gulls** on 9 April and about 1880 by the 18<sup>th</sup>.



Mary and Sue G saw a **New Zealand Falcon** in Arrow River Gorge on 3 April. They had “great views of 3 falcons calling and searching for prey; also one came by to have a look at us; perched on a nearby matagouri bush for several minutes”

A juvenile male **Falcon** was seen chasing **House Sparrows** and **Redpolls** around a farmyard above Waitati on March 27 and what was possibly the same one was seen over the motorway at Pigeon Flat on 13 April.

## Notices and Business

**Helen Jeffery & Ian Douglas** who were regular participants in Otago OSNZ and F&B events last year have returned to Canada

“Hope this long overdue note finds you well. Helen and I have returned to Canada and are now planning to sail north to Alaska over the Summer with a weather eye very much for the birds along the way. Most of the migrant shorebirds have got ahead of us but there are lots of new "local" birds for us to find. Helen has developed a good eye for the woodpeckers even when they are not hammering!

Anyway I just wanted to say thanks for making us very welcome at Otago's OSNZ. Your enthusiasm was infectious. Please thank Peter Schweigman for his encouragement and guidance and Derek Onley for sharing his knowledge with us. Before I left NZ I got a job for a couple of months with the Ministry of Fisheries, working on inshore boats, so got to see lots of Pelagics, something I'm looking forward to coming across very much in this part of the world.

All the best. Ian and Helen.”

## Long Point

We will be making our regular Autumn trip down to the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust land at Long Point in the Catlins on a weekend May, date yet to be finalised. The purpose is to survey all birds except Yellow-eyed Penguins. Anyone interested please contact Derek [derekonley@yahoo.com](mailto:derekonley@yahoo.com) or 03 4822831.

## Black-fronted Terns – yet more legs to look at :-

On 16 April, David Melville and co. caught some terns at Grassmere, Marlborough. “This was an experimental catch using mistnets and tape lures. We caught 3 Black-fronted Terns and 4 White-fronted Terns, 2 of which were recaptures of juveniles banded at Kaikoura by Lindsay Rowe on 26 November 2009.

The 3 Black-fronted Terns have been marked with alpha leg-flags (black characters on a white flag) on the tarsus. All birds were also marked with yellow dye on the breast which will turn to a more orange colour over time.

One of the White-fronted Terns has already been seen at the Wairau Bar (c. 26 km from the banding site) today., the 17<sup>th</sup>.”

A further 9 black-fronted tern were caught at the Wairau Lagoons on 17 April. These birds have been marked with white leg flags with three black characters, but do not have yellow dye on the breast.

Records please to David Melville [david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)



### **Subscription for OSNZ Inc.**

These were sent out just prior to Christmas so if you have overlooked this, please remember to pay your sub. There are a few outstanding.

### **Membership of OSNZ**

This is a good time to join OSNZ as new members will receive a free copy of the Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004 (worth \$90) as well as other Society publications. If you know of those interested in studying birds why not give them a membership brochure (copies from Mary).

### **State of New Zealand Birds 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008**

Spare copies are available for members who want to complete their set. If you have other ideas of where these might be placed; e.g. libraries, schools, that might publicise OSNZ more widely, please let Mary know.

### **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](mailto:mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz)

### **Editor for July and August Newsletter**

I am off to Paraguay for 2 months on 24 June and despite the wonders of modern technology I cannot, and may not feel inclined to compile the Otago newsletter from Laguna Blanca (see below). Is there anyone out there who will be a little closer to the action over these two months? Please contact Derek [derekonley@yahoo.com](mailto:derekonley@yahoo.com)



## Mystery Photos

Why is this a Fiordland Crested Penguin?



Photo Marc van Woerko

Moulting crested penguins can be hard to identify. There are half a dozen options: Rockhopper, Royal, Macaroni, and the three most likely to turn up in Otago: Fiordland, Snares and Erect crested. Both Royal and Macaroni have straggly golden plumes that start from the centre of the forehead so there is less of an eyebrow effect. They are big (70cm) with huge bills and adult Royals have white chins and

faces. Rockhoppers are the smallest of the group with relatively small bills and head plumes that start as a thin eyebrow and splay out at the back of the head in all directions, suggesting they have been in a good Otago southerly or been overly generous with the hair gel. You don't need to look at the plumes of the other three to separate out the Fiordland-crested. Both Snares and Erect-crested have pale bare skin at the base of the bill. Fiordland's skin is feathered right up to the base of the bill. The bird in the picture also has broken white stripes on the cheeks, a feature typical, but not always present, in Fiordland-crested.

Quite often when you find a dead seabird it isn't exactly in a pristine state and in order to identify it you may have little to go on other than the bill. This albatross was found at Cosgrove, Long Point in the Catlins earlier in the year.



## Programme 2010

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.

Wed 28 April	Indoor Meeting Bitterns of NZ	Peter Langlands
Sunday 23 May	Harbour Survey	start time 9.45am
Wed 26 May	Indoor meeting.	Hamish Spencer Birds of Costa Rica
Sunday 20 June	Harbour Survey	start time 8.30am
Wed 23 June	Indoor meeting	Sheena Townsend Bird studies on Ulva Island (note change of date)
Sunday 11 July	Harbour Survey	start time 1.15pm
Sunday 18 July	Hawksbury Lagoon	
Saturday 9 October	Hawksbury Lagoon	

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[derekonley@yahoo.com](mailto:derekonley@yahoo.com)

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