



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

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## *Otago Region Newsletter 6/2006 December 2006*

### **Greenfinch × Goldfinch Hybrid?**

I found this bird dead (quite fresh) at Lowburn near Cromwell on 2 December 2006. NZ Finch Breeders Association members believe it is a **Greenfinch** × **Goldfinch** hybrid and features of both species are present. The wings are obviously goldfinch like but the bird is more the size of a greenfinch. It is not unusual for the two species to mate and produce hybrid offspring in captivity but from what I understand, it is a very rare occurrence in the wild.



Dick Marquand

### **Rare or unusual sightings of birds**

Don't forget to report your sightings of rare or interesting birds to Frank Austin, our Regional Recorder for possible inclusion in Classified Summarised Notes that are published in *Notornis*. You could also alert the email list **Otago Birding Reporting Group** [j.j.wilson@actrix.co.nz](mailto:j.j.wilson@actrix.co.nz) that Jim Wilson administers so others can be kept up to date.



### **Ten Years of NZ Falcon Sightings in Otago**

Peter Schweigman has collated all the records of **NZ Falcon** sightings in Otago since 1995 for the Raptor Association of NZ, which is conducting a national survey. You may be surprised to hear that we have a total of at least 72 reported records; think of all the times you have seen a falcon and not reported it!

## Godwit Spotting in January

There are two weekends when the tides should be suitable. They are Sunday, 14 January at 11.00 am at Aramoana and Saturday 20 January at 3.00 pm at Warrington. Contact Peter Schweigman for more details. If you haven't already done so, add your name to the "Godwit Enthusiasts" email list [peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz] and Peter will be able to send you information on other trips. Remember new spotters are very welcome, even if you think you are a novice; that is not a problem.

## Bird Books & DVDs Added to the Dunedin Public Libraries' Collection in 2006

### Books

*Albatross: elusive mariners of the Southern Ocean* by Aleks Terauds & Fiona Stuart

*Albatrosses and petrels across the world* by Michael Brooke

*The art of John Keulemans: paintings of the birds of New Zealand* introduced by  
Ross Galbreath

*Beautiful birds of New Zealand* by Rod Morris & Alison Balance

*The bedside book of birds: an avian miscellany* compiled by Graeme Gibson

*Birds* by Gilles Martin

*Birds in China* by Xu Weishu

*Birds of New Zealand checklist* by Brian O'Flaherty

*Extinct birds of New Zealand* by Paul Martinson & Alan Tennyson

*Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic birds, Volume 7, Boatbill to Starlings*

*In the company of crows and ravens* by John M Marzluff &  
Tony Angell

*March of the penguins* by Luc Jacquet

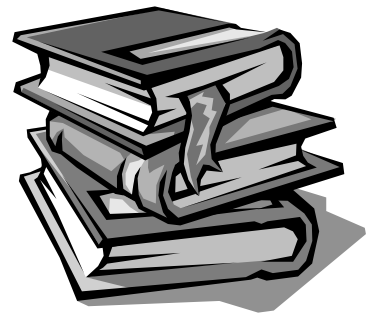
*New Zealand birds in focus: a photographer's journey* by  
Geoff Moon

*Know your New Zealand birds* by Lynnette & Geoff Moon

*Return to Wild America* by Scott Weidensaul

*RSPB birds of Britain & Europe, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, by Rob Hume

*Skua and penguin: predator and prey* by Euan Young



### DVDS

*March of the penguins*

*Waterfowl and wetlands: a New Zealand odyssey*

## Easter at Great Barrier Island?

The Auckland OSNZ is planning a trip to Great Barrier Island on 6-9 April, staying in backpacker-type accommodation "to explore good birding sites including the wetlands at Kaitoke and the Whangapoua Estuary." Suzi Phillips, Auckland RR, is happy if a few of us from Otago joined them on this trip and in return maybe they could join us on a trip in our region sometime. Could anyone interested please

contact Mary Thompson in the first instance? Numbers are needed by the end of January.

## **Birds Nesting in Gardens**

You may remember seeing an ad in the paper for reports of birds nesting in your garden for a study being conducted by Yolanda van Heezik of the University of Otago's Department of Zoology. She will be giving a talk next year at one of our meetings. In the meantime she is very interested in hearing from people who have nesting birds. Here is a description from Yolanda of what she wants to find out. Maybe some of us can help out.

I've done work on counting birds in various urban habitats, and more recently on quantifying prey brought back by domestic cats, so I feel now the next logical step is to try to understand how productive urban populations of birds are. It's difficult to find and monitor nests in an urban environment where there is so much private property, so we were hoping that we could get people to monitor nests for us in their own gardens. We (this study involves Ian McLean, also from the Department of Zoology) thought that people who know about nests in their gardens could check on whether they were still active every couple of days or so, and record all this information for us.



Checks wouldn't necessarily involve being able to look into the nest, as we wouldn't want to encourage any activity that might result in a nest abandonment, but it is usually possible to monitor the nest's progress by watching the behaviour of the parents. Ultimately we hope to collect information on whether nests failed or succeeded, and the timing of the failure. We would also want to record some features of the nest (height, species of tree, etc.) which we would do ourselves.

We're interested in most bird species except starlings and sparrows, but of course information on natives would be extremely welcome.

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## Report of Cannon Netting Attempt in November 2006



At Warrington Spit, the recce was done by the local OSNZ members and, as always, spot on. While the rest of New Zealand was either drenched or blown off the island, a nice high pressure area was evolving straight above the catching site involving 460 **Godwits**. Birds were homing in on the net very nicely, providing a record harvest of already banded godwits. We fired at about 25 birds in the right corner of the net. Unfortunately, a brand-new piece of rope

on projectile was of a lesser quality compared to the old stuff. The right projectile came loose, leaving the part where godwits were roosting uncovered, giving a poor result of only two **Pied Oystercatchers**. (\$^\$&^\$%#@))\_\_\_\_)

While we were already a projectile down in Awarua, the options of catching diminished with just one net operable. With the fantastic help of the local DoC people, we were able to obtain new equipment within hours. The next day we set nets again, but an unfortunate situation of increased water level of at least 0.4m on top of predicted tide swamped both nets. There are no further keys on the keyboard to express our dismay.

So, if people want to join the "Nelson House Truckers Team" for more (hopefully more successful) catching adventures, please let us know. During the next few months more trips to Farewell Spit, Nelson Area, Otago, Awarua and also Parengarenga is planned. As always, your help will be appreciated.

Many thanks to the local OSNZ members in Southland and Otago and DoC people for their ongoing commitment to help us with the wader movement project.

Rob Schuckard and David Melville

## Black Stilt at Kaikourai Estuary and Brighton Lagoon

Derek Onley saw a **Black Stilt** at Kaikourai Estuary on 29 November 2006, probably the same bird as seen last year. Peter Schweigman also saw the bird that day, taking up residency with its **Pied** partner. Copulation was witnessed and confirms Mary Thompson's observation at the Brighton Lagoon that this **Black Stilt** is a male.



Lesley Gowans saw it alone at 9 a.m. on 6 December, with 2 **Pied Stilts** about 5m away. On the evening of 8 December she and Louise Foord visited the Kaikourai Estuary at the car park between the road and the Estuary, but saw no **Black Stilt** and

only one **Pied Stilt**. They travelled on to the Brighton Lagoon and there was the **Black Stilt** frantically feeding. From their position beside the large flowering eucalyptus tree, they could see 4 **Pied Stilts** sitting on nests, each one surrounded by water. After watching for half an hour they decided to pour their coffee. After this, they couldn't immediately see the **Black Stilt**: it was now incubating!

### Otago Summer Wader Count, 12 November 2006

	Aramoan a	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Harbour West	Harbour East	LPG Depot	Total s
South Island	14	76	99		30	5	224
Pied Oystercatcher							
Variable							
Oystercatcher		71	2		25		98
Bar-tailed Godwit	230		700				930
Banded Dotterel							0
Pied Stilt	3	14	61		2		80
Royal Spoonbill		14	11				25
White Heron							0
White-faced Heron	12	27	6				45
Caspian Tern							0
Kingfisher		2					2

Again, despite a rather strong, coolish southerly, the summer wader count did take place. The total figures didn't look too different from previous summer counts, except the **Variable Oystercatcher**. The average is about 15, with 8 at Papanui. Papanui with 71 is unheard of. The **Godwits** didn't like the weather very much and huddled in tight groups, difficult to count. They were followed at the Catlins and Richard Schofield came up with 366; Karitane had about 190 and Blueskin Bay 500. A total of 1986 is slightly up from last year.

Ken Gager and Peter Schweigman

### How many seeds do birds disperse?

Peter Bannister has collected the droppings from under his bird feeders over a 2 month period and has counted and sorted all the seeds that he found. They were mainly pseudopanax, pittosporum, coprosma and passionfruit. How many? 58,000!

### Antipodes Island Parakeet Breeding at the Dunedin Botanic Garden Aviary, March 2006

After 2 unsuccessful breeding attempts during the winter period resulting in infertile eggs, springtime produced 2 fertile eggs for our breeding pair of **Antipodes Island**

**Parakeets.** The parents successfully fledged two healthy young and they are male and female. Highlights of their breeding season:

- the female's nest choice = a horizontal tunnel nest log;
- the change in behaviour of the breeding male when his partner was incubating = more protective of nest area;
- the discovery of their favourite rearing food = very fresh carrot;
- the dedication of the male to constantly regurgitate food for partner and offspring.



Current genetic research of all captive **Antipodes Island Parakeets** has almost finished and pairings will be finalized soon to ensure maximum diversity. The two young bred at the Aviary this season will be paired with partners of suitable genetics so the captive species can enjoy maximum vigour. A small population is being held in captivity throughout NZ as an insurance policy should anything affect the stability of the wild population.

### **Christmas Crossword (from OSNZ Northland Newsletter)**

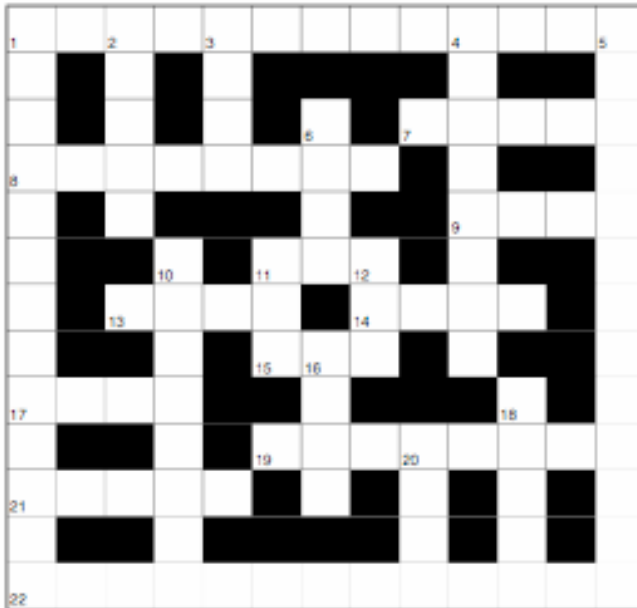
#### Clues across

1. Common white New Zealand bird (3-6, 4)
7. See 5 down.
8. Former American Long-tailed Duck
9. Grey, Brown & Campbell Island ones occur in New Zealand
- 11 Genus of endangered Hawaiian birds
- 13 See 18 down
- 14 Extinct New Zealand bird
- 15 Lacking moisture
- 17 Metal decay or part of a tanager that isn't yellow?
- 19 Colourful European woodland bird
- 21 2 under par for the raptor
- 22 Decorative species of antbird? (6, 7)

#### Clues down

- 1 Argentina's national bird (6, 7)
- 2 Well-dressed person?
- 3 Trouble-ridden country but home to the babbler
- 4 British garden bird (5, 3)
- 5 Baby boomer? (6,7) and 7 across: prefix for an even smaller one?
- 6 Extinct Hawaiian bird
- 10 Australian nuthatch?
- 11 Aged
- 12 Timid species of albatross?
- 16 Huge South American bird
- 18 (and 13 across) North Atlantic auk

20 One of many on the breast of a thrush



## Ornithological Snippets

Alan Baker reports 7 **Crested Grebe** in the Otematata boat harbour on 1 December 2006. The nest he saw being built at Sailors Cutting in September (see the October newsletter) had a bird sitting on it that day, too. Another pair of **Grebes** that came too close was chased away. A pair he saw at Lake Middleton on 27 November dived for weed and sticks and carried them under a swimmer's platform. He also reports good views of **Grebes** on Lake Aviemore (27 November 2006), Lake Ruataniwha (28 November 2006) and the Ohau Channel Mouth (28 November 2006).

Louise Foord saw a family of **South Island Pied Oystercatchers**, 2 parents and one chick, half-sized and not fully feathered, on the driveway of Gladbrook Station, Middlemarch on 29 October 2006. The same day she saw several **Pheasants**, including at least one obvious pair, on the roadside in lucerne, Puketoi Road, south of Gimmerburn. Alan Baker saw 2 **California Quail** at Otematata on 10 September 2006.

Richard Schofield reports 2 **Arctic Skuas**, at least one an immature, disturbing the **Bar-tailed Godwit** roost at Pounaweia on the morning of 12 November 2006. Alan Baker had an excellent close view of a **Black Stilt** at the mouth of the Ohau Channel, Lake Benmore on 28 November 2006.

On the 29 November 2006, Peter Schweigman came across three **NZ Scaup** and two **Coots** at the DCC Wetland Enhancement area off the Brighton Rd. The **Coots** appear to be new for the area, although 2 **Scaup** have been seen before.

