



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

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*Otago Region Newsletter 1/2011 February 2011*



**Falcon Action**

Craig took the photo above at Akatore Forest on a recent outing with Steve Lawrence. You can find more on [www.flickr.com/photos/craigmckenzie](http://www.flickr.com/photos/craigmckenzie).

Those who have been fortunate enough to go on the Falcon trips have been well rewarded. Here are a few of the highlights from the reports that Steve circulates to the ‘Falcon group’.

“On 4 December Jill and Francie spent a few hours on Taieri Beach Road where Craig and I had seen some activity last week while Lesley and I walked around a forestry block investigated on the first trip of the season. Just after arriving at Taieri Beach Road a falcon appeared circling above us - a good start. Unfortunately Lesley and I didn’t see any falcon at all - it looks like they have moved down the road about 1km this year. Jill and Francie had plenty of sightings of falcon at their spot but no obvious

nest site - we will have to check them out again. We decided to go to a south east corner of Akatore forest opposite the turn off to Quoin point where forestry workers had recorded falcon (no nest site) in the past which we had not checked out last year. On the way we fortunately avoided running over a falcon dustbathing on the gravel road- first time any of us had seen that! We found the clearfell site which was regenerating in coprosma I think and at the first stop played the callback which resulted in an immediate response with a falcon appearing kekking on a dead tree. On approaching it the falcon started kekking and dive-bombing becoming more determined as I approached a large pine log where 4 eggs were discovered underneath with a good collection of prey feathers on top. After I retreated we saw the falcon return to the nest.

Craig and I had a successful day early in January- we had 3 responses to the falcon call playback on Mt Allan, one of which resulted in locating a nest with 3 chicks about 5 days old. (Akatore040111004c) We also went into Akatore and found a nest close to where we suspected it was (near the top of Wilkinson road) with 1 large chick about 30 days old. The pair off Mailbox road has 2 chicks about 14 days old. (Akatore 04-111mailbox1c) We collected prey samples from all sites for future identification. At each site only the females were defending while the males were off hunting (or loafing about) somewhere.

On the 9th January we (Craig, Lesley, Francie, Campbell Weston and I ) located a pair with 1, possibly 2, fledged juveniles in a gully off Taieri Beach Road - these may be the birds seen from the road on previous trips. Some of us also saw a food pass to the single chick in the Wilkinson road nest site. Unfortunately we didn't locate the pair we suspected in a large area of cutover to the south of Wilkinson road although faint kekking responses to the playback were heard from 2 sites.

Our last trip on 23<sup>rd</sup> January was a successful one in that we located 2 recently fledged juveniles close to their nest site off Wilkinson Rd in Akatore forest and the "volunteers" who clambered down the hill to the nest site returned with a nice collection of prey remains and pellets. The pair at the Mailbox Rd site were strongly defending their chicks which had begun moving around in the vegetation surrounding the nest. The presence of a new operational skid site 200m from the nest doesn't appear to have caused problems but Wenita have been asked again not to encroach any further into the clearfell block."

**Steve Lawrence.**



## The new bird roost in Andersons Bay Inlet

The roost, finished in June 2009, is now 18 months old. The local birds were decidedly wary of it to begin with, but variable oystercatchers, little shags, mallards and red-billed and black-backed gulls accepted it readily in the first three months. The behaviour of the birds roosting changed, with more of them sound asleep, heads under wings, though cars and people were passing less than 50 m away. It wasn't until the summer months that the white-



faceted herons and spur-winged plovers adopted the roost. During the 2010 winter, numbers built up and at high tide, 25/6/2010, there were 55 birds of the above 7 species plus a pair of Paradise ducks on it, and hardly another bird anywhere else on the inlet. The two main objectives, a safe high tide roost for birds and a place where people could see the harbour birds easily, had been fulfilled.

The pair of Paradise ducks brought nine ducklings on to the inlet in the first week of November 2010 and trundled their ducklings up the asphalt ramp to brood them at high tide. Unfortunately they lost eight ducklings, but have raised one to fledging. As the high tide comes in they often feed on the weed beds well out on the delta of the creek from Somerville Street. The rising water frustrates the smaller duckling first, and it often leads the way over to below Larnach Street for a drink and a wash, and then off to the roost for a sleep.

A pair of pied stilts brought a fledged juvenile to the inlet on 31 December, probably from Tomahawk Lagoon, and have used the roost over every high tide I have checked so far. The species was very uncommon in the inlet before the roost was built. There is a lone variable oystercatcher and a pair of spur-wings that have taken up residence, and seem to spend all their non-feeding time on the roost. Spoonbills sleep on it only when the tide is high in the middle of the day, but make off south for the night, probably to the colony on Green Island. But it is like watching chooks drift into the henhouse when high tide falls at dusk - first the red-billed gulls settle on the railings, then the variable oystercatchers lie down around the rocks in the middle, followed by the paradise duck family, pied stilts and finally the pair of white-faced herons which like the rocky edges.

My only disappointments are that the SIPO that feed on Bayfield Park are extremely reluctant to use the roost (seen only once), and the gulls tend to monopolize the

railings so much that the little shags are deterred. I suspect that white-fronted terns land among the red-bills sometimes at night but I have not yet caught them doing so.

Below is the list of all species that I ever saw around the whole inlet during the 100 counts I did in the year before the roost was built and the number of times each species was seen. The figures in brackets are the number of times I have seen the species which have notably increased in frequency during 54 counts in the last 14 months.

Little shag	98	Paradise duck	37 (25)
Spotted shag (juvs)	37	Mallard	73
Stewart Is shag	4	Pied stilt	..4 (7)
Black shag	2	Spur-winged plover	..9 (26)
White-faced heron	..6 (13)	Black-backed gull	..95
Royal Spoonbill	125	Red-billed gull	100
Pied oystercatcher	36	Black-billed gull	1
Variable oystercatcher	56 (37)	White-fronted tern	2
Black swan	1		

Out of the 17 species, 12 have been seen using the roost, including a stray Stewart Is Shag, probably juvenile

It looks as if a parent spoonbill has brought its fledgling to the inlet, or been followed by it (probably from the Green Island colony), and for at least two weeks the parent has been defending the corner of the inlet that has the best foraging, so that it can efficiently feed its fledgling safely on the roost. Before the roost went in, it was common to see up to 5 spoonbills feeding amicably side by side on the delta.

On 22 January, I saw three spoonbills on the inlet, one on the roost and the two others in opposite corners of the inlet. The one near the causeway flew over to the delta by the hospital and got severely chased right off the inlet by the one that was feeding at the delta. Today (5th February) there was the same pattern of three birds widely separated. At 4.30 pm the bird on the hospital delta flew to the bird on the roost, which woke up and begged vigorously for 10 minutes and was fed by the other bird 7 times. While this was happening, the bird at the causeway, where feeding is poor, flew across to the delta and was chased off by both the parent and the fledgling. The chased bird circled high and disappeared to the south. The fledgling returned to the roost and the parent to the delta for a preening session.



**Jill Hamel**

## Hawksbury Lagoon Summer Count



Bruce McKinley shows off his new telescope.

Species	23 Jan	10 Oct
Little Shag	2	4
Black Swan	115	83
Paradise Duck	9	116
Canada Goose	43	10
Domestic Goose	25	17
Hybrid Goose	11	6
Mallard/Grey Duck	508	56
N.Z. Shoveler	205	83
Grey Teal	655	185
NZ Scaup	2	
Pied Stilt	226	35
Spur-winged Plover	3	
Black-backed Gull	22	18
Red-billed Gull	43	47
Black-billed Gull	1	
White-faced Heron	1	
Royal Spoonbill	4	
Kereru	1	
Welcome Swallow	36	183

After October's howling, wet southerly the weather for the summer survey on 23 January was balmy – overcast, a tropical 15 degrees with occasional refreshing drizzle. Welcome Swallow numbers were down from 100's to a mere 36, the rest presumably having returned to the warm, sunny pastures around Waikouaiti. Paradise Duck numbers were well down from spring. Apart from the pair with a couple of very late chicks the others may well be off moulting. Other duck numbers increased as did Pied Stilts which appear to call in at the area briefly in late summer and early autumn on there way coastward. A male and female Scaup were the only unexpected sightings, the first since 3 in July 2008. Details of all the counts are available on ebird.

The next count is on 3 April at 10.00am. Contact 4822831; [derekonley@yahoo.com](mailto:derekonley@yahoo.com)

**Derek Onley**

## Geolocators



Fifteen fairy prions have been fitted with geolocators at the St Clair cliffs in early January. Geolocators are dataloggers that record light levels and sea temperature for a year. Position accurate to 150 kilometres can be calculated from light times using classical navigation methods once the bird has been re-caught and downloaded. The birds selected were adults with a record of successful breeding in the past two years. It took five of us two nights to successfully fiddle with the glue and

plastic. Graeme Loh, Kat Manno, Kalinka Rexa-Huber, Daniel Jack and Keith Payne.

We hope to catch the birds and download the loggers in spring. All the chicks of the parents fitted with loggers fledged with good weights so we are confident that the adults have adjusted to this burden. The loggers were gifted by the British Antarctic Survey to Graeme Taylor for use with NZ seabirds.

**Graeme Loh**

## Waifs

DOC has been called out to a range of interesting birds this month. The boiling hot Waitangi day saw a young injured Fiordland-crested Penguin panting on Brighton Beach. It was put in a bucket with wet sand in the bottom to keep it cool (cooling happens through the feet) and carried to a quiet location where we presumed that it would moult. But it went to sea again and came ashore three days later, very skinny. Off to the penguin hospital.

At midday the people at the Aramoana Spit Pilot houses called to say they had a big brown albatross. “Can you describe it? - It is big. - How big? - Big.” After some

dithering I decided it might not be a juvenile black-backed gull and headed out to find a hot southern giant petrel that was also panting in the heat. More water on the feet and off to some cliffs. Nothing appeared to be the matter with it except a reluctance to fly. It seemed well humoured and did not bite much at all. A tin of sardines was opened. It helped itself. It kept wanting to climb higher up the hill rather than flying off so we left it to its own devices.

A fairy prion was found in the mouth of a cat in the Octagon 29 January. It seemed well but died. And a Hutton's shearwater turned up at Aramoana 9 Feb. It smelled bad but flew.



Penguin Transport, Giant Petrel and Hutton's Shearwater

**Graeme Loh**

## Ornithological Snippets



Eric de Leeuw saw this Little Owl on the road between Sandymount and Hooper's Inlet on the 23 December.

At the NZ Falcon nesting site on the Kepler Track near Rainbow Reach swing bridge, DOC signs warn you to be prepared for dive-bombing. Mary saw some activity on 22 December and Mary and Sue watched falcon young screeching and flying from perch to perch on high lichen-covered branches of the beeches lining the river. They finally saw 3 young perched together on one branch but even after 1-2 hours there was no sign of adults

returning to feed them. Great to see they successfully fledged 3 young.

In the Eglinton Valley; Sue and Mary saw kakariki, kaka, young robins, tomtits and reintroduced mohua at Deer Flat camp site on 22 January. And at the Haldon side of Lake Benmore on 12 January they found two Great Crested Grebe with one chick each, one of which looked almost albino.

On 17 January Mary saw in Cannington Road 21 young Welcome Swallows on powerlines roosting close together – spread out no more than 20 metres – are they preparing to migrate to warmer regions? Do they stay around Dunedin?

Along with the first returning Black-fronted Terns of the season on February 1, Derek Onley saw a White-winged Black Tern in breeding plumage quartering the sandbank in the centre of the Harbour off Port Chalmers. This, following on from last years records of a bird flying past Waitati beach in December and several records inland in spring suggest there may be a few birds breeding in the region. Keep a look out next spring in Black-fronted Tern nesting habitat.

### **Summer Wader Count 21 November 2010**

To make sure that the harbour survey and the wader count were carried out, both were out on the same day. It is an ideal situation since this way we get a far better idea of the waders present in coastal Dunedin.

It has been mentioned before and repeated here again: bird life at Aramoana has dropped dramatically since the early 70s. With the absence of godwits at Aramoana and the high numbers at Hooper's Inlet one is inclined to assume that all the godwits were counted at Hooper's. Unfortunately Blueskin Bay was missed during this wader count. The February wader count might give a better idea.

Species	Aramoana	Harbour	Papanui	Hooper's	Total
Pied Oystercatcher		236	32	5	273
Variable O'catcher	8	49	13		70
Pied Stilt		6		10	16
Banded Dotterel					0
Bar-tailed Godwit	15			798	813

### **Peter Schweigman**

#### **Fantail Nest observations at Ross Creek**

On 14 December Mary came across a pair of fantails finishing off a lovely nest in a coprosma at the side of a track in Ross Creek reserve. They would take turns sitting in it and wriggling around. It was perfect for bird-watchers too as at eye height. I was away for 10 days but when on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec the fantails were sitting and observed one changeover. Over the next 10 days observed birds sitting and changeovers (less than 5 seconds), which happened about every 15 to 20 minutes. Then on holiday again so missed the hatching day and on 14 Jan birds were brooding and changing every 8 to 12

minutes- young with closed eyes, no feathers; saw 2 chicks. By 17<sup>th</sup> Jan brooding occurred for about 15 minutes, then off the nest for 15 minutes during which time chicks fed every 2 minutes (now saw 3 chicks). Two days latter (19<sup>th</sup> January) no brooding occurred during the afternoon, chicks had eyes open and well-feathered, one dominant chick sitting on top and very active; chicks fed two or three times every minute, although occasional 10 minute rest period (but parent did not brood during this time). Now saw that there were 4 chicks squashed into that little nest. Sue Odlin was able to video some of this action. Sue followed up observations as Mary away again and had guesstimated fledging on 23 January, which appears to have been the case as chicks in nest on the evening of 22 and gone 24<sup>th</sup>. Fledglings not observed in vicinity of nest.

**Mary Thompson & Sue Odlin**

## **Notices and Business**

### **Summer Reading, Boating and Picnics**

#### **What is happening at sea? Boat trip Saturday 19 February**

We will spend three hours off Taiaroa Head getting close to the albatross, mollymawks and all the other sixteen seabirds that regularly use Otago seas. We may encounter feeding frenzies in the eddies of food created by the peninsula.

A focus will be on the proposals to deepen the Otago Harbour and dispose of the spoil seven kilometres off Taiaroa Head.

We will leave town at 7:30am to join a charter and return a little after midday. The group will share the cost with an upper limit of \$120 each. Price dependent on numbers and time at sea.

Ring, text or email Graeme to book before **next Saturday**.

4876125 home

0211322436 cell

gloh@earthlight.co.nz

#### **OSNZ Picnic at Aramoana on Sunday 27 February at 12 noon.**

Everyone is invited to a picnic get-together at Aramoana to start off the birding year. We will meet outside the community hall in the Domain on Moana Street just before the Spit Road; please bring your own drinks and something that can be shared with others for a pot-luck picnic. If the weather is not cooperating too well the hall has a veranda we can sit on. It will be a last chance to look for colour-tagged Bar-tailed Godwits, see the newly-arrived Banded Dotterels, check out the shags and terns on the Mole and look across to Taiaroa Head at the albatross. High tide is at about 12.45 pm. So the birds should be roosting. Look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it, even if you are not regulars on field trips, this event should have something of interest for everyone.

## **New books in the Dunedin Public Library**

The Bird Garden    Fay Bolt  
 Bird Migration    Ian Newton  
 Birdology            Sy Montgomery  
 Birds New Zealand : a beautiful collection    Paul Gibson  
 Birds of Australia    Don Hadden  
 Birdscapes : birds in our imagination and experience    Jeremy Mynott  
 Bright Wings : an illustrated anthology of poems about birds    ed. Billy Collins  
 Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand, Norfolk and Macquarie Islands and the Ross  
 Dependency.  
 Field Guide to the Birds Of Australia 8<sup>th</sup> edition    Ken Simpson and Nicolas Day  
 Invisible Connections : why migrating shorebirds need the Yellow Sea    Jan van  
 de Ram  
 Kakapo Rescue    Sy Montgomery  
 Kakapo : rescued from the brink of extinction    Alison Ballance  
 Moa Sightings    Bruce Spittle  
 National Geographic Bird Coloration    Geoffrey E Hill  
 New Zealand Forest Birds and their World    Geoff Moon  
 Owl            Desmond Morris  
 Penguin        Stephen Martin  
 Pigeon        Barbara Allen  
 The Private Lives of Birds            Bridget Stuchbury  
 The Running Sky    Tim Dee  
 Say Goodbye to the Cuckoo    Michael McCarthy  
 A Sky Full of Starlings    Stephen Moss

### **DVDs**

Birdland, the TV series  
 The Splendour of Australian Birds  
**Alan Baker**

## **OSNZ Annual General Meeting, Queens Birthday Weekend, Lower Hutt**

It is not too soon to think about attending the OSNZ AGM as early bird registration closes 28th February. This year the meeting is from Saturday 4th June to Monday 6th June. There will be scientific sessions on both Saturday and Sunday (Bruce will be presenting some of our Harbour survey results); on the Monday there are three field excursions to choose from. Mary will be attending as RR and Bruce as Council member; it would be great to have others from Otago come with us.

All registration details, including schedule and map are also available online:  
<http://osnz.org.nz/osnzagm.htm>

## OSNZ Subscriptions

Members of OSNZ will have received just before Christmas their Invoice for the 2011 year, so this is a reminder to pay subs in case you have overlooked them during the holiday season.

New members are always welcome and this is a good time to join as new members will receive a complimentary copy of Atlas of Bird Distribution valued at \$90.

## 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)

## Mystery Photo



If the bird Graeme Loh photographed from his kayak on 28 September had posed a little more co-operatively and you could see that it had ashy grey upperparts merging rather scruffily into white underparts, a pale yellowish bill with a dark tip..... and if you could see that it was bigger than a red-billed gull but smaller than a black backed .....

then you should have no problem identifying it as a Grey Petrel.



But seabirds rarely look anything like the neat illustrations in field guides.

## 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.

- Saturday 19 February** Seabird Boat Trip 7.30am. Contact Graeme Loh  
4876125 0211322436 gloh@earthlight.co.nz
- Wednesday 23 February Indoor Meeting Graham Parker &  
Kalinka Rexa-Huber A Year on Gough Island
- Sunday 27 February Picnic at Aramoana to farewell the godwits. Meet at 12  
noon at the Aramoana Hall in the Domain.
- Sunday 20 March Harbour Survey start time 3.15pm
- Wednesday 23 March Indoor Meeting Graeme Loh  
Experiences in the Galapagos
- Sunday 3 April Hawksbury Lagoon Survey start 10.00am
- Sunday 17 April Harbour Survey start time 1.00 pm
- Wednesday 27 April Indoor Meeting Derek Onley  
Paraguay Burning

Please pass on any suggestions for speakers at Indoor Meetings to Mary Thompson

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, c/o Blueskin Store, Waitati, 9060  
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Many thanks to all who contributed.  
The next newsletter will be in late January  
Final date for copy for next newsletter 16 March