



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

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*Otago Region Newsletter 1/2010 January 2010*



Photos © Chris Benesh.

On November 26 at the Yellow-eyed Penguin colony at Taiaroa Head (Penguin Place), we encountered a Fork-tailed Swift flying around the colony and beachfront at around 17:40. The combination of dark plumage with paler throat and contrasting white rump patch, as well as overall long arched wings and long tapered tail were indicative of this species. Conditions were partly cloudy with very high, sustained winds. We watched the bird for several minutes before departing.

**Chris Benesh**

This is a first for Otago. The only other swift ever seen was a group of at least 60 Spine-tailed Swifts at Tautuku back in 1979.

<http://chrisbenesh.blogspot.com/2009/11/fork-tailed-swift-in-new-zealand.html>

## NZ Falcon Survey- Akatore Forest



Wenita owned Akatore forest, situated between Waihola and the coast, was surveyed over 6 trips covering 90kms of forestry roads between 10th October and 29th November. Falcon were located by broadcasting “kekking” calls through an MP3 player connected to an 800watt car amplifier and unidirectional speakers. Other bird species were recorded during the survey for Wenita’s records.

The forest has been milled in large tracts resulting in just 3 age classes with some pockets of mature pine and scrub left. This has meant that large areas aren’t suitable for falcon and don’t have many other birds present either. Falcon prefer territories containing smaller clear-felled blocks with pines more than 3 years old and mature forest on the edges. We noted good bird populations on the edge of farmland and pine forest around Akatore and 3 of the falcon territories were close to this habitat.

Falcon calls were played at skid sites and open areas three times for 20 seconds duration at 1minute intervals. Observers looked and listened for falcon during and between broadcasts which were stopped if any falcon were seen or heard. Some responses were barely audible suggesting falcon could hear the broadcast around 1km away. If present most falcon were located after the first broadcast with varied responses:

- a) Silent or occasional kekking while flying past (single birds)
- b) Whining or kekking in distance- bird unseen.
- c) Constant kekking, flying up to vehicle then perching silently (pairs and singles)
- d) Constant kekking, flying towards vehicle, then attacking harrier.

Four pairs of falcon were located in the forest with possibly 2 other pairs present.

We still hope to locate the nest sites and revisit to locate fledged juveniles later.

For the rest of summer several other forests will be surveyed for falcon territories but there will not be time available to locate any nest sites.

To summarise, the method of broadcasting calls from a vehicle was successful in locating falcon territories, allowing large areas of forest to be surveyed relatively quickly.

For surveys in future years I anticipate we will need to restrict the number of forests we attempt to cover or perhaps intensively monitor one forest per year.

I would like to thank those who assisted with the survey:

Peter Schweigman, Ian Douglass, Lesley Gowans, Dave Bell, Sin Phua and Yvette Lawrence. **Steve Lawrence.**

## Otago Summer Wader Count, 15 November 2009

The weather this year was atrocious, with a strong southerly wind and poor visibility. It might have had a bearing on the numbers of birds or their locations. There were only 16 godwits at Aramoana and 350 at Hooper's Inlet. But at least the Catlins had a rarity, the Red-necked Stint. It might not be a rarity nationwide, but it is for Otago.

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour	Papanui	Hoopers	Catkins Lake	Total
S.I. Pied Oystercatcher	4	260	35	114	5	8	22	448
Variable Oystercatcher	11	29			1		8	49
Pied Stilt	27	19	5	2		32	2	87
Banded Dotterel							2	2
Bar-tailed godwit	227	540	16			350	324	1457
Red-necked Stint							1	1
Royal Spoonbill				8	12	6	24	50
White-faced Heron				8	22	2		32
Kingfisher					3	1		4
Paradise Shelduck				29	8	20		57

### Peter Schweigman



## Harbour Survey November & December Results

November	Section							Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Little Shag	12	27	23	37	20	31	5	155
Stewart I Shag	3	1			4			8
Spotted Shag	6	3	234		27	2		272
White-faced Heron				1		2		3
Royal Spoonbill			5	3				8
Black Swan		3						4
Feral Goose				2	7			
Paradise Duck	1			18	3	7	2	31
Mallard	7	31	7	10	4	5	6	70
Shoveler		1						1
Pied Oystercatcher	38		13	1	49	13	35	149
Variable Oystercatcher	32			2	48	23		105
Spur-winged Plover	3		4					7
Bar-tailed Godwit							16	16
Pied Stilt						2	5	
Black-backed Gull	52	1	47	55	423	5		583
Red-billed Gull	126	32	347	550	404	205	41	1705
Caspian Tern								
White-fronted Tern	25	4	179	3	2	12	4	229

December	Section							Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Black Shag	1							1
Little Shag	9	37	32	47	27	35		187
Stewart I Shag	2	1		7	9			19
Spotted Shag	11	4	2	3	4			24
White-faced Heron				2		8	6	16
Royal Spoonbill						1	6	7
Black Swan						50	29	79
Feral Goose					1			1
Paradise Duck	8			41		8	5	62
Mallard	4	39	3	39	72	84	5	246
Pied Oystercatcher	11				273	20	28	332
Variable Oystercatcher	8				5	2	3	18
Spur-winged Plover		1	5	4	2		18	30
Pied Stilt						4	15	19
Black-backed Gull	29	1	3	20	730	317	3	1103
Red-billed Gull	98	41	59	184	74	106	7	569
Black-billed Gull				1				1
White-fronted Tern	2		7	2	4	2	24	41

Section 5 near Port Chalmers had the highest numbers overall. Red billed gulls made up 20% of the total numbers counted. Black backed gulls made up 40%.

### Summary of monthly totals to date

	September	October	November	December
Black Shag	3	1		1
Little Shag	326	230	155	187
Stewart I Shag	15	15	8	19
Spotted Shag	3	4	272	24
Gannet		2		
White-faced Heron	23	19	3	16
Royal Spoonbill	2		5	7
Black Swan	73	28	4	79
Canada Goose		2		
Feral Goose	15	3	9	1
Paradise Duck	23	40	31	62
Mallard	100	110	70	246
Domestic Duck	1		6	
Shoveler	2		1	
Pukeko		1		
Pied Oystercatcher	178	237	149	332
Variable Oystercatcher	45	34	105	18
Spur-winged Plover	1	5	7	30
Bar-tailed Godwit	172		16	
Pied Stilt	6	12	7	19
Black-backed Gull	255	415	583	1103
Red-billed Gull	994	1038	1705	569
Black-billed Gull		30		1
White-fronted Tern	86	70	229	41
Total	2324	2296	3368	2755

Overall numbers of birds are increasing. Red-billed Gull, Black-backed Gulls and Variable Oystercatchers are increasing, Pied Oystercatchers up and down, Spotted Shags dramatically up in November. Good to see Spoonbills in the sample. I'm getting lots of notes saying people are seeing them around the Harbour. Also Gannets are present in the Harbour. So keep a lookout for them.,

**Bruce McKinlay**

## Ross Creek Survey November and December results

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Black Shag				7			
Little Shag				9B			
White-faced Heron				1			
Mallard	S			14B			
Coot				1			
Black-backed Gull				4			
NZ Pigeon	B	S	S	S	1	S	S
Rosella			S	S			
Shining Cuckoo	H	H		H	H	H	
Kingfisher		1		1		1	
Rifleman		B		S	S	B	
Welcome Swallow				3B			S
Dunnock	1	S	S	S	S	1	S
Blackbird	B5	S	S	9	5	1	B
Song Thrush	2B	B	S	1B	2	H	B
Brown Creeper		H					
Grey Warbler	4B	S	S	S	4	3B	S
Fantail	S	S		S	1	1	S
Tomtit					1		
Silvereeye	3	B	S	S	2	B	B
Bellbird	8	S	S	3	4B	3	S
Tui	2	B	S	1	4	3	
Chaffinch	S	S	S	5	H	S	S
Greenfinch					S		
Goldfinch	S			S			
Redpoll	S	S		S	S		S
House Sparrow	S			9	S	S	
Starling	S	S		S	S		S
Species Total 27	15	16	10	25	17	14	12

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

Nesting birds found were NZ Pigeon, Rifleman, Swallow, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Silvereeye. In addition we recorded Mallard, Grey Warbler, Tui and Bellbird with young. As reported in the last newsletter, we saw Little Shags carrying twigs on 1<sup>st</sup> November. However no breeding activity has been recorded since.

In November Len heard a call in block E which sounded like a Saddleback.

To avoid a clash with the Harbour survey, our February group visit will take place on the 14<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at 1.00pm at the end of Carrington Road.

Could I please have all January records by 7<sup>th</sup> February.

**Alan Baker** 4675180 48 Pacific St., Dunedin 9010

## Ornithological Snippets

Len Buchanan saw a pair of **Paradise Ducks** with 10 half grown young in a pond near Westwood. He compared that with the 3 pairs at Brighton Swamp which had just 1, 1 and 2 ducklings, suggesting predation was higher there than at Westwood.

Alan Baker did not see any **Brown Creepers** at Ross Creek in December but had an excellent view of one foraging in a marbleleaf outside his bedroom window in Roslyn on 6<sup>th</sup> December. Other suburban forest birds included a couple of **Brown Creepers** that passed through gardens in Waitati on 17 January and a juvenile male **Tomtit** in Murray Efford's garden at Wakari on 18<sup>th</sup>; the first he has ever recorded there. Doreen Grant received a report of 6 **Tui** in a garden in Outram on 8 January. There were also more bellbirds in the garden than usual.

A colony of 50-60 pairs of **White-fronted Terns** are nesting on the big rock stack at the far end of St Kilda beach near Lawyers Head

Paul Sorrell photographed this adult feeding a chick there on 5 January and submitted this shot to Graeme Loh to get an ID on the squid species. Apparently it's a young **Southern Arrow Squid** (*Nototodarus sloanii*), almost certainly less than 6 months old.



Richard Schofield reports from down south “Despite a calm sea at Nugget Point this morning (28th Dec), plenty of interesting birdlife about. Highlights were several flocks of black-and-white shearwaters, totalling 151 birds. Early views inconclusive due to the low sun, but as conditions improved all appeared to be **Hutton's Shearwaters**; the vast majority were heading in a westerly direction, and closer inshore than the more numerous **Sooty Shearwaters**. I've only ever seen ones and twos here previously.

Other sightings included 2 dark phase **Arctic Skuas** (one possibly an immature) chasing a hapless **White-fronted Tern**, and several small groups of both **Little and Yellow-eyed Penguins**. Two **Bar-tailed Godwits** about 1 km offshore were unusual here, while 45 Spoonbills were present on one of the stacks”.

(Richard's photographic Gallery is now open at John St, Balclutha)

Lesley Gowans saw a **Black Shag** on the edge of the water of the plastic lined fire pond at Orokonui on 22 December.

Following on from a similar sighting last year, Helen Clark spotted a **White-winged Black Tern** in breeding plumage whilst monitoring **Black-fronted Terns** on the Dart River at Paradise on 2 December, and Ursula Ellenberg saw another, again in breeding plumage, flying south past the **White-fronted Tern** breeding colony at Doctor's Point beach, Waitati on New Years Day.



Photo Peter Langlands

Tim Cotter reports a juvenile **Broad-billed Prion** discovered by Lora in the Daffodil Lawn of the Botanic Gardens just after lunch on 15 December. "He was ok. DoC came and picked him up within 10 minutes and they said he was the second one they had picked up lately (another at Pine Hill). The young birds try to 'cut out' the point (the Otago Peninsula) when flying from south to north along the coast for the first time. He was in good condition, so sardines for him from the DoC staff for a few days, before being released back at sea.

Anyone have fish for lunch in the Upper Garden today?"

(There were several reported both dead and alive in Otago in December 2004 ed. The picture is of one found dead on SH1 at the Kilmog on 12 December 2004)

David Melville saw 1 juv **Red Knot** at Hoopers Inlet on the morning of 19 Nov 2009, together with about 750 **Bar-tailed Godwits** (24 of which were juveniles).





## Notices and Business

### 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 Photos



We believe that November's mystery tracks (Fig1) at Warrington beach were made by the same large cryptically coloured, crawling, littoral, mammalian creature spotted and photographed, unfortunately at some distance, in the salt-marshes at Karitane (Fig2). All records to date have been on sandy beaches and marshes in the vicinity of wader roosts and all indications are that its major prey is Bar-tailed Godwits. The creature appears to have evolved a sophisticated hunting technique that involves a slow, cautious approach culminating in an explosive pounce, exhibiting a degree of fabricatory and technical skill unrecorded up until now in any animal other than Homo sapiens. There is anecdotal evidence that it also exhibits some degree of cooperative hunting strategy but this has yet to be confirmed and until a successful kill has been witnessed, the hunting process and indeed its food preferences remain conjectural. Further study is required.

## 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.

Sunday 24 January	Hawksbury Lagoon meet 10.00am end of Stuart St
Sunday 7 February	Harbour Survey start time 9.45am
Sunday 14 February	Ross Creek Meet 1.00pm at the end of Cannington Road
Wed 24 February	Indoor meeting Jamie Wood Birds of Broome and North West Australia
Sunday 14 March	Harbour Survey start time 2.00pm
Wed 24 March	Indoor meeting Derek Onley Update of Orokonui birds and bird counts
Sunday 11 April	Harbour Survey start time 11.45am
Saturday 17 April	Hawksbury Lagoon
Wed 28 April	Indoor meeting Sheena Townsend Bird studies on Ulva Island
Sunday 23 May	Harbour Survey start time 9.45am
Sunday 20 June	Harbour Survey start time 8.30am
Sunday 11 July	Harbour Survey start time 1.15pm
Sunday 18 July	Hawksbury Lagoon
Saturday 9 October	Hawksbury Lagoon

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

The next newsletter will be in **March**: Final date for copy: 17 March