



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

PO Box 12397
WELLINGTON

Frank Austin
Regional Recorder
8 Dunblane St
Maori Hill
Dunedin
☎ (03) 467-5214

Mary Thompson
Regional Representative
197 Balmacewen Road
Balmacewen
Dunedin
☎ (03) 464 0787

Otago Region Newsletter 6/2007 July 2007

June Indoor Meeting and Otago AGM



Despite the frosty night there was a record turn-out, which shows what a draw-card **Fernbirds** are. I hadn't realised that they are not normally seen much further north in Otago than Dunedin (I wonder what the new Atlas will show) so that they are one of *our* special birds. Bruce is obviously a keen observer and gave us a special insight into the habitat that is preferred by these birds – which is dense and damp with emergent vegetation – and of their distribution further north with recent

discovery in the headwaters of Kurikuri stream above Herbert forest. This prompted those present to add their sightings: many reports of birds on Swampy, in the Catlins forest in autumn a long way from coast and at least 9 territories at Okia Reserve. There was much discussion of how these so-called sedentary weak fliers disperse to these areas; how do they get to Okia? From Waihola, but there have been no reports of them along Hoopers or Papanui en route.

The AGM was a chance to discuss what projects our OSNZ Region could do over the next few years. We have sufficient funds in our project account to subsidise fuel costs for members so it would be great to have more people come out on field trips; not everyone has to be an expert, just enthusiastic about watching birds. We have a long list of possible field trips. The project ideas that we are going to pursue further, with much thanks to those who volunteered to explore the logistics of them for us, are:

- Seasonal Count of all birds at Hawkesbury Lagoon; leader/organiser Jim Wilson
- Survey of proposed windfarm site at Lake Mahingarangi before and after development, with perhaps an emphasis on **Falcon**. There is essentially no

information on the impact of windfarms on birds in NZ; leader/organiser Bruce McKinlay.

- Weekend Field Trip to Glenorchy; leader/organiser Louise Foord
- Orokonui Ecosanctuary; discussion of possible involvement of Otago OSNZ after Derek's talk at the up-coming meeting.

Mary Thompson

Wader Counts and looking for Banded Godwits

This is an important on-going project of the Otago Region of OSNZ, which links into the national surveys and also to international ones of the Australian Shorebird Census and the Asia Waterbird Census. We have valuable data extending back over 20 years for the Otago harbours. Ken Gager and Peter Schweigman have coordinated all our efforts for these surveys and it is much appreciated. At the last meeting we agreed that for the next season we would try to do a complete count of **Godwits** (and other migratory waders if we are lucky) from Karitane down the Catlins coast as far as Riversdale in November and again in February. Rob Schuckard, the coordinator of the Wader Project, may be able to help with some manpower. This is just an early warning; dates will be available soon.

The Aurora Otago Science Fair

Our Otago Region awards a book prize for the best project that relates to bird study. There are usually a few projects with some interesting personal observations and recording of data and these young people are worth encouraging. I am looking for a couple of people who would be available to act as judges of these projects: it takes place on Tuesday 21 August any time throughout the day. Please contact Mary, 464 0787

Dunedin Town Belt Management Plan

This information contains the results of the bird survey done by Derek Onley and can be viewed in the Library or online via the DCC website. Derek will talk briefly about this survey at the up-coming meeting and also about the possibility of doing a 'spring survey'.

Rare Birds in Otago with the official stamp of the Rare Bird Committee

The sightings of the following species have been submitted to the Rare bird Committee and were accepted:

One wary **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) was trapped in the hangar of the Wanaka airport and observed by Margaret Child and Andy Anderson in

between 19 and 21 Sept 1991. Reference: *Notornis: Vol 39 (1992): 320*. This is the first bird to be seen alive in New Zealand.



One adult **Chinstrap Penguin** (*Pygoscelis antarctica*) was seen alive on 27 November 1992 at Warrington Beach by Carol Landis and Barbara Markby and confirmed by John Darby. Reference *Notornis Vol 42 (1995): 57*. This is a first for Otago and at the time only the second one for the country. Refer also the Rare Bird Report, *Notornis Vol 47 (2000): 66*.

One female **Chestnut Teal** (*Anas castanea*) was seen by Derek Onley from 14-18 Jan 1993 at Karitane. Reference: *Rare Bird Report, Notornis Vol 47 (2000): 66*. Another sighting of the same species was reported by Richard Schofield from 14-16 Feb 2003 at Balclutha. One was seen on the 14th and 18th, and three on the 16th and 17th. I put it here, although this sighting has not as yet been processed by the Rare Bird Committee.

Hamish Spencer, while out in the Pacific Ocean off Taiaroa Head on 15 March 1993, came across a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** (*Pterodroma antarctica*). “The underwing looked dark from the distance of some 50 m, but the bright white underbelly was crossed by a narrow-grey band across the neck” (pers. comm. Hamish Spencer). Not often do we have this species in the Otago waters. Reference: *Rare Bird Report, Notornis Vol 47 (2000): 66*.



The find for 1993 was a **Grey Phalarope** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) first seen by Murray Neilson at Inchclutha Lagoon on 8 July 1993. It was still present on 10 and 11 July 1993 and seen and confirmed by a number of us, including close-up photographic evidence. Reference: *Rare Bird Report, Notornis Vol 47 (2000): 67*.

A single **Large Sand Dotterel** (*Charadrius leschenaulti*) was seen at Aramoana on 9 March 1995 by Peter Schweigman. It was frantically feeding in the creek behind the row of flax bushes. It was not seen the following day. It might be assumed that it used Aramoana as a sort of transit station from Awarua in the south on its way to say Lake Ellesmere. A follow-up the next day was unsuccessful. Reference: *Rare Bird Report, Notornis Vol 47 (2000): 68*.

To be continued.

I should finish this with the abbreviation E. & O. E., but I prefer to say: I accept full responsibility for any errors or omissions that occur, but would respectfully request members to point them out.

Peter Schweigman

Pelagic Trip, Friday 10 August

A small group will be going out with Alan Anderson from Karitane. The objective is to see the pelagic open ocean seabirds, that is to go past the near shore mollymawks and onto storm petrels and other less observed birds. Details to be confirmed. If the weather is bad again, this time we may be able to go out in the following days.

Interested? Contact Graeme Loh on 487-6125 or 474-6935 or gloh@earthlight.co.nz

Winter Wader Count, Otago Harbour, 10 June 2007



It was a rather successful count this time. Ken Gager had it right and even the Met Office had it not wrong. On the day it was sunny and not too windy. Admittedly it was coolish, but one just dresses up for the occasion. We had an increase in the number of **Pied Oystercatchers**. June last year our tally was 562, this time 1225. The increase was most obvious in the Harbour, including Aramoana, but even Hoopers and Papanui had a significant increase. The results:

OTAGO WINTER WADER COUNT 10/06/2007

	Aramoana	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Harbour West	Harbour East	LPG Depot	Totals
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	237	175	330	269	184	30	1225
Variable Oystercatcher	2	7	1	3	9		22
Bar-tailed Godwit	69		97				166
Banded Dotterel	82		34				116
Pied Stilt	22	33	108		53		216
Royal Spoonbill							0
White Heron							0
White-faced Heron	1		6	3			10
Caspian Tern	6	5					11
Kingfisher	5	6	2				13
Paradise Shelduck	33	28	139				200

This time we checked the numbers of **Paradise Ducks**. If we continue to include this species, it might give us an idea over the years of their status. And the Peninsula team checked the numbers of **Pukeko**. It is known that there is an increase in numbers. We made a start what sort of increase we have. This time we counted 34. Not so many years ago you were lucky to see half a dozen maximum.

Ken Gager and Peter Schweigman

Bird Survey of Dart/ Rees Area

We've been monitoring birds (**Banded Dotterels**, **Black-fronted Terns**, **Black-billed Gulls**) on the lower Shotover for a few years now – this has been for personal interest and as paid professional work (I'm an ecological / environmental consultant – Natural Solutions for Nature Ltd). We managed a sighting of a **Banded Dotterel** that had been banded in Victoria on the lower Shotover River. This was reported through all the appropriate channels and networks.



Last year we had also hoped to extend our volunteer efforts up to the Dart/ Rees Rivers – to find some **Wrybill** but that did not eventuate. It appears that DOC in the Wakatipu are also interested in co-ordinating a survey of the Rees/ Dart, etc., this season so we will co-ordinate locally – no point duplicating any efforts. This will essentially be on a volunteer basis and would add to the information we have about our local populations. This information would help to inform DOC and local authorities about the values of the rivers as habitat and put this (bird habitat) issue more firmly along side the gravel extraction and flood protection issues when Resource Consent issues arise.

I am hoping we can muster some keen coastal and central OSNZers into the hills. I would like to hear from those interested in participating in this survey so I can keep you informed as planning progresses. Please contact me by email at dawn.palmer@xtra.co.nz

Dawn Palmer

Bellbirds in Town

Eric Spurr would like to receive your observations at eric.spurr@yahoo.co.uk. **Bellbirds** come to town in winter. But what for? What are they feeding on? I would appreciate receiving reports of what bellbirds are feeding on in any towns or cities around the country: date, location, plant species, nectar, fruit, or gleaning for insects.

Ornithological Snippets

Mary Thompson and Sue Galloway counted 48 **Variable Oystercatchers** in one paddock opposite the Taieri Mouth School on 17 June 2007 at 4.00 pm. They also had close views of 2 **Fernbirds** beside the Taieri River walkway, late that afternoon.

Richard Schofield reports a pair of **NZ Falcon** at Cannibal Bay (Catlins) on 13 June 2007. The female was chasing the male, which had a small prey item.



Dave York saw a juvenile **Crested Grebe** on 20 & 21 June 2007 at the downstream side near the bridge over the Kaikorai Estuary. Paul Davey spotted the grebe on 23 June and managed to snap a few decent photographs as it moved into the lagoon from downstream of the bridge. When he got to the estuary, there was just a bit of wind. However, within the next twenty minutes it began to snow! By the time the weather got too cold for comfort the grebe had moved away anyway. But as for the snow that fell in the night before, there didn't seem any around the estuary.

Programme 2007

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.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Wednesday, 25 July | Indoor Meeting
Topic: Orokonui Bird Counts | Speaker: Derek Onley |
| Wednesday, 22 August | Indoor Meeting
Topic: Urban birds in Dunedin: species and possible impacts of domestic cats | Speaker: Yolanda van Heezik |
| Saturday, 1 September | Sinclair Wetlands Field Trip. 3.30 p.m. onwards. The aim is to stay into the evening to listen for bittern, but also including a survey of other birds in the area (fernbirds, grey teal, scaup, etc). Take a picnic tea, warm clothes, tape-recordings of bittern and fernbird calls.
Contact Mary Thompson, ☎ 464 0787 | |
| Wednesday, 26 September | Indoor Meeting
Topic: Tracking Titi for 64,000km and Other Recent Findings from the Titi Research Team | Speaker: Jamie Newman |
| Wednesday, 24 October | Indoor Meeting
Topic: Loving Them to Death: How Tourism is Putting Pressure on our Penguins | Speaker: Phil Seddon |

Newsletter Editor: Hamish Spencer, 50 Grey Street, NEV, Dunedin, 9010.
hgspencer@xtra.co.nz