



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

WELLINGTON

THE

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*Otago Region Newsletter 6/2008 June 2008*



**AWESOME day off Taiaroa Head!**

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, Russell Cannings survived a 13 hour pelagic trip out from Otago Harbour as a guest on board the University of Otago's research ship, Polaris II. They went out as far as 35 nautical miles (nm) from the coast, stopping along the way to collect water samples:

The weather was cloudy in the morning with brief squalls and patches of fog around 20 nautical miles. Clearing around noon, then clouding over again and remaining grey until clearing after dark. Swells and wind were pretty minimal. Temperature cool but bearable.

The highlights were Grey-headed Mollymawk, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Grey Petrel, White-headed Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, 3 species of Storm Petrel and White-winged Black Tern.

### **The Birds**

The list does not include the shags and gulls seen close inshore, only those few seen out to sea. The figures outside brackets are an estimate of the total number seen, those inside brackets the most seen at any one time.

Wandering Albatross 5 (2) – All “mottled brown jobs”

Northern Royal Albatross 1 (1)

Southern Royal Albatross 18+ (13)

White-capped Mollymawk 25+ (9)

Salvin’s Mollymawk 1 (1) - Probably an older bird

Black-browed Mollymawk 2 (1) – Including an immature

Campbell Mollymawk 1 (1) – Subadult

Grey-headed Mollymawk 4 (3) – Two adults, two immatures

Buller’s Mollymawk 60+ (21) – Including one “Pacific” (Chatham Island subsp) adult

Light-mantled Albatross 6+ (1) – As many as eleven birds, all immatures

Northern Giant Petrel 24+ (16) – Mostly juveniles. (Resemble giant Scaup when asleep!)

Southern Giant Petrel 13+ (7) – Mostly young birds

Sooty Shearwater 5 (3) – Three close to land, two out at 34 nm.

Grey Petrel 22+ (7) – Skilfully evading my camera!

Cape Petrel 50+ (27) – All apparently “Snares” birds

Fairy Prion 500+ (40) – Mostly close to land in morning

White-headed Petrel 2 (1)

Soft-plumaged Petrel 22+ (5) – This is probably the neatest find of the trip

Wilson’s Storm Petrel 3 (3) – Out at our last stop (35nm)

White-faced Storm Petrel – Last stop

Black-bellied Storm Petrel – 19+ (4) – A few birds moulting primaries

Yellow-eyed Penguin 3 (2)

Blue Penguin 20+ (“) – All in one group leaving the harbour

Stewart Island Shag 4 (1)

Black-billed Gull 1 (1) – Juvenile

Black-fronted Tern 2 (1)

White-winged Black Tern 1 (1) – Adult in non-breeding plumage way out at 35nm!

Russell Cannings

## Otago Harbour Winter Wader Count Results for June 14 2008

	Aramoana	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Harbour West	Harbour East	LPG Depot	Totals
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	217	133	190	143	154	37	874
Variable Oystercatcher		15	5		11		31
Bar-tailed Godwit	25		109				134
Banded Dotterel	144		77				221
Pied Stilt	5		21		36		62
Royal Spoonbill							0
White Heron							0
White-faced Heron	1	2	1				4
Caspian Tern	5		3				8
Kingfisher	5	3	1				9
Paradise Shelduck	8				19	2	29

Ken Gager

### Ornithological Snippets

Snippets are very thin on the ground this month because the editor had to shoot off to Wanganui and records received by post are unfortunately still in the Waitati post office some 900 km to the south. They will be included in a **Two Month Roundup Special !!** next newsletter.

Meanwhile Russell Cannings reports 183 **Coot** on Lake Waihola in mid June.

### World News - Mary Thompson reports from England

More news from Liverpool

On Bank Holiday Monday Sue and I took our bikes on the train to Southport and headed off down Marine Drive to bike the 2 miles to the RSPB Reserve at Marshside. It was blowing a huge easterly gale so it took us about 30 minutes to bike there, plus facefulls of sand, but it was worth it. There were fewer waders and wildfowl than in February but compensated by good close-up views of shovelers, shelducks, mallards, coots and young, oystercatchers, redshanks (nice views with sun on red legs) and black-tailed godwits and dunlin in breeding plumage. Sue spotted a little grebe cruising by and diving in front of the hide.

But the highlight was the many pairs of avocets with chicks. The adults are very smart with their black and white markings, which showed up particularly well in flight and the up-turned bill, and long bluey legs - much the same size as a stilt. The chicks were just looking after themselves and having a good time paddling about the water's edge on the low islands obviously catching water bugs to eat - the chicks have short stubby legs of a blue hue and still with fluffy grey and black mottled feathers; bill still stubby and rubbery looking and maybe slightly up-turned.



Whenever a larger bird, duck, godwit, gull flew too near the chicks the avocets flew at the intruder and chased it away. There were also swallows, swifts and house martins flying around the hide and catching insects over the pools, so good to see them all together to compare. While we were very happy looking at the more common birds the local birders with their telescopes and cameras were after the rarities; a Glossy Ibis, Garganey and Gadwall ducks and Little Stints.

Mary Thompson

### **Peter Schweigman from Scotland**

Jenny, Susan and Kim  
identifying a  
Great Northern Diver ?



Susan and I were invited by Kim and Jenny Morrison, long term friends and former OSNZ members from Dunedin, to come to Scotland to do some serious birding. Since their retirement early last year, Kim and Jenny have moved from Exmoor to Thurso, the very top of Scotland. They have become very involved in the Scottish Bird Atlas 2007-2011, a nice follow-up from their part in the NZ Atlas. Consequently they knew the birds and their habitats.

This birding took place on a daily basis in early May in glorious sunny weather and for most of the week there was no wind to speak of.

We have seen all sorts of habitats from wet marshes, boggy heaths with all sizes of lochs, beaches, rugged coast lines not unlike Otago and rolling farmland, a reminder of Central Otago; if you obliterate the old, stone, crofters cottages.

The most numerous bird is the **Carrion Crow**. The **Jackdaw** second.

The **Sandwich** and **Arctic Terns** were easier to identify at this time of the year, since they were in breeding plumage.

We came across quite a number of waders, like the **Dunlin**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Redshank**, **Ringed Plover**, **Oystercatcher**, the **Curlew** with its liquid song and the **Lapwing**. The identification of the **Purple Sandpiper** took a bit longer, since the two we found were not yet in full breeding plumage. But Kim managed.

The **Dipper** was frequently seen on most streams and could be considered common. We even watched one in the Ross River, just a few hundred metres from Kim and Jenny's property. In that same stream we saw the **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Reed Bunting** and **Sand Martins**. It must be nice to live so close to this sort of habitat.

On the last day Kim and Jenny insisted on showing us the breeding habitat of the **Merlin**, the smallest falcon in Europe. We saw the male's fantastic aerial display early in the morning, just before leaving Scotland. An ideal way to round off our Scottish birdwatching. Thanks to Kim and Jenny who made our stay so memorable.

Susan and Peter Schweigman

## Notices, Meetings, Field trips etc

### Trial of Email Newsletter

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 didn't, please send your email address with your request to:

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

## Hawksbury Lagoon

The winter survey of Hawksbury Lagoon will take place as advertised on Saturday 28 June at 1pm but as our usual organiser is away for the week, will those interested in coming along please contact Derek Onley on 4822831 after Tuesday 24 June.

### **Keep an Eye Out for Kaka**

The Orokonui EcoSanctuary has received the go ahead from DoC to release four young Kaka next spring. The birds have been bred in captivity and are at present held in an aviary at the top end of the sanctuary. They have been fed regularly over the last six months and are very used to people so may not move far but as a further incentive for the free flying birds to stay nearby, the parents of two of the juveniles will remain in the aviary. However Kaka are well known to wander and a condition of their release is that they be fitted with radio tracking devices. Movements will be monitored on a regular basis with the intention of finding out, not only where they go, but also what they feed on, where they roost and hopefully, where they nest. Their fate will determine whether further releases are worthwhile.

Sightings will also be useful, so keep an eye out and, if you are interested in helping to radio track them, the Orokonui Trust would appreciate any help.

Contact Derek Onley.

### **Momentarily Mysterious Bird ?**



The answer to last month's Mystery Bird will be in next month's newsletter – when I get back to Dunedin – ed.

## Programme 2008

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.

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|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Wednesday, 25 June            | Indoor Meeting<br>Topic: Return of Campbell Island Teal  | Speaker: Bruce McKinlay |
| Saturday 28 June              | Winter Survey of Hawksbury Lagoon. 1pm.<br>Contact Derek Onley 4822831   |                         |
| Wednesday, 23 July            | Indoor Meeting<br>Topic: TBA   | Speaker: Bryan Rhodes   |
| Wednesday, 27 August          | Indoor Meeting<br>This meeting will feature the NZ premiere of Sandy Crichton's film "Karearea: The Pine Falcon" starring George Chance. Hamish Spencer says "I have had a sneak preview and it is a wonderful film, a moving tribute to George" |                         |
| Labour Weekend, 24-26 October | Glenorchy Weekend Fieldtrip.<br>Contact Louise Foord, ☎ 467 5041   |                         |

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Final date for copy for next newsletter : 20 August