



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

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WELLINGTON

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*Otago Region Newsletter 6/2009 June 2009*

**Ross Creek Survey**

May was the first month of the Ross Creek survey. Mary Thompson and Alan Baker contributed section bird lists, seeing a total of 24 species. The most widespread species, found in all 7 sections (see map on next page), were Bellbird, Waxeye, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Grey Warbler and Fantail. Song Thrushes were singing which made them easier to find than usual. Other birds recorded were: in 5 sections – Tui, Dunnock; in 4 sections – Kereru, Brown Creeper, Tomtit; in 3 sections – Rifleman; in 2 sections – Starling, Chaffinch, Redpoll, House Sparrow; in 1 section – Mallard, Black-backed Gull, Goldfinch, Little Shag, Welcome Swallow, Paradise Duck, Coot and Eastern Rosella. Not surprisingly the most productive was D, which includes the reservoir, with 20 species. The other sections all had 11 or 12 species except for G which had 7.

No 5 minute counts were received but Mary counted the reservoir. On 26 May the totals were: Mallard 40 on large pond, 12 on small; Paradise Duck 4; Little Shag 2; Coot 1. The Coot, a young bird was first reported on 17 May by Julian Smith. It was last seen, again by Julian on the 30 May.

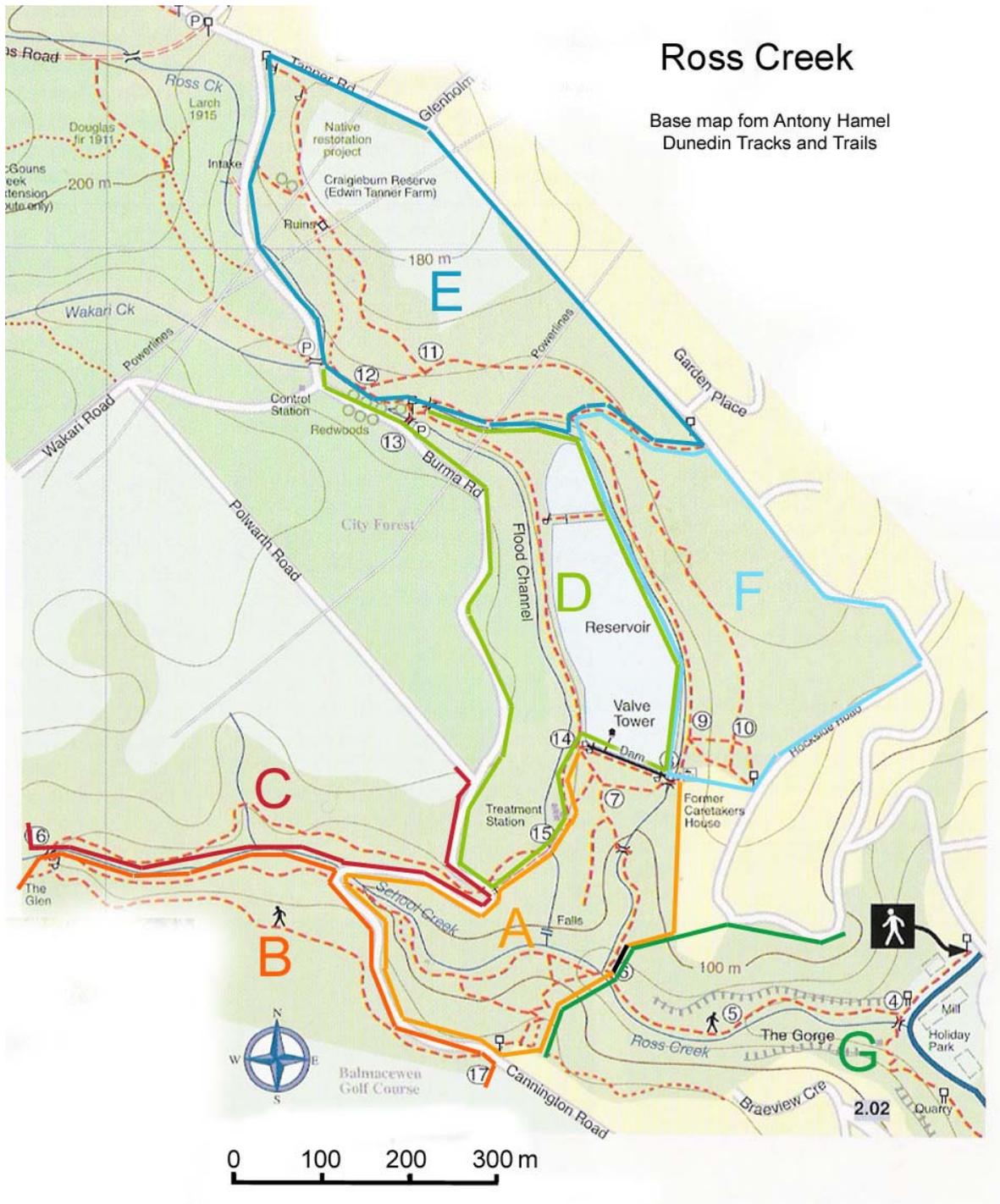
One would not expect many breeding records in May, but Alan saw a young Kereru being fed by an adult near to a nest.

June has got off to a promising start with one new participant and an additional three species not seen in May.

The City Council's "Hill Reserves Management Plan" contains a list of indigenous birds recorded at Ross Creek which includes Pipit, Shining and Long-tailed Cuckoos, Kingfisher, Morepork and Robin. (Where did those records come from? ed.). It will certainly be a challenge to find some of those but Ross Creek is the sort of place where almost anything could turn up, so it is definitely worth keeping an eye on.

Please send all June results to Alan by July 7. The next Group Survey will be held on Sunday 2nd August, meeting at 1.00 pm at the end of Cannington Road.

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



# Ross Creek

Base map from Antony Hamel  
Dunedin Tracks and Trails

## Report on OSNZ AGM, Orewa, Queen's Birthday, 2009



I attended this meeting as Regional Representative and Bruce attended as Council member. There were over 140 participants and two great field trips as well as the Scientific Day and the Regional Representatives meeting and a long Council Meeting for Bruce. OSNZ is in good heart and the policies set in place to see that publications and activities continue to engage members

in their enjoyment and study of birds. The new President is David Lawrie and the new Vice-president is Bruce McKinlay – congratulations.

The RRs discussed a range of topics from strategies to attract younger members, the design of a new publicity poster, media releases to advertise meetings, local committee structures, and, new to me, that regional OSNZ projects should be approved by the Scientific Committee. A bird location map for SI prepared by Nick Allen is at the draft stage. A new Checklist of NZ Birds is to be published in April 2010 - it will be 425 pages long. It will take into account the changing taxonomy from DNA technology; eg. Ducks and swans are now considered an older order than grebes.

A new National Project was accepted: Caspian Tern Colony Count starting 2010/11 for 3 years (in the meantime we can find the whereabouts of colonies). Then the plan is to move onto another threatened species, possible red-billed gulls.

Saturday was Scientific Day and was choked full of very many interesting talks. I will highlight the ones that are most relevant to us. Dave Wilson, who used to be a student here and also actively involved with Peter Schweigman and the SI Robins, is now with DOC and gave a talk on a count of Fairy Terns – total population 38 (32 were seen). [He sends his greetings] Dave Bell reported on the NZ Falcon distribution survey that was launched at the Wellington OSNZ AGM in 2006 and is now complete. Top regions for returns were Canterbury, Manawatu and Otago (Peter Schweigman collated these) with greater than 300. Full analysis is still to be completed. There was a request for any unpublished information on seabird breeding colonies to compile a seabird database - funded by Birdlife International via Forest

and Bird (robyn\_blyth@hotmail.com). A highlight was a summary by Phil Batley of the findings from the colour-banding programme to study wader movements within NZ. 770 Bar-tailed Godwits were banded and 9500 sightings of 721 birds made. Special mention was made of the reports from Peter Schweigman among others. Godwits remain at one estuary and do not venture far away. Adult birds are very site faithful, year after year and even have a preference for roost area. Immature birds wandered more widely before they settled on their preferred wintering ground. There was no evidence of any substantial northward movements before migration; looks like they move off directly on migration. A full report will be soon published by DOC (a link to it will be put on OSNZ website). The day finished with a beautifully illustrated talk by Keith Woodley of his expedition to the Yukon delta to find our breeding Bar-tailed Godwits – all will be revealed in his book to be published in October – good ad!

Sunday was Field Trip Day. I went on the bus trip to Tawharanui Regional Park which is a small peninsular near Kawau Island. It has recently been turned into a 550 hectare open sanctuary by erecting a 2.5 km fence across the neck. Whiteheads, kiwi, robins and pateke have been released and bellbird and kaka have self-introduced from little Barrier Island. Our guide called up a noisy flock of Whitehead and located a NI Robin. Bellbird, kereru and fantails were very numerous. Twenty Brown Teal had just been translocated and were still in a group and a lovely sight. Pairs of NZ Dotterels had already returned from their summer sojourn at Omaha Beach to their breeding territories and we saw 3 pairs close up. On the Monday I had hoped to go to Tiri Tiri but the trip was cancelled because of southerly gales. Instead a group of us explored the wetlands near Waiwera and the highlight for me was seeing my first NZ Dabchicks - 8 of them displaying and diving in bright sunshine, and all this with the new Motorway just metres away!

Next year's AGM is to be held in Nelson so more of us should take the chance to attend. There is a suggestion that Otago host the AGM in 2013!

**Mary Thompson**

### **Ornithological Snippets**

A banded, dead **Yellow-eyed Penguin** picked up on Warrington beach by Richard Reeve and Wiremu Bretton on 26 April was sent to Massey University for a post mortem. It was found to be “in a moderate state of decomposition, and it looked like it had been scavenged a bit. The keel was prominent indicating that it was starving though the heaviness of the bird may have been due to sand in the body cavity. It was banded J19494 on the right flipper, and had been retrieved with a lacerated foot from Papanui Beach last year as a juvenile, being released from captivity a while later. The bird had recently moulted into its adult plumage. No other observations of this bird had been made since its release.”



**Falcons** have turned up in a few places over the past month. Richard Schofield reports: “24th May 2009 Walking across the Paper Plus car park in the centre of Balclutha late on a grey autumn afternoon, my attention was attracted by the "chit, chit, chit" of an agitated flock of starlings. "Must be a sparrowhawk," I thought, and glanced skywards, as the female raptor headed purposefully to the south east over the rooftops. It was then that I realised I was not back in the UK, but watching my first Balclutha falcon. Good to know that the technique works here also, and that falcons can be seen so close to home.”

Michael Harrex reports one a few weeks ago along the tussock edge on his farm at Harvey Flat on the northern flanks of Maungatua

**Photo Annette Harrex**

He subsequently photographed one at the homestead on 9 June that attacked a paradise duck when it flew away, removing some feathers.

This June, for the third winter in a row, a bird has been seen several times at the Orokonui ecosanctuary.

### **Saddleback Summary**

38 of the 40 birds caught on Ulva Island survived the trip to the Orokonui ecosanctuary and were released on 16 April.

All birds are individually colour banded with two bands on one leg and a colour and metal band on the other. Bryce Masuda has been searching for the birds in the sanctuary but after the first couple of days, they proved difficult to find and only 2 new birds have been sighted since the beginning of May.

By the end of May, 24 birds had been seen within the fence, 17 of which have been seen once, 6 twice and 1 three times. A favoured area seems to be just inside the lower pedestrian gate along the stream amongst the eucalypts. Birds have been observed feeding on berries and on the trunks of trees, but so far have not been seen foraging on the ground.

There has been no organised searching outside the fence but birds have been seen along Mopanui Road, alongside Blueskin Road at the start of the old DoC track, up the hill a little at Paws Inn and in a stand of eucalypts outside the fence in the lower valley. The photo below was taken on 19 June in my garden in Waitati well over a kilometre from the fence. Saddlebacks outside the fence are unlikely to survive as they cannot deal with mustelids or rats. Unfortunately rats have recently also been found within the predator proof fence.



**Photo** Derek Onley

Keep a look out for Saddlebacks if you are in the Orokonui area (and elsewhere!). Bryce would like to know date, time, location, number of birds, colour bands of course and any notes on feeding and calling behaviour. His email is [brycemasuda@gmail.com](mailto:brycemasuda@gmail.com)

**Derek Onley**

## **Notices and Business**

### **Garden Bird Survey, 27 June – 5 July, 2009**

Don't forget to spend an hour during the Garden Bird Survey counting the maximum number of each species you see at any one time in your garden or favourite bird-watching spot; a very relaxing exercise. You should have received a form and information in the last Southern Bird or you can download a form from [www.landcareresearch.co.nz](http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz).

## **Your 2008 Records**

Regional recorders are now collating records for the NZ Bird Report. Could you please send your records to Alan Baker, 48 Pacific Street, Dunedin 9010. Include all your initials –e.g. Alan R Baker as these may be used to identify observers. Please remember that locations should ideally be easily found by people from outside your region. A good guide to this is that the names should be on the 1:250,000 map series and, if they are not, then relate the location to somewhere that is. Remember to include the date!

Records suitable for the report include not only the rare and unusual but series of counts at a site, maximum and minimum counts, indications of changes in status throughout the season or compared with previous years, arrival and departure dates for migrants, counts at breeding colonies, new or abandoned nesting sites etc.

For some species whether to send in the record will be relatively obvious: for example all records of falcons will be welcome. For commoner species some indication of context or the reason for sending in the record will be helpful. For example, 13 Canada Geese in Blueskin Bay may need to be qualified by “only seen irregularly in the bay” whereas 13 at Karitane might require a comment along the lines of “usual number over the last few years”.

Generally speaking however, the yet to be published 2007 bird report suffers from a lack of records; a dire lack in some regions. If in doubt it is better to send in more information and let the recorder and compiler sort it out.

**Alan R Baker & Derek J Onley**

## **Colour Banded Bellbirds and Tui**

Murray Efford is colour banding Bellbirds and Tui in Wakari and would be interested to hear of any sightings. The left leg has a colour over metal band and the right leg two colours. The colours are dark blue and green (not always easy to distinguish), orange and red (can be awkward until you have seen a couple) and an easy yellow. He may add white when he can get some. Murray is away for several months but still would like to receive any sightings by email – [murray.efford@clear.net.nz](mailto:murray.efford@clear.net.nz)

## **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

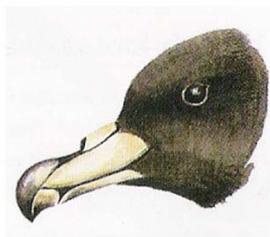


Port Otago rang DOC on 15 May to say a titi had arrived on the container ship Maersk Dunafare from Auckland via the east coast, en route to Tanjung Pelepas. Graeme Loh went to pick it up and photographed this bird.

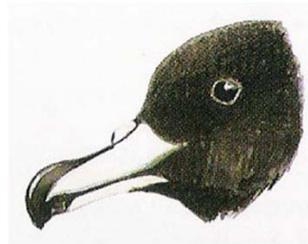
You can rule out Titi and any other dark shearwaters such as Short-tailed as they all have relatively thin bills with far less prominent nostrils. There are a fair number of dark petrels with bills shaped like the bird in the photo; Grey-faced, Providence, and Kerguelen for example, not to mention dark phases of variable species like Kermadec and Herald Petrels. However only three, Westland, Parkinson's and White-chinned Petrels have pale coloured bills. White-chinned does not always have a white chin but can be ruled out because its bill tip is pale.

That leaves Westland and Parkinson's, both entirely dark birds that have pale bills with dark tips. (And both, incidentally, species that only nest in New Zealand.)

If Graeme had measured the bird then the answer would almost certainly have been clear because, except for a few individuals, Parkinson's Petrel is smaller than Westland. But he did not, so the only diagnostic features left are the details of the shape of the bill and the extent of dark on the tip. Generally speaking Parkinson's Petrel has slightly longer nasal tubes than Westland and pale patches in the dark bill tip.



Parkinson's Petrel



Westland Petrel

So it was probably a Parkinson's Petrel – but not everyone agrees.

The bird below, photographed off Fiordland recently, was tentatively identified as an Amsterdam Albatross. Was it?



**Photo Keith Larner**

## Programme 2009

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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|----------------------|--|
| Saturday 20 June     | Winter Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.26.<br>Back up day, Saturday 27 June, with high tide at 14.09.<br>Contact Ken Gager, phone 487 6670. |
| Wednesday 24 June    | Dr Shinichi Nakagawa "The days on the ice: memories of a Japanese scientist of Adelie Penguins."   |
| Wednesday 22 July    | Dr Bruce McKinlay "The Albatross of Taiaroa Head."   |
| Saturday 25 July     | Hawksbury Lagoon Winter Survey.  |
| Sunday 2 August      | Ross Creek Survey. Meet at 1.00 pm at the end of Cannington Road. Contact Alan Baker, phone 467 5180   |
| Wednesday 26 August  | Indoor Meeting TBA   |
| Wednesday 23 Sept.   | Indoor Meeting Sheena Townsend<br>"Experiences monitoring birds on Ulva Island."   |
| Wednesday 28 October | Indoor Meeting Graham Parker<br>"S I Robins of Dunedin."   |
| Sunday 1 November    | Ross Creek Survey. Meet at 1.00 pm end of Cannington Road. Contact Alan Baker, phone 467 5180  |
| Wednesday 25 Nov.    | Indoor Meeting Jamie Wood<br>"Birds of Broome and North West Australia."   |
| Sunday 11 October    | Spring survey of Hawksbury Lagoon  |
| Saturday 28 November | Summer Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.22.  |

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Many thanks to all who contributed,  
Final date for copy for next newsletter: 15 July