



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

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*Otago Region Newsletter 5/2010 June 2010*

**Otago Harbour Survey: 23 May**



Top: Rare fine weather. Lesley, Francie and mystery ear at Aramoana.  
Below: Common Little Shags, Waverley. A few of the 731 in the harbour.

## Summary table. May 23 2010

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
banded dotterel							76	76
black-backed gull	77	11	68	8	49	9	26	248
black-fronted tern							119	119
black swan						240	35	275
blackbird					1			1
canada goose				7				7
caspian tern							4	4
gannet		1						1
godwit							193	193
grey teal			2		4	110	114	230
greylag goose					7		1	8
little shag	53	200	145	119	117	57	40	731
mallard	9	92	175	93	176	170	33	748
paradise shelduck		1	2	2	1	2	20	28
piebald oystercatcher		94	4	12	1	14	152	277
piebald stilt						39	11	50
red-billed gull	54	3	9	13		3	3	85
rock pigeon			2					2
shoveler						10		10
spotted shag		5	9	2	3			19
spur-winged plover			1			7	3	11
stewart island shag	1	4	6	30	9			50
variable oystercatcher		5				23	7	35
welcome swallow					1			1
white-faced heron		1	20	2		1	5	29
white-fronted tern				14	7	7	116	144

As everyone said “Where are the Red-billed Gulls?” From the start of the survey last September, numbers have been between 513 in April and 1804 in January. May’s total of 85 was by far the lowest and 54 of these were in section 1 close to town. They must be hanging around some where else? The inlets or sports fields or way out at sea? Graeme Loh saw several hundred out at sea on his kayak voyage to azero (see below) on May 2 but only 15 on May 15. So maybe they are all inland, feeding on paddocks and sportsfields after the recent rains?

## Monthly totals so far.

Month	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
banded dotterel						47	48	43	76
black-backed gull	255	415	583	1104	410	351	412	380	541
black-fronted tern							2	375	119
black shag	3	1		1		3		16	
black swan	73	28	4	79	80	137	180	225	296
black-billed gull		30		1	2		3	16	
canada goose		2			7		7		7
caspiant tern						2	6	14	4
domestic duck	1		6			5			
feral goose	15	3	9	1	9	10	27	11	8
gannet		2				1			1
godwit	172		16		252	486	388	129	193
grey teal					4	2	26	189	230
little shag	326	230	155	187	241	396	474	462	863
mallard	100	110	70	246	402	578	436	453	748
paradise shelduck	23	40	31	62	21	35	40	19	94
pie d oystercatcher	178	237	171	332	526	1146	1017	1103	897
pie d stilt	6	12	7	19	23	13	28	33	50
red-billed gull	994	1038	1814	569	1804	778	1020	513	86
royal spoonbill	2		8	7	4	8	15	3	
shoveler	2		1				6		10
spotted shag	3	4	272	24	17	16	17	128	19
spur winged plover	1	5	7	30	5	11	13	8	13
stewart island shag	15	15	8	19	5	5	46	33	50
variable oystercatcher	45	34	105	18	71	43	76	87	42
white-faced heron	23	19	3	16	3	37	13	19	29
white-fronted tern	86	70	229	41	21	16	1022	248	144

Bruce Mckinlay

### A Crested Grebe in Otago Harbour

At 4.00pm on Friday 28th May Richard and Jane Higham saw a grebe at the bottom of Castlewood Road, Company Bay diving and swimming north, then when they came back ten minutes later with the camera it was at the bottom of Raynbird Street and Luss Roads. The weather was wet and windy from the South, the water choppy.

Crested Grebes are becoming increasingly common on the Canterbury Coast but are still unusual on the coast of Otago. There was a juvenile in Kaikourai Estuary on 20 June 2008.



## Ross Creek Survey Summary of the years results

The following table lists all the birds we recorded in our Ross Creek survey, from May 2009 to April 2010, with the number of months they were recorded in each section. The column headed M gives the number of months in which they were found in the reserve as a whole. There is a map of the sections in last years June newsletter.

Section	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	no months recorded
Blackbird	12	12	12	12	12	11	12	12
Silvereeye	12	12	12	12	12	12	11	12
Bellbird	12	12	12	12	12	11	11	12
Grey Warbler	12	12	12	12	12	12	9	12
Fantail	12	12	8	11	12	11	10	12
Dunnock	11	11	9	11	11	9	10	12
Tui	12	10	12	12	11	11	1	12
Kereru	10	10	8	11	12	10	7	12
Song Thrush	12	10	11	10	10	10	4	12
Chaffinch	12	10	9	10	8	8	8	12
Starling	11	4	6	9	5	1	2	12
Mallard	2	0	0	12	0	0	0	12
Little Shag	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	12
House Sparrow	6	0	0	11	4	4	4	11
Brown Creeper	3	8	2	1	6	8	0	11
Rifleman	2	6	1	4	8	7	0	11
Welcome Swallow	1	0	0	11	0	0	7	11
Black-backed Gull	0	0	0	11	2	1	0	11
Goldfinch	2	0	0	7	4	0	0	10
Tomtit	5	1	3	4	8	3	1	9
Redpoll	6	5	0	4	5	2	2	9
Rosella	0	1	1	7	3	3	0	9
Black Shag	0	0	0	8	0	0	2	8
Paradise Duck	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Greenfinch	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	5
Shining Cuckoo	1	1	0	4	2	2	0	4
Kingfisher	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	3
Coot	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Harrier	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Magpie	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Californian Quail	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Spur-winged Plover	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Yellowhammer	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
No species	21	19	16	30	24	20	16	33

**Alan Baker**

## Ornithological Snippets



On 11 May Kelvin Lloyd saw a single **SI Fernbird** in a patch of scrub above a small marshy wetland in the floor of a slump at about 400 m elevation. “This was above the North Branch of the Waikouaiti River about 5 km west of Mt Watkin/Hikaroroa, This area typically supports dry forest dominated by kowhai and broadleaf, which I would not associate with fernbird habitat. The fernbird was observed in patches of *Fuchsia perscandens* and *Coprosma propinqua* near the marsh wetland (with *Juncus*, *Carex* and toetoe).” This record extends the distribution northwards from the Silverpeak population recorded in the Atlas. (photo: Arani Penwarden)

Brendon Rae reports hearing **Morepork** calling on 21 May in Pilkington Street, Maori Hill.

Doreen Grant watched a **native pigeon** feeding on apricot leaves in Outram on 31/5.

Relevant perhaps to the lack of **Red-billed Gulls** in the harbour, there were over 600 **Pied Oystercatchers** feeding on a muddy paddock in Waitati in late May/early June and a further thirty or so in drier sheep paddocks well up the hill near Don’s Creek.

Kelvin sent in this photo of a **Kereru** and said he’d often noted kereru feeding on kowhai foliage outside his office window in the Landcare building on the main street in Dunedin, but this is the first time he’d seen one feeding on the *Coprosma virescens* beneath it.



One of Murray Efford’s **Tui**, colour banded at Wakari has turned up in Oamaru

## Notices and Business

### Nelson AGM

Graeme Loh was sent to Nelson and reports:

I had fun pretending to be an RR at the Nelson AGM 4 June 2010 and saw two good birds on a wet day in Torrent Bay, reef herons.

Here are some of the matters of interest.

**Media**, Sending a photo in is a good hook for media interest. The mood of council is that we can be active in assisting people's enjoyment of birds, ie get a bit closer to advocacy.

**Promotion** Put "OSNZ" on the cover of 'Southern Bird'. Ingrid will supply extra copies for distribution to schools.

**Science Fairs** Problems with attracting student effort because no NCEA recognition of that work. Focus on teacher awareness. Dr Hamish Campbell the key person.

**Subscriptions.** There was some agony about the price of subscriptions for those that are retired but the mod was that the Notornis is a major purpose of the society so subs must rise, they haven't for some time. Even so people are free to turn up to meetings. And another approach is to plan for retirement by becoming a life member \$1150.

**Naming** Council will only consider this issue if a formal paper presenting the pros and cons is produce for consideration. A majority of RR's desire change but not the effort.

**Activities** The activities paper circulated 23 Nov 09 garnered only one response. Dig it out and consider.

A national survey of Caspian terns is billed for 2011-2013 led by Mike Bell.

The nest record scheme is languishing but will not be discontinued.

**Ebird** 'At sea' and some other new habitat classifications will be adopted.

**The Bird Report** Derek's efforts praised. Plan is to have a bumper 08, 09, 10 edition. Proposal to have an Ebird "Otago Regional Recorder" account to facilitate gathering of records.

**Notornis** Backlog cleared. Need for submissions now.

### Banding and Handling training

Potential for a significant role here now tha thte manual is near completion. Already Mike Bell runs regular activities at Ward and also done at Wellington Zoo and Miranda.

Annual camps are popular with members.

The new **Checklist** was launched. (Graeme has a spare copy)

Peter Frost, Murray Williams, and Colin Miskelly appointed as **councillors**

### News from the science day.

-Brian Gill would like long-tailed cuckoo bodies to assist understanding migration.

- Leg mounted daylight loggers can be used to assess breeding success in godwits because they record the amount of incubation in the arctic.
- Harriers and black-backed gulls are important predators of black-fronted terns.
- Electrocution of falcons on 11,000 volt power poles, particularly those with transformers, is the single most important cause of falcon mortality in the vineyards of Marlborough.
- Some useful protection of grapes by falcon fostering.
- Spotted shags leave roosts, swallow stones in shallow water and regurgitate them on the beach before heading off for a days foraging in non-summer months at Able Tasman.
- White-winged black terns were recorded as breeding in Canterbury by Stead in 1917.
- There are now 4000 gannet pairs at Farewell Spit, 11% increase per year despite 70% juvenile mortality and catastrophic storm events on the breeding sites.
- There has been a great reduction in the number of offshore fishing vessels, combined with mitigation measures some seabird losses are reduced. Still problems with the inshore fleet.
- It takes a long time to round up riflemen for a transfer
- Playback snchoring worked a bit for retaining transferred kokako after release.
- Mallards did not take off in NZ until British birds raised in the USA were imported in the hundreds early last century.
- Garden Bird Survey, we record more sparrows than Britain now.

Next **AGM** in Wellington. It will have two scientific days. That will include some practical training options. Dunedin is billed as the venue in 2013.

Just ring Graeme if these snippets are too puzzling or intriguing. 4876125.

## **Graeme Loh**

**Garden Bird Survey** This years survey begins on 26 June.

**The Oamaru Penguin Symposium** will be held on Thursday 24 and Friday 25 June. Contact [oamaru.penguin.nat.nz](http://oamaru.penguin.nat.nz) for details.

## **Dead Birds**

Bronwen Presswell is studying parasites in the Zoo Department and is on the lookout for dead birds:-

The parasites I am looking at, at the moment, are all found in their larval form, in bullies (*Gobiomorphus cotidianus*) that are collected from fresh or brackish water bodies. I have good reason to believe that a couple of worms will be found, in their adult form, inside the guts of shags. However, they could be in any piscivorous birds (such as herons, terns, etc.) so I would be very pleased to examine any such birds found nearby fresh or brackish water.

I'm interested in obtaining dead birds but do need them within 48 hours of death (preferably 24 hours) since the worms are the first thing to degrade once the bird is dead. They can be frozen, or sent fresh immediately (as long as they don't pong, because I don't think the postman would like it much!).

If anyone finds any dead birds I would be pleased if could they contact me on 03 4658335 (home), 03 4795215 (lab) or on email [bpreswell@hotmail.com](mailto:bpreswell@hotmail.com), and the birds can be sent to me (addressed to Dr. Bronwen Presswell) at the Zoology Department, Great King Street, University of Otago.

## **Bron Presswell**

### **Long Point**

The Autumn trip down to the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust land at Long Point in the Catlins has already been put off for 2 weekends due to bad weather and we have decided to abandon further attempts. However we will be going down again in Spring.

### **Black-fronted Terns – yet more legs to look at :-**

On 16 April, David Melville and co. caught some terns at Grassmere, Marlborough. “This was an experimental catch using mistnets and tape lures. We caught 3 Black-fronted Terns and 4 White-fronted Terns, 2 of which were recaptures of juveniles banded at Kaikoura by Lindsay Rowe on 26 November 2009.

The 3 Black-fronted Terns have been marked with alpha leg-flags (black characters on a white flag) on the tarsus. All birds were also marked with yellow dye on the breast which will turn to a more orange colour over time.

One of the White-fronted Terns has already been seen at the Wairau Bar (c. 26 km from the banding site) today., the 17<sup>th</sup>.”

A further 9 black-fronted tern were caught at the Wairau Lagoons on 17 April. These birds have been marked with white leg flags with three black characters, but do not have yellow dye on the breast.

Records please to David Melville [david.melville@ xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.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)

## 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.

Wed 23 June	Indoor meeting Sheena Townsend Mud, Mealworms and Microsatellites: Studying Stewart Island robins on Ulva.
Sunday 11 July	Harbour Survey start time 1.15pm
Sunday 18 July	Hawksbury Lagoon
Wed 28 July	Indoor Meeting Craig McKenzie Bird photography
Wed 25 August	Indoor Meeting Graeme Loh Catlins Ark and Mohua
Wed 22 September	Indoor Meeting Murray Efford Studying birds
Saturday 9 October	Hawksbury Lagoon

Sue has offered to be the newsletter editor for the next 2 months

Please send all contributions to:

[waitapu1@clear.net.nz](mailto:waitapu1@clear.net.nz)

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for copy for next newsletter: 21 July