



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

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Otago Region Newsletter 2/2010 March 2010

NZ Falcon Survey- Mt Allan

On the last day of January, one of the better days of summer, Steve Lawrence, Peter Schweigman, Lesley Gowans and Derek Onley drove the falcon loudspeaker gear around Mt Allan forest, west of Mosgiel. The area is a mosaic of recently felled and mature commercial pine forest with tiny patches of struggling, scruffy natives like mahoe interspersed amongst broom, gorse and himalayan honeysuckle.



Spot the Falcon. Mt Allan logging.

While the others struggled to hear a Tomtit, Bellbird or Brown Creeper amongst the clouds of Redpolls, Steve pronounced it excellent falcon habitat and was soon proved right. Seven falcons were found including a female with two recently fledged young, a couple of lone juveniles and an adult male. As the breeding season nears its end playing calls, however loud and effective the sound system, becomes less effective so the falcon surveys will resume next spring.

Not long after our visit a huge fire burnt down much of the Mt Allan forest. Smaller birds are likely to have had a very hard time but the young falcons appeared old enough to have been able to avoid the fire.

(Peter Schweigman has long given up smoking in the field.)

Derek Onley

Otago Summer Wader Count part 2 6/7 February 2010

In November “The weather this year was atrocious, with a strong southerly wind and poor visibility.” February was no different. Consequently godwits and Pied Oystercatchers were just about impossible to count properly. Added to the bad weather conditions, the extremely low high tide made it difficult to find the waders as many continued feeding and did not go to roost. Numbers for Blueskin Bay for example were an estimate. Normally they don't turn up at Harwood and Papanui at high tide, but this time we had good numbers.

This February count was requested as a follow-up from the summer count in November. Despite some rather conservative estimates this time, numbers were up for all species.

Species	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins Lake	Total Feb '10	Total Nov '09
SI Pied Oystercatcher	85	200	257	889	248	49	343	2071	448
Variable Oystercatcher	7		4	39	11	12	6	79	49
Banded Dotterel	143		47				57	247	2
Bt Godwit	203	200	335	151	138	374	388	1789	1457
Pied Stilt	31		1	12	20	80	35	179	87
Spur winged Plover	28				16	9	2	55	nc

The Otago banded godwits

We all know that the weather this summer was not very conducive to chasing Bar-tailed Godwits and trying to identify bands and flags.

Despite this and the lack of observers, the number of banded godwits seen this summer during 10 visits to the usual areas was 16 birds all of which were banded at Warrington and Awarua Bay. 12 were seen at Aramoana, 4 at Blueskin Bay, 1 at

Harwood and 2 at Karitane. Two at Aramoana have been seen twice during a two months period, one seen at Hooper's Inlet in November turned up at Blueskin Bay in February. In addition orange flagged birds from Australia have been spotted on 8 visits. Considering the regular sightings of these orange flags one wonders how many have been banded in Australia.

It was a pity the cannon netting in November last year was unsuccessful. It might have increase the above numbers considerable. Let's try again next summer, both catching and spotting.

Peter Schweigman

Otago Harbour Survey Update: February 2010

Yet again the weather was extremely dodgy and some people really struggled to get good counts.

This table summarises the whole count. It includes those birds counted above the tide line including 646 pied oystercatchers roosting on the Port Otago shed roofs. It looks like they have really found a home here. A quarter of the total count was recorded as 'above the tide line' which shows the importance of roosts.

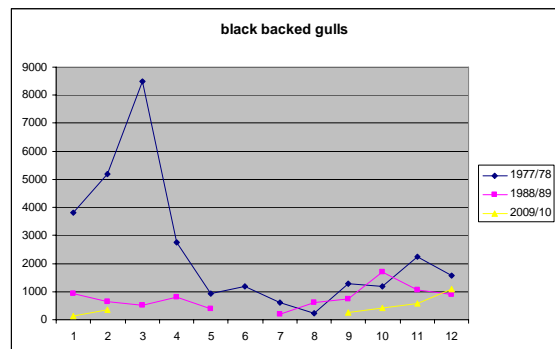
Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
black shag			1	16				17
little shag	20	77	80	143	33	18	11	382
spotted shag	1	3	1	9	2	0		16
stewart island shag		1		4				5
gannet						1		1
white-faced heron			2	7		22	6	37
royal spoonbill			3	4		1		8
black swan						115	22	137
paradise shelduck	9			19		7		35
feral goose	1			2	7			10
domestic duck			2	3				5
mallard	34	46	227	46	87	113	25	578
grey teal							2	2
black-backed gull	101	6	42	42	101	35	24	351
red-billed gull	163	54	123	178	154	99	7	778
caspian tern						2		2
white-fronted tern	4	2		9	1			16
spur-winged plover	1			6	2	2		11
banded dotterel							47	47
pied oystercatcher	132		28	1	646	82	257	1146
variable o/catcher	12					27	4	43
pied stilt						12	1	13
bar-tailed godwit						151	335	486
kingfisher				1				1
feral pigeon					2			2
welcome swallow	4							4
bellbird				1				1
house sparrow						10		10
Total	482	189	509	491	1035	697	741	4144

Here is the summary for the whole survey so far. February is the 6th month of the survey.

Month	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
banded dotterel						47
bellbird						1
black backed gull	255	415	583	1104	410	351
black shag	3	1		1		17
black swan	73	28	4	79	80	137
black-billed gull		30		1	2	
blackbird		12	2		2	
canada goose		2			7	
caspian tern						2
domestic duck	1		6			5
feral goose	15	3	9	1	9	10
feral pigeon	1			2		2
gannet		2				1
godwit	172		16		252	486
grey teal					4	2
harrier hawk		1		1		
kingfisher						1
little shag	326	230	155	187	241	382
mallard	100	110	70	246	402	578
paradise shelduck	23	40	31	62	21	35
pieb oystercatcher	178	237	171	332	526	1146
pieb stilt	6	12	7	19	23	13
Pigeon					2	
pukeko		1				
redbilled gull	994	1038	1814	569	1804	778
rifleman		1				
royal spoonbill	2		8	7	4	8
shoveler	2		1			
song thrush			2	1		
Sparrows						10
spotted shag	3	4	272	24	17	16
spur winged plover	1	5	7	30	5	11
Starling					5	
stewart island shag	15	15	8	19	5	5
variable oystercatcher	45	34	105	18	71	43
welcome swallow				7	8	4
white faced heron	23	19	3	16	3	37
white fronted tern	86	70	229	41	21	16

Jill Hamel has been asking after Black-backed Gull numbers. Here's the monthly pattern for gulls for all three surveys. Trying to explain what was happening with Black-backed gulls in 1977/78 could be a bit of a challenge.

Bruce McKinlay



Ross Creek Survey January & February results

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Black Shag				1			1
Little Shag				4			
Mallard	S			51			
Black-backed Gull				5			
NZ Pigeon	S	S	S	S	3	2	S
Rosella				S			
Shining Cuckoo				H			
Kingfisher		1					
Rifleman	S	s			S	1	
Welcome Swallow	S			3			S
Dunnock	S	S	H	S	S	S	S
Blackbird	S	B	S	5	3	3	S
Song Thrush	S	B	S	S	S	2	
Brown Creeper	S	S	S	H	S	S	
Grey Warbler	S	S	S	S	6	3	S
Fantail	S	S		1	7	3	S
Tomtit	1			2	1	1	
Silvereye	S	B	S	2	5	2B	S
Bellbird	B	S	B	5B	12	B	S
Tui	S	S	S	1	4B	1	
Chaffinch	S	S	S	S		1	S
Greenfinch				H			
Goldfinch	S			1	S		
Redpoll	SB	H		S	S		
House Sparrow	S			27	S		B
Starling	S	S	S	2B	S		
Species Total 26	19	15	12	24	16	13	11

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

Indications of breeding were: nest – Silvereye; young of Starling, Blackbird, Tui, Bellbird, Song Thrush House Sparrow and Silvereye and a Redpoll carrying nesting material.

I recently received a report of a Morepork, a bird which has not yet featured in our survey< Brian Heenan heard one in the lower Ross Creek/Leith Valley area around 10.30pm on 1 March



Could I please have all March records by 7th April.

Alan Baker 4675180 48 Pacific St., Dunedin 9010

Ornithological Snippets

Lesley, Sue and Mary saw a huge flock of White-fronted Terns roosting on the Mole at Aramoana in the afternoon on Sunday 14th March. Estimated number was 4000, with many juveniles.

On 9 March Tim Cotter sighted a NZ Falcon in Alexander St, Abbotsford, Dunedin. At “6:10pm the bird flapped in a straight flight path from a small pine radiata stand near the end of Alexander St, in a direction towards Saddle Hill.”

Derek Onley reports a large female NZ Falcon hunting over an open field near Roxburgh on 10 March and two males, one of which was a juvenile at Horseshoe Bend on the Teviot River. The juvenile was first seen flying around the base of the three wind turbines.

On 6 March, Len Buchanan found the Black Stilt 5km. south of Brighton Store, on the beach opposite the grey house with the netball hoop. His usual place this time of the year. He advises care. It is not a nice place to pull out from if you are driving.

Hamish Spencer heard a Morepork in his NEV garden at about 2 p.m. on a moonlit night. The first time this year, and only the second, he thinks, in 18 years.



From his garden in Outram in late January, Steve Lawrence reports 3 juvenile Tui, just developing the “parsons bib” feathers, eating ripe apricots as well as taking sugar water from feeders. “As one particular juvenile was feeding on plums on the ground I made a small table on a post and added ripe plums which it soon found and kept it from becoming a cat’s dinner.”

On 29 January, Richard Schofield checked out a bird brought home by a cat in suburban Balclutha and confirmed it as a Fairy Prion. Deceased. No bands. He also saw a live Brown Creeper in his suburban Balclutha garden. The first time he has seen one there. It was just a single bird, presumably a youngster, judging from its plumage.

Bar-tailed Godwit numbers in Blueskin Bay declined from 514 to just over 50 in the first two weeks of March. On 3 March there were still over 650 feeding at low tide on the bank in the centre of Otago Harbour out from Port Chalmers. Numbers had declined to 67 at Karitane by 14 March but several of these were males in breeding plumage.



As usual at this time of year the odd moulting penguin turns up. A Fiordland Crested Penguin was found near the Waipapa Point Lighthouse, Catlins on 30 January and another was present below Taiaroa Head on 7 February. On the same date a quick trip out to sea beyond the head on the Alan Anderson's catamaran, complete with wine and birthday cake, saw White-capped, Salvin's and Buller's Mollymawks fighting over gurnard carcasses along with one or two Sooty Shearwaters and Cape Pigeons. Passing by were Hutton's Shearwaters and an Arctic Skua.

Marc van Woerkom



Buller's Mollymawk

Notices and Business

Yellow-eyed Penguins

Transponders, small micro-chips, have been implanted under the skin of in Yellow-eyed Penguins/Hoiho at several places in Coastal Otago and on Stewart, Codfish and Enderby Islands. Though some penguins may have both a standard metal flipper band and a transponder, many birds may only be marked with a transponder and there will be no external indication that one has been implanted. Transponders may only be read with compatible readers.

As people who are out looking at birds on a regular basis, we encourage you to report sightings of Yellow-eyed Penguins to the Department of Conservation. Dead Yellow-eyed Penguins are sent to Massey University for post mortem examination, so we would like to retrieve all carcasses found regardless of their state of decomposition, as well as to check for a transponder.

Please contact DoC's Coastal Otago Area Office on (03) 477 0677 if you would like more information.

Our after-hours hotline 0800 362 468, should be used only to report dead or injured wildlife..

Thank you.

Melanie Young Ranger - Biodiversity Assets

OSNZ AGM, Queen's Birthday weekend, 4-7 June 2010 in Nelson

If any member is interested in representing Otago at this event, please let Mary know as she is not able to attend this year.

Subscription for OSNZ Inc.

These were sent out just prior to Christmas so if you have overlooked this, please remember to pay your sub. There are a few outstanding.

Membership of OSNZ

This is a good time to join OSNZ as new members will receive a free copy of the Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004 (worth \$90) as well as other Society publications. If you know of those interested in studying birds why not give them a membership brochure (copies from Mary).

State of New Zealand Birds 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

Spare copies are available for members who want to complete their set. If you have other ideas of where these might be placed; e.g. libraries, schools, that might publicise OSNZ more widely, please let Mary know.

Otago Branch AGM, 24 March 2010

Please come along with ideas for Projects, field trips, speakers or other events you might like to participate in. Current projects include Harbour Survey (Bruce

McKinlay), Falcon Survey (Steve Lawrence), Hawksbury Lagoon (Derek Onley and Jim Wilson), Ross Creek (Alan Baker) and our ongoing Wader Counts (Ken Gager) and godwit band sightings (Peter Schweigman).

Welcome to new members: Georgina Pickerell, Edwardo Santos, Shinichi Nakagawa, Simon Beale, Sharon Roberts, Brendon Rae, Sue Odlin.

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

Mystery Photos



Why is this a Fiordland Crested Penguin?

Photo Marc van Woerkom

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 24 March	Indoor meeting Derek Onley Update of Orokonui birds and bird counts Followed by a short AGM
Sunday 11 April	Harbour Survey start time 11.45am
Saturday 17 April	Hawksbury Lagoon. meet 10.00am end of Stuart St. Contact Derek Onley 4822831
Wed 28 April	Indoor Meeting Peter Langlands Bitterns of NZ
Sunday 23 May	Harbour Survey start time 9.45am
Wed 26 May	Indoor meeting. Hamish Spencer Birds of Costa Rica
Sunday 20 June	Harbour Survey start time 8.30am
Wed 23 June	Indoor meeting Sheena Townsend Bird studies on Ulva Island (note change of date)
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.
Final date for copy for next newsletter: 21 April