



THE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND
(INCORPORATED)

PO Box 12397
WELLINGTON

Alan Baker
Regional Recorder
48 Pacific Street
Dunedin 9010.

☎ 03 467 5180

Mary Thompson
Regional Representative
197 Balmacewen Road
Balmacewen
Dunedin

☎ (03) 464 0787

Otago Region Newsletter 5/2009 May2009

Seabird Voyage 2 May 08



White-capped Mollymawk

photo Cornelis Kater

Graeme was thinking to have another seabird trip around the time of the titi exodus. May comes, time passes but maybe the carter boats are not full up on the opening days of duck shooting? Maybe the regular fishing folk will be out after ducks? Rang Allan Anderson, "Yes the Caprice is available" and weather looks promising.

Deluged those I know to be interested in seabird voyages and fourteen of us arrived at the Carey's Bay wharf. Sunny, wind north east 20knots. Away past Taiaroa and seven km eastwards. Pretty choppy, so the camera and binocular handling was unsteady but the catamaran is a great boat to view from. Elton and Cornelis set to mollymawk feeding and our trail of birds was crowded. A couple of feeding aggregations of a few hundred birds dominated by red-billed gulls with Titi, Spotted Shags, and Cape Pigeons. Twenty one species of seabirds observed. Titi numbers very low, 10's not 100's.

It is worrying to note that in the recent review of the status of our birds that only three of those we saw are classified "Not Threatened" (Notornis, 2008, Vol. 55: 117-135)

Black-fronted Tern	10's	Nationally Endangered
Red-billed Gull	100's	Nationally Vulnerable
Black-backed Gull	10's	Not Threatened
White-fronted Tern	10's	Declining
Australasian Gannet	1	Not Threatened
Spotted Shag	10's	Not Threatened
Little Shag	1's	Naturally Uncommon
Stewart Island Shag	some	Nationally Vulnerable
Buller's Shearwater	1-3	Naturally Uncommon
Fairy Prion	10's	Relict
Hutton's Shearwater	some	Declining
White-capped Mollymawk	20's	Declining
Buller's Mollymawk	20's	Naturally Uncommon
Black-browed Mollymawk	1 juv	Coloniser
Northern Giant Petrel	1	Naturally Uncommon
Northern Royal Albatross	1 or 2	Naturally Uncommon
Snares Cape Pigeon	10's	Naturally Uncommon
Sooty Shearwater	10's	Declining
Southern Royal Albatross	5-10	Naturally Uncommon
White-chinned Petrel	1	Declining
Southern Blue Penguin	1's	Declining

Our return was marked by a long rest at the harbour entrance where we had to await assistance. We could appreciate the skill of the windjammer captains in entering harbour in difficult conditions.

Thanks to Allan we had a great voyage.

If you are keen to be on future trips, contact Graeme Loh

Hawkesbury Lagoon Autumn Survey

Seven members gathered to do the autumn census of the Hawksbury Lagoon. This was a first visit to the lagoon for 4 of us and we were not disappointed. The weather was calm, mild and overcast and the light was excellent for viewing the birds. It was very good to see all the different ducks together to hone our identification skills. We saw one grey duck with a very definite dark eye stripe and green speculum with no white borders. There was also one juvenile Caspian tern. No other rarities but we were given a wonderful display by Welcome Swallows and Eric took some great photos.

	13 Apr 2008	1 Feb 2009	19 Apr 2009
Start time	2.00pm	10.00am	1.00pm
Water Level cm below top gate	75		50
Little Shag	0	1	0
White-faced Heron	0	1	1
Royal Spoonbill	0	0	0
Black Swan	14	42	44
Canada Goose	8	25	1
Greylag Goose	27	23	43
Canada/Greylag Hybrid	22	22	
Paradise Shelduck	22	34	51
Mallard/Grey Duck	178	257	238
Grey Duck	0	0	1
Grey Teal	341	771	203
NZ Shoveler	356	195	253
Harrier	0	2	0
Pied Oystercatcher	1	0	0
Variable Oystercatcher	2	0	0
Pied Stilt	76	337	21
Hybrid Pied/Black Stilt	0	1	0
Spur-winged Plover	40	11	13
Black-backed Gull	9	25	7
Red-billed Gull	0	7	0
Black-billed Gull	0	90	0
Caspian Tern	3	0	1
Kingfisher	0	0	0
Welcome Swallow	1	10	25+
Total	1100	1854	902



The main changes since February were big decreases in the numbers of Pied Stilts and Grey Teal and complete absence of Black-billed Gulls. Compared to April last year there were more Mallard, Black Swans and Paradise Ducks but lower numbers of Grey Teal and Shoveler.

Mary Thompson

Ornithological Snippets



A **Mottled Petrel** was picked up on Pinehill on 18 May. See the mystery photo for another seabird found in an odd place.

Graham Parker heard and observed a pair of **NZ Falcon** all summer (Nov-late Jan) at Whare Flat, immediately above the car park. He spent a lot of time in the bush in that area and was never attacked though, so he isn't sure if they were nesting in the immediate area.

He also saw and heard **falcon** regularly at skid sights around the Mountain Road area of the Silverpeaks. In addition he twice found **Kereru** pluck-sites along the South Branch of the Waikouaiti.

On April 21 he saw a **falcon** just down (east) from the Bullpen on Flagstaff-Whare Flat Road, first thing in the morning and then on April 24 he disturbed an adult at the top of the Steve Amies track, on the Swampy Summit road, again first thing in the morning.

Elsewhere a **falcon** was watched taking what appeared to be a **House Sparrow** from the roof of a Kingston flyer wagon at Kingston station and Valerie Fay saw a juvenile on Mt Cargill Road near Waitati on 23 April.

In the same area she also saw a flock of over 150 **Spur-winged Plovers** in a paddock and a female **Mallard** with a brood of 9 newly hatched ducklings on 19 May a few hours before the latest cold southerly moved in.

Warrington had 63 overwintering **Bar-tailed Godwits** on 8 May and Karitane 39 on 17th including a male in breeding plumage and a colour banded/flagged bird. In addition there were 68 **Banded Dotterels** and 11 **Caspian Terns** at Warrington and 172 **dotterels**, the highest number counted by far in the last 10 years, at Karitane.

A couple of birds to look out for:

Sue Guthrie reports a possible **Kookaburra** by Monday 4 May at 1.00pm near bridge south from Temuka (before Opihi so probably Temuka Stream) on dead branch, 2 metres above water.

On Saturday 18 April on the beach about 1 km. to the south side of the Shag River. Kathy Haliwell met a large a penguin waddling down to the beach from the sand dunes and her description matches a **Royal or Macaroni Penguin** "It was certainly big enough, with a big square head and very large beak, and just faint tufts of yellow over and behind the eyes."

and a correction:

Rosemary Heather's sighting of a **Royal Spoonbill** at Bendigo, reported in the last newsletter, was not a first for Central Otago. On 21 September 1972, who else but Peter Child came across an adult in breeding plumage roosting on the edge of Lake Wanaka near the outlet of the Matukituki River.

Loathsome Lorikeets

Hot reports of Lorikeets are wanted by DOC. Please contact Graeme Loh if you have one in front of you in the wild. DOC wishes to capture them and put them in secure captivity.

There has been a rash of Rainbow Lorikeet activity starting in March when Blacks Road residents noted a lorikeet flying around. This one was apparently being taken for "walks" by its owner. Lorikeets may be kept in captivity, but they must be kept securely. If they establish a wild population they will be a direct competitor with our valued native birds such as tui and bellbird. As a result of discussions I trust this bird is now kept securely, but a number of other sightings and incidents have come to our

attention. Lorikeets are being lost and found quite often it seems. Of most concern are reports of Lorikeets around the Balmacewan Golf Course. These do not seem to be recent escapes nor someone's pet. Graeme would be most interested to get more information about these birds in particular, so that a capture strategy can be plotted. A note of the trees the birds are feeding in are particularly valuable.

and Parrots at the University

I was around at Landcare in Union St. on 14 May at 10:30am and heard parrots screeching. Tracked them down to the big deciduous tree with dead leaves and fruit? on it east of Landcare's car park. Eventually I saw three short, plump parrots with orange chests and yellow bills, between tui and bellbird in body size but with a short tail. They were around for about an hour.

I alerted Tim Cotter of the Botanic Gardens Aviary. He thinks they may be peach-faced lovebirds and commented that they are even more aggressive than lorikeets so a problem if they establish in the wild.

I would like to be promptly told of any further sightings of these birds. Further efforts at identification are essential. Be great to find the owner of these birds.

Graeme Loh 4746935 w 4876125 h, 0211322436 or gloh@doc.govt.nz

Ageing Oystercatcher



Being in some sort of hibernation but with access to the computer, I'd like to talk a bit more about the white-headed oystercatcher (*Haematopus albacephalus*) at Aramoana. The first time I saw it was back in March 2003 and it has been seen every year since with the last sighting on 21 January 2009. A six year old bird, seen every year was not bad.

Leafing through old newsletters I came across an article in the OSNZ newsletter no 1990/2 "Aramoana Revisited", written by Jill Hamel and I quote:

"There was a beautifully speckled bird amongst the oystercatcher with its head almost white just dappled with grey and white speckles on its black mantle and wings. It looked a perfectly healthy bird"

I have taken a shot some time ago from a distance but enlarged on the computer it looks the same as the bird Jill describes. All of a sudden this bird turns from a 6 year old into a 19 year old one.

Peter Schweigman

Notices and Business

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

Ross Creek Survey

Our new project officially started Sunday 10 May with our introduction to the area and the various habitats of the area. The cold, sleety weather conditions were not so ideal for birding but the intrepid, Alan and Mary walked nearly the whole area and saw 10 species; on the 9th Alan had seen 17 species and we added a lone Little Shag on the Sunday. Alan also had the pleasure of watching a young NZ Pigeon being fed by its parent.

Ross Creek often provides some interesting birding, e.g. Shining Cuckoo fledgling being fed by Grey Warblers, little families of Bellbirds and Riflemen, colony of Little Shag, and Welcome Swallow nests, so it is an area well worth visiting regularly.

The next Group Survey will be held on Sunday 2nd August, meeting at 1.00 pm at the end of Cannington Road.

Between the group visits it would be great if those interested could survey sections whenever it suits them. We want to make the survey methods as straight forward as possible so the aim is to just record species seen or heard. Some may wish to carry out 5 minute bird counts. It might be a good idea to have a particular section allocated to you and that way we can cover as much of the area as possible. Please contact Alan to be allocated a section and for a map if you are still needing one.

Please remember to get your Ross Creek bird records for May to Alan before the end of the month so that they can be collated for the June newsletter.

Mary Thompson
and Alan Baker (48 Pacific Street, phone 467 5180)

OSNZ AGM, Owera, 29 May to 1 June.

Your RR, Mary Thompson, is heading up to Owera, so if there is anything you would like me to bring up for discussion at the RR meeting please let me know. I presume Bruce will be attending the Council Meeting. There are to be field trips to Tawharanui Regional Park and Tiri Tiri Matangi.

Conservation status of New Zealand birds, 2008

Graeme Loh has prepared a synopsis of the status of birds in and around DOC Coastal Otago which is available on request. gloh@doc.govt.nz

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

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



Last month's photo is of a flock of starlings feeding on the filtration beds at Milton waste water treatment station. Every time the sprinkler arm passed by they would leap in the air over the boom to avoid getting wet.



Shipping News

Port Otago rang DOC 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 found the bird above. It sat on the Aramoana Mole for a while watching people walking by, typical trusting tubenose. A photo was taken, then he launched it into the wind and away.

What is it? There is a clue in Graeme's final comment: Note to self, TAKE MEASUREMENTS.

Graeme Loh

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.

Wednesday 27 May	Indoor Meeting Dr Bruce Robertson "The role of genetics in Kakapo recovery"
Saturday 20 June	Winter Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.26. Back up day, Saturday 27 June, with high tide at 14.09. 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. Note date change from last newsletter
Sunday 11 October	Spring survey of Hawksbury Lagoon
Saturday 28 November	Summer Wader Count. High tide at Dunedin 13.22.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, c/o Blueskin Store, Waitati, 9060
derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed,
Final date for copy for next newsletter: 17 June