



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

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*Otago Region Newsletter 9/2007 October 2007*

**Survey of Dart River**

I am intending to do a braided river bird survey on the Dart River on Saturday, 27 and Sunday, 28 October. This is largely a volunteer project and builds on several earlier surveys. Should any Otago OSNZ members like to join me they would be most welcome. If accommodation is an issue let me know and I'll try and jack something basic up. It would be good to know numbers before Labour Weekend. If we have sufficient people, we will do the Dart on the Saturday and the Rees on the Sunday.

Key Species **Black-fronted Terns, Wrybills, Banded Dotterels, Black-billed Gulls.**

My phone at work is (03) 442 5864; that at home in the evening is (03) 442 9275.  
Email [blawrence@doc.govt.nz](mailto:blawrence@doc.govt.nz)

Barry Lawrence

**Wrybill at Aramoana**

On 15 September 2007, Hamish Spencer saw a female **Wrybill** in breeding plumage on the salt flats at Aramoana. Very few waders other than **Variable** and **Pied Oystercatchers** were present: just 2 **Bar-tailed Godwits** and 2 **Spur-winged Plovers**, no **Pied Stilts** at all. **Wrybill** are not common in coastal Otago and this record appears to be the first from Aramoana, at least as far as our intrepid record-keeper, Peter Schweigman, can ascertain.



Peter has compiled the following list of sightings from old newsletters and reports in *Notornis*:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Observer</b>
30-Oct-76	Inchclutha	1	Peter Schweigman
15-Nov-76	Inchclutha	1	Ali McArthur
27-Jan-85	Hawkesbury Lagoon	1, dead	Peter Schweigman
06-Oct-86	All Day Bay	1	Alan Baker
05-Oct-88	Inchclutha	4	Peter Schweigman
14-Nov-92	All Day Bay	1	Alan Baker
07-Nov-94	Inchclutha	2	Phil Garside et al
30-Dec-95	Kaikorai Estuary	1	Kim and Jenny Morrison
08-Jan-96	Kaikorai Estuary	1	Robyn Gledhill
Oct-00	Karitane	1	Peter Schweigman et al
13-Aug-02	Inchclutha	5	Richard & Suzanne Schofield
29-Oct-02	Kaikorai Estuary	1	Peter Schweigman
01-Jan-04	Pounaweia	1	Richard Schofield
08-Oct-06	Warrington Beach	3	Craig McKenzie
03-Jan-07	Cabbage Point, Catlins	1	Richard Schofield
15-Sep-07	Aramoana	1 female	Hamish Spencer

Footnote: As of Friday, 5 October 2007, Peter Schweigman reports that there was no change in the **Godwit** population at Aramoana: still 2. And no **Wrybill**. One **VOC**, 3 **Caspian Terns** in breeding plumage and a handful of **White-fronted Terns** feeding in the harbour.

## **Report of Bird Survey of Allan's Beach Wetland**

Prepared by Mary Thompson, Regional Representative, Otago Branch of OSNZ, 197 Balmacewen Road, Dunedin.

Date: 28 January, 2007, 1.00 – 4.00 p.m.

Conditions: Cool, overcast, strong NE wind with southerly front approaching.

Participants: Seven members of Otago Branch of OSNZ and a visitor.

Each of the different habitats making up the area was surveyed. The weather conditions were probably the least favourable for observing birds so no real attempt was made to count all the birds, although a record of numbers seen in the main area is included. A total of 31 different species was observed in the area and the adjacent Department of Conservation Crown Land beside Hooper's Inlet. The Allan's Beach Wetland is adjacent to Hooper's Inlet, which is an important feeding and roosting area for many waders including **Bar-tailed Godwits** (over 700 have been counted), **Banded Dotterel**, **Royal Spoonbills**, **Pied Stilts**, **Pied Oystercatchers** and **Caspian**

**Terns.** The reed area of the wetland would be suitable habitat for **Fernbird**, but none were seen.

In habitat made up of sedges, reeds and grazed wetland areas, and including a small area of manuka, kanuka and coprosma scrub (several **Blackbird**, **Song Thrush**, **Redpoll** and other nests were also found in this area), the total number of species seen was 17

<b>White-faced Heron</b>	2	<b>Welcome Swallow</b>	8
<b>Paradise Shelduck</b>	1	<b>Blackbird</b>	1
<b>Mallard</b>	5	<b>Song Thrush</b>	1
<b>Harrier Hawk</b>	3	<b>Yellowhammer</b>	6
<b>Pukeko</b>	2	<b>Goldfinch</b>	3
<b>Pied Stilt</b>	2	<b>Redpoll</b>	8
<b>Spur-winged Plover</b>	3	<b>Starling</b>	100+
<b>Kingfisher</b>	1	<b>Bellbird</b>	1
<b>Skylark</b>	10		

In habitat made up mainly of rolling dunes and hollows with areas of flax, the total number of species seen was 13:

<b>Harrier Hawk</b>	<b>Chaffinch</b>
<b>Skylark</b>	<b>Greenfinch</b>
<b>Blackbird</b>	<b>Goldfinch</b>
<b>Song Thrush</b>	<b>Redpoll</b>
<b>Hedge Sparrow</b>	<b>Starling</b>
<b>Silvereye</b>	<b>Magpie</b>
<b>Yellowhammer</b>	

In neighbouring Department of Conservation land; it would be expected that birds observed here would also use the Allan's Beach Wetland. The total number of species seen was 16:

<b>White-faced Heron</b>	<b>Banded Dotterel</b>
<b>Royal Spoonbill</b>	<b>Spur-winged Plover</b>
<b>Paradise Shelduck</b>	<b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>
<b>Mallard</b>	<b>Black-backed Gull</b>
<b>Grey Teal</b>	<b>Red-billed Gull</b>
<b>Pied Stilt</b>	<b>Skylark</b>
<b>Pied Oystercatcher</b>	<b>Welcome Swallow</b>
<b>Black Oystercatcher</b>	<b>Starling</b>

### **Surveys of Hawkesbury Lagoon**

If you were looking to see the following birds – **Little Black Shag**, **White Heron**, **Little Egret**, **Australian Shelduck**, **NZ Scaup**, **Australasian Coot** and **Marsh**

**Sandpiper** – where would you think of looking?

Well this is the list of rarities that Peter Schweigman sent to me after I agreed to coordinate a survey of Hawkesbury lagoon in Waikouaiti. These birds had been seen at the Lagoon between 1985 and 2002. Peter's list reminded me of the range of birds that had been seen on Hawkesbury. I first started formally keeping records from Hawkesbury Lagoon in 1989 and continued until 1994. I recorded my observations at three month intervals. I am looking forward to revisiting the area to establish what changes there have been since I last regularly recorded my sighting in such a systematic way.



The Spring Survey took place last Sunday, 14 October. and the Summer Survey will be in January so please look out for this. I am sure it will also be interesting, the walking is easy and the experience enjoyable.

Jim Wilson

### **Godwit Band-spotting**

Our own Otago Godwit band-spotting Group will be in full action this summer, led by Peter Schweigman. A date with a suitable very high tide mid-afternoon has been set for the first OSNZ field trip, i.e., Saturday, 24 November at Hooper's Inlet. Last year over 75% of the godwits that were banded at Warrington were seen again the following season, which is a remarkable recovery rate thanks to the diligence and perseverance of Peter and others. It will be very exciting to spot our own birds returning for a second time after their trip to Alaska and back.

### **Summer Harbour Survey and Godwit Census**

This count, coming up Sunday 18 November, is a special wader count and so as many members as are able to help would be greatly appreciated. As usual we will count all the waders in the Harbour and Aramoana, Hoopers and Papanui estuaries. This count has been done every June and November for over 20 years, so we have an invaluable record of the number of birds present. The coordinator for these counts is Ken Gager, phone 487 6670.

In addition, this year we have been asked to do a census of all the **Bar-tailed Godwits** (and any **Knots, Curlews**, etc) in the whole of the Otago Region. We would like to make a special effort to count godwits also at Purakanui, Blueskin Bay/Warrington and Karitane as well as in the Catlins area at the same time as our harbour count. Please let Mary Thompson (phone 464 0787; email [mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz](mailto:mary.thompson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz)) know if you can help in these areas.

The subsequent plan is to repeat the **Bar-tailed Godwit** census in February 2008 (date to be finalised soon). This will be done over all NZ. The reason for the double count is to identify whether numbers have reached a peak in November, whether there is nationwide movements of birds between November and February, or whether new birds are still arriving over the summer from Australia. The February Census coincides with the Australian Shorebird Census and the wider Asian Waterbird Census and so our data could be added to these counts too. Population monitoring is becoming even more important because of the declining numbers of birds and the loss of habitat on the migration routes; godwit numbers have declined from an estimated 155,000 in the early 1990s to 80,000 now.

Mary Thompson

### **Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)**



According to the *Checklist of the Birds of NZ*, the **Glossy Ibis** (*Plegadis falcinellus*), is a vagrant to NZ, sometimes irrupting in small flocks. This doesn't seem to apply anymore to Otago, not lately anyhow.

We had them turning up, but a long time ago now. The first recorded sighting in Otago came from Peter Child with 3 at the Taieri Lake, in the Maniototo on 17 December 1968. Bob Smith and Dick Sibson followed this up and counted on 17 January 1969, a total of 10. And that number was by far the highest ever recorded in Otago.

We had to wait till the 1980s for the odd sighting: one in August 1984 at Lake Tuakitoto. And another sighting, also at Lake Tuakitoto, was in September 1986, when Rob Soulsby from the Acclimatisation Society reported two. They stayed for about a week. In 1987 one was present near the Contour Channel, at Berwick. It was first seen on 5 May 1987 and last seen on 3 July that year by George and Doreen Grant. A local farmer confirmed that it had been around for about two months. In 1988 there was a brief visit by one at Titri, alongside the Flood-free Highway on 20 August 1988. It had been in view for over half an hour, seen by a few of us. The Acclimatisation Society reported another one, this time in December 1988 and January 1989 at Duffy Lane, Upper Taieri.

The numbers increased from now on. Three turned up at Berwick in between 11 and 17 March 1989, one nicely posing for the future illustrator of the *Field Guide*, Derek Onley. This number dropped to two on 2 August 1989. Three months later four were sighted near the Berwick end of Lake Waipori on 16 November 1989 and still present on 17 January 1990. The last sighting in the Berwick/Waipori area was on 3 June

1991, when three were spotted by George and Doreen Grant, last seen on 20 June 1991.

On 22 February 1992 Tony Hocken *et al.* counted four at All Day Bay, which were last seen on 11 March 1992. The latest one seen in Otago, by Hamish Spencer and Abby Smith, was at All Day Bay on 6 February 1993. The *Checklist* also states in 1990: "...now expected almost annually, wandering from one wetland to another...". That might be correct for part of New Zealand, but definitely not for Otago over the last 14 years.

Peter Schweigman

### **Assistants for Godwit Banding**

The Wader Study Team will be in Southland (Awarua Bay) 23-27 October 2007, 9-14 January 2008, and 19-24 February 2008. There are also banding trips scheduled for Parengarenga and Golden Bay. Otago OSNZ members who would like to be involved in band-spotting of marked godwits and adding more marked birds at these sites over the summer should contact Rob Schuckard (email [rschckrd@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rschckrd@xtra.co.nz))

### **Proposed Weekend Fieldtrip to Glenorchy, 21 - 24 March, 2008**

This is the Easter weekend and also coincides with Otago Anniversary. The plan is to stay at Glenorchy and explore the surrounding areas; it may be possible to organise a trip up the Rees or Dart. At this stage we need to have a good idea of how many are likely to come so that suitable accommodation can be arranged well ahead. Please let Louise Foord (☎ 467 5041) know as soon as possible if you are at all interested.

### **Ornithological Snippets**

Sue Galloway and Mary Thompson saw 6 **Scaup** in the overflow channel along SH1 at Henley/Berwick crossing on 8 October 2007 at 6.00 p.m.



A Shining Cuckoo was heard at Orokonui on 7 October 2007 by the Bird Survey Counters; another was heard by Lesley Gowans at Saddle Hill the following day; a third was heard at Tawanui, Catlins River, on 10 October 2007 by Lesley's tramping group.

## Programme 2007

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, 24 October                         | Indoor Meeting  | Speaker: Phil Seddon  |
|   | Topic: Loving Them to Death: How Tourism is Putting Pressure on our Penguins                                  |                       |
| Saturday, 27 October to<br>Sunday, 28 October | Dart River Survey   |                       |
|   | Contact: Barry Lawrence, ☎ (03) 442 5864 (day) & (03) 442 9275 (evening)                                      |                       |
| Sunday, 18 November                           | Summer Wader Count: High tide at Aramoana 10.36 a.m.; Backup date Sunday 2 December (high tide at 11.26 a.m.) |                       |
|   | Contact Ken Gager, ☎ 487 6670   |                       |
| Saturday, 24 November                         | Godwit Band Spotting, Hooper's Inlet. 1.00pm onwards  |                       |
|   | Contact Peter Schweigman, ☎ 455 2790  |                       |
| Wednesday, 28 November                        | Indoor Meeting  | Speaker: Ian Jamieson |
|   | Topic: TBA  |                       |

## Proposed Dates for 2008

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|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Saturday, 26 January | Summer Survey of Hawkesbury Lagoon   |
|                      | Contact Jim Wilson, ☎ 476 3235       |
| Saturday 23 February | Otago Godwit Census                  |
|                      | Contact Peter Schweigman, ☎ 455 2790 |
| Weekend, 21-24 March | Glenorchy Weekend Fieldtrip.         |
|                      | Contact Louise Foord, ☎ 467 5041     |
| Sunday, 13 April     | Autumn Survey of Hawkesbury Lagoon   |
| Saturday 28 June     | Winter Survey of Hawkesbury Lagoon   |

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