

# BIG BIRD CUP.

2008 CHALLENGE QUIZ.

QUIZMASTER: CHRIS DAY,  
EDUCATIONAL OFFICER, MT. BRUCE / PUKAHA WILDLIFE  
CENTRE..

THE SCORE IS CURRENTLY 2 ALL.

TEAM ONE.....Greytown and environs  
TEAM TWO.....Masterton and environs.

Rally your team for this important event, which combines learning with lots of fun. The more members in your team the better, as every member has his or her special bit of knowledge that could make your team a winner.

VENUE : Tenick and Janet Dennison's, 127 Renall St.  
Masterton.

TIME : 7 30 p.m. Thursday, August 14

SHARED TRANSPORT: ph. 06 304 9948

Ornithological Society of New Zealand  
Wairarapa Branch.



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## AUGUST 2008 NEWSLETTER.

### WINTER HANDOUTS.

The curtains are drawn back.....  
they're all ther waiting for breakfast  
on the lawn or perched in the copper beech  
to which they can retreat if there is trouble.  
Sparrows mostly, though the Chaffinch and his lady are regulars.....  
his pink waistcoat and distinctive white wing feather  
putting to shame the dowdy plumage of the Sparrows.

Expect to see other "pretty" birds if there's fruit amongst the breadcrumbs  
Feisty little Silvereyes. Finches green and gold  
even a Tui once made a landing, grabbed some apple and was gone.

Next, the "bully-boys" move in.  
Where do all the Blackbirds come from? Sleek, with yellow bill, pompous and pushy,  
swaggering and lungeing at the small fry.  
None of this deters the little chaps.....  
They've seen it all before.

handsome Thrushes drop in but mainly extract worms from the sodden lawn.  
Lastly, the word gets around to the Starlings who "stiff-leg" on the periphery...  
wary of the Blackbirds, but not missing an opportunity.  
Their saving grace ? Flutey whistles and melodious trills from the neighbour's roof,  
under a pallid sun.  
I'll enjoy this "cupboard-love" while I may as in spring plentiful Nature will provide....  
making me redundant. ( kindly submitted by Eileen van Trig. )

## REPORT ON THE JULY 10TH MEETING.

Narena Olliver gave an informative presentation on **Pukeko** which also prompted some excellent discussion.

The Pukeko, with other swamp hens has a long history, being mentioned in the writings of Pliny the Elder. Swamp hens are found in a number of areas around the world, but our own Pukeko is thought to have arrived here, from Australia less than 1000 years ago.

They are both herbivorous and carnivorous, a dietary habit that often brings them into disrepute with humans.

Their breeding is in communal groups. A stable group, usually of kin, holds a permanent territory, and is polygamous. There are 2 to 7 breeding males and 1 to 2 breeding females. They are assisted by 1 to 7 non-breeding birds that are offspring from previous matings.

Unstable groups are usually non-kin, and promiscuous, with much aggression, and many male members, and are largely unsuccessful breeding.

Within a stable group mate-sharing is total and multiple paternity prevails.

Dominant females lay in a common nest, and all group members care for the young. Habitat saturation and a shortage of prime breeding territories appear to be responsible for this breeding strategy.

### FIELD TRIPS

The July field trip was cancelled due to lack of members available to go. The August trip will be on Sunday August 18.

Details will be announced at the Big Bird Quiz night, or by contacting Barbara Lovatt.

### SCIENCE FAIR. August 27-29. Masterton.

This is a national annual event run by The Royal Society for Primary and Secondary school entrants. Participating schools have preliminaries, prior to the regional science fair, and the overall winners then go on to national level. In the early years of our OSNZ region, we sponsored a special Bird section. We are now reviving this involvement. We are offering.....

Junior Prize: Handbook of the Field Guide to NZ Birds, by Barrie Heather and Hugh Robertson.

Senior Prize: Field Guide to the Birds of NZ, by Heather & Robertson.

Supplementary Prizes : Where to Find Birds in the Wairarapa. 3 for Juniors & 3 for Seniors, depending on number of entries.

We offered a comprehensive list of study aspects of Birding for the entrants.

Our judges will be Tenick Dennison and Narena Olliver.

The above prizes will be awarded not of right, but provided a sufficient standard has been attained. The Fair will be open to the public Aug.29, 9 a.m to 2.30 p.m.

We would also hope to offer on-going mentoring and encouragement, to put interested students on our mailing list, and invite them to field trips and meetings.



The pic above was kindly submitted by Colin Hicks, Main St Greytown. This banded kaka appeared in his garden on Monday, June 16 from 9. 30 a.m. to 11. 30 a.m. Colin states that the bands ( both legs ) were of a simple aluminium type ( no colours visible). Colin contacted Mt. Bruce / Pukaha who stated.....

Hello Colin

It must have been exciting for you to spot this bird in your back yard!

Thank you for taking the time to let us know about him. We cant confirm that he's from Pukaha but its definitely possible. They're certainly well capable of travelling that distance and more.

Its also quite possible that the bird is from Karori Sanctuary or even Kapiti Island. He appears to be in good health (actually, the lighter colouring around the eyes indicate that its more likely to be female or possibly a juvenile).

We'd certainly welcome any information you're able to get from the bands if he visits you again. They tend to sit on them though, so reading bands can be a bit difficult!

Colin further stated " The kaka was very active (and therefore difficult to photograph) on branches about 30-40 feet above ground. We tried to offer him/her food but could not coax the bird nearer to the lens."

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE.....Thank you Colin for your great pic and the attached preamble. We are most grateful to you for sharing this experience with us.

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## PELARGIC BIRDING WITH " OCEAN WINGS" KAIKOURA

Narina Olliver and Barbara Lovatt shared this memorable experience prior to the OSNZ Conference in Kaikoura, June, 2008. The following account is compiled by Narena, with pics supplied by Barbara..

The day dawned fine and calm. The experts say that pelagic birding is better during rough weather but I was happy enough with the calm conditions. The trip with Ocean Wings was just magical. It's a long time since I have had such a great birding experience.

Travelling south and parallel to the coast for some time, we stopped eventually at some point known only to our captain but somewhere near the trench I would hazard. Cape pigeons were the first to arrive to take advantage of the block of liver chum and then the albatross started to fly in. It was an opportunity to improve my identification of birds on the wing. However, I have to say, they are the more easily identified alongside the boat.



The distinctive yellow band along the bill identified Buller's albatross, the southern variety it seems. Shy (white-capped), black-browed and a solitary Salvin's also arrived and then the wanderers began to fly in. They are the true monarchs of the ocean and soon shouldered all other birds away from the chum.



The captain pointed out the darkening purple of the "heels" of the birds which indicated breeding colour. It was also a surprise to learn that only females are usually found off the coast. Apparently the males, which are somewhat larger, do not compete with the females for food, the males staying well south.

Real gentlemen!

We moved on with some of the birds following us, the cape pigeons flying right up close to the side of the boat



while a wanderer, magnificent in flight, moved back and forth across our wake. We stopped suddenly, the captain having noticed a Royal albatross just sitting on the water. We continued on to join one of the fishing boats which already had an entourage of sea birds as they pulled in their net. Here we saw giant petrel, the darker northern variety, hutton's shearwater, black backed, black-billed and red-billed gulls as well as wanderers, black-browed and shy albatross. We then headed along the shore line to Barney's rock where we picked up little blue penguins, white-faced heron, pied and spotted shag, and gannets as well as NZ fur seals and dusky dolphins. We failed to see any Hector's dolphins.

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#### REGIONAL RECORDER'S REPORT FOR JULY 08

Falcons were seen at Henley lake and near Greytown, Greenfinches were reported Masterton, and in Greytown.

Morepork are regularly heard at Te Ore Ore and have been heard in Masterton.. An interesting observation was that Tui seem to be more melodious since Bellbird have become more numerous, another was of a Spur Winged Plover surfing on a Gale force wind. At Western Lake, Pied Stilt, Oystercatcher and Spur winged Plover were seen. The White Heron seen at the Oparua Floodway has not been sighted again. .