

Ornithological Society of New Zealand
Wairarapa Branch.



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JANUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER.

WILD RIVER WEEKEND 29 NOV. 09. Report compiled by Jenny Doring, who represented OSNZ at the event Edited by Barbara Lovatt.

On Sunday afternoon, at Mt. Holdsworth. Jenny shared a display table with DOC. Publicity items, "Where to Find Birds in the Wairarapa", OSNZ membership forms, and back and present copies of "Southern Bird" were available, and taken up mainly by local visitors. On the Loop Track, a Thrush, a Grey Warbler and a Kingfisher were the only birds noted. About 150 people were present at the event, and most were at Mt Holdsworth without prior knowledge of the event, so it was an added bonus for them. 50 people were able to participate in white-water rafting on the river.

END OF YEAR DINNER at GLENYS HANSEN'S HOME at MATAHIWI.

Report compiled by Jenny Doring.

17 members enjoyed the feasting and Glenys's gracious hospitality. Some took a walk around the lake, and later asked about a lonely looking male Australian Shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*) that was haunting the area in front of the decks. Apparently, while on one of the ponds, its mate had been predated by a Harrier which held the Shelduck's head under water until it drowned. An interesting observation.

Glenys's home was an ornithologist's dream. During dinner, a flock of Canada Geese took flight and formed the familiar V-formation. There were several different types of birds coming and going from the ponds. A pair of Pied Stilts arrived, and Welcome Swallows swooped above the diners on the deck. Thank you, Glenys for offering your lovely place as a Xmas Dinner venue.

WAIRARAPA REGIONAL AGM Thursday FEB.11 Details in next Newsletter.
Your committee will meet this month to plan the summer programme.

BUSHY PARK NOV.7-8, 2009. Barbara Lovatt reports on a weekend visit .

Originally, Bushy Park and the homestead were gifted to Forest & Bird. Its 81 hectares of remnant forest is now a mainland island created and run by a Trust. The gracious restored Edwardian villa provides accommodation, along with an adjacent bunkhouse for school parties.

There is prolific birdlife, including very successfully introduced Saddlebacks / Tieke. What a joy to be woken in the morning by the strident dueting of Saddlebacks whose chosen territory was at the forest edge, only a few metres across the lawn from our bedroom windows. Indeed, Saddlebacks were heard throughout the forest in their chosen territories. On a walk around the wetland area, we were halted by the nearby sound of a Saddleback. Until then, we had only heard but not sighted them. One alighted on a low branch and busily preened itself, occasionally calling to another saddleback further away. Back would come a reply. After 10 minutes or so, a second Saddleback flew in and alighted beside the one being observed. They touched beaks, but it was not clear whether this was ritual feeding, as it happened so suddenly. From their dueting contact from afar, and their greeting behaviour, they were perhaps in courtship mode. They both continued to preen, before, later flying off together. To be able to observe them at such close quarters was a delight and a privilege.

Another sighting highlight, was of a Bellbird busily belling and chortlingly chiming as it gorged on the nectar of flax flowers, its forehead stained orange with pollen. We sat and watched it, from only about 3m away.

The North Island Robin has been successfully introduced, and it, too, is regularly sighted. In fact, it sights you rather than you sighting it, and the more the forest floor is disturbed the closer the Robin comes. However, their colouring is good camouflage especially in the darker parts of the forest.

Kereru and Tuis are abundant not only in the forest but throughout the extensive and beautiful homestead gardens.

There is a Kiwi nursery which is not open to the public. The kiwi are later returned to their place of origin. Unfortunately, although they are present at Bushy Park, they cannot be heard calling, as they do not begin to call until they are about 3yrs old.

Our personal Bird list: Saddleback, North Island Robin, Tui, Kereru, Harrier, Spur-winged Plovers, Pukeko, Paradise Shelduck, Kingfisher, Blackbird, Starling, Thrush, Sparrows, and Grey Warbler (heard) Shining Cuckoo (h) Californian Quail (h).

NEWS OF GLEN & NATALIE HOLLAND from NAMIBIA.

An edited version of their November email.

The biggest problem, for our dog, here are snakes so we have to keep our doors closed at all times. We found a massive dead puff adder on the road and tried to

scare her with it. A lesser problem is with leopards but our dogs stay inside at night. We are all adjusting to the extreme dry and heat - not too bad a temperature so far 33 degrees average, but December and January we head for the 40 degree mark!! In the evenings it cools down a lot and is really pleasant to sit outside (with suprisingly very few mossies) - we are very much in the bush and although we are not in a game reserve, there are plenty of game in our 'back yard'. - Lots of warthog, kudu, jackal, baboons (but baboons do not come near the house), ground squirrels (Jackie looks at them from the lounge window and has turned into a real Jack Russell hunter but fortunately can't catch them), grey duiker, steen buck, and lots of birds for Glen!!!!

We are on a farm called Cheetah View and that is 24kms from the Main Centre at Cheetah Conservation Fund. There are 2 houses on the farm - the other one is for international tertiary students and volunteers (ranging from 18 years to middle/old age) and they are due to arrive in the next week for the next international course - coming from all over Africa and the world. There is also an African family on the farm looking after the cows etc. - an elderly couple and 2 adult sons and they are very pleasant. Where we are staying at the moment is only temporary as they are looking for a site closer to the centre to build a house for us. We would still like to be in the bush though as this is how Glen and I lived 25 odd years ago!

The sunsets and sunrises here are phenomenal and the other night when the moon came up it was a yellow/orange and just looked great through the trees. The other night when travelling from the Centre to the farm we encountered a porcupine, aardvark, aardwolf which is more unusual so I am going to keep a record of what we see for the ecologists here. On Sunday we went out Black Rhino tracking and Glen used the GPS and I helped Rob (ecologist) with recording which was a lot of fun. There are 30 permanent staff and then another 15 farm workers and lots of volunteers from all over the world coming and going all the time so even though we are in the middle of nowhere there is no shortage of meeting people. The cheetah here are so lovely. Earlier today a whole lot of us went out to take the ambassador cheetah, Cheebaka for his walk in 'the wild'. We took a few photos and as soon as we get a cord connection for my camera we will send you a few photos.

It really is good to be here but we certainly miss family and friends but technology makes the world very small and we will see some of you next year and Nikki and Kyle will be visiting us in July next year. It is quite funny how we have slotted in as we did 25 plus years ago when we first lived in 'the bush'. We are so enjoying the different cultures here in Namibia!

Editor's note. Glen and Natalie will be leading a tour to Namibia, Botswana & S. Africa. May 21 to June 4, 2010. Contact your R.R. for a copy of the tour flyer, and itinerary.

Geoff and Jenny Doring and Glenys Hansen were on Glen's and Natalie's tour in 2009, and they will be happy to fill you in with their glowing account of the tour.

PROFILES OF SOME OF OUR MEMBERS.

In this year's Newsletters, your editor will be including profiles of some of our long-standing members. What makes a birder? It is hoped that you will enjoy these individual stories, and we thank those who will share their story with us. A benefactor has very kindly offered his professional services, free of charge, to interview the members, and record their stories.

Previously, your editor recorded, in the Newsletter, profiles of our life-member, Helen Cook, and also of Betty Watt, some time prior to her death. Here is the the first of our present series.

EGG SHELLS and BIRD OBSERVATION with TENICK DENNISON.

Tenick Dennison recalls that he began keeping his bird diaries from around the age of eight or nine years. It all began at the family home on a North Otago farm near the Oamaru coast.

He says proudly, "The diaries are still in my possession. One early entry contains observations on a sparrow with drawings, notes on the bird's behaviour, with a description."

As a child Tenick collected sparrow, thrush, blackbird, skylark, and greenfinch eggs for the local council. These birds were considered pests, especially by the farmers. Tenick recalls that he and his brother collected around 900 eggs in a season and spent hours blowing them. Then came a trip to the local council where eggs were counted, paid for and then deliberately stepped upon by a local official. With a good job done Tenick and his brother collected their wages and began thinking of what Xmas presents to buy.

The love of birds intensified over the years. Tenick studied medicine and practised in the Wairarapa for many years. In the early 1990s he got a job as a ship's doctor on the "Pacific Rose" a ship chartered by Southern Heritage Expeditions for trips to the Antarctic for ornithologists. Unfortunately the ship broke down south of the Auckland Islands three days before Christmas. But, this trip was still memorable despite not making it to the intended destination. At the Snares Islands Tenick saw hundreds of thousands of sooty shearwaters circling the islands in the early evening waiting to go into their nest burrows. It is estimated that there are about seven million pairs of sooty shearwaters on the Snares Islands.

As an adult Tenick resided in the U.K. for several years. On other overseas trips he saw flamingos in Kenya and visited the Galapagos Islands to observe first-hand what Darwin had recorded many years previously.

As Tenick's oldest son became a teenager they both got passionate about bird photography. One highlight was exhibiting at the Wanganui Salon. Another achievement was becoming a second place getter at the Photographic Society in Auckland for a photographic slide of a freshly hatched pied stilt foraging for food in

the water just after hatching.

The farm that Tenick lived on as a child is still in family hands. When he returns to North Otago he sees numerous shifts in bird patterns. Some of it rather sad.

“ I’ve only seen one bittern in the last five years..... there used to be more when the land around the family home had ponds and was less developed than it is now.”

He reminisces on some of the birds that have come to N.Z. in his lifetime. In 1942 the spur-winged plover first became common in Southland. Then in the 60s and 70s the numbers seemed to explode. The black-fronted dotterel was first sighted in the Wairarapa during the 1960s and has been adopted as our Wairarapa Region’s icon, although it is now seen in many other parts of the country. Royal spoonbills are also starting to appear locally, although they have probably been in N.Z. from around pre-European times. White-faced Herons have also been seen in increasing numbers in the district. Pipits are decreasing . Perhaps says Tenick it’s because there are fewer gravel roads for them to run about on and the pastures have become “tamed”.

Working around Henley Lake complex in Masterton with pupils from the nearby school gives Tenick a huge satisfaction as he notes that it encourages young people to take an interest in observing and caring for bird-life. The complex has about 107 acres of parklands and around 26 acres of major lake area. There are now 55 different bird species on the “birds seen” checklist as they all make a life on or near the complex.

The school on the edge of the lake has around 450 pupils. The Headmaster is keen to give every pupil an opportunity to spend up to a week per year in or around the lake environment looking and enjoying bird-life, the water, the fish and the waterfowl. To that end, he is now working on a plan to make this happen.

Tenick really enjoys his work with the children at the school.

“It’s one of my dreams to use this Henley Lake complex as a teaching resource, because it is one of the best outdoor classrooms in the whole southern North Island. It’s got a major river, the Ruamahanga, and a minor river, the Waipoua. It’s got a major lake and two small ponds, it’s got streams, bushlands..... we have photographs of all the birds. There are 55 of them, and each week we put up a bird-of-the-week photograph on the notice boards with some text around it.”

Editor’s note: Thank you, Tenick for sharing your story, and for your continuing enthusiasm, creativity, and extensive knowledge of birding.

REMINDER: 2010 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE.
See details in Dec. 09 “Southern Bird”.

Your R.R. / Editor wishes you all an excellent birding year ahead.