

OSNZ WAIRARAPA BRANCH

OCTOBER 2006 UPDATE.

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THE GHOST of SIR JOHN HANHAM---unravelling the mysteries of the extinct STEWART ISLAND SNIPE.

Presented by Colin Miskelly, Wellington D.O.C.  
THURSDAY, OCT.12. 7.15 p.m @ 4 Clara Anne Grove,  
Greytown. Note earlier starting time.

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Field Trip to TAUHERENIKAU GORGE via Underhill Rd. Pleasant bush walk, hopefully, with lots of birds.  
SAT. OCT.14. 1 P.M. meet at Farmlands, Main St.  
Greytown. Convenor: Brian Boeson. ph: (06) 304 9074.

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N.B. Please note, on your calender, that the Nov. Field Trip, to Glenys Hansen's " Tidsforddriv ", has been changed from Nov.12 to Sunday, Nov.19.

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Report on the SEPT. MEETING. compiled by Colin Scadden.

Two for the price of one was the story at our September meeting when we had the husband and wife team of Bruce and Rosemary Van der Lee talking to us.

Bruce had studied the Black Billed Magpie in an urban wildlife refuge at a National Wildlife Refuge near Denver. The fact that the area had been a pesticide manufacturing site made the study an important one. Pesticides such as DDT, DDe, and Dieldrin that were still present in the soil some 40 years later led to problems for the Wildlife, particularly the birds. The Black Billed Magpie was quite a colourful species with a long tail and being a scavenger that didn't migrate allowed for contaminants to build up in the body fat. One of the effects was the poor development of the wings another effect was the production of thin

shelled eggs. The refuge contained a number of Prairie Dog towns which had to be moved away from the contaminated area: this was done by sucking them out of their burrows with a "Vacuum cleaner"!

Great Horned Owls were the subject of Rosemary's study at the same site. The Owls were good bio-indicators being at the top of the food chain. One feature of these Owls, which weigh up to 1200 gram and have a wing span of 1.4 meters, was that their eyes were the same size as a human eye. Their ears were offset to help in prey location, they have a barred chest, feathered toes and pointed ear tufts. The claws had two toes pointing forward and two facing backward which enable them to clasp their prey which could be up to twice their own weight. Like the Magpies they suffered from the accumulation of pesticides by producing thin eggs and at times dying from the concentration levels.

A most interesting evening to hear about birds from another country, thank you Bruce and Rosemary.

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## News from Greymouth from our friend, Ailsa Harrison.

"I have plenty of birdlife to keep me occupied around our place. Over the back fence on a grassy road reserve we have a pair of spur-winged plovers nesting. There should be a hatching soon, so we are keeping a good watch through the gaps in the fenceposts. If we pop our heads over the fence the nesting bird becomes upset and gets off the nest.

The weka across the road have their first young of the season though the youngsters have only been heard - not seen. The adults often wander through our yard to see what can be found. We have a pair of Variable and also South Island Pied, oystercatchers that are resident down by the rivermouth nearby, which we look out for when in the area. And as well as the usual urban birdlife we have a wetlands area close by to keep the interest up."

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## Report on the field trip to HIDDEN LAKES. Compiled by our visitor, Enfys Graham.....

On a visit to Wairarapa, from Wellington, I was pleased to be invited to join the Wairarapa Branch members on a field trip to Hidden Lakes.

The lakes were formed during the 1855 earthquake, and are enclosed in a slumped area of land, surrounded by a narrow band of native bush.

On Sunday, Sept. 17, a group of 16 regular and new members drove to Kopuaranga. We set off across farmland, dotted with sheep and new lambs, and curious cattle. We walked up a steep muddy track to the lakes, passing large, old Kowhai trees in full golden bloom. Kowhai, threaded throughout the bush, were alive with TUI. The huge number of Tui, and their incessant chatter, was an agreeable surprise to us all.

Both lakes were visited, although the second lake proved elusive. The search for it resulted in members becoming separated into two groups, which caused a little confusion..... but we all knew where WE were!

Water birds were not abundant, but CANADA GEESE, SHOVELER DUCK, a pair of DABCHICKS, and PARADISE SHELDUCKS were seen.

Passerine birds included TUI, GREY-WARBLER, KINGFISHER, KERERU, WHITE-EYE, FANTAIL, SWAMP HARRIER, MAGPIE, CHAFFINCH, YELLOWHAMMER, EASTERN ROSELLAS, and DUNNOCK.

When we returned to the cars, a SPUR-WINGED PLOVER and chick were seen in the field.

We all really enjoyed the afternoon, the Kowhai, the birds, the exercise and each other's company, and I was especially pleased to be welcomed to the Wairarapa in such a warm and friendly manner.



Taking in the view, and the Tuks regularly swooping across the gap.



A welcome rest, after the climbing and scrambling.....  
Time to take in the beauty of the lakes, and the abundant tui  
population.



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WELCOME to the following NEW BIRDERS, in our Branch.....  
Luke Easton, Kahutara, Kate McWiggins. Sharon Renfro, & Peter Major from  
Greytown, Jeannie Sale & Cielle Stephens from Masterton,  
If you know of any other interested Birders, the Editor will put them on the  
email / snail-mail list, if they submit their name, phone no., postal address, and  
email address.

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"BIRDS of the WAIRARAPA, where to find them."

This excellent pocket-sized reference book was compiled by Tenick Dennison &  
others. It lists 21 locations, and how to get there from S.H.2 It is available for  
sale, at meetings or contact Tenick (06 377 532). \$ 10 per copy, or a special price  
of \$5 to paid-up OSNZ members. ( membership of OSNZ is \$57.50 per annum.) If  
you would like to know more about OSNZ , there is a comprehensive website on  
[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz) .

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The editor, Barbara Lovatt thanks all who have contributed to this UPDATE, and  
her husband, Des, who, every month patiently proof-reads and prints the UPDATE.  
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