

Ornithological Society of New Zealand
Wairarapa Branch.



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SEPTEMBER, 2007. NEWSLETTER.

MONDAY, SEPT.3 invitation from the Wgtn Region, to hear Chris Robertson speak on "*The Atlas of New Zealand Birds: a retrospective*". A look back over 40 years at the evolution of the Atlas of New Zealand Birds. Contact Barbara Lovatt for the details.

THURSDAY SEPT. 13 7.30.pm at 4 Clara Anne Grove, Greytown. Bruce and Rosemary Vander Lee, from Mt, Bruce / Pukaha Wildlife Centre will speak on **ENDANGERED SHOREBIRDS along the MISSOURI RIVER**. i.e the PIPING PLOVER & the INTERIOR LEAST TERN. Their work with birds at Mt. Bruce follows on from their findings with these American birds.

SATURDAY SEPT.15. FIELD TRIP to **MT. BRUCE / PUKAHA WILDLIFE CENTRE**.
\$8 Entrance Fee applies.
Meet at Moore Wilson Car park, Masterton 11 a.m.to arr. at the Centre by 11.30 a.m. for a talk on the Takahe. BYO Lunch or Cafe lunch, followed by a tour of the Centre, culminating in the 3 p.m. feeding of the Eels.
Convenor: Colin Scadden.

THE BIG BIRD CUP has migrated south !

Report on the Quz evening compiled by Colin Scadden.
The Big Bird Quiz proved to be a very close run affair..The range of questions tested the teams' Ornithological knowledge to the limit. Questions that required identifying

birds from fuzzy photographs. Identifying birds from their calls and their plumage. Charades provided plenty of laughs too, Maybe it was the evening but contestants imaginations was sorely tested with not too many right answers on both sides. The Quizmaster had spent quite a considerable amount of time preparing the questions and was amazed that both teams finished up with the same score. The outcome was finally decided by a calculator, with the Southern team(which outnumbered the Northerners) winning the Big Cup by a fraction of one per cent of a mark One thing that the quiz highlighted was that Ornithology is a very wide subject!!!.



THE WINNING TEAM. Dave Sim,Narena Olliver, Geoff Doring,Jack Luttrell,Jenny Doring, Frank Minehan, Brian Boeson, Barbara Lovatt & Quizmaster, Chris Day.

Your editor& R.R. Barbara Lovatt is recently back from a visit to Christchurch and Stewart island, and here is her report.....

Massive storm on Stewart Island. Torrential rain, high winds, and rough sea. First two days birding consisted of watching from the safety and relative comfort of my hotel room. I became familiar with 3 Variable Oyster-catchers, and numerous Black-billed gulls that claimed the foreshore as their own. It was actually quite intriguing watching them over an extended period.



When the weather improved, I went to Ulva Island and had a good hike around. Generally, on Ulva Island and on the main island, I think the birds were still shell-

shocked from the storm. Certainly, on the main island, I did not see /hear the considerable birdlife that I had remembered from our visit about 20 yrs ago. On Ulva I saw Saddleback, Kaka, Bellbird Tui, Kereru, South Island Robin, South Island Tomtit, Pied Fantail and Black Fantail, Parakeets, (but not sufficient time to identify whether they were red or yellow crowned) Weka, and a pair of Variable Oystercatchers on the beach beside the jetty. Apparently, this was their territory, and where they bred each year. I heard a rifleman but just missed seeing it. It was seen by two other people who were also present with me.

While in Christchurch, your editor noted the following newspaper items.
from the **Christchurch Press**.....

The Port Hills Ranger reports " RARE FALCON ON THE COMEBACK TRAIL....Karearea ,our native Falcon has returned to Christchurch, delighting bird-watchers, and alarming pigeon fanciers. The falcon has been seen rarely in the city for more than a century, but, in the last 2 yrs, 3 or 4 birds have taken up residence in the city. One breeding pair is now resident at Bottle Lake, while a couple of other birds have established territory in the Port Hills.
Nationally, the Falcon numbers are 4000 breeding pairs."

Also in the Christchurch Press.....

Dr. Eric Spurr, of the Landcare Research team, released his preliminary findings from the **recent GARDEN BIRDS SURVEY**, in which some of us participated.
" Blackbirds were recorded in 90% of gardens, House Sparrows 83% Silvereyes(Waxeyes) 81% Starlings 54% but other species were in fewer than 50% of gardens."

Newsletter Editor's note.....The " other species " were, mostly our native birds, so it would seem that our gardens need to be planted to attract our natives as well as our introduced birds.

The SOUTHLAND PRESS ran a recent full-page article, including beautiful pictures, about a family of **Crested Grebes on Lake Te Anau**. It was submitted by their chief photographer, Barry Stewart, who had been following the fortunes of this avian family.

Newsletter Editor's note.....It is heartening to know that there are such people out and about, observing, recording and celebrating our natural world., and our birds in particular.

The followiing observation was sent to the Editor, from Jeannie and Terry Sale, of Masterton.

Although my wife Jeannie and I are not members, we enjoy receiving your newsletter - thank you.

I thought you might be interested in something we witnessed today. We have been putting out feed for the birds and we get a large number of silvereyes (Zosterops lateralis) and after feeding they like to rest in the tree in which the feeder is hung. Today I was watching them for a while when I noticed two of them sitting on a

branch leaning very close together, so I called my wife and we watched them for some minutes, and they were actually preening each other very gently on their heads. I have never seen wild birds do that before and we both thought how interesting and lovely it was.

The following is an extract from an email from Ian Armitage, Wellington R.R.(July 20)For the full article contact Barbara Lovatt.

Shore Plover Survey on Wellington Coastlines

Wellington members may already know that several shore plover released on Mana Island are now regularly travelling to the Titahi Bay - Green Point coastline, west of Porirua. Assuming that movement of some of the birds will continue and that plover may yet move further afield, I thought that it would be useful if Wellington OSNZ members could help with shoreline monitoring of these fascinating birds when out walking.

Editor's note.....

This is an interesting prospect. It is a long shot that these wee birds might migrate into our area, but they are feisty little birds, and fly where they want to fly.

LAUNCH OF THE ATLAS OF BIRD DISTRIBUTION IN NZ 1999-2004.

Six of our members attended this gala occasion at Government House, where we enjoyed the company of fellow OSNZers from other regions. Various dignitaries spoke, but the evening belonged to Christopher Robertson, who brought this tome into being. Every financial member will receive a copy , a most generous gesture from our OSNZ to its members.

VISIT OF OUR OSNZ PRESIDENT, PROF. RICHARD HOLDAWAY on Tuesday, Aug. 14.

Not only was this meeting extra-ordinary in that it was additional to our usual monthly fixtures, but it was also extra-ordinary in its content. Prof. Holdaway briefly outlined some of his visions and suggestions for future directions in OSNZ. He then gave a scholarly and enthralling illustrated presentation on some aspects of his work as a palaeobiologist. Those of us who had read "The Lost World of the Moa " (2005) which the Professor co-wrote with Trevor Worthy had our interest in this subject rekindled. All present at the meeting felt privileged to be in the presence of such an outstanding scholar. We are privileged, indeed, to have Prof. Richard Holdaway as President of OSNZ.