

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)  
**Wellington Region Newsletter**

**August 2010**

[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz) and [www.notornis.org.nz](http://www.notornis.org.nz)

## Silvereye now known to fly across Cook Strait

On 21 July 2010 Peter Reese (Wellington) and Mike Bell (Marlborough) posted the following reports on 'Birding-NZ' (slightly edited).

We are aware of several stories that make it look likely that silvereyes cross Cook Strait. David Melville has reported flocks flying off the end of Farewell Spit and Arnie Wright recalls seeing flocks coming and going from 'The Brothers' Islands when stationed there as a lighthouse keeper. Further north at Foxton Beach a flock of silvereyes were once seen by beach patrollers to arrive from offshore and one bird was so worn out that it landed on a persons head!

The problem with these sightings is that we could never confirm that these birds definitely did cross Cook Strait but thanks to recent banding efforts on both sides of the strait, we now have proof that they do!

**A silvereye banded at Jack Taylor's farm at Ward (Marlborough) in Feb 2007 was last weekend (10 July 2010) recaptured at Wellington Zoo.** A straight-line distance of 81 km separate the two sites.

Although it is not the longest know movement of a silvereye it may be the longest proven sea crossing in recent times and it is the first record (as far as we are aware) of a banded silvereye crossing Cook Strait.

This is an exciting record and with further banding efforts will hopefully be the start of a programme to learn more about the movement of passerines in NZ.

The OSNZ is in the process of forming a new National Passerine Banding Study Group that will bring banders together from across the country to work cooperatively to encourage further discoveries.

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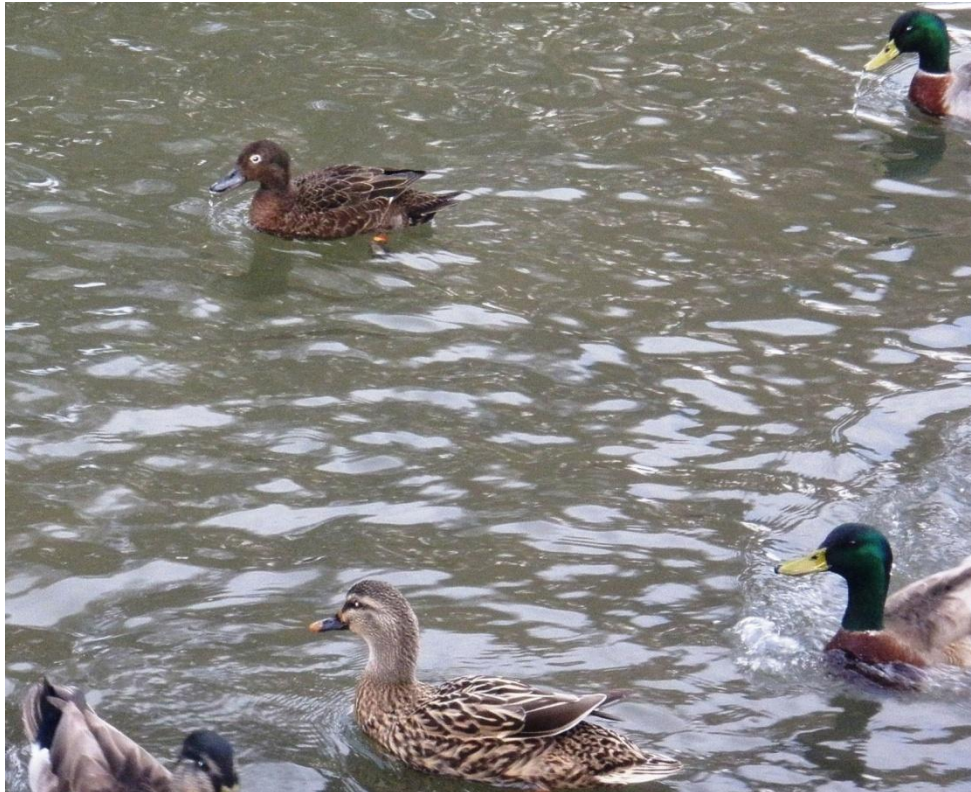
In a later email Peter Reese reports that two birds having unrecognised bands were in fact recaptured but the band numbers on one bird cannot be read clearly.

## Brown teal seen in Lower Hutt

Wendy Baker, an observant walker in Lower Hutt, wrote the following note to the Karori Sanctuary in mid-July.

"I saw a small brown duck with a white ring around it's eye in the lower part of the Waiwhetu Stream this afternoon. Is it possible it is a brown teal? I have a photo, but it's not a wonderful one. I have not seen a duck like it before, and I walk along this particular stretch of river most days. It is definitely banded - red over yellow on the left leg and plain red on the right leg. The bird was seen between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> July."

Raewyn Empson, Conservation Manager at Karori Sanctuary, thinks that it is a brown teal that was banded as a juvenile at the sanctuary in 2004. It prompts the question of where has the brown teal been since 2004. Keep a good look out for a lone brown teal in the Hutt Valley and if seen try to record the band combination and take a photo.



A lone brown teal amongst mallards, Waiwhetu Stream, 19 July 2010 (photo: Wendy Baker)

## Programme from August to February 2011

- 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Wellington and 9<sup>th</sup> August, Paraparaumu:** *“Bellbird genetic population structure and recolonisations: a conservation genetics approach”*. Ms. Shauna Baillie, Ph.D student, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington will discuss some aspects of her genetic studies on bellbirds.
- 7<sup>th</sup> September:** *“Progress in Genetic Studies on Albatrosses”*. Dr. Geoff Chambers, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington. Further details of this talk will be provided in the next newsletter.
- 4<sup>th</sup> October:** *“Critical critters: how urban gardeners can contribute to regional recovery of birds”*. Ms. Lynn Adams, Biodiversity Conservation Manager, Poneke Office, DOC. Lynn will describe a project aimed at encouraging suburban gardeners to establish suitable plants to support native birds, lizards and invertebrates in our gardens.
- 1<sup>st</sup> November:** *“The Salmonella Typhimurium DT160 epidemic – more than just sparrows”*. Dr. Geoff de Lisle, OSNZ member and scientist at Agresearch Ltd. In 2000 *Salmonella* Typhimurium DT160 caused the death of large numbers of house sparrows throughout New Zealand. At the same time, this strain of *Salmonella* was also responsible for causing severe gastroenteritis in humans. This epidemic has a number of interesting features which will be the focus of the talk.
- 6<sup>th</sup> December:** *“Challenges and Successes of Zealandia, Karori Sanctuary”*. Ms. Raewyn Empson, Conservation Manager, Karori Sanctuary Trust. Raewyn will review progress being made in the development of Zealandia, including recent introductions of birds.

**7<sup>th</sup> February 2011: “Member’s Evening”.** An opportunity for members to make short presentations on summer bird watching, bird study and bird conservation activities. Please let the RR know during January if you wish to make a presentation.

Offers to lead or assist with field trips and suggestions and ideas for meetings would be appreciated. What topics would you like to hear about? Please let Ian Armitage know of any suggestions you may have.

### **Field activities:**

1. **“Mist-netting and passerine banding”** at Wellington Zoo and elsewhere in Wellington. Sessions are usually held on Saturdays or on Sunday if the weather is too wet on Saturday. Please contact Peter Reese for details.
2. **“Monitoring of shore plover”** on Mana Is. and at adjacent mainland sites, including Green Point. Regular monitoring of the movement of birds will continue during the year. Contact Barry Dent for details.
3. **“Monitoring of birds at the Pencarrow lakes”.** Periodic weekday field trips to monitor populations of wetland and forest birds on the Pencarrow lakes and in adjacent forest and scrublands will resume in the spring, with emphasis upon species having a ‘threat classification conservation status’. Please contact the RR or Sheelagh Leary for details.
4. **“Wellington Harbour Bird Survey, 2008 – 2010”.** First Sunday of each month (excepting January and June, second Sunday), 1 pm to 3 pm. We welcome offers of assistance from members to participate in the harbour bird survey. Contact the RR for details.
5. **“Kapiti Island Bird Survey”.** Led by Dr. Colin Miskelly. A long-term survey of forest birds on parts of Kapiti Island will continue until 2012. Overnight stays on the island are necessary – always comfortable and with pleasant company. The next survey is planned for mid-October. More volunteers are welcome but remember the work is physically demanding.
6. **“Caspian Tern studies”.** A new series of observations of Caspian tern breeding behaviour at Onoke Spit, southern Wairarapa is proposed later this year. Developed in conjunction with Wairarapa OSNZ members and Dept of Conservation staff it builds on an earlier programme of banding of Caspian terns but these new observations will record colony location and size, fledgling growth and breeding success. More details on timing of visits will be advised later.

## **Notable and Recent Bird Sightings**

**Bellbirds** have been seen and heard at Pukerua Bay by Jim Cox, the first time for at least 18 years, and continue to be seen and heard in Tawa. **Red-crowned parakeets** have been seen for the first time in the Larsen Crescent Bush, in suburban Tawa (reported by Michael Turner, non-member) and were seen at Horokiwi, Hutt Valley.

Hugh Robertson recorded 12 each of **cape petrels** and **giant petrels** close inshore along the south Wellington coast during the July harbour bird survey and three **cape petrels** were also seen on 1<sup>st</sup> August. During the June harbour bird survey Nikki McArthur and Hugh Robertson counted several **black-browed** and **white-capped albatrosses** at the harbour entrance and on the south Wellington coast. At least 3,500 **fluttering shearwaters** were counted by 12 members in most sections, especially near Lowry Bay and at the Interislander ferry terminal. **Little**

**black shags** were counted by 11 members in Wellington and Porirua Harbours, with 80 having been seen in one flock near the Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve.

Several observers in Wellington suburbs have seen **redpolls** during the winter. **Royal spoonbills** continue to be seen regularly at Pauatahanui Inlet, at Hutt River Estuary and near Waikanae. A single **reef heron** has been seen regularly at Pukerua Bay by Jim Cox and up to four **reef herons** are regularly counted during the harbour bird survey, both inside the harbour and on the South coast.

A cold wet winter has led to a large influx of passerines into the suburbs. **Tui** and **silvereyes** are frequent visitors to home gardens, especially where feeders are present and **yellowhammers**, **dunnocks** and **greenfinches** are common too.





39 little black shags on rocks near the main road at Pauatahanui Inlet (photo: Ian Armitage)

## Kapiti Island Five-minute Bird Counts

The winter series of five-minute bird counts was only just squeezed into July after delays of three weeks caused by bad weather. Seven of us visited Kapiti Island on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July during a brief period of calm weather and we enjoyed it very much. Kokako were recorded on the McKenzie and Te Mimi Tracks. Tui and bellbirds were particularly active and vocal, especially at lower altitudes. Always a point interest near the Rangatira Beach landing were 20 N.Z. pigeons grazing grass, clover and low coastal shrubs (see photo below).



## Wellington Harbour Bird Survey

Observations for July in the Wellington Harbour bird survey are summarized below. Thirty-nine species were recorded, a monthly total not exceeded previously in this series of counts, and included 138 little black shags, 169 little shags, four little penguins, 12 cape petrels and three reef herons.

Offers from members to assist in the survey during 2010 are welcome as the work is falling onto the shoulders of a small number of people. Remaining survey dates are 5<sup>th</sup> September, 3<sup>rd</sup> October and 7<sup>th</sup> November.

Earlier this year the RR was approached by Alison Ballance of Radio New Zealand with a view to conducting shoreline interviews with a few members for an "Our Changing World" radio programme, broadcast on the National Programme on Thursday evenings. Interviews made last week with Hugh Robertson, Sheelagh Leary, Reg Cotter and the RR will be broadcast later this year, probably in October. Members will be advised of the actual broadcast date when it is known.

SPECIES RECORDED	July	SPECIES RECORDED	July
BLACKBIRD, European	16	PIPIT, NZ	2
CHAFFINCH	27	PLOVER, Spur-winged	7
DUNNOCK	3	SHAG, Black	25
FANTAIL North Island	3	SHAG, Little	161
GANNET, Australasian	6	SHAG, Little black	138
GOLDFINCH, European	7	SHAG, Spotted	30
GOOSE, Canada	33	SHAG, Pied	18
GOOSE, Feral	4	SHEARWATER, Fluttering	436
GREENFINCH, European	6	SHELDUCK, Paradise	2
GULL, Black-backed	1,357	SILVEREYE	23
GULL, Red-billed	1,060	SPARROW, House	69
HERON, Reef	3	STARLING, Common	194
HERON, White-faced	1	SWALLOW, Welcome	29
KINGFISHER, NZ	3	SWAN, Black	10
MALLARD x Grey Duck	110	TERN, White-fronted	8
OYSTERCATCHER, Variable	161	TERN, Caspian	2
OYSTERCATCHER, South Is. Pied	3	THRUSH, Song	2
PENGUIN, Little	4	TUI	2
PETREL, Giant	12	YELLOWHAMMER	2
PIGEON, Feral / White Dove	51	<b>No. Species Recorded</b>	<b>39</b>

## Bird Banding at Wellington Zoo

Peter Reese has recently summarised the passerine banding fieldwork, as follows:

It is now 10 years since we started banding at this site with the first session being on 8 July 2000. Since 2000 we have banded 6,218 birds of 14 species and have made 1,979 recaptures. Species caught (with recaptures in brackets) are:

Silvereye - 2173 (987).	House Sparrow - 1187 (336)
Greenfinch - 1141 (251)	Chaffinch - 362 (79)
Blackbird - 357 (141), including quite a large number of nestlings.	
Starling - 354 (66)	Fantail - 168 (18)
Dunnock - 118 (56)	Goldfinch - 110 (6)
Yellowhammer - 96 (19)	Grey Warbler - 28 (6)
Song Thrush - 28 (8)	Kingfisher - 10 (1)
Magpie - 2.	

## Penguin Ponderings

Reg Cotter and Ros Batcheler periodically summarise their **little penguin** fieldwork on Matiu/Somes Island with an informative and easy-to-read newsletter. Here is an edited version of the July issue of "Penguin Ponderings". Reg and Graeme recently presented results of some of their work at a Penguin Symposium at Oamaru and photos of them are included here.

As Graeme was on Matiu planting trees with work colleagues, Mike and Reg decided to travel to the island on Monday afternoon. Graeme was to stay the night and return to work next day on the first ferry. The transponder recorder had been giving trouble so Graeme fixed it.

We went to the wharf at night and caught penguins. Next morning before Graeme left we went to the bottom on Cable Bay and decided where a second transponder recorder could be located. We then checked all the nest sites before we caught up with Ros. We then did North Point, finding a new natural nest site with two penguins in residence. After completing the wharf area we returned

for dinner, then walked down to the wharf again at night. Ros found a new site at the top of the sea wall with two penguins at home but we were unable to extract them.

During the night it rained steadily rain that made conditions too unsafe to venture down to the west coast and lighthouse sites. We then completed the rest of the island including the top half of the Lighthouse except the beach area of this section and departed the island on the mid afternoon ferry.

Our thanks go to Matt Sidaway and Richard Brown, DOC rangers on the island for their help. While preparing lunch on Wednesday a flock of three Royal spoonbills flew past the west coast of the island, close to the water and heading south.

### RESULTS

We managed to cover quite a lot of ground in spite of the weather.

Visited 175 nest sites, Captured 65 penguins (plus two in an inaccessible nest),

Found and marked one new nest site, Relocated 1 box,

Caught 25 on the first night (via the loop) at wharf,

Transponded 11 new penguins, Caught five on the second night (2 via the loop) at wharf,

In total, we captured 24 banded little penguins, 10 transponded penguins and 11 dualled penguins.

Twenty penguins captured were neither banded nor transponded. Fourteen single penguins and 24 pairs were found in nests.

Participants: Reg Cotter Team Leader, (OSNZ), Graeme Taylor (DOC), Ros Batcheler (OSNZ) and Mike Rumble (Eastbourne Forest Rangers).



Reg Cotter and Graeme Taylor at 2010 Penguin Symposium in Oamaru and Ros Batcheler taking a break on Matiu/Somes Island





## Monthly Meetings in Wellington City

We meet on the first Monday of each month (January and June excepted) at the Head Office of the Department of Conservation (DOC) ("Conservation House" – Te Whare Atawhai), 18-32 Manners Street, Wellington (located between Manners Mall and Willis Street). Please wait outside the glass entrance doors for a DOC staff member / OSNZ member to admit you through the entrance security system and to the meeting room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Access is available between 7:20 p.m. and 7:45 p.m. Meetings commence at 7:45 p.m. If you are late please telephone (027) 230-8454 and someone will come to the door to let you in.

## Periodic Meetings in Kapiti Coast District

Meetings are held periodically at the Paraparaumu Public Library Meeting Room, 179 Rimu Road, Paraparaumu, commencing at 7.30 pm. Ample car parking is available. Tea and coffee are served before the meeting. If you are late please telephone (027) 230-8454 and someone will come to the door to let you in.

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