



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington Region Newsletter

January 2011

www.osnz.org.nz and www.notornis.org.nz

Monthly Meetings in Wellington City – change of venue

Changed security arrangements at the Head Office of the Department of Conservation (DOC) in Manners Street, Wellington and a reducing number of DOC staff/OSNZ members who can provide door access means that it is not now practicable to use Conservation House as a venue for Wellington Regional meetings. Several alternative venues in Wellington have been canvassed since December and the most suitable, at least for the present, appears to be Turnbull House in Bowen St.

Our Wellington Region meetings will now be held in the Museum Room, Turnbull House, Bowen St, Wellington. The Museum Room is on the top floor of Turnbull House. Access to Turnbull House through the front door will be available from 7 pm and meetings will continue to commence at 7.45 pm unless there is general preference of members to meet earlier. The society will need to pay for room hire so it is suggested that as a matter of regular practice we now make a gold coin donation by each person attending for the use of the Museum Room in Turnbull House. Tea and coffee can be made at Turnbull House if there is preference for supper. Car parking is available on nearby streets (The Terrace and by the Courts).

Since Wellington Region is hosting the national conference/AGM in June this year and there is considerable work associated with this in coming weeks no arrangements for Kapiti Coast meetings will be made for several months.

Programme from February to September 2011

7th February 2011: *“Member’s Evening”*. Short presentations by Wellington members on spring and summer bird watching, bird study and bird conservation activities. Please let the RR know if you wish to make a presentation.

7th March: *“Challenges in Wildlife Conservation (or a related title)”*. Mr. Aalbert Rebergen, Lower North Island Field Officer, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand.

4th April: to be advised.

2nd May: *“Auckland Island merganser - an unraveling tale”*. Dr. Murray Williams, Member of OSNZ Council, former Dept of Conservation scientist and former Associate Professor of Conservation Biology, Victoria University of Wellington. Murray will describe his recent research in Europe on some aspects of the biology of the extinct Auckland Island merganser.

June – no local meeting. The national society conference and AGM is being held in Lower Hutt between 3rd and 6th June.

4th July: *“Bird Monitoring and Conservation on Greater Wellington Regional Council Managed Lands”*. Mr. Nikki McArthur, Conservation Officer, Greater Wellington Regional Council. Nikki will talk about efforts to maintain and improve native bird diversity on lands managed by Greater Wellington Regional Council. He will describe how the council's biodiversity staff measure trends in the abundance and diversity of native birds in Wellington's regional park network and how local OSNZ members might be able to contribute to this ongoing work.

1st August: *“In the footsteps of Edgar Stead”*. Dr. Colin Miskelly. Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrates, Te Papa Tongarewa – National Museum of New Zealand and OSNZ Councillor. Colin will describe his recent biographical studies on the life and accomplishments of Edgar Stead.

September: – Instead of a local meeting a tour of the archived bird collections at Te Papa Tongarewa – National Museum of New Zealand is being arranged on the evenings of 5th, 6th and 8th September. Maximum 30 people (members only), 10 members on each of 5th, 6th and 8th September. A registration list will be circulated in August.

Offers to lead or assist with field trips and suggestions and ideas for meetings would be very much appreciated. It has been a bit of a struggle lately to identify and arrange speakers for monthly meetings. What topics would you like to hear about? This is your society and we welcome wider member involvement in our activities. 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. *“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.

Annual Meeting of Wellington Region – 7 March 2011

The Annual Meeting of the Wellington Region will be held on 7th March 2011. It is to be hoped that we have a good attendance and that members will be prepared to air their views on issues of concern on how the society is being managed locally and what it is achieving. As always, the two elected positions of Regional Representative and Treasurer are up for election. It is important to share the workload of these two positions so nominations for either position from members are welcome. Neither Stephen Sharp (Treasurer) nor I as Regional Representative who have held these positions for several years now have any particular desire to hold to these roles. Change is always useful in any organisation and nominations for both positions are welcomed.

National Conference and Annual General Meeting – Lower Hutt, 3rd to 6th June

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held in Lower Hutt during Queen's Birthday weekend 2011. Meetings of Council and Regional Representatives will take place at the Angus Inn, Waterloo Road. The scientific days will take place at 'The Dowse Art Museum' Conference Centre, Laing's Road, Lower Hutt. Details and Registration Forms are being mailed in the next issue of Southern Bird and are also available on the OSNZ website or by contacting the RR.

3 June 2011 (Friday) – Angus Inn, Waterloo Rd

Council and RR Meetings.

4 June 2011 (Saturday) – The Dowse Conference Centre, Laing's Rd

8 – 9 am Registration
9 am – 5 pm Scientific Day
7 pm Informal dinner
8.30 pm Annual General Meeting.

5 June 2011 (Sunday) – The Dowse Conference Centre, Laing's Rd

8 – 9 am Registration
9 am – 5 pm Scientific Day
7 pm Conference dinner & guest speaker.

6 June 2011 (Monday)

9 am – 4 pm. Three options
Zealandia - Karori Sanctuary
Kapiti Coast, Waikanae and Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve, Porirua
Matiu/Somes Island and Wellington Harbour

Notable and Recent Bird Sightings

Kakariki in Kapiti District – From Larry Paul (15th October 2010). “We have had *kakariki* in our garden for about the last six months. Previously we have seen a pair about once a year, they stay a couple of days, then move on. This time three arrived, and stayed but were reduced to two when one – regrettably – died in a window-strike (it has been saved for Te Papa's collection), but over the last couple of weeks I have seen 3 together again. We see, and/or hear them almost every day. A couple of days ago there were 7 feeding on new leaves in a big beech tree at the top of our drive. We have a number of mature trees on the property, including several big puriri, and we back directly on to a big block of native kohekohe forest on the hill behind. The area around here has several big gardens, and it is likely that they will find plenty of food.”

Mana Island News – from Colin Miskelly (5th January 2011):

“The main reason for visiting the island this afternoon was to band Mana Island's first locally-bred *fluttering shearwater* chick. This

chick is the offspring of a male translocated as a chick from Long Island in 2006 and an unbanded female attracted to the sound system. It should fledge in about 2 weeks.

We also banded two *fairy prion* chicks. The parents of these were translocated as chicks from Stephens Island during 2002-04.

Whiteheads (translocated from Kapiti Island along with *bellbirds* in mid 2010) were very vocal, and the island staff reported that juvenile whiteheads had been seen, and two unbanded bellbirds (age of latter uncertain).

The *shore plover* are having a good season, with seven fledglings banded so far, and a similar number ready for banding. I was surprised to hear that a pair had laid 3 eggs in a nest on Plimmerton Beach (on the mainland nearby), though these failed to hatch”.

Reef Herons nesting on Matiu/Somes Island – from Reg. Cotter (15th December 2010):

During little penguin surveys one live and one dead *reef heron* chick was found in a new nest on Matiu/Somes Is. It first contained

three eggs when first found but upon checking on 2 January there were neither adults or chicks.

Shore plovers nesting at Plimmerton – from Hadley Bond and Colin Miskelly (November to January): A pair of shore plovers attempted nesting at Plimmerton

since November but it is understood that eggs failed to hatch.

Falcons seen in Wellington Region – reported by several members:

Up to three reports are received each month of **falcons** having been seen in and near the Wellington.

Black-fronted dotterels nesting at Peka Peka

Phil Palmer and Jean Luke (Kapiti Coast members) report that a pair of black-fronted dotterels were nesting on an inland site at Pekapeka, near Waikanae. Surprisingly the nest was built on the road edge leading to a house building site! Some protection from passing trucks was provided by the builders and although the eggs are thought to have hatched it is unknown whether young birds fledged from this nest.



Photo: Dr. Phil Palmer

Wellington Harbour Bird Survey

Observations for November 2010, the final month of the two year Wellington Harbour bird survey are summarized below.

Thirty-six species were recorded and included 103 variable oystercatchers, 28 black shags, 43 spotted shags and three reef herons.

The RR wishes to thank all members and others who have contributed to the 2008 – 2010 phase of the harbour bird survey; your efforts and support are much appreciated.

The next task is to gradually analyze the data and in due course publish results for the last 20 years, and conclusions in *Notornis*.

SPECIES RECORDED	November	SPECIES RECORDED	November
BLACKBIRD, European	15	PIPIT, NZ	2
CHAFFINCH	7	PLOVER, Spur-winged	4

SPECIES RECORDED	November	SPECIES RECORDED	November
DOTTEREL, Banded	2	SHAG, Black	23
DUNNOCK	1	SHAG, Little	31
FANTAIL North Island	2	SHAG, Little black	11
GANNET, Australasian	8	SHAG, Spotted	43
GOLDFINCH, European	1	SHAG, Pied	16
GOOSE, Canada	4	SHEARWATER, Fluttering	1
GOOSE, Feral	1	SILVEREYE	5
GREENFINCH, European	1	SPARROW, House	100
GULL, Black-backed	586	STARLING, Common	179
GULL, Red-billed	276	SWALLOW, Welcome	9
HERON, Reef	3	SWAN, Black	6
HERON, White-faced	2	TERN, White-fronted	30
MALLARD x Grey Duck	30	THRUSH, Song	5
OYSTERCATCHER, Variable	103	TUI	4
OYSTERCATCHER, South Is. Pied	3	YELLOWHAMMER	4
PIGEON, Feral / White Dove	55	No. Species Recorded	36

Penguin Ponderings

Reg Cotter, Ros Batcheler and non-members periodically report on their **little penguin** conservation fieldwork and studies being conducted on Mātū/Somes Island with an informative and easy-to-read newsletter. Once again an edited version of the December issue of "Penguin Ponderings" is summarised, with great photos too (see page 6). Contact Reg if you wish to know more about the programme. Their fieldwork is gradually increasing our knowledge about this distinctive small penguin, especially in Wellington Harbour.

Sites Visited:

7-9 December: 184 sites were checked (24 on Mokopuna Island).

14-15 December: 97 sites were checked.

22-23 December: 31 sites were checked

31 December to 2 January: 60 sites were checked.

Little penguins captured or sighted:

7-9 December: 176

14-15 December: 95

22-23 December: 37

31 December to 2 January: 27

New and deleted nest sites: 3 new sites with adults and/or chicks, and 3 sites were deleted.

Evening Captures:

7-9 December: 33 penguins (28 via the Loop and 5 in the Wharf Area or on the sealed road).

14-15 December: 9 penguins (8 via the Loop and 1 in the Wharf Area).

22-23 December: 5 penguins via the Loop)

31 December to 2 January: 1 penguin via the Loop) – came in at 10.45pm!!

Counts for 2010 (incomplete):

556 adult penguins and chicks observed/banded/transponded/web tagged.

57 penguins banded, 57 penguins transponded, 225 penguins web tagged

Chicks:

341 eggs, 269 chicks, 212 chicks banded (543) or web tagged (159)

30 dead chicks at or near nest sites.



Photos: Vince Wanders & Brent Tandy

Reports of Recent Talks

5th July 2010: Melody McLaughlin from the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust spoke to us about the Kiwi Project involving the release, monitoring and management of brown kiwi mainly in the Turere Valley area of the Rimutaka forest Park. The project commenced in 2003; 473 stoat traps were laid over 1,000 hectares in the Turere catchment. Eight captive bred kiwis were released in 2006. The first breeding success occurred in 2007, with three live chicks. Three breeding pairs from these original captive bred kiwis have produced to date a total of 21 eggs, 11 live chicks, and 8 surviving young. Additional kiwi captured on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island were transferred in April 2009. Incubation and crèche facilities are used to support the survival of chicks. The Rimutaka population currently stands at 42 (possibly 44) birds: 27 adults (of which 18 are known breeders), 10 sub-adults, 1 juvenile, and 4 chicks. Thanks to Melody for her very informative talk. (Editors note: in January 2011 the population now exceeds 50 birds).

2nd August 2010: Shauna Baillie from Victoria University of Wellington told us about the genetics of small population sizes and recolonization of New Zealand Bellbird. The largest contemporary extinction of bellbirds occurred from Waikato to Northland during the 1860's. A predator-proof fence was installed at Tawharanui, Lower Northland, in 2005 to support wildlife recovery efforts. After predators were eliminated, recolonization by bellbirds occurred through natural dispersal, probably from Hauturu/Little Barrier Is. Because of the bellbirds' high genetic variation at Tawharanui, no founder effect on the population was detected and no significant recent genetic bottleneck is considered to have occurred. So, "natural" bellbird recolonization can prevent a decrease in genetic diversity. Thanks to Shauna for sharing her study with us.

6th September 2010: Dr. Geoff Chambers of Victoria University of Wellington presented a review of the difficulties involved with albatross taxonomy, and why some albatrosses can be

recognised as species or as subspecies; interbreeding occurs between some different types of albatrosses. The importance of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (or ACAP) was emphasized. Thanks to Geoff for going through his research with us.

4th October 2010: Lynn Adams from the Department of Conservation described ways in which increased biodiversity can be achieved in the urban environment. Nowadays, 86 percent of the New Zealand human population lives in an urban area. Suggestions that people undertake in their own backyards and gardens for improving wildlife conservation include: trapping rats, planting suitable plants so that garden birds have a year-round food supply, letting the grass become rank rather than mowing the lawn to provide a complex habitat, placing large cover objects around the section (such as garden ornaments, pot plants, logs, piles of firewood) for protection for lizards and invertebrates, allowing plantings to drape over the edges of paths, and using companion planting in vegetable gardens to reduce pest insect numbers. Thanks to Lynn for a very interesting presentation.

First-Aid Kits, Telescope and HANZAB for Loan

Our branch has some first-aid kits if members want to use during OSNZ field trips. The telescope belonging to our region is stored by Ian Armitage at home for safe-keeping; it is always available to be borrowed by members. We own five volumes of the “Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds” – Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks; Volume 2: Raptors to Lapwings; Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons; Volume 4: Parrots to Dollarbirds; Volume 7: Passerines (divided into two books); these can be borrowed for a while by any member. Contact the RR if you wish to use of any of these items.

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