

2019 Birds New Zealand Youth Camp

The Marlborough branch held a youth camp for 16 students from the 15th to 20th of April 2019. An interesting group of teenagers with varied birding experience and knowledge arrived from a far north as Tutukaka and south as Dunedin. The weather was perfect for the entire week.

Our first afternoon involved a visit to the Brancott Estate Falcon Trust. It was spectacular seeing these birds up close. Dianne from the trust is a superb advocate for these birds and their recovery/rehabilitation.

We enjoyed a day trip to Blumine Island where we saw Orange fronted parakeet, Saddleback, and Rowi Kiwi. Bill Cash was our main guide here. He has had many years' experience with translocations and conservation work on Blumine. Willie Cook has also been involved in the past on Blumine on projects with Bill. So, it was a privilege to have them showing us around.

Another day trip involved a coastal walk from Marfells Beach to Cape Campbell. Grace and Finn in particular enjoyed collecting beach wrecks. They picked up pieces of Albatross, Blue penguins and seal skulls and spent well over an hour examining them. What a great way for them to learn about the species that interest them. We walked out onto the reef, and also climbed up to the light house and used scopes to watch a raft of shearwaters and albatross.



On the way home we called into Lake Elterwater, and were lucky to see a Hoary Headed Grebe. Jack Taylor was with us for this day. He was the first person to record grebes breeding on Elterwater.

Our half-day excursions included banding passerines and handling Harriers, gull band reading, Wairau Lagoon/Kotuku walk, visits to Taylor Dam and Kaipupu Point Sanctuary. Evenings were filled with guest speakers. Nick Dillon on painting birds, Willie Cook about his work with Caspians and Gannets, Samantha Rowe about e-bird, Tamzin Henderson about bird photography. Dave Barker also shared his knowledge about Lake Elterwater and provided brochures about the lakes ecology and the changes it has had in recent years.



It was great to have some of the local members assist in the camp. Shiree Murray played a huge role in applying for funding. Jan and Dave Roxburgh had perfect timing with a huge pot of soup one evening, Patrick Crowe was excellent in teaching the students about bird handling and banding, along with L3 banders Willie Cook, Jack Taylor and Paul Bell. Thanks to Sue Bell for allowing us to set up nets at her place and for providing a hot morning tea of sausages and bacon sandwiches.

Willie Cook came over from Nelson and stayed with us for the week. Willie has a wonderful ability to communicate with any age group and his enthusiasm, knowledge and humour were appreciated by all of us. Ian Southey joined us from Auckland.

For the organisers here – Bill Cash, Heather Davies, Chris and Shiree Murray and Kristin Ruwhiu, the week was considered a success. We enjoyed the company of everyone. However, the students who stood out to us were Grace Richards – a delightful person to have on camp for her constant enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning new things, Bradley Shields – a quiet and respectful young ornithologist, Finn Davey – totally engrossed in dissecting beach wrecks, Oscar Robinson – has a zest for life and zest for swimming in the sea, Max Cunninghame – noticed for his politeness and eagerness to learn, Hunter Murray – this camp was on his home territory and although has seen and done most of the activities, he was enthusiastic and as always, was absorbing information.

It was rewarding to hear parts of the programme included activities that some had been wanting to experience for a long time.

