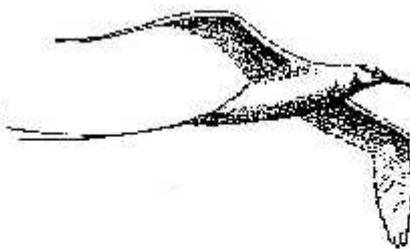


# AMOKURA



*Newsletter  
of the Northland Region  
of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand*

## October 2012

## Amokura 105

**Published in February, July and October of each year**

**MEETINGS** of the Northland Branch of the O.S.N.Z. are held each month on the second Thursday, for the period FEBRUARY to DECEMBER.

TIME: 7-30p.m.

VENUE: Founders Room, Alzheimers Society, 321 Western Hills Drive, Whangarei.

COST: A donation of \$3-00 per person per meeting is requested toward the cost of hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

**ALL WELCOME**

### PROGRAMME TO DECEMBER 2012

OCTOBER		AMOKURA 105	
	11	MEETING – Allan Ford – A visit to the Cape York Peninsula, Q, Australia	
	13	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL	
	16	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL	
NOVEMBER	8	MEETING – Tony Beauchamp – Starling up-date and Kukupa numbers	
	10	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL	
	13	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL	
	17	KAIPARA HARBOUR SURVEY – 1:55p.m. 4.3m	
DECEMBER	1	WHANGAREI HARBOUR SURVEY – 10-30a.m.	3.1m
	5	MEETING – Socialise – details t.b.a.	
	8	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL	
	11	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL	

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:	Janet Snell	438-5737
TREASURER:	Den Carter	435-1650
SECRETARY:	Ruth Crockett	435-0954
REGIONAL RECORDER:	Tony Beauchamp	436-2224
REGIONAL REPORTER:	Claire Burt	435-1166
AMOKURA EDITOR:	Kevin Hayes	437-6470

## RECENT SIGHTINGS

SPECIES	No.	SITE	DATE	OBSERVER
Royal Spoonbills	3	Ngunguru	23-6-12	Hilton Ward
“ “	200-300	Unahi (Paddocks)	2-7-12	Janet Snell
Banded Rail	1	1711 Ngunguru Rd.	3-7-12	Hilton Ward
Royal Spoonbill	3	Waipu Est.	3-7-12	Audrey Williams
N.Z. Dotterel	18-20	Rarawa Beach	3-7-12	Janet Snell
Royal Spoonbill	4	Parua Bay	4-7-12	Alan Willis
Wrybill	32	Kowhai Bay, Houhora	4-7-12	Janet Snell
Banded Dotterel	61	“ “	4-7-12	“ “
Godwit	38	“ “	4-7-12	“ “
N.Z. Dotterel	4	“ “	4-7-12	“ “
Royal Spoonbill	15	Waikaraka	5-7-12	Ron Burgin
Dabchick	2	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	11-7-12	Ruth & David Crockett
Bittern	1	Tapp wetland, Parua Bay	31-7-12	Karen Miller
Royal Spoonbill	2	Near Yacht Club, Onerahi	2-8-12	Ruth & David Miller
Blackbird (nesting)	2	Kamo	9-8-12	Den Carter
Fairy Tern (Feeding)	2	Johnston Point Rd. Waipu	8-9-12	Janet Snell
N.Z. Dotterel	23	On shell bank, Johnston Point	8-9-12	Janet Snell
Dabchick	8	Waro Lake, Hikurangi	9-9-12	Dale & Karen
Dabchick	1	Wairua River nr. Borrow-cut	9-9-12	“ “
Reef Heron	1	In river, Princes St. Ruakaka	9-9-12	Janet Snell.

## THEN THERE WERE THE PELICANS

The most notable happening here has been the arrival, at the beginning of August, of several groups of Australian Pelicans; one at the Kerikeri Basin and two other groups that totalled 14, on the Kaipara Harbour between Aratapu and Ruawai.

The Kaipara groups were sighted by the operator of a sand barge on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> as he returned with a load and he had the forethought to take a video-camera with him so that he could film them on his return. His film is currently with the Dargaville Office of DoC and we will get to see it soon. A further bird was photographed at the Ruakaka River mouth and featured in the “*Northern Advocate*”

Heather and Robertson tell us in the revised edition of “*The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*” (Page 237) *Rare vagrant to New Zealand with four records: Whanganui River (1890), Kaipara Harbour (August 1976), Southland (November 1977), three or four birds in South Canterbury (December 1977-June 1978). When the 1977 birds came, there was a simultaneous influx into New Guinea and some reached as far as Palau.*

## WHAT WE HAVE BEEN UP TO SINCE THE LAST AMOKURA!

In addition to some individual birding, our regular monthly meetings have been fairly well attended during the winter months.

For our **July** meeting Jean Hawken told us of her recent visit to the Sea of Okhotsk on the charter vessel “*Spirit of Enderby*” which normally runs “Heritage Tours” from New Zealand

to the Sub-Antarctic Islands. To enable the predominantly Russian crew to visit family and friends, the vessel travelled north to the port of Korsakov on the Sea of Okhotsk. Jean flew to Seoul in Korea and then on to Vladivostok in Russia to join the tour group on the boat. The map that she showed to us featured the course of the voyage from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk to Oktotsk and then to Magadan, the former Soviet mining settlement where thousands of prisoners died while mining gold and silver. The museum there has a substantial display of the remains of mammoth and other mammals.

From Magadan the vessel travelled to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy. Jean was lucky to get, under very cold and poor lighting conditions, some great photographs of the multitudes of birds that breed there during the brief Arctic summer. We enjoyed shots of ice-floes, Brown Bear, Sea lions/Seals, Sea Otter, Ribbon Seals, Orca and numerous wrecked fishing boats stranded on the rocky coast. Among the birds that I can remember were Whiskered Auklet, Black-legged Kittiwake, Aleutian Tern, Tufted Puffins, Steller's Sea Eagles and Guillemot. It was incredible that birds could roost and nest on some of the near vertical rock faces where they clustered. The on-shore shopping visits were of great interest – particularly the shoes – as were the huge monuments, oil rigs and war museums with displays of tanks, planes and weaponry. The local people presented colourful dancing and cultural displays. Thanks Jean, for a rare glimpse of a “far-away place” and for your informative commentary. (P.S. The Russian tour will be repeated May/June 2013 if you are interested!)

By a rare fluke, our speaker for **August** was Paul Bonetti, Environmental and OSH Manager for the Golden Bay Cement Company, who travelled with Gareth Morgan on his recent voyage to the Antarctic and to the Sub-Antarctic Islands where again, the birdlife was prolific – so many ultra-photogenic penguins, albatross and sea lions etc. Just glad that we did not have “smellivision” to convey the gentle aroma of all of that semi-digested fish!

Paul has some spectacular photographs of the wildlife and birds of the region where, until the impact of mankind is scheduled and long-term recordings are compared, we have no idea of the subtle but continuing long term damage being done to this fragile environment by fishing, tourism and territorial “bases” such as those at Scott and McMurdo. The intention to raise funds toward the cost of eradicating vermin and predators of wildlife from The Snares, Auckland and Macquarie Islands is deserving of success and support. We look forward to hearing more environmental news from Paul next year.

Retaining the “off-shore” focus of this quarter of the year, our **September** speaker was another of our members Julie Hudson, who joined her sister on a tour to the Chatham Islands guided by Ruud Kleinpaste, the “Bug” man. Although there was not a “birding” focus for the tour group, Julie managed to take a good number of photographs to give those of us who have not been there, some idea of the landscape and of the vegetation. She also researched, and told us, something of the history of the Islands from the original inhabitants to the present day. This history included the story of the Brig “*GLORY*” which was wrecked in 1827; an anchor from which vessel remains on Chatham Island today.

The trip to Pitt Island showed another aspect of life in an often rugged environment where residents have to adopt a self-sufficient lifestyle with an emphasis on solar and wind energy. A new luxury lodge is under construction by one of the local people. While there, the group were shown Petrel nesting boxes that are part of the DoC conservation effort.

Back on Chatham, an Apiary has been established and a member of the audience who has lived and fished on the Islands, commented that the introduction of bees has led an explosion of gorse which has appreciated the extra pollination. We learned also, that land which has been cleared for farming, soon re-vegetates when stock are excluded. Our meeting almost turned into a re-union for Chatham-ites as eight or more of those present had been to the Islands. Many thanks Julie for inspiring a lot of memories! We are truly spoilt this quarter, for glimpses of a range of wild-life habitats that vary markedly from our own "patch".

## CATCH-UP TIME

Because our publication dates are spread, we have sometimes, a back-log of items to report. Two of these follow, with my apologies to the authors for the delay.

March 25<sup>th</sup> was a rainy Sunday morning when Prue and I headed to Horeke to hopefully see the unusual grey and white bird. Will it still be in the same paddocks beside the upper Hokianga Harbour? We had travelled only a few kilometres north of Whangarei before the sun came out and it continued to shine all the way to Horeke and home again. There was a fair bit of water lying around in the paddocks after the previous very wet days and as we neared Horeke I said to Prue "Keep your eyes peeled. Following this rain, it's a good time to see Bittern out and about." Sure enough, just east of the Horeke Wharf, we stopped when we saw a Bittern standing amongst rushes just below the road. He was looking at us and we were looking at him – he moved his neck a little, but that was all.

We had our lunch at high tide beside the Horeke Wharf where we counted 75 Red-billed Gulls perched on the roof of a deserted building nearby. Further around the harbour edge, we counted 2 Pied Shags and 9 Spoonbills perched on an old wooden framework beneath some tall Mangroves. As we headed off down the metalled Motukiore Road I slowed right down – not knowing where we might see "THE" bird – or even *if* we would see it.

As we slowly drove past the paddocks where we had seen it before, it flew up from right beside the road and landed only a few feet away in the same paddock. We got the telescopes out and had a good look at him as he slowly walked amongst the long grass. After watching him for quite a while, we headed further along the road hoping to see the other "White Bird", but no such luck as it seems to have moved on. Turning the car around, we drove slowly back, with farm paddocks on one side and tall Mangroves on the other side.

In the deep drain that runs parallel to the road we saw another Bittern that did not seem to be very concerned as we watched him from inside the car. Eventually he wandered off very slowly and ducked under the fence into the paddock while Prue took off, hoping to get a photo. Heading back to Horeke, we drove past an old barge tied up close to the edge of the road, where we counted 320 South Island Pied Oystercatchers waiting for the tide to drop. In the paddocks nearby we counted 55 plus White-faced Heron and 20 Spur-winged Plover before we headed home in the sunshine, having had a good day.

Janet Snell and Prue Cozens

### **THE ZOO VISIT – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

The Department of Conservation organised a visit to the Auckland zoo as a “thank-you” gesture for those who had volunteered to monitor the local Fairy Tern population. Matiu picked us up at 7-45am and headed south to Kaiwaka where we picked up the team from Mangawhai and headed for Auckland zoo. There, we met up with the volunteers from Pakiri, Papakanui Spit and Auckland and the zoo attendant who took us around the newly built aviaries.

Of particular interest were the Red and Yellow-crowned Parakeets, Tui, Pigeon, Bellbirds and Silveryeyes and others flitting around the spacious, bushy aviary. We went through the Kiwi House, but weren't lucky enough to see the Kiwi. We did however, see Weka, Rail and New Zealand Dotterel in another smaller area. The Blue Duck had its own aviary with a swiftly running stream through the middle. This was my first sighting of a Blue Duck so was particularly pleased.

The emphasis within the aviary displays is to educate people about our native birds, and hopefully, make them more aware of the importance and also the vulnerability, of birds – even within their own backyards. So often young N.Z'ers grow up without this appreciation if they are not introduced to native birds. Judging by the numbers of people present on the 29<sup>th</sup> April, it is evident that the recent upgrades of the habitat areas, have made the zoo a favourite place to visit. After a leisurely picnic lunch we saw other areas of interest and were back in Whangarei by 4-30pm at the end of an interesting day.

Janet Snell & Julie Hudson.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT OUR MEETINGS ON THE SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

**PLEASE LET JANET OR PRUE KNOW IF YOU ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH A BEACH PATROL.**