



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER APRIL 2011

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Welcome to this month's newsletter, informative and mostly accurate, (who noted the errors last month?), and welcome to new members, Roseanne F, Rosemary M, Michael N, Jo W, Lotte vG, Jeroen L, and Vincent O, now on my mailing list. Last year Nelson did a great job hosting the OSNZ Conference and AGM, this year proceedings cross over to Wellington, for Queen's Birthday Weekend, with an extra set of scientific papers being presented. Our own local evening meeting will be forfeited for June. Contributions for the May newsletter: please email or phone me by 19 May - Gail 03 5450456 stagefrightmusic@paradise.net.nz

SHOW AND TELL

A dozen or so members supported our April meeting and heard Rob's double presentation on King shags and local bio-diversity marine surveys. Thank you Rob. Next month, on 2 May Sandy Toy is giving a talk 'Tale of Two Kiwis' – experience of translocating NI brown and great spotted kiwi.

UP THE CREEK

Well, up the Cobb Valley, anyway, and alongside the Takaka River between the Power House and bridge, Willie had the good fortune to watch two **blue duck** feeding. The ducks were paddling and puddling around in a shallow area stirring up silt and feeding on prey they had disturbed.

BIRDS SCENE

Time to check paddocks for **cattle egret**. Ken George has spotted one with cattle at Motupipi, and reports continued sightings of falcons and reef herons at Pohara and Tarakohe.

ROUND AND ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH

While out on the sandflats behind the holiday camp at Kaiterteri, Willie, Pauline and Gillian watched a **banded rail** being chased by a **pukeko** annoyed about something. This reminded me of a story from Farewell Spit many years ago. A group of wader watchers were counting the white-faced herons coming into their evening roost at the lighthouse compound when a squawking **weka** ran across in front of us with a stoat hanging onto its tail. An OSNZer dislodged the stoat which escaped with its life intact unfortunately. The weka didn't stop to pass thanks.

Further to the tracking expeditions round Waimea Estuary, Willy sent in this report on BANDED RAIL.

When we did the survey six years ago, it was only the Waimea Estuary itself. This time we broadened the horizon a bit, and have so far done from Delaware Bay to Marahau. Next to do is Golden Bay.

The first part was very pleasing as lots more prints were found, we only went for presence or absence. D/Bay had footprints nearly everywhere, then a big gap to the fertilizer works down Queen St where an adult and juvenile bird were seen, they were not seen there six years ago. Then from Deadman's Is to the Waimea River the closer we got to the river, the more footprints we found, there seemed a healthy population there. Next was Pearl Creek (mouth of) again lots of prints. As that area has been protected by trapping for the last six years, and 180+ predators taken out of that area, it's what you'd expect. O'Connor's creek was next and had lots of prints, we tried at Research Orchard Rd but only found rather large dog footprints, next embayment was the same, no prints, a jump to Stringers Creek, where prints were seen on both sides of the inlet.

Trafalgar Rd also drew a blank, one of us, Julia Melville walked around the peninsula to Higgs Reserve but again except for a very small length of prints (about 400mm in length) there were no prints and what those prints were is open to interpretation.

Next was Mapua, on the Western side of the causeway over to the Holiday park a family of four, two adults and two juveniles, were seen, nothing on the eastern side.

We then did the Moutere Inlet, the only one to show anything was the first on the left as you come off the new by-pass from there to Robinson Rd we found nothing. Next jump was to Otūwhero where good prints were found on both sides of the estuary, lastly we did Marahau, where again two birds were seen as well as prints.

Summing up, we saw 11 birds in total, lots of prints, especially around areas where trapping has and is taking place, this is common sense really, not science. Six years ago from Headingly Lane to Higgs Reserve we found six sets of prints, this year we found more than that in most of the places we looked they were either there in reasonable numbers for the area or were absent.

People involved were: Don Cooper, Till Melis, Gillian Pollock, Pauline Samways, Julia Melville, Sandy and Robin Toy, who all did a great job, the mud on our boots got heavier as the day wore on.

THE ROVING BIRDWATCHER

Birds 'n' Cars

Drivers have been banned from using cell phones while at the wheel, but what about ornithologists peering left and right, left and right. Go slow there, sudden stop here. I've been with some birding drivers that have the potential to get into a great deal of peril. When out driving over estuary causeways an observant passenger helps. Once when driving through to Port Chalmers with a family member, I saw a flash of a large white bird, and she exclaimed, 'there's a sp....., there's a sp....., there's a spatula!' I knew what she meant.

Driving with windows down or partially down can have unexpected moments. On a hot summer's afternoon while driving from Picton to Nelson, just near Havelock I heard a fairly hefty thump on the passenger side behind me. Just as I was pondering over the size of a bird equivalent to the bump, the car filled with feathers, thrush feathers. I stopped to investigate. There in the boot of the stationwagon lay a limp warm body with neck broken and feathers still flying around. I didn't take it home with me.

My thermos and I have become familiar with many roadside rest areas. One day when stopped alongside the coast near Shag Point after leaving Dunedin, I wasn't watching the hand my filled roll was in, just bought from the Waitati bakery, and a red billed gull came swooping down and helped itself to a beakfull. I thought about Alfred Hitchcock's movie '*The Birds*' and finished my lunch off sitting in the car.

Perhaps the occupants of the vehicle that left the carpark at the top of Otira Gorge just as we arrived, fed the keas but I read the notice to say don't feed them and so I didn't, but that didn't stop the badly behaved parrots from clambering all over the landrover with a special interest in the rusting windscreen wipers, so we took the obligatory photograph and carried on our way. Often, when stopped at a road side rest area, sparrows will come to inspect the front car grill and peck off a ready supply of insects. The distribution of sparrows is expansive, but another bird has learnt the same trick. Round Bush on the shores of Lake Ohau some years ago, could support bellbirds, tomtits, robins and brown creepers amongst other passerines. Within a few minutes of arriving with our afternoon tea on one trip there, I turned around and watched a rifleman rifling its meal from the front grill of the Holden. Sadly I haven't seen any native birds in that spot for quite some time now. GDQ

PROGRAMME 2011

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Building", Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). All birders are welcome! Contact: Don Cooper 03-544 8109 or Gail 03-5450456.

Monday 2 May

Sandy Toy
'Tale of Two Kiwis'

Monday 6 June

No local meeting

Monday 4 July

Speaker to be confirmed