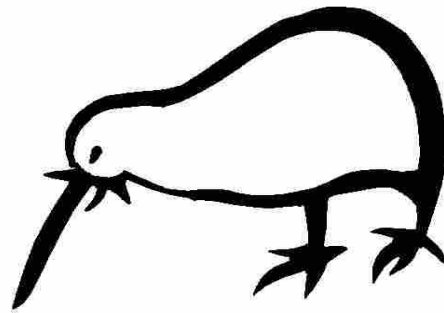


# APTERYX

Issue 10

**December 2004**



## **NEWSLETTER OF THE FAR NORTH REGION OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND**

### **DETLEF'S DELIBERATIONS**

There may be times when we aren't seeing much in our region or when members are finding it hard to indulge enough in their beloved hobby of birding. Our newsletter should be about us as much as the birds we see or study. So have we been outside the area in the last 6 months? Have you been birding anywhere else? I would welcome a short article, perhaps with photos or drawings of birds, places, other wildlife from anywhere in the world. Carol & I will start the ball rolling with a resume of our recent holiday in Madagascar.

We also subscribe to Forest & Bird which has a larger membership than we do. We have asked to make some of their local events joint with ours which will help attendance numbers. The first of these is Anthea Goodwin's trip to Parengarenga Harbour on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Most Far North members have an email address. From time to time I circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times & meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email & would like to be kept informed this way, please let me know & give me a phone number so that I can contact you with such information.

The Far North Regional Officers are as follows:

**Regional Representative:** Detlef Davies

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**Regional Recorder:** Detlef Davies

**Treasurer:** Isabella Godbert

Waipapa Road West, Kerikeri

Tel No: 09 407 8058

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### **RECENT EVENTS**

#### **Sun 15<sup>th</sup> August. Crake-watch**

Early rain today made our planned crake-watch doubtful but Anthea, Carol & I decided to give it a try. Weather cleared up by 11 am. so we proceeded up Parau Road inland from Taipa to an extensive area of swamp & played a tape of a variety of Spotless Crake calls. We had a surprising number of responding birds but all in areas of dense ground cover so none put in an appearance. The best sighting was of 3 displaying New Zealand Pigeons. On the mudflats by the estuary bridge were an Eastern Reef Egret, 22 S I Pied Oystercatchers, 4 Variable Oystercatchers & 2 Caspian Terns.

#### **Fri 27<sup>th</sup> August. Slide Show**

"Detlef showed his slides of a unique trip on board the S.S. Agulhas which left Cape Town in Nov 2002 with 80 or so birders on board, bound for the Antarctic pack-ice via Marion Island & Prince Edward Island. The trip, lasting 17 days, featured some very special seabirds including the Prince Edward Island endemics and the slides showed many of the numerous albatrosses, petrels & shearwaters recorded, huge icebergs dotted with Chinstrap Penguins & evidence of some cold & rough weather. " *Russell Thomas*

#### **Sun 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. Shining Cuckoos (or not)**

A misunderstanding as to the meeting place meant that just Carol & I went for a walk around Aroha Island hoping to find an early Shining Cuckoo. We found none & gained the impression that they are late this year. There were 9 Royal Spoonbills at the high tide roost & large numbers of White-fronted Terns & 2 Caspian Terns, also heard a Banded Rail calling.

#### **Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. Moturua Island**

Unfortunately bad weather caused our intended trip to Moturua Island to be cancelled. We hope to arrange this trip again early next year.

### **Weekend 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 'Birds-a-Plenty Festival**

I received a note in the post about this & emailed members but only Carol & I went from the Far North. This was a joint OSNZ & Forest & Bird event which took place in the Whakatane area. We did not get to everything (art exhibition, photo workshop etc.) but began with an overnight stay at Lions Hut in the northern part of the Ureweras. We managed to see a pair of Blue Ducks on the nearby river before dusk & we had more views of at least 3 the following morning. Bellbirds were in the bushes near the hut & we had brief views of Parakeets.

It was tempting to join ranger, Andrew Glaser's walk up to the ridge on the off-chance of finding Kokako but rain soon set in and none were calling so we aborted this after an hour. The only notable sighting was a flock of Whiteheads.

We were back in sunshine again in the afternoon when we joined the 'Godwit welcome' at Ohiwa Spit. This began with the unveiling of a wader signboard drawing people's attention to the breeding waders on the beach (including NZ Dotterel) & then Gillian Vaughan from Auckland led a group of 30 or more people (including non-birders) to look at waders at high tide. In spite of the welcome, the 1500 or so godwits flew off before most people got a good look but Pacific Golden Plovers, NZ Dotterels, Turnstones, Oystercatchers, Black-billed Gulls, etc. gave good views. The day ended with an excellent barbecue at Ohiwa Holiday Park.

Sunday saw the unveiling of an Interpretation Point at Nukuhou Saltmarsh with marshland birds painted onto rocks. At this point there is a panoramic view over the marshes where crakes & bitterns are seen regularly. With the aid of a tape we had wonderful views of 2 Fernbirds.

We called in at Miranda on the way home & among commoner shorebirds were a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper & 2 Marsh Sandpipers.

### **Wed 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. Members Evening**

The members' evening postponed until tonight was combined with some planning for the New Zealand Dotterel census, due to take place the following weekend. Steve McManus from DOC joined us early on for this purpose & the rest of us enjoyed a video about Antarctica & the New Zealand subantarctic islands.

### **Weekend 16<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> Oct**

#### **New Zealand Dotterel Census**

Many members took part in this & most potential sites in our area were covered. The organiser is away at present but the indication is that the birds are holding steady & numbers are similar to the last count in 1996

### **19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. Pelagic trip from Houhora.**

We were away in November but we gather that this trip did not go ahead because of rough weather. Let's hope that sea trips will fare better when summer really comes.

## **PROGRAMME**

### **Fri 14<sup>th</sup> January 2005 Indoor Meeting & Social**

At our house in Landing Road Kerikeri from 7 pm. We may show slides or a video but will also try & plan trips to Moturua Island & to the Cavallis in the next couple of months. If you have a boat or know someone whose boat we could use for this, please let us know. We will also discuss how to use the funds received from the Society.

### **Fri 21<sup>st</sup> – Sun 23<sup>rd</sup> January Far North Pelagic**

Kiwi Wildlife Tours are planning a weekend pelagic from Houhora towards the Three Kings where they may land. Your RR & Carol are booked on this. Why not join us? Phone Chris or Karen on 09 422 2115 .

### **Sun 6<sup>th</sup> February Barbecue**

Barbecue at Landing Road, Kerikeri. Workmates & other non-birding friends will hopefully also come. Please bring a drink & something to cook.

Detlef & Carol, 09 407 3874

### **Sat 19<sup>th</sup> February Parengarenga Harbour.**

This is a joint event with Forest & Bird & with the Kiwi Conservation Club. Meet at the wharf at Paua at 1 pm. We will walk along the coastal margin to see wading birds which will soon be migrating north.

Phone Anthea Goodwin on 09 406 1533.

### **Sat. 12<sup>th</sup> March Motupapa Island.**

Another joint event with Forest & Bird. The revegetation of Motupapa Island is now over 10 years old. Help celebrate this achievement with a picnic / barbecue on the island. DOC will provide transport & a sausage sizzle. Those inclined to gardening can bring pruning shears to help release some of the trees from the native Muehlenbeckia vine. Meet at the Opito Bay boat ramp. Boats will run a shuttle until approximately 11.00 am.

Contact Rod Brown on 09 407 4294

## **RECENT SIGHTINGS (August – November)**

RT – Russell Thomas, IW – Ian Wilson, IG – Isabella Godbert, TH – Tony Habraken, D&CD – Detlef & Carol Davies, DD – Detlef Davies, AG – Anthea Goodwin, MW – Michael Winch, PA – Phil Aspden, CJLH – Charles & Jo Le Heron.

### **Australian Little Grebe**

2 pairs on small lakes near the Geothermal Power Station (Kawakawa area) during Sept & Oct. (RT)

### **New Zealand Dabchick**

Pair with 2 chicks recently near Kerikeri (IW)

### **Chatham Island Mollymawk**

Adult found on 90 mile Beach during 28<sup>th</sup> August beach patrol (IG)

### **Royal Spoonbill**

16 at Houhora on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept. (TH, D&CD), 9 Aroha Island on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. (D&CD)

### **South Island Pied Oystercatcher**

High numbers: 45 Parengarenga Harbour 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD), 70 Bluff 90 mile Beach 17<sup>th</sup> Nov (AG)

### **Variable Oystercatcher**

High numbers: 33 Kowhai Beach 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. (MW), 14 The Bluff, 90 mile Beach 17<sup>th</sup> Nov (AG)

Nest with 3 eggs Matai Bay 27<sup>th</sup> Nov (only 8 metres from a NZ Dotterel nest) (PA)

### **Pied Stilt**

With 2 newly fledged young Lake Owhareiti 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. (AG)

### **Banded Dotterel**

10 Karikari Bay 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. (D&CD), 5 Kowhai Bay 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. (MW), 2 Henderson Bay 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. (MW)

### **New Zealand Dotterel**

Apart from those noted on the census:

13 at Parengarenga Harbour on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD), nest + 3 eggs Matai Bay 27<sup>th</sup> Nov (PA)

During census, clutches of eggs found in Henderson Bay (MW) & Wainui Bay (DD, IW).

### **Knot**

c.480 Parengarenga Harbour on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD)

c.100 Kowhai Beach on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct (MW)

### **Great Knot**

One at Parengarenga Harbour on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD)

### **Wrybill**

4 Parengarenga H. on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD), 2 Kowhai Bay 16<sup>th</sup> Oct (MW), 2 Karikari Bay 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. (D&CD)

### **Turnstone**

c.40 Parengarenga Harbour 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD), 4 Kowhai Beach & 12 Henderson Bay on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct (MW)

6 Karikari Bay 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. (D&CD)

### **Red-necked Stint**

19 at Parengarenga Harbour on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD)

### **Bar-tailed Godwit**

c.600 Parengarenga Harbour 18<sup>th</sup> Sept. (TH, D&CD), surely some high numbers elsewhere too.

### **Tattler sp (prob Grey-tailed)**

One at Parengarenga Harbour during wader count on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (TH, D&CD), one Te Ngaere Bay on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct (DD, IW)

### **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**

Heard Matthews Reserve 6<sup>th</sup> Nov (IW CJLH)

### **Kaka**

Heard Matthews Reserve 6<sup>th</sup> Nov (IW, CJLH), 2 Bush Road, Fern Flat nr. Kaitaia, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. for last 3 months (Charlie Hill)

### **Shining Cuckoo**

Heard in various places from 24<sup>th</sup> Sept but they must have been around earlier than this.

### **Tomtit**

Present in native forest near the Geothermal Power Station (RT)

### **Redpoll**

One near Kerikeri recently (IW)

With this Newsletter is a simple recording form on which please let me know what you have seen. This will make preparing this section easier.

## BEACH PATROLS, AUGUST – DEC 2004

### NINETY MILE BEACH

MONTH	Aug	Sept	Nov	Dec
	28th	12th	11th	4th
DISTANCE	34	34	28	35
Chatham Island Mollymawk	1			
Grey-headed Mollymawk	1			1
Lt.-mantled Sooty Albatross	1			
Mollymawk sp.	1		1	
Southern Giant Petrel		2		
Buller's Shearwater		1	9	5
Sooty Shearwater	1		1	14
Short-tailed Shearwater		2		15
Flesh-footed Shearwater		1		3
Fluttering Shearwater		2	1	20
Allied Shearwater				1
Common Diving Petrel	4			2
Cape Pigeon		1		
Antarctic Fulmar	1			1
Fairy Prion	10	3		1
Thin-billed Prion	1	4		
Prion sp.	1			
Blue Petrel		2		
Cook's Petrel				2
Mottled Petrel		1		
White-headed Petrel	1			1
Kerguelen Petrel				3
Grey-faced Petrel	1			
Blue Penguin	1	2		2
Australasian Gannet	20	12	23	11
Pied Shag				1
Southern Black-backed Gull	3		3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>88</b>

Little found lately on **Karikari Beach** patrols but 11<sup>th</sup> Nov produced:

Buller's Shearwater 2  
 Sooty Shearwater 5  
 Fluttering Shearwater 9  
 Little Shag 2  
 Southern Black-backed Gull 1



Antarctic Fulmar (Photo: Detlef Davies)

### BEACH PATROLS Jan – March 2005

These are scheduled for the following Saturdays:

90 mile Beach: **5<sup>th</sup> Feb & 5<sup>th</sup> March**  
 Karikari: **22<sup>nd</sup> Jan, 19<sup>th</sup> Feb & 19<sup>th</sup> March**

Contact: Isabella Godbert 09 407 8058 or  
 John Dawn 09 407 8658.

### STOP PRESS

We have just had a phone call from Chris Gaskin of Kiwi Wildlife Tours telling us that there is to be a 2 day, 2 night pelagic trip leaving from Houhora on Wed 5<sup>th</sup> January. This is to make up for the cancellation of the Dec trip. Hadoram Shirihai, the author of the lovely Antarctic Wildlife book is staying at KWT's lodge at the moment & will be on the trip. If you would like to go, please phone Chris or Karen on 09 422 2115 as soon as possible.

## MADAGASCAR Nov 2004

In November this year we went on a tour to this unique island. It was Detlef's third visit but Carol's first, and so tempting to visit new areas within the country & see some more of the mammals & reptiles, as well as new birds. The tour was arranged by Naturetrek in England & the other 6 participants & the leader travelled from there via Paris. We made our way independently via Sydney & Mauritius & joined the others on the first evening in a smart hotel in the centre of Antananarivo, the capital city with a population of over a million.

Madagascar is about twice the size of New Zealand, still very poor & primitive by our standards & with few good roads. In spite of this it has a surprisingly good network of internal flights, even to some of the most remote places. We began by flying to Fort Dauphin on the south-east coast from where a coach took us to the small private reserve of Berenty. This is an area of dry sandy forest, familiar to tourists because of the tame Ring-tailed Lemurs & Verreaux's Sifakas. Highlights among the birds were the Giant Coua, one of a sub-family of cuckoos endemic to Madagascar, White-browed Owl & Totoroka Scops Owl, both in daylight, & Madagascar Sparrowhawk. Our leader, Nick Garbutt, is the author of the most up-to-date book on Madagascar mammals which contains his own photos & drawings. Together with local guides they were able to locate many nocturnal creatures including the diminutive Mouse-Lemurs & several kinds of chameleons.

After 2 more internal flights we arrived at the north-west town of Majunga from where we visited the forest around Ampijoroa in Ankarafantsika National Park. We enjoyed a further array of interesting birds, lemurs & reptiles, particularly the rare Madagascar Fish Eagle of which only about 60 pairs remain & the highly localised Schlegel's Asity & Van Dam's Vanga. Both asities & vangas are entire families endemic to Madagascar. Accommodation on the trip was generally of a high standard but we resorted to some camping & more basic rooms on the next part of the tour which was to the remote Lake Kinkony. Ours was the first tour to get to this place, where the hardly known Sakalava Rail has recently been found. Getting here involved boarding a vehicle ferry across the wide estuary at Majunga, a bumpy 3 hour jeep ride & then canoes across the lake to a village where arrangements with the Chief had been made for us to camp. To our amazement, the Sakalava Rail was quite easily located from our canoes the following morning & to find a pair with 3 chicks was particularly exciting.



Collared Nightjar, *Mantadia*  
Detlef Davies

Sakalava Rail, Lake Kinkony  
Detlef Davies

After a return flight to Antananarivo, our coach took us from here eastwards to the rainforest around Perinet & Mantadia. This wonderful place now has a lovely new luxury lodge & more large areas of forest have recently been opened to visitors. One of the most sought-after endemic families of birds are the ground rollers, 5 very striking species; we saw three of them here within an hour, thanks to the keen hearing (& effective imitation) of their calls by the local guide. Adding to this the inquisitive Indris (the largest lemur) with their wailing cry & the chameleons varying from the huge Parson's Chameleon to the tiniest, the ones in the genus, Brookesia, which are shorter than your finger, it was hard to leave this precious place.

On our return journey we stopped over for 3 nights in Mauritius where we combined some good snorkelling with a trip into the remnant forest to find the rare & endemic Mauritius Kestrel, Pink Pigeon & Echo Parakeet.

If you have a general interest in wildlife, you just have to visit Madagascar once in your life!

*Detlef & Carol Davies*

## **RIFLEMEN !**

I recently received this email from Forest & Bird member from Kerikeri, David Fisher.

***“ On Saturday night / Sunday morning our cat, Tygs, disgraced himself. At about 12.45am he came in with a cock Rifleman, and just gone 1am he returned with the hen. She was in pretty good fettle. She sat calmly in the warmth of my hand with a good grip on a finger, so I took her outside and placed her in a safe place and was not surprised to find no trace of her in the morning. The cock, however, was more subdued and I thought he probably had had a heart attack. Anyway I dropped him gently 18 inches out of the bedroom window and heard him fall onto the leaf litter underneath. In the morning there was no trace of him either, so perhaps he'd made a recovery or perhaps he's been eaten. So I have neither of the victims as evidence, but I do have a few feathers from the hen to substantiate my claim.***

***There can be no doubt the birds were Riflemen. They were tiny. Much smaller than a white-eye. Half the size of an English Wren, with a very distinctive body shape with a very short tail. The cock was olive green on the back with a buff belly and a very clear yellow eyestripe emphasised with a dark line above. The hen was much the same but brown rather than olive green.***

***When the cat put them on the carpet at the foot of our bed, both birds were very subdued and lay quite still, which made it very easy for me to rescue them from the cat. He had not started to play with them, which meant that physically they were uninjured and in good shape.***

***A couple of years or so ago I reported to Ian Wilson the fact that I thought I had seen a family of Riflemen at 211 Inlet Road. Ian suggested that they were probably a family of young Grey Warblers, but in the light of last night's experience I am inclined to revert to the idea they were Riflemen after all. “***

The Rifleman is a scarce native bird which is almost unknown north of Auckland & is certainly not wild around Kerikeri. We assume that these must relate to captive birds being bred, or even exported locally. We hope there is nothing sinister going on but it would of course be wonderful if they could eventually be released into Puketi Forest.



