

The Wrybill

Newsletter of the Canterbury Region, Ornithological Society of New Zealand

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November 2014

Something Different

The Westland Milk Products processing site in Hokitika is surrounded by a security fence comprising 1.8m 55mm heavy netting with three running wires above, total height of 2.25m. Within this area close to the tanker washing bay and bounded by sealed roading, is a triangular shaped lawn of approximately 900m². This grassed area has gravel hardfill outside edges and the balance is a clayish/soil overburden which goes to a depth of 0.6 to 1m. The area is mowed on a regular basis. Heavy vehicle movements right alongside and passing this grassed section total around 250 a day and include milk tankers, coal and freight trucks, forklifts etc.

This unusual area hosts a surprising amount of birdlife including South Island Pied Oystercatchers, Spur-winged Plovers, Red-billed Gulls, Black-backed Gulls, ducks and other smaller species.

Two Variable Oystercatchers had been seen on the grass and around mid-December 2013 two little balls of fluff were spotted in their company. These chicks must have been hatched from eggs laid in this seemingly unfriendly area!

Variable Oystercatchers are an endemic species and belong to the wader group of birds. There are around 4500-5000 in New Zealand with most found in the North Island and they breed mainly on sandy beaches, dunes and coastal habitats. The breeding success rate of these birds is low due to predation – it is estimated that approximately 25 million birds are eaten by predators in New Zealand each year.

Breeding adults are known to vigorously defend their territories and this was obvious

when the adult pair chased away all other birdlife from the site they had chosen to raise their chicks.

During this period there was a reasonable amount of rainfall which would have softened the turf allowing for easy penetration to reach earthworms and other food, although one parent would fly off and bring back other morsels for the chicks. The novel part of this situation was that the adults and chicks would often camp on the road area with truck movements just metres away. Sadly, on Monday 27 January 2014, when not far from adulthood, one juvenile was killed. The other chick achieved full flight on Monday 10 February when it flew out with the adults.



So why did these chicks survive to reach the stage they did in such an unnatural environment? Had they chosen Cass Square or any other large grassed areas with the Hokitika township they would have perished. The answer lies with the security fence keeping dogs and cats out, and also the Westland Milk Products policy of creating a pest free environment which includes poison stations killing other predators such as rats and mice. The trio do still fly in occasionally, mainly at night.

Jack Davidson (photo by Kay Davidson)

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Recent Sightings

Contributors

AC (Andrew Crossland); BA (Bev Alexander); BD (Brian Darlow); CO'D (Colin O'Donnell); DR (Rowey); GBL (Grahame Bell); GB (Grant Bowden); JH (Jill Hanna); JW (Jan Walker); NM (Niall Muga); PC (Phil Crutchley); PH (Peter Howden); PW (Peter Wilson); SA (Steve Atwood); SL (Sue Lovatt); SW (Steve Wratten); WH (William Harland)

July

White-Winged Black Tern, 1, Bromley Oxidation Ponds, 15/7 – 14/9 PC, AC, GBL, JW, DR
Golden Pheasant, 1, Reynolds Valley Rd, 16/7, NM
Kookaburra, 1, North Beach, 17/7, Council Rangers
NZ Falcon, 1, Peacock Springs, 20/7, Reported to CO'D
Bar-Tailed Godwits, 293, Southshore Spit, 23/7, AC
Crested Grebe, 109, Kaituna Lagoon, 28/7, AC
Little Egret, 1, Lake Forsyth, 28/7, AC
Cattle Egret, 1, Tulls Road, 28/7, BA

August

Red Necked Stint, 5, Curlew Sandpiper, 9, Banded Dotterels, lots, Jarvis Road, 5/8, JW
Bar-Tailed Godwit, 304, Southshore Spit, 6/6, AC
Black Stilt, 1, Embankment Rd, 7/8, DR
Thrush feeding 2 fledglings on a lawn at Leithfield, 8/8, reported to JW
New Zealand Falcon, 2, Victoria Park, 10/8, SA
Little Egret, 1, Kaituna Lagoon, Lake Ellesmere, 10/8, SA
Wrybill, 6, Ashley Estuary, 15/8, SA

Black Stilt (GB/GY), 1, Embankment Road, 16/8, DR

White Heron, 8, Royal Spoonbill, 3, Ataahua Point, 18/8, AC

Red Necked Stint, 20, Curlew Sandpiper, 6, Wrybill, 50, Black Fronted Terns, 12, White Fronted Tern, 12, Caspian Tern, 12, Banded Dotterel, lots, inc. 1 pair on nest, Kaitorete Spit, 22/8, SA

Bellbird, 1, Leeston, 25/8, WH

Australasian Bittern, 1, Kaiapoi Lakes, 25/8, PW
Wrybill, 12, Royal Spoonbill, 5, Ashley Estuary, 25/8, BA

September

Bar-Tailed Godwits, 257, Southshore Spit, 3/9, AC

White Heron, 2, Cattle Egret, 1, White-Faced Herons, 28, Tulls Road, 6/9, AC

White Heron, 7, Crested Grebe, 50, Australasian Bittern, 4 (heard calling), Hart's Creek, 6/9, SA

Bar-Tailed Godwits, 248, Southshore Spit, 7/9, First migrants have returned, AC

Black Stilt, 1, (BR/BY – seen mating with a male pied stilt) Ashley Estuary, 8/9, BA

Turnstone, 1, Kaitorete Spit, 12/9, AC

Curlew Sandpiper, 9, Bar-Tailed Godwits, 150, Jarvis Rd, 17/9, DR

Black Stilt, 1, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, 20/9, BD
Sharptailed Sandpiper, 1, Ashley Estuary, 23/9, JH

Shining Cuckoo, 1 heard both at Otanerito Bay and at Le Bons Bay, Banks Peninsula, 25/9. First for summer, reported by SL

White Heron, 1, Taranaki Creek, Waikuku, 27/9, BA

Reef Heron, 1, Avon Heathcote Estuary, 28/9, AC
Bar-Tailed Godwits, 65, Wrybill, 4, Ashley Estuary, 28/9, BA

Marsh Crakes, 2, Russell Langdon's wetland, Ashburton River, 29/9, reported by PH

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Cattle Egret, 1, White Heron, 1 Tulls Road, 28/9,
BA

October

Turnstone, 5, Jarvis Rd. 2/10, JW
Barbary Dove, 1, Roydvale Ave, 13/10, Byrd
Knot, 20, Greenpark Sands, 14/10, GB
Knot, 22, Selwyn Huts, 26/10, SW
Bar-tailed Godwit, 112 Greenpark sands, 14/10,
GB
Litt Egret, 2, Kaituna Lagoon, 18/10, JW and
others
Cattle Egret, 15, (many in breeding plumage),
Rushbrooks Rd, 26/10, BA
White Heron, 1, Harts Creek, 26/10, BA
White Heron, 2, Stilt (Hybrid), 1, Ashley
Estuary, 30/10, IMc

Useful Websites

<http://www.birdingnz.net/> - A discussion
forum focussing on birds and birding in New
Zealand. A great place to keep up to date with
interesting recent sightings.

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BIRDI-NG-NZ/info> - A Yahoo newsgroup relating to
birds and birding in New Zealand. It currently
has over 550 members.

<http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/> - This
digital encyclopedia is a collaboration between
Te Papa, Birds New Zealand and the Department
of Conservation. It includes comprehensive
information on all New Zealand bird species.

<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/> - The Internet Bird
Collection has photos, videos and sound
recordings of bird species worldwide.

<http://fatbirder.com/> - Good if you are going
overseas and looking for contacts or information
about where to go birding.

Thanks to John Allan for suggesting some of
these sites.

Dead Birds

Canterbury Museum is always after good quality
dead birds to add to its collection for display or
research purposes. If you spot a suitable sample
on your birding adventures please consider
collecting it in a plastic bag. When you arrive
home contact Paul Scofield at the museum. Birds
can be stored in your freezer until you are able to
pass them over. Currently the museum has plenty
of Little Blue Penguin, Pukeko and pigeon
samples. Anything else that is in good condition
will be gratefully received.

Survey Results

The results of the Winter Wader Count and
Ashburton Lakes Survey are attached at the end.
Thanks again to everyone who helped out.

Thanks

Many thanks to Ann Sherlock for her work as
editor of Wrybill. Ann has been in charge of
putting together our regional newsletter since
2007 but has now decided to take a well-
deserved break from this role. The new editors
hope they manage half-as-good a job.

Contributions

Wrybill is your newsletter and we really need
you to contribute. Any articles or photos of
interest to birders here in Canterbury, not
necessarily just about birding in Canterbury, will
be gratefully received. Please send them to the
editor - eleanor.gunby@gmail.com

**What's on at OSNZ Canterbury:
November 2014 to February 2015**

Evening Meetings take place at 7.30 pm on the last Monday of the month at Mahaanui Area DOC Office, 31 Nga Mahi Road, off Blenheim Road, Sockburn. Plenty of parking is available.

Indoor Meetings

Monday 1 December 2014 – David Lloyd-Jones, a student at the University of Canterbury, will talk about his research on South Island Saddlebacks and Rock Wrens. **Please note the change of date.**

Monday February 23 2015– Member's Night.

Field Meetings

29 November 2014 – Summer Wader Count of Lake Ellesmere and other areas, followed by a social get-together for lunch. Meet far end of Embankment Road at 9am. Usual mud-sloppy footwear and clothing appropriate for weather.

21 February 2015 – Te Waihora Lake Ellesmere Bird Survey. More details to come.



Wishing all our members a Merry Christmas and a happy summer of birding. Keep an eye out for the next edition of Wrybill - hopefully in early February.

Canterbury Region Contacts

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Canterbury Wader Count June 2014

Species	Waipara RM	Ashley/Swale Crik Est	Taranaki Creek paddocks	Brooklands Lagoon	Travis Wetland	Avon- Heathcote Estuary	Lyttelton Harbour	Port Levy	Pigeon Bay	Okains Bay	Le Bonis Bay	Akaroa Harbour	Lake Forsyth	Tip of Kaitorete Spit	Kaitorete Spit	Birdlings Flat A	Birdlings Flat B	Kaituna Lagoon	Halswell Flats B	Halswell Flats A	Osbornes	Greenpark Huts-Janvis Road	Jarvis- Embankment Rds	Embankment Rd	Yarss Flat
Counters/NC	n/c	NA	NA	AC	AC	AC	AC	AC	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	PC,TH	AC	AC	AC	PC,TH	PC,TH	MR	KR	SW,EG	GBE,JW	GBA	GBA	GBA
Notes																									
Date counted		25-Jun	25-Jun	24-Jun	24-Jun	24-Jun	23-Jun	21-Jun					20-Jun	20-Jun	20-Jun	20-Jun	20-Jun	20-Jun	20-Jun	20-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun
Aus Crested Grebe													5			2	5	7	14						
Mute Swan																				2		2		2	3
Stewart Island Shag																									
White Heron													1					2	3				1	1	4
Little Egret												1													
Cattle Egret																									
Australasian Bittern																					1				
Glossy Ibis					1																				
Royal Spoonbill		9				22						1					1		49						
Pied Oystercatcher		170		18	1	2291	80	39					2	2		5	1		4		60	1	2		
Variable Oystercatcher		11		4		74	6	2					15			1									
Hybrid Oystercatcher		16				4																			
Pied Stilt		1	14	8	15	96	19						121	23	8	8	70	10	50	10	11	86	203	30	12
Black Stilt																							1		
Hybrid Stilt																									
Banded Dotterel			12			58								142		126	1		2	11	43	88	58	4	16
Black-fronted Dotterel																									
Wrybill																							1		
Pacific Golden Plover																									
Spur-winged Plover		1	9	37	43	62	46	2					29	19	35	186	16	21	14	2	61	8	105	3	2
Turnstone																									
Lesser Knot																									
Curlew Sandpiper																								6	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper																									
Pectoral Sandpiper																									
Red-necked Stint																								12	
Eastern Curlew																									
Whimbrel		1																							
Bar-tailed Godwit		1				236	9																		
Black-billed Gull		140																				60	149		
White-winged Tern														1											
Gull-billed Tern																						4			
Black-fronted Tern		260												139											
Caspian Tern		11				15	2						27	6	2	2	3		3	5		3	5	4	
White-fronted Tern		135												102											
Site totals	0	756	35	67	60	2858	162	43	0	0	0	0	202	434	45	330	96	41	90	79	180	248	543	44	37
Wader site totals	0	201	35	67	59	2821	160	43	0	0	0	0	167	186	43	326	88	31	70	23	175	183	388	37	30
% of total count	0.00	3.31	0.58	1.10	0.97	46.45	2.63	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.75	3.06	0.71	5.37	1.45	0.51	1.15	0.38	2.88	3.01	6.39	0.61	0.49
# wader species at site	0	7	3	4	3	7	5	3	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	5	4	2	4	3	4	4	8	3	3

Counters

Bev Alexander = BA Peter Wilson = PW Kenny Rose = KR Matt Rose = MR Phil Critchley = PC Tom Hitchen = TH Andrew Crossland = AC Sandra Wallace = SW Eleanor Gunby = EG Grahame Bell = GBE Jan Walker = JW Grant Bawden = GBA Nick Allen = NA
Peter Langlands = PL Black Stilt-Embankment banded GBGW

Canterbury Wader Count June 2014

Species	LII RM to Selwyn Huts	Selwyn Huts to Inwell RM	Drain Road	Harts Creek	Timeryard Point	Johnston's Bay	Lakeside Flats	Cants Road	Rushbrooks Road	Fishermans Point	Subtotal Lake Ellesmere	Coopers Lagoon	Lake Hood	Opitahi RM	Washdyke Lagoon	Ki-Wairoro	TOTAL
Counters/NC	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW	BA,PW		BA,PW	PL	PL	PL	PL	
Notes					nil count					nil count							
Date counted	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun	21-Jun		21-Jun	29-Jun	29-Jun	28-Jun	29-Jun	
Aus Crested Grebe											28	1					34
Mute Swan			2								11	22				4	37
Stewart Island Shag											0					1	1
White Heron	2										13						14
Little Egret											0						1
Cattle Egret									14		14						14
Australasian Bittern											1						1
Glossy Ibis											0						1
Royal Spoonbill	12										62						94
Pied Oystercatcher								12			87	8	1	3	12	12	2712
Variable Oystercatcher											1		2	12	4	4	131
Hybrid Oystercatcher											0						20
Pied Stilt	10	10	2	2			27	8			580			46	315	1215	1215
Black Stilt											1					1	2
Hybrid Stilt											0						0
Banded Dotterel		1					33				525					133	728
Black-fronted Dotterel											0						0
Wrybill											1						1
Pacific Golden Plover											0						0
Spur-winged Plover	60	12	3				5	4			556	2	18	2	60	132	999
Turnstone											0						0
Lesser Knot											0						0
Curlew Sandpiper											6						6
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper											0						0
Pectoral Sandpiper											0						0
Red-necked Stint											12						12
Eastern Curlew											0						0
Whimbrel											0						1
Bar-tailed Godwit											0						246
Black-billed Gull	23					9					241	14	1200	24	26	70	1715
White-winged Tern											1						1
Gull-billed Tern											4						4
Black-fronted Tern											139		2	4	10	415	415
Caspian Tern	1	10				4					48		2	4	30	139	139
White-fronted Tern											102	7		45		5	294
Site totals	108	33	7	2	0	13	65	24	14	0	2433	46	1226	78	155	717	8838
Wader site totals	70	23	5	2	0	0	65	24	0	0	1769	2	26	5	121	597	6073
% of total count	1.15	0.38	0.08	0.03	0.00	0.00	1.07	0.40	0.00	0.00	29.13	0.03	0.43	0.08	1.99	9.83	100.00
# wader species at site	2	3	2	1	0	0	3	3	0	0	9	1	2	3	4	6	

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ASHBURTON LAKES MID-WINTER BIRD COUNT

	L. Heron	Emily	E Maori	W Maori	Trinity	Denny	Emma	Roundabout	Spider/Donn	Nursery	Camp	Cleanwater	Lambies	Barossa Paddocks	Totals
Date: 27/7/2014															
%Ice	< 1	50	3	10	50	10	12	60	25/70	5	35	40			
Crested grebe	42			3			1				4	4			54
Black shag	11		1	1			2				0	1			16
Little shag	102					3	36				18	32			191
White-faced heron	4								1	1					6
Bittern							1								1
White heron															0
Black swan	138	29	21	9	2	55	192	45	2	7	8	38			546
Canada goose	221	66		250		46	80		10		36	164			873
Paradise shelduck	108	14	6		1					2	2	3			136
Mallard	121			25	40	38	138				2	37			401
Grey duck	3														3
NZ shoveler	53				34							4			91
Duck spp		85	41												126
NZ scaup	1916			35		26	24				222	62			2285
Grey teal	105				25		4					19			153
Pukeko			6												6
Coot	36														36
Pied oystercatcher						3									3
Pied stilt															0
Hybrid/black stilt	3			4		1									8
Spur-winger plover															0
Banded dotterel	3						6								9
Black-fronted tern															0
White-fronted tern															0
Black-billed gull	2	1					2	1			1	1			8
Back-backed gull								1							1
NZ Falcon	6		1												7
Harrier															0
Kingfisher															0
Swallow															
NZ pipit															
Totals	2874	195	76	327	102	172	486	47	13	10	293	365	0	0	4960