



Studying NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS

OSNZ®

NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2011

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There's a lull in bird song in my garden and juveniles from late clutches are testing their survival techniques, some successful some not. I hope you all correctly identified Rebecca's photo without my caption last month, yes, a NZ dotterel. (It disappeared magically off the emailed version).

SHOW AND TELL

Little Barrier Island/Hauturu has been a sanctuary since 1895 and in recent years officially declared pest free. (2006) One of its treasures is a self sustaining population of **stitchbird/hihi**. Between 2005-10 density studies were carried out on the island targeting hihi, tui and tieke/saddleback. To the fore is the question of viability, with or without management, of the hihi population. At our February meeting, Robin Toy presented a talk to a small audience of members with photos and graphs on his involvement in population monitoring using distance sampling, in the lush vegetation and often difficult terrain. Thank you Robin.

BIRDS SCENE

As well as doing maths on a wader count, - count the legs and divide by two – less abundant Arctic migrants, common and uncommon, can usually be encountered. During the recent count Willie reported 26 **golden plover** on Farewell Spit and a **sanderling**, but no **whimbrels** or **curlews**. Closer to the city he identified a **terek sandpiper** on the airport sandbar. (One was seen on Farewell Spit in Dec.) Early in February Rebecca B spent some time with her camera and a **wrybill** at the top end of the Haven.

TOP O' THE SOUTH

The February wader count was completed in great weather, and over very high tides pushing the birds around a bit. No godwits were seen in the Haven area and in the Waimea, counters watched the movement of flocks from their patch into other counting locations. In recent years a new important high tide roost has been evolving near the airport and Motueka Sandspit is a significant area. Rob will collate the figures. If you're not already on his mailing list and would like to see these results please contact him rschckrd@xtra.co.nz 5765371, or me stagefrightmusic@paradise.net.nz 5450456.

KIWI CENSUS

Much more interesting to complete than the national statistics census, is a **Kiwi Survey** in the Cobb Valley on **12 March**.

Chris Petyt from Takaka has sent through notice of this work.

Accommodation is available (free) at a dam site cottage. People are paired off and allocated a listening position at one of a number of sites in the valley. The survey starts after sunset and about 2 hours are spent listening for kiwi calls.

Please contact Chris on cpetyt@xtra.co.nz or Marian Milne on ammilne@xtra.co.nz for further details.

Don adds this note,

Willie Cook and myself took part in a survey in February and despite having no kiwi calls at our locations other bird calls after dark proved interesting. (Kaka, weka, and morepork) The location and company was most enjoyable.

(I understand a compass was a requirement of their kit - to locate their listening sites or to find their way back to camp? Ed.)

BESIDE THE SEASIDE

Beach Patrol has nothing to do with brandishing a stick at overnight freedom campers but keep your eyes to the ground while strolling among flotsam and jetsam and a bird carcass may be spotted. Willie picked up a **white capped mollymawk** recently from Rabbit Island. If you're not taking the bird home with you, after recording the find on a OSNZ beach patrol card, heave the remains higher up the beach so no-one else finds them and duplicates the entry, or bury them, wearing the same hat and darkglasses used for checking road kills.

BANDED RAIL

Also with eyes to the ground, members donned gumboots, pocketed notebooks and took to the Waimea Estuary recently to note the presence or absence of banded rail in the first of a series of surveys for these secretive aquatic inhabitants.

The Roving Birdwatcher

Nesting affairs

For me, jelly and icecream was always a pudding treat as a child growing up on rather isolated South Island farms, and the collection of Greggs bird cards from the jelly packets rated several notches higher than weetbix cards. Along with the treasured card books that seemed to take ages to fill properly, birthday gifts helped shape my life long ornithological interest. First it was three volumes of the Ladybird series, *British Birds*, then F & B's *NZ Forest-Inhabiting Birds* and I was fascinated with the bower bird in an Australian booklet my Aunty sent over from Canberra. I've since read bowers come in two types, may pole and avenue, but the collection of display items including manmade objects is the curious trait. On a more practical note, one year a nest site in my garden was given away by a hunk of dirty white plastic fantastic hanging through branches of the bay tree. I traced it back to find it partially woven into a blackbird nest. It seems that small plastic shopping bags can't quite be wholly jammed into a nest. In late January, three blackbird fledglings left a second or third clutch from a plum tree nest out the back, where their mother had utilized four or five pieces of different petroleum based litter from the garden, not that I'm in a habit of throwing my rubbish out the kitchen window, but with a school very close by I do seem to get more than I bargain for, windblown or otherwise. I wonder if birds would like to use marbles or toy cars?

At Canada Water, South London, a small busy shopping mall has an artificial pond with waterfowl and Canada geese, no surprise there. In July 07 straight over and below a walkway railing round the vegetated edge, a coot's nest with 6 eggs was very open and visible with a magazine page, chippy packet and sizeable slab of polystyrene included in her nesting material.

Closer to home, Father had a small wrought iron planter in his back yard, lined with coconut matting. When he'd exhausted the supply of veges within he went to take it apart and found that something else had beaten him to it. One whole end was devoid of coconut fibre. We guess his resident female blackbird was the culprit.

In the June 2010 edition of NZ Gardener a page was dedicated to arranging a hanging container of nesting materials to encourage birds into our gardens. Full of large gaudy faux feathers, ribbons and string, was the designer thinking of blackbirds or bower birds! GDQ

PARISH NOTICES

Keeping in touch

Please update Stuart, Don or myself with new contact details, i.e. email etc. We don't want to lose you.

Ingrid sent in this reminder.

Submissions for the "National Policy on Indigenous Biodiversity" close on 2 May 2011. Here is the official link:

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/biodiversity/indigenous-biodiversity/index.html#how>

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). Anyone interested is welcome! Contact Stuart Wood 03-544 3932 or Don Cooper 03-544 8109.

Monday 7 March	Indoor meeting 'To Fly or Not to Fly' <i>The Life of Birds</i> DVD Episode one Narrated by Sir David Attenborough
Saturday 12 March	Kiwi survey cpetyt@xtra.co.nz
Monday 4 April	Indoor meeting speaker to be confirmed
Monday 2 May	Indoor meeting 'Tale of Two Kiwis' Sandy Toy
Monday 6 June	No local meeting
Queen's Birthday Wknd June 4, 5, 6,	OSNZ AGM and Conference Wellington

Thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the March newsletter: please email or phone me by 25 March. Gail 03 5450456 stagefrightmusic@paradise.net.nz