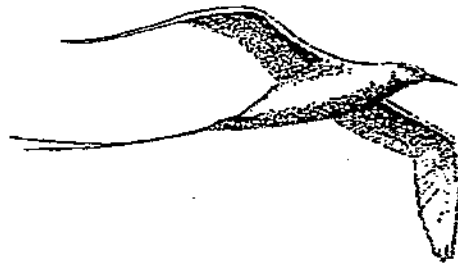


AMOKURA



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

MAY 2011**Amokura 101**

Published in February, May 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 meeting is requested toward the cost of hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

ALL WELCOME

PROGRAMME TO SEPTEMBER 2011

MAY	12	MEETING – "On Safari with the Roadley's" Don't miss this programme!
	14	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	17	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
JUNE	4-6	O.S.N.Z. AGM (Wellington)
	9	MEETING – Pete & Kath Mitchell, rangers for the BREAM HEAD TRUST
	11	WHANGAREI HARBOUR SURVEY
	11	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	14	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
JULY	2	KAIPARA HARBOUR CENSUS 11-10a.m. 3.9m
	9	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	12	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
	14	MEETING – Jan & Wade Doak – ABOVE and BELOW project.
AUGUST	6	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	9	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
	11	MEETING – Programme to be advised
SEPTEMBER:	8	MEETING – Programme to be advised
	10	WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	13	EAST COAST BEACH PATROL

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:	David Crockett	435-0954
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

THE ANNUAL REPORT (for 2010) SUBMITTED BY OUR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

REGION: **NORTHLAND**

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (name) : **David CROCKETT**

REGIONAL RECORDER (name): **Tony BEAUCHAMP** _____

NUMBER OF MEMBERS : **22** _____

NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD : **10** _____ AVERAGE ATTENDANCE : **14** _____

NUMBER OF FIELD TRIPS : **26** _____ AVERAGE ATTENDANCE : **9** _____

FIELD TRIPS (list with brief comments) : *National Projects*

<u><i>Beach Patrols:</i></u>	East Coast	TEN
	West Coast	TEN
<u><i>Harbour Census:</i></u>	Whangarei Harbour	THREE
	North Kaipara Harbour	THREE

REGIONAL PROJECTS: **Fairy Tern** - members assist D.o.c. with monitoring Fairy Tern during the breeding season and post-breeding.

Shag colony surveys – ongoing with two members participating.

Seasonal Lake Surveys – individuals visit designated lakes four times per year.

REGIONAL NEWSLETTER (number of issues) : **THREE** – *February, May, October*

RR FOR 2010 (name) : **David CROCKETT** _____

(address) : **21 McMillan Avenue, Kamo, WHANGAREI 0112** _____

(phone number) **(09) 435-0954** (email address) : **C/- khayes@vodafone.co.nz**

REGIONAL RECORDER FOR 2010 (name) : **Tony Beauchamp** _____

(address) : **17 Bellbird Avenue, Onerahi, Whangarei 0110** _____

(phone number) : **(09) 436-2661** (email address) : **tbeauchamp@doc.govt.nz** _____

WHO WILL BE ATTENDING THE NEXT RR MEETING? **To be confirmed.** _____

GENERAL COMMENTS ON HEALTH OF REGION: We are recovering from a period of reduced activity and need to recruit younger members. Finances are basic, but stable. Speakers at our meetings have covered a range of informative and stimulating topics – especially those who have been birding in exotic locations. Our end-of-year function included a shared meal. The regional newsletter “AMOKURA” and additional copies of Southern Bird have been distributed to supporters of O.S.N.Z. as potential members of our group.

SHAG COLONIES IN THE NORTH – 2011 UP-DATE

Compiled by JANET SNELL.

During 1988 the Late Brian and Lorna Simpkin started entering into a Register, sighted Shag colonies. This Register contains records from as far back as 1976 when observations were made by O.S.N.Z. members who included M. P. Kearns, S. Reed, F. McCormack, W. R. Ringer, M. Hows, M. N. Hawthorn and A. T. Edgar. In the 1980's and then into the 1990's, observations were also recorded from P. J. Miller, K. F. Miller, B & L Simpkin and others.

There has been a gap of about sixteen years since any entries were made into the Register. Some colonies have been checked again, beginning in 2007, by Janet and Lloyd Snell and Claire Burt who checked on colonies in the North that were accessible on foot. Some areas of the coastline have been bought by private parties and public access has been stopped. We have found that some colonies move just a few hundred metres along the same piece of coast or further up the same creek.

A variety of Shag species are often seen nesting together, but Pied Shags appear to be the most prevalent. About 8 of the 24 colonies that have been checked since 2007 have moved right away and are nowhere to be seen, with no evidence of a colony nearby.

The largest colony that we have counted to date (and a very active one) was right beside the walk-way between Haruru Falls and Waitangi. We counted some 70 Shags of mixed species in the Pohutukawa trees right beside the track and overhanging the water. Pohutukawa trees seem to be favoured by the Shags, I guess because they grow right beside, and often over-hang, the water but they do occasionally choose tall Pine trees that are close to the water.

There are 70 colonies currently entered in the Register, of which 24 have been recently re-visited. More colonies have been seen and counted at the following locations; McCathie Road, Ruakaka, Mangawhai River entrance and Whananaki North. Some interesting comparisons follow:

LAKE NGAKEKETA

1978 (S. Jenkins) A few Pied Shags.

2010 (A. Crene-Far North & J. Snell) No Shags seen or evidence of a colony.

RARAWA BEACH

2008 (J & L Snell) Pied Shags seen in a medium sized colony in Pohutukawa trees on the edge of the Ngataki Stream and close to the beach.

2010 (J. Snell & A. Crene-Far North) Colony has moved upstream into tall Pine trees. Mostly Pied Shags with some Little Shags and some Little Black Shags.

LAKE ROTAKAWAU near lake Ngatu. north of Awanui

- 1977 (S. Reed) Pied, Black and Little Shags seen in old Pohutukawa trees growing around the south end of the lake.
- 2009 (J & L Snell) Old Pine trees are all gone from the lake perimeter and no shags or colony seen.

BUTLER POINT near Mangonui

- 1977 (M. Kearns) Around 70 Pied Shags seen.
- 2010 (C. Burt & J. Snell) A very busy colony of mostly Pied Shags. Counted about 40 but there were probably many more with all their comings and goings.

TAEMARO BAY north of Whangaroa Harbour

- 1977 (R. Cowan & M. Canning) About 30 to 40 Pied Shags counted.
- 2010 (C. Burt & J. Snell) Only 8 to 10 Pied Shags counted.

TAUPO BAY

- 1989 (B. Simpkin) Some Pied Shags.
- 2010 (C. Burt & J. Snell) No Shags or colony seen.

WHANGAPE HARBOUR

- 1990 (P. Anderson) Large Pied Shag colony near the harbour entrance.
- 2008 (J & L Snell) No Shags or colony seen. Spoke to a resident on the harbour who had spent a lot of time fishing locally and he said that he had not seen any Shags for years.

PATANUI BAY

- 1976 (A. Edgar & D. Calvert) Few Pied Shags and Little Shags.
- 1989 (B & L Simpkin, 1 May) About 50 Pied Shags sighted. Colony seems to have increased.
- 2010 (C. Burt & J. Snell) No shags or colony seen in the vicinity.

HARURU FALLS to WAITANGI TRACK

- 1988 (B. Simpkin) About 23 Pied Shags with a few nests.
- 2010 (C. Burt & J. Snell) A big colony now and very busy. We counted about 70 Pied Shags and many nests, mostly Pied Shags.

TAIHARURU

- 1990 (P & K Miller) Mostly Pied Shags.
- 2007 (J. & L. Snell) Colony moved across the Bay to the south side of Pataua Island, spread between a few Pohutukawa trees.

LIMEBURNERS CREEK

- 1989 (B. Simpkin) Mostly Pied Shags.
- 2007 (J. & L. Snell) No Shags or colony seen in this area, but Pied Shags were seen across the harbour in the top of some tall Mangrove trees. Mostly Pied Shags and a few Little Black Shags.

PARUA BAY

- 1990 (P & K Miller) A moderately sized colony of Pied and of Little Shags situated in Mangroves near the Parua Bay Tavern.
- 2007 (J & L Snell) Colony has moved and is now in old Pohutukawa trees overhanging the water on the top-side of the wharf. Mostly Pied Shags with a few Black Shags.

WAIPU COVE

- 1989 (B. Simpkin) 30+ Pied Shags counted slightly south of the Cove in large old Pohutukawa trees growing along the cliffs.
- 2007 (J & L Snell) No colony or Shags seen in the area mentioned above. Most of the old Pohutukawa trees have died and gone.

WAIPU LAGOON

- 1990 (G. Pulham) Pied, Little and Black Shags seen around a colony in the Pohutukawa trees growing along the landward side of the lagoon. About 30 of mixed species were counted.
- 2010 (J. Snell) A large and active colony use the same trees. Around 73 Pied Shags, 6 Little Black Shags and 10 Little Shags. A few Black Shags were also seen. Maybe the shags from the Waipu Cove colony have moved to this site.

SMUGGLERS BAY

- 1990 (F. Brook, G. Carlin, P. Miller) Pied and Little Shags situated in Pohutukawa trees on the rocky coastline east of Smugglers Bay. About 50 Shags were counted.
- 2007 (J & L Snell) Colony in the same place, but there were a lot fewer Shags to be seen.

MONTHLY MEETING ROUND-UPS

At our meeting held on 10th February 2011 we experienced a "technology hiccough" when a data projector was needed by our speaker, but it was not available! Fortunately for us, Ron was very understanding and a general discussion ensued about recent sightings and Tony explained his reasons for changing the date of the next Whangarei Harbour Survey.

March 10th was our AGM which saw the business conducted promptly and we were able to again enjoy the company of Detlef and Carol Davies. Detlef had just returned from a voyage that took him from Auckland to Japan on the "*Spirit of Enderby*", a vessel chartered by Southern Heritage Tours from Russian owners. The Spirit of Enderby hosted the "Odyssey Tour" which followed pelagic birds on their northern Pacific wanderings. We were able to see the value in a new lens that Detlef had purchased for his camera so that he could capture birds on the wing with better speed and definition. Of interest to members, was Detlef's comment that "...birds that are regarded as rare, are seen more frequently far from land and may not be as rare as we originally thought". Thank you once again Detlef for more superb shots of sea birds that many of us seldom see.

Our presenter for the April 14th meeting was Ron Bergin, a photographer with the local newspaper, who showed to us some of his photographs of Australian birds. In his capacity as a newspaper man, Ron has been stationed in several of the Australian States and we were treated to some excellent birdlife shots, mostly in their natural habitat. Sorry about the technology mix-up in February Ron, but this proved the Mainland cheese T.V. motto that "*Good things take time!* – but are worth waiting for" Claire Burt has recorded these comments for "Southern Bird";

At our well attended April meeting Ron Bergin treated us to a few of his photographs of birds that frequented the Bundaberg area of Queensland and others from Werribee, near Melbourne. Many of his shots are of "birds in action"; enabling us to see Fairy Martins nest building, a beautiful Bronze Kite with wings and tail wide-spread, a Channel-billed Cuckoo feeding in a fig tree, a White-bellied Sea Eagle with a snake in its claw, Black Kites hunting for prey as the bush-fires started and cheeky Kookaburra's intent on reading a sign that said "Will close in one hour".

A wide variety of birds were shown in mid-flight, alighting on vegetation, or taking off again. We were also treated to a selection of New Zealand birds; including some lovely shots of New Zealand Shoveler ducks at the water treatment plant in Rewa Rewa Road, Whangarei, Fairy Tern at the Waipu Refuge, and Oystercatchers with juveniles. We all enjoyed the presentation with Ron's informative and lively commentary.

Thanks to Ron and Dee for this fascinating glimpse of some rich and colourful birdlife.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

Just off shore at Waipu Cove at about 5-00p.m. on April 9th, three rafts of Fluttering Shearwaters plus some possibly Flesh-footed Shearwaters were observed following a bunch of White-fronted Terns that were feeding. The three rafts merged into one huge mass of roosting, feeding and low-flying birds. Knowledgeable experts put the numbers at c.15,000.

Small groups of juvenile Giant Petrel and Black Petrel have been sighted during April offshore from Tutukaka, around the Poor Knights Islands.

D.o.C. Whangarei have received some reports of low numbers of N.Z. Pigeon in the north this year – possibly as a result of the “die-back” last season.

LAKE AND POND SURVEY

On Tuesday 19th April 2011 Pauline Smith and Kevin Hayes visited the Jack Bissett Wetlands at Poroti during the afternoon. The day was calm and bright but with very good light conditions for using the 'scope and binoculars. All ponds were full, having been topped-up during the March rains which were heavy enough to cause the Wairua river to overflow into them. There were good numbers of waterfowl present, mainly Paradise Shelduck and Black Swan. With them were good numbers of Mallard and some Grey Duck, but several groups of ducks flew over us as we came through the gate at the top of the property. These were in clusters of eight to thirty birds and appeared to be Mallards; totalling over a hundred that flew North-east of us and did not appear to return to the ponds. Contractors are harvesting the forest on the right hand side of the road as you travel out there and both trucks and loaders were busy as the chainsaws revved. Don't know what effect, if any, that this activity has upon the birds, most of whom were on the Plateau Pond and we counted:

Paradise Shelduck	251	
Black Swan	78	
Grey Duck	65	
Mallard Duck	13	
Mixed species	16	(Too far away for ID certainty)
Little Shag	1	
Black Shag	1	

All of the Passerines, other than a few Pipits and Skylarks, appeared to be away for the day. The wetlands are closed to access from Easter onwards so that the birds can settle prior to the opening of the shooting season on May 7th. Rudi Hoetjes, Manager of Fish and Game Northland, told us that several pairs of Australasian Bittern have been seen at the wetlands recently but we did not see them. A young Harrier Hawk was working over the valley floor and may have caused them to be particularly wary.

DON MERTON

Members will have been saddened to read in the media, news of the passing during April this year of Don Merton. His work in the conservation of endangered species is world renowned and he will be sadly missed by all Ornithologists.

DONATION TO OUR GROUP

We are all as delighted as David Crockett was recently, when he was contacted by Aaron Simpkin who advised him that the family have decided to donate to O.S.N.Z. Northland Branch, the slide projector, screen and table that belonged to Lorna. This gesture is most appreciated and the equipment will certainly be put to good use by our group.

WHANGAREI HARBOUR SURVEY Compiled by Tony Beauchamp

DATE: 27 November 2010

TIDE HEIGHT: 2.6m

Site	Airport & north shore	Portland	Skull creek	Takahiwai	Marsden	Port Whangarei	Ruakaka	Waipu	TOTALS
Pied Shag	5	24				2	24		55
Little shag		3							3
White-faced Heron	18	9	10	3	2				42
Reef Heron					1				1
NZ pied oystercatcher				20	20				40
Variable oystercatcher	6	4	4	2	248		29		293
Pied Sift	6	57		12	8				83
New Zealand dotterel			2		3		8		13
Spur-winged Plover	6	6	17						29
Lesser knot			320	200	94				614
Bar-tailed Godwit			1360	700	190			18	2268
Black-backed gull	32				9	2			43
Red-billed gull	1							2	3
Caspian tern	1				1			2	4
White-fronted tern		1							1

TOTALS: 75 104 1713 937 576 4 61 22 3492
 COUNTERS: Tony Beauchamp, Kevin Hayes, Pauline Smith, Claire Burt, Margaret Dowdell, Peter Smith

WHANGAREI HARBOUR SURVEY
 Compiled by Tony Beauchamp

DATE: 19 February 2011 Tide height 2.9m

Site	Airport	Portland	Skull creek	Takahiwai	Marsden	Port Whangarei	Ruakaka	Waipu	TOTALS
Pied Snag						2		Not Counted	2
White-faced Heron			1					1	1
R Heron			1						1
MZ pied oystercatcher	60	500		150	300	20			1030
VOC			11		50				61
Pied Stilt	4	204	32				3		240
NZ dotterel			45		3				51
Banded Dotterel		48	3				14		65
Wrybill									
Lesser knot			300	100	185				585
Bar-tailed Godwit		22	1500	1000	316		10		2848
Black-backed gull					57				57
Caspian tern			5						5
White fronted tern		47					361		408
TOTALS:	64	826	1893	1250	911	22	388		5354

COUNTERS: Tony Beauchamp, Gerard Pilon, Claire Burt, Janet Snell, Ruth & David Crockett.