



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER MAY 2012

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Hasn't it been a stunning autumn - all those brilliant colours. When out driving, you never knew what might be around the next bend, a bright yellow ginkgo tree, a striking scarlet oak or the apricot rows of fruit trees in their end of season glory. Autumn can be unpredictable. Birding, on the other hand, has been more **black and white**.

Birds Scene

Near the Motueka bridge recently a **white-winged black** tern has been seen amongst **black fronted** terns. Stopping on the bridge is not recommended. In our estuaries on most days a **white** heron or two can be seen, and apparently one was spending a great deal of time looking for easy meals at Nature Land. A hybrid **black** stilt can be spotted as the Motueka tide recedes out from Motueka Quay. Winter is a good time to count **little black** shags in the Waimea, and **black** shag colonies become visible through deciduous willow trees. You might be lucky enough to have a **black** fantail hanging round your back door.

Then there're the birds that embrace both colours in their scheme, wintering flocks of **pied** stilt and **pied** oyster catchers have gathered around the coast, with the bird who is confused, the variable oyster catcher. Suburban gardens have **pied** fantails, perhaps with the afore mentioned **black** companion. Look for colonies of **pied** shags. Keep your eyes on **white** faced herons, to see where they head to roost as they leave the estuaries in their dozens at dusk, while **white** fronted tern numbers diminish. **Black** swans have started to clog up their gathering sites, and they don't mix well with avian pursuits. I've heard a thrush singing in 2nd gear recently but haven't heard a **blackbird** yet.

Show and Tell

At the May indoor meeting 17 members gathered to hear Sandy Toy talk about a recent trip to the Chathams. Volunteering plays such an important role in the conservation of many of our most threatened birds and she and Robin spent three weeks on Rangatira playing their part. We had a short recap on the history of the management of black robin then photos and talk of current banding and translocating, followed by a presentation on the at risk Chatham Petrel. Along with harriers as unwanted predators competition comes from the abundant broad-billed prions for nesting burrows. Manmade wooden and plastic nesting boxes are being used with a small flag at the entrance which seems to be a deterrent to the prions. The show opened with a photo of Robin wearing 'petrel boards' a bit like snow shoes for pussy footing amongst burrows and finished with lovely photos of shore-plovers, snipe and weta. Thank you Sandy, and Robin.

Birds Scene Reprise

A slot for the non checker-board beauties. **Falcon** reports keep coming in from localities close to human habitation with prey items ranging from fantails to decapitated chooks. One was spotted alongside the Matai River walkway just opposite the Riverside Pool. (A falcon that is, not a decapitated chook). Rabbit Island is a great place for birding. While I was at home enjoying my porridge Sunday morning 20 May, Don was out and about with binoculars adding a juvenile **brown booby** to our local list. A difficult camera shot directly in the sun but enough to show what was in the sky that morning.



Figure 1 About 50m off shore, Rabbit Is, by Don C.

Also off Rabbit Island

The last **skua** reports came from Ingrid on 15 April, when 4000+**shearwaters** were feeding about 100-200m from the beach with five skua closely monitoring them and the white-fronted terns. Five gannets including a juvenile were also feeding while on 18 May about ten **gannets** were feeding vigorously in the Mapua channel, diving in from less than 10m above.

RECOVERY DISCOVERIES

Under the Motueka Bridge on 12 May with his binoculars and camera aimed upwards, Steve W recorded a flagged **black-fronted tern, CTJ**.

Mike Bell responded: 'This is a great record. This tern was banded on 17/4/2010 at the Wairau Lagoons, a month later it was seen at Lake Grassmere, but has not been recorded since. This is the first record of a black-fronted tern I have banded either on the Wairau River or Lagoons, which has been seen outside of Marlborough.'



Figure 2 photo by Steve W

Parish notices

Thank you to all those who have paid 2012 subs, - it's only 6 months to go before the next round, so if this year's subscription has slipped your mind, now would be a good time to get it sorted.

PROGRAMME 2012

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

Queen's Birthday Wknd	AGM and Conference Tauranga
Monday, 4 June	No local meeting
June	Wader count
30 June – 8 July	Garden Bird Survey
Monday, 2 July Indoor meeting	Speaker to be confirmed
Monday, 6 August Indoor meeting	Speaker: Dave Butler
August 12	Royal Spoonbill Count
Monday, 3 September Indoor meeting	Speaker: Peter Gaze

Thanks to those who contributed.

Contributions for the June newsletter: please email or phone me by 20 June
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