



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2012

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Lately after dark, I've grabbed my little torch and gone outside on slug patrol. I haven't yet acquired the taste for violas in my salads but I don't want slimy little introduced vegetarians to have them either. Nor do I have a taste for snails so they're despatched also. But, am I robbing the blackbirds and thrushes of their share of protein to raise families? I've seen the first of the thrush young, though I'm sure it thought I couldn't, as it sat motionless and tail-less on a low branch with its neck and bill stretched upwards like a little miniature bittern. There does seem to be plenty of dirt being grubbed about around the house so I guess there're enough meals left. I want my pansies and baby birds too. During the day I've engaged in a spot of shore-line birding. Earlier in the month 30-40 **little black shags** were fishing, or loafing on the rocks, between Haulashore and Rocks Road, and recently from my lounge window I've seen on several occasions **gannets** cruising in the Haven on a full tide very close to QE II Drive. I haven't seen any little blue penguins crossing Wakefield Quay but a couple of tourists thought the warning sign worthy of a photograph, pity it's the wrong penguin.

SHOW, TELL AND LISTEN

Monday's meeting (1 October) will be a members' night of telling stories and showing off photos and be prepared for a little bird song test! I have recordings and am asking for recognition, but if any of you are good at renditions of your own you're welcome to show off! No need to dress up.

WHAT ELSE TO LISTEN FOR

Pete has had a good response from members regarding the **morepork** survey and has thrown it open to people from the wider community to add their interest and listening skills to the project. The nights involved will be during the last two weeks of October and you can still email Pete if you'd like to participate.
gaze@slingshot.co.nz

No **shining cuckoo** calls have been reported yet.

OUT AND ABOUT

I didn't have to go over to Golden Bay to see the **dabchicks**, I spotted one on a sewer wetland pond out by the Boulder Bank. They've been sighted there three years in a row now, June 2010, July 2011 and Sept 2012. But Ingrid and Peter trekked over the hill and spotted two adult birds on Lake Killarney. They also reported one **bittern** in a paddock at Rangihaeata, at the intersection to the main road to Collingwood. Ken G sent in this snippet recently - "A local guy I know phoned me towards the end of July to say he had a Bittern in a paddock near his home. Unfortunately I was over in Nelson that day so missed it. It was foraging out in the open in a swampy farm paddock right up close to the road. My friend saw it while bicycling home from work one arvo. He raced home and got his camera and came back. The bird was pretty bold apparently; it's a main road and when he came back and stood at the fence line close to the bird; the local farm dogs got upset at him being there and started barking. The Bittern took no notice of them; and my friend whistled at the Bittern, which looked up and eyed him for a while, even coming towards him a couple of metres before it decided he wasn't that interesting and went back to foraging in the mud. The general area it was in has a bit of a Bittern history (Three Oaks/Motupipi) and is only a few hundred metres up the road from where one nearly knocked someone off their bike a couple of years ago when she startled it in a roadside swamp and it took off."

Ingrid's great view of the bittern in Golden Bay.



AN INTEREST IN BOVINES

Also hanging around in paddocks while associating with four legged beasts, **12 cattle egrets** were seen by Ingrid and Peter on a dairy farm, early Sept, just after the Collingwood bridge towards Pakawau. The farmer said they have been around for some time. And, whilst at the godwit celebration in Motueka, (23 Sept)

word got about of cattle egret just up the road, and five birds were duly seen from Staples Street. Several birds were sporting the start of breeding dress.

WITH AN EYE ON THE BANDS

On 5 September Ingrid noted a banded immature **black-billed gull** amongst eight adult birds on Wainui Spit, Golden Bay. It was banded as a chick on 10 December 2011 at Wairau River, Marlborough. Metal band E223739 with alphanumeric band A89.

The following day an adult **VOC** was seen with metal band K10822 at Milnthorpe. This bird had been banded on 22 December 2005 at Parapara but is now missing its orange flag.

FLYING THE FLAG

Godwits flagged and unflagged have started arriving back to our shores. To raise awareness and reverence for these amazing birds and the habitat they need Pauline S has been flying the flag for OSNZ by organizing a welcome celebration with her team in Motueka. Our estuaries host considerable numbers of Arctic migrants. A huge bouquet for Pauline, and many thanks to Rob S for making the time to give a stunning talk on godwit migration. An incredible bird undertaking incredible yearly journeys.

READING AND WATCHING

Over the winter months I read Lillian Beckwith's rather humorous account of life on the Hebrides round the middle of the 20th century. Cormorants were locally called skart and evidently good to eat if prepared properly, but fast forward to the 21st century and winter months are a good time for distinguishing our different species of shag in the field not in the pot. **Little black shags** have visited our waters and Willy spotted a black **little shag** in Picton recently. The latter have varying amounts of white down their front but an all black one is uncommon. Bill and tail lengths help to identify these two species. Check your Field Guide. Top of the South is a winter destination for thousands of **spotted shags**. Fifeshire Rock and Haulashore mole roosting are easy sites to view from Rocks Road. It would be interesting to know how many stick around over summer, if any. Keep your eyes peeled. The Tata Is breeding population is a permanent fixture. The big **pied shag**, striking in its black and white, is visible in colonies around the coast (remember to record these sites and send in details – see Aug newsletter), and the **black shag** frequents both saline and fresh waterways. Again, check the Field Guide for juvenile plumage of all these species.

SPOONBILLS

Thanks to all those who participated in the national count, in the middle of some rather unpleasant wet weather. Our region was given a pretty good coverage. The total for both Tasman and Golden Bays came to 205. Records show a total of 208 at the last national count in 2000. It seems that the number of roost sites have increased over the years and birds have spread out a bit round the region. It would be nice to have breeding birds stay for the summer. Keep a watch out.

PROGRAMME 2012

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Fisheries 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.

Monday, 1 October
Indoor meeting

Members' night
Show, Tell and Listen

End of October
Dates to be confirmed

Morepork Survey
gaze@slingshot.co.nz

Monday 5 November
Indoor Meeting

Speaker to be confirmed

November
Dates to be confirmed

Wader Count

Thanks to all those who contributed.

Contributions for the October newsletter:
please email or phone by 26 October

Gail 035450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz