



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER

January 2013

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BIRD OF THE MONTH: SONG THRUSH

See 'New Feature' p3

As the year 2012 turned into 2013 it was disappointing to hear of disturbance, deliberate or otherwise, and carnage of black-billed gulls, kiwi and roosting birds closer to home. It's sad to think some people have no reverence for wild life. On the other end of the scale the news of snipe being translocated was heartening, pity the TV news readers had a lovely taxidermied specimen of a godwit between them as they announced the item, and before Christmas I heard of an extra special mission to rescue an extra special chick from an extra special gull species that was found away from its nest on a wharf at Wellington Port. The chick had prematurely left its rooftop nest near the Rugby Union, most likely being well attended to on the ground by its parents but the SPCA was called in to save the day and presumably the SBBG species!! And replaced said chick back into the nest.

One of Rebecca Bowater's lovely photos of gannet at Farewell Spit



IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY AGAIN,

Three times actually,

Caspian Terns nesting on Bell's Island shell banks were washed out from their initial site in October, shifted a few metres, washed out again, then went back to their first choice. Success this time, just high enough to avoid the prevalence of 4.5m tides this summer, and recently 68 chicks were banded by Willie and his team. VOCs weren't so lucky, they've had a bit of a grim season with very few successful nests.

BANDING CASPIANS IS MESSY JOB

Written by Lotte Van Ginkle

Photo by Don Cooper

On the 21st of January a group of 15, mostly OSNZ members (including 3 from Marlborough), Doc ranger Bruce Vander Lee and his wife went out to band Caspian Tern chicks. On arrival, the race was on to catch all the chicks that would then have to be put into boxes, so that we could contain them until they were all caught and worked with. Most chicks were easily caught while trying to hide in groups amongst the long tussock grasses. One almost got away after running



Doc ranger Bruce Vander Lee and OSNZ member Lotte van Ginkel measuring a Caspian tern's wing.

halfway down the beach. Luckily I managed to catch up with the bird just before it reached the sea, and I have now learned first-hand how fast these chicks can be. After successfully having caught all birds, some members like myself had to hold the birds upside down so that other members could easily work with the birds. Luckily, I had the bird's head facing towards me, so that when the chicks pooped, it wasn't on me but on the person standing opposite at the 'wrong' end! Each chick had to have 2 bands put on their legs for identification, one metal and one plastic, and in turn has their lower legs and wing tips measured by Bruce Vander Lee. Finally, they were weighed by another OSNZ member and put back into a box, but not before also having puked on at least several people. You will not believe how big the pieces of fish were that they threw up from their lunch. It was a very successful day, with 68 chicks being released simultaneously to be re-united with their parents. This made quite a spectacle, especially for the younger members that were present who may never have witnessed this before, including myself. This was my first experience with handling this type of bird, nor have I handled such a big quantity, and I have found that I really enjoyed it. Bring on the next field trip! I'll be there!

SING A SONG OF YELLOWHAMMERS

Peter Frost from OSNZ Project and Activities Committee has asked that the following be circulated to OSNZ members.

Professor Stuart Parsons of the School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland, has been approached for assistance in advertising a new citizen science project being developed by Dr Petr Procházka, Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (<http://www.ivb.cz/staff-rndr-petr-prochazka-ph-d.html>). Details of the project are given below. Professor Parsons has asked the OSNZ to help promote the project and solicit inputs from its members.

Dr Procházka writes: 'The principal aim of the proposed project is to explore **yellowhammer** song dialects both in Great Britain and New Zealand. The idea behind this is based on the well-known fact that yellowhammers were introduced to New Zealand from Great Britain and we would like to test how stable over time their song dialects are. The past research undertaken in Europe discovered that yellowhammers show sharp borders between populations with particular song dialects. By mapping the geographical pattern of yellowhammer dialects in Great Britain and New Zealand we might reveal how the newly founded population spread across the free space and whether some new dialects emerged during the process of cultural evolution.'

'The recent Czech citizen science project investigating the distribution of yellowhammer dialects in the Czech Republic involved a decent number of people from the public and the results were encouraging. During two years we obtained more than 1700 recordings. The recording it is very easy for the public as common devices (mobile phones, digital cameras or video-cameras) are sufficient for this purpose and yellowhammer song can easily be recognized. The results can be viewed here: <http://www.strnadi.cz/kde>.'

'The website <http://yellowhammers.net> allows users to upload their recordings and it gives them all necessary information about the project and the study species. I would greatly appreciate if you could circulate this information among potentially interested people. You can also like and share the Facebook group <http://www.facebook.com/YellowhammerDialects> or use other social networks to spread the public awareness of this new project. Thank you for any help you can provide.'

A NEW FEATURE

Bird of the Month - Song Thrush

Not a society project nor indeed a particularly scientific activity but something to use observation skills and enjoy bird watching.

I would like to choose a bird of the month and ask members to take note of any aspects they spot of that bird, ordinary is fine, eg feeding, fighting, singing etc. Send your notes to me and I'll sort out a paragraph or two for the following newsletter. Please note time, place and date and other details such as identifying a plant the bird was feeding in, if not the actual food item. If you observe something interesting from another bird, store the info away until it's that bird's monthly turn. If we get good at this, data could be recorded in a more official format!

So keep your eyes and ears open for song thrush – *Turdus philomelos*. GDQ

MOVING WITH TECHNOLOGY

If one of your new year's resolutions for 2013 was to learn or study something new, here's your chance.

A training session to guide you through inputting and uploading bird data on **eBird** will be held in Motueka on Sunday 17 Feb. If any members who are interested and haven't already put their name down, please contact Robin Toy. twotoys@xtra.co.nz

The session is at 3 o'clock on Sunday 17 Feb, held at the SeniorNet rooms off Pah Street.

Pauline has given these directions:

When coming from Nelson, drive through Motueka and turn left into Pah Street after 3rd pedestrian crossing, at Post Office Hotel /Guthrie Bowen/Irish Bar/Countdown corner.

Drive past cricket field and turn right into driveway opposite Bennett St intersection. There is a multiple sign that includes Cricket Club, Bowling Club, Toy Library, SeniorNet.

Turn left at the end of the driveway, and you will see the SeniorNet rooms.

There is plenty of parking.

EVENING MEETING, 11 FEB

No speaker this month.

But a chance to come along and meet and greet fellow birders, relay holiday stories and show your favourite snap shots. Willie will show some great photos of dabchicks in Takaka. We have technical gear available so just bring your memory sticks etc.

Farewell Spit Gannet in November Photo by Rebecca Bowater



PROGRAMME 2013

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, 11 February
Indoor Meeting

New Year Meet and
Greet.

Sunday, 17 February
eBird Training session

Motueka
SeniorNet rooms 3.pm

Monday, 4 March
Indoor Meeting

Speaker to be advised

Monday, 8 April
Indoor Meeting
(2nd Monday in April)

Speaker to be advised

Thanks to all those who contributed.

Contributions for the February newsletter:
please email or phone by 24 Feb

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