



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2015

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Well, it's getting a bit late to wish everyone a happy new year, and I bet most of those new year resolutions have waned a bit by now anyway!. The Nelson airport has been busy with the comings and goings of holiday makers and our region has been visited by some uncommon Australian avian travellers. Lately I've been driving QEII Drive more frequently than usual, with one eye on the edge of the incoming and outgoing tides and have seen great bird spotting potential. Pied stilt, spur-winged plover, white faced heron, **banded dotterel**, flocks of godwit, c300 on 3 Feb, groups of VOC, gulls, terns, shags, ducks, and several occasions seen photographers taking advantage of the scenes too. Not many SIPO around the Haven as yet.

Sandhill crane, Florida, photo Rebecca Bowater 2014.



THIS SIDE OF THE HILL

I've heard my first evening call of **weka** recently, in Atawhai, in Montrose Drive, Ingrid has two resident weka calling and roaming around her home above Stoke every day and night and Ben noted his first sighting of a **banded rail**, with chick at Marahau end of November.

Around the Estuaries

Caspian terns, after suffering badly in their 2013 breeding season, successfully provided 70 chicks to be banded in December last by Willie and his great team. An adult's carcass found with a band showed the bird to be 17 yrs old from Willie's records.

Out at the Wakapuaka wetlands, Peter F has spotted five **white-winged black terns** recently, (probably a first for the area), **a bittern and several marsh crake**. Also three **royal spoonbill** in the middle of the wetland, one sporting breeding plumes, and a roosting flock of white-fronted terns just over the bank at the end of the road. A good chance to check out juvenile plumage. GDQ. R. Parrish. I understand a large cull of pukeko was taken earlier in the season.

Our birding highlight of January must go to four **Australian wood ducks**, including two juveniles, confirmed by Don C, at Maiseys Road. They were seen on more than one occasion.

AND

Thanks to those folk who specifically noted **red-billed gull** colonies - Golden Bay, Tasman Bay and around the Sounds. The big count is next year, made easier by this year's preliminary work.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

And the birding highlight here is from Ken G:

25 Jan. Pigeon Saddle Track. 'I've just heard an **Australian Common Koel** calling in the rainforest bush area of the Abel Tasman National Park – about 30 mins walk in from the road along one of the ridge tracks that criss-cross the area. I am 100% certain it's a Koel, they are one of my favourite tropical Australian birds and I've spent many a happy moment both looking at them and listening to them at various places around the Aussie Top End, Kakadu and North Queensland –the last time only a few weeks ago in fact. Additionally I have the Aussie BOCA CD set of bird calls, and have listened to the Koel many times on that- so I'd swear my life on it being a Koel. Even by Aussie bird standards, it's a pretty distinctive call. It called for about 2 minutes, I reckon it was about 200 meters away from me, and it was the complete repetition of both rising series of 3-4 notes, followed by the 'wurra wurra wurra' in a rising pitch.' Ken also reports kea from near the koel site, and falcon, weka and shining cuckoo in the Bay.

From Helen K:

'Today 21 November I saw the breeding pair of **NZ dabchicks** *Poliiocephalus rufopectus* on Lake Killarney, in the reeds at the corner nearest Commercial St and Abbeyfield House, observed from the viewing area at the corner of the Abbeyfield driveway at the northern end of the lake.

Two adults and one new chick on one of the adult's back.

I think this is the first observation of a young one this breeding season.'

From Ingrid:

'Today (25 Jan) we spotted three **reef herons** (grey phase) on Taupo Point (near Tata Beach/Golden Bay).

We have seen one here before, but never three at once.'

SOUTH EASTWARDS

From Ingrid again :

I spotted a flock of 210 black-fronted terns, flying low above Lake Sedgemere (Molesworth) on 10 December 2014 (evening).

Haven't seen that many b/f terns in a flock up there before.

Also spotted b/f tern and SIPO nests/chicks very close to the bridge just before Sedgemere (coming from the Rainbow).

Mystery photo : whose foot is this?



Then try to identify the carcass. Photo taken at Rabbit Island, Jan 2015

Two Notices from our Executive Officer:

The "**75th NZ Bird Conference & AGM**" is coming up - 29 May to 1 June. The conference will be held in Blenheim - just over an hour drive from Nelson - so it would be good to see as many Nelson members as possible this year!

"The People and the Birds"

Join us for this milestone and celebrate both our country's unique birds, but also the people who have shaped our organisation over the last 75 years.

This conference will not only look at our birds, but also at the people, projects, activities and history of the Society and its members, and then take a peek at our future direction.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Top of The South for what should be a fantastic weekend to mark this historical occasion!

For online registration go to www.osnz.org.nz

Sharon Alderson, who is a member of our Projects & Activities Committee, has organized a "**Teen Field Camp**" which will be held from 7 to 11 April 2015 on Mana Island!

The one week field camp is for 10 to 12 teenagers in Year 12/13 or aged 16-18 (if not at school) - and a pilot for what will hopefully become an annual event!

This field camp is a fantastic opportunity for teens to get a hands-on experience with birds and develop skills in bird ecology!

All details and an application form are available on our website <http://osnz.org.nz/node/581>

**FIRST MEETING OF THE YEAR: Monday Feb 9th
AT LAST YEAR'S VENUE**

With appreciative thanks to Charles Hufflett we are again welcome to have the use of Solander Fisheries board room for our monthly meetings.

PROGRAMME 2015

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 2nd March

Indoor Meeting

Thank you to this month's contributors.

Contributions for February newsletter by 20 Feb, please email, snailmail, or phone:

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