



NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2016

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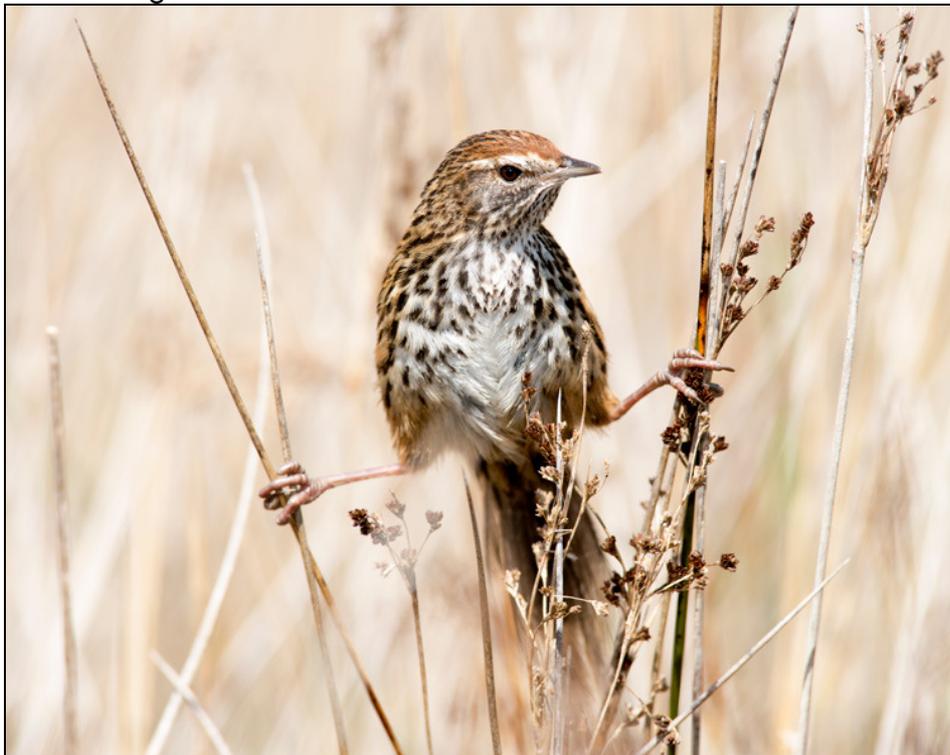
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Welcome to 2016. Local birders with keen eyes have been out and about this summer with some good results. Top prize must go to Willie for spotting a **Cape gannet** (*morus capensis*) on Farewell Spit, early January. Amongst several thousand Australasian gannets (*morus serrator*) engaged in breeding affairs on the colonies he noticed one with a longer gular (throat) stripe and all black tail. The bird has since been confirmed as breeding with a local gannet.

Fernbird sightings are being regularly noted around the region. Glenhope: Richard W has them on his property there. Golden Bay: “.....we'd been told by a local farmer how he has plenty of fernbirds on his property.....half an hour there and we'd have to agree. They were running around our feet like mice and checking us out from the scrub” Oct 18

Photo Ken George 2015



BLASTS FROM THE PAST – well, last year actually:

From Ken George, (Golden Bay) “ *We had our scheduled local Big Day here on the date planned – Labour Weekend Saturday. The weather was perfect. A tight team of four, three primary spotters and one designated record keeper. There was nothing in the least scientific about it, it was all just about getting a bit of fun into our birding, - the object being to count as many species as possible within the one 24 hour day. In our case, we only did sunrise to sunset, so about 13.5 hours of solid non-stop birding, total distance travelled was 184 kms, both walking and driving, in a clockwise rotation around Golden Bay. Our species count was **59 species**. It was all great fun and even as reasonably seasoned birders, I think everybody in the team learned something new. **Having now got the first Golden Bay Big Day done, I'd like to issue a challenge to you lot over the other side of the hill to put together a Team Tasman and have a crack at it your side. We could make it an annual team fun event, any takers?**”*

FALCON FEASTS

“... our U3A birding group walking and watching in Queens Gardens, Nelson, at 9am one morning, spotted a native falcon swoop on the pond, taking up a duckling, then settled on a nearby branch low down and close to one of the paths, to pluck and devour it totally - oblivious of its human audience. When finished, it ambled along the branch, then flew up to a higher branch overlooking the Chinese Garden, but quite visible to anyone watching. No doubt there to digest its take before another attack on the pond. Undoubtedly, top of the food chain! You just have to be there and watching for the unexpected. Passers-by on their way to work, and builders on the Suter construction site, also oblivious to such goings on.” Grace S. Oct/Nov '15

AND from Richmond, last week, Don C has again been called to witness a falcon mealtime in a Wilkes Street property. Not that far from the CBD.

A BELLBIRD REQUEST from Chris Smuts-Kennedy. “*My request is: can you please provide any records of bellbirds nesting within town or city boundaries in your region? I will welcome any definite nest records (adults feeding fledged chicks is good), circumstantial evidence, anecdotal reports and assumptions. I'm especially interesting in how much they might rely on urban or adjacent bushy parks for at least part of their breeding home range, so a precise location would be great (grid ref or street address). With precise locations, I can use Google Earth or Google Maps to look at such things. Comments on any pest management in such areas would also be welcome. My reason for asking is; there is currently a nest in a home garden in suburban Cambridge, and their breeding home range appears to be almost entirely within home gardens (albeit some large and well treed). It's concealed in dense foliage about 8m high, but behaviour suggests the chick(s) hatched about a week ago. A few males have been increasingly visiting this area since pest control was started in some surrounding regional reserves including Maungatautari about 9 years ago, and last May a female also arrived. She has been present in/around this garden ever since. It is a significant event for Waikato, and I'd like to see how it fits in a national context.* Chris Smuts-Kennedy, 168 Burns St, Cambridge 3432, Ph 07 8231331.

PROJECT JANSZOOM WETLAND BIRD SURVEY IN THE ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK

During Oct/Nov last year Ingrid Hutzler and her team of volunteers (including Birds NZ members) enjoyed surveying various wetlands within the Park with early mornings, late nights and gum boots stuck in the mud! The main objective of this initial survey was to find out more about the distribution of key wetland species within the Park, in particular NZ fernbird, banded rail, marsh crake, spotless crake and Australasian bittern. The survey included a search for foot prints, playback/listening, as well as the use of three acoustic recorders*, which are programmed to record a total of six hours over sunset and sunrise at each site. Analysing the sound files from these recorders will provide a better picture of the presence and absence of wetland birds. Ultimately, the survey will help understand habitat suitability within the Park, and how these wetland areas can be managed to provide better habitats for these birds. Ingrid will be giving us a presentation some time this year.

*One of the acoustic recorders is owned by the Nelson Branch of Birds NZ and this survey has already shown how important this device is in recording cryptic wetland species.

FIORDLAND CRESTED PENGUIN IN TE PUKATEA

One of the "accidental" sightings during the wetland bird survey was a **Fiordland crested penguin** in a cave at Te Pukatea! The penguin was first spotted by hut warden Steve Franklin and identified as a Fiordland crested penguin by the wetland bird survey team. Meanwhile Ingrid has reported this sighting as an "Unusual Bird Report" to the Rare Birds Committee, and it turns out that a very similar individual was spotted on 7 October at the Glen - so likely the same bird?

Photo Til Melis 2015



WADER COUNT

From Rob: The census of top of South Island (including Marlborough)

Just over 31.000 shorebirds (16 species) have been counted of which 26.000 (83%) were migratory shorebirds. Most of the count was done between 26th and 30th November 2015 by about 20 counters.

The count was successful with all areas covered. Interesting species recorded: Pacific Golden Plover (Farewell Spit and Waimea), Lesser Sand plover (Farewell Spit), Red-necked Stint (Farewell Spit), Whimbrel (Pakawau), Grey-tailed Tattler (Waimea), Sanderling (Farewell Spit), Sharp tailed Sandpiper (Farewell Spit) and Grey Plover (Farewell Spit).

Farewell Spit

Farewell Spit was challenging with about 35kn wind. As a result, most of the migratory shorebirds where hunkered down in very small areas. About 80% of all red knots where in Banana Pan area and Lagoon, and 75% of all the godwits were in the lagoon area.

Pied Oystercatcher numbers, Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot were average. Despite the tough wind conditions, the count went well. Some birds may have flown earlier over the dunes to the tidal flats; this is very likely the reason why turnstone numbers and maybe banded dotterel numbers are low. A red knot from the Amur Region was spotted at Farewell Spit.

Golden Bay

Average numbers were counted. Numbers of Red Knot have declined since 2013 from 100-200 to some birds. Decline of this species is caused by lower numbers in Westhaven Inlet..

Tasman Bay

All numbers were counted in average numbers.

WITH BANDS ON THEIR LEGS

Willie and his team put their usual effort into the annual one off banding session with **Caspian tern** chicks on Bells Island early in January. 42 birds were banded, just over half the number from last year. Meanwhile during the **VOC** breeding season Willie and Don have spent many hours observing pairs and nesting round the Waimea with the latest count of caught and banded chicks, (the one's that didn't fly away that is!) being 9. So, there's another batch of birds out there ready to be sighted and reported by the rest of us.

SPOTTED WHILE OUT AND ABOUT

A **black-fronted dotterel** was seen on the Waimea R near Brightwater, JL, and a **gull-billed tern** over the Waimea Est, also a **white-winged black tern** colouring up, SW.

TIP OFF PAYS OFF

This week, Willie heard about nesting **black-fronted terns** on the Waimea River and went to investigate. He counted c40 birds mostly in the air, including juveniles, with birds working the small rapids. Five occupied nests previously reported had fledged, probably the last of the season. The island near the confluence of the Waimea and Wairau Rivers no doubt shifts with floods etc but this year supported black-fronted terns and **14 pied stilt nests**. Good news. But black-fronted terns attempting to nest near the Motueka Bridge earlier, again as in recent years, were unsuccessful.

CURRENT SUBSCRIPTIONS. **Thank you** to those members who have renewed their subs for this year. Now is a good time for those who are a bit behind to catch up and secure receiving future publications.

PROGRAMME 2016

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.

TUESDAY 2 February

Indoor evening meeting

February

Date to be advised

Top of the South

Wader Count

Monday 7 March

Indoor evening

Thank you to this newsletter's contributors.

Contributions for February newsletter by 20 Feb, please email, snailmail, or phone: Gail 03 5450456, stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz