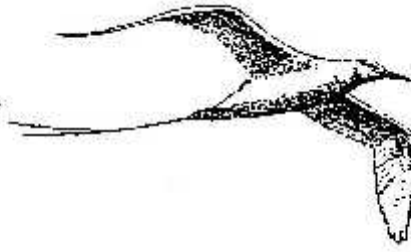


# AMOKURA



*Newsletter  
of the Northland Region  
of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand*

## **July 2013**

## **Amokura 107**

**Published in February, July and October of each year**

**MEETINGS** of the Northland Branch of the O.S.N.Z. are held each month on the second Thursday, for the period FEBRUARY to DECEMBER.

TIME: 7-30p.m.

VENUE: Founders Room, Alzheimers Society, 321 Western Hills Drive, Whangarei.

COST: A donation of \$3-00 per person per meeting is requested toward the cost of hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

**ALL WELCOME**

### **PROGRAMME TO OCTOBER 2013**

JULY	AMOKURA 107 <b>GARDEN BIRD SURVEY – 29 June to 7 July.</b> Details below
	11 Meeting: 7-30p.m. Speaker – Robert Webb. Whangarei Native Bird Recovery
	20 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	23 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
AUGUST	8 MEETING:
	17 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	20 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
SEPTEMBER	12 MEETING:
	14 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	17 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL
	22 Caspian Tern nesting survey
OCTOBER	AMOKURA 108
	10 MEETING:
	12 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
	15 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL

For details of the Garden Bird Survey and a form, see <http://osnz.org.nz>

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## BRANCH HAPPENINGS

For the October 2012 meeting, we were joined by the sprightly Johnny Kendrick, a veteran member of O.S.N.Z. living at Waipu, who is renowned for his superb recordings of native bird-calls that have been used extensively by Radio N.Z. for some years. It is with regret therefore, that we record his passing on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at North Haven Hospice after a short illness, aged 91 years. This very enthusiastic man crammed a lot of living into an apparently fast-paced life-much of which was devoted to conservation.

Skimming through the year to date I note that among other things, our Christmas gathering was again a very enjoyable “pot-luck” meal and that the following day, a group of four of us accepted an invitation from the environmental team at Refining N.Z. to join them on a tour in one of their vans, to see some of the birds nesting within the perimeter fencing at the refinery. This will be the subject of a future article in Southern Bird. Fifteen members attended the first meeting of the year in February, where Janet and Julie told us of a trip by Kayak to observe a shag colony on the Whangarei Harbour. March was our AGM and marked the end of a long stint by Den Carter as our Treasurer. Recently joined member, Jim O’Malley, has stepped into the position and we are available to help him as he completes his move to Whakapara. Thanks Jim!

Our April meeting resolved to review our accumulated assets and to establish a temporary sub-committee to complete this task and to report back. The library of books and magazines is the main storage problem as they were not being used to the extent that they warrant. Jim O’Malley reported that there were still about 6 or 7 Pelicans on the Northern Wairoa River near Toka Toka. At our May meeting Janet reported large numbers of NZ Dotterel at Mangawhai. The June meeting was attended by 18 of us and most of the seating was used so the meeting resolved to purchase chairs up to a value of \$400-00 and to donate these to the Alzheimers Society. Janet reported on the OSNZ AGM in Dunedin and her post conference visit to Invercargill and Audrey was asked to continue representing us on the Fairy Tern Trust. The technology defeated Kevin and others, so we had to forego watching a video about birds, but better luck next time.

### RECENT SIGHTINGS

Shining Cuckoo	1	1711 Ngunguru Rd.	15-09-12 H. Ward
Shining Cuckoo	1	Whatitiri Scenic Res.	20-10-12 D & R Crockett
NZ Pigeon	4	Western Hills Quarry	24-10-12 J. Snell
Australasian Bittern	1	1711 Ngunguru Rd.	28-10-12 H & M Ward
NZ Pigeon	3	Pukenui walk-way	31-10-12 J. Snell
Tomtit	2	Pukenui walkway	31-10-12 J Snell
NZ Pigeon	1	Selwyn Park, Maunu	01-11-12 J Snell
Australasian Bittern	2	Barge Park, Maunu	08-11-12 D Crockett
Australasian Little Grebe	2	Limeburners Wetlands	08-11-12 A. McCracken
Australasian Shoveller	2	“ “	08-11-12 A. McCracken

Oriental Pheasant	1	Western Hills Track	12-12 J Ballinger
Spotted Dove	2	Kensington area	08-01-13 P. M. Cozens
N.Z. Dotterel	25+	Johnson Point Rd. Waipu	22-01-13 J Snell & C Burt
Banded Dotterel	25+	“ “ “	“ “
Fairy Tern	2	“ “ “	“ “
Banded Rail	1	Old Mill Lane, Ngunguru	Feb 13 H. Ward
Australasian Bittern	1	“ “	“ “
S.I. Pied Oystercatcher	4000+	Kelly's Bay, Kaipara Harb.	17-02-13 J Snell & J Hudson
N.Z. Dotterel	36	Johnson Point Rd. Waipu	02-03-13 “ “
Banded Dotterel	41	“ “	“ “ “
Variable Oystercatchers	85-90	“ “	“ “ “
Goldfinch	40+	Maunu	12-03-13 Jean Hawken
Spotted Dove	7	Tatton Road, Maunu	14-03-13 T. Toohill
Pheasant & 6 chicks	1	Maungatapere	Mar 13 P. Smith
Pelican	1	Paua, Parengarenga	Mar 13 V. Muldrock
Morepork (Dead on beach)	1	Ruakaka/Waipu River	26-03-13 J. Snell
N.Z. Pigeon (Dead on beach)	1	“ “	“ “
Royal Spoonbill	9	Weber's Farm, Pahi	31-03-13 J Snell
Long-tailed Cuckoo (Dead)	1	Mt. Tiger Rd. (hit window)	05-04-13 P Stevenson
Banded Rail	1	Old Mill Lane, Ngunguru	09-04-13 Melva Ward
Royal Spoonbill	21	Lagoon @ Johnson Point	09-04-13 J. Snell & C Burt
Spotted Dove	5	Maungatapere	Mar/Apr T. Toohill
Tui harassing an Aust. Harrier	1	Whareora Valley, Whg.	Apr J. Smith
Pelican	7	Nth. Wairoa River, Darg.	Apr J. O'Malley
Caspian Tern	1	Whananaki South	21-04-13 J. O'Malley
California Quail	14	Quarry Garden, Russell Rd.	02-05-13 P. Smith
Reef Heron (Adult & Juv)	2	Waipu	02-05-13 Tony Beauchamp
Grey Duck (+6 ducklings)	1	Parua Bay	07-05-13 D. Calvert
California Quail	10+	Mangawhai Heads	09-05-13 J. O'Malley
Blackbird (Egg only)	1	On grass @ Nixon St. Park	29-05-13 P. Cozens
Albatross (plus young)	5	Otago Peninsula	03-06-13 J. Snell
Yellow-eyed Penguin	24+	“	“ “
Dunnock	6+	Gardens @ Otago Museum	“ “
Stewart Island Shag	60+	Otago Peninsula	“ “
Banded Rail (caught in Myna trap)	1	Old Mill Lane, Ngunguru	04-06-13 Melva Ward
N.Z. Dotterel	1	Whananaki South	06-06-13 J. O'Malley
S.I.P.O.	60+	Mudbank opp. Dockland 5	12-06-13 D. Calvert
Royal Spoonbill	35	In Mangroves Port Nikau	12-06-13 “
Goldfinch	46+	Heatherlea Rd., Ruakaka	13-06-13 J. Snell
California Quail	30+	Church St. Onerahi	13-06-13 Madelaine
Morepork (Heard ea. day 2a.m. to 5a.m. Tikipunga)			May/June P. Smith
Australian Magpie	1	Takahe St. Tikipunga	“ “

## N.Z. DOTTEREL v TECHNOLOGY

The endangered N.Z. Dotterel *Charadrius aquilonius* has nested near the entrance to the Whangarei Harbour for many years and was displaced in the late 1950's by the work required to construct the oil refinery at Marsden Point. The resourceful birds then used the harbour foreshore towards One Tree Point until they were harassed by predators and seemed to have vanished. As oil refining is a potentially explosive process, the plant is enclosed by a secure two metre high perimeter fence with limited access and 24hr security.

Refining N.Z. operates under a restrictive resource consent and retains an environmental team to monitor gas, water and particulate emissions, both adjacent to their plant and across the harbour at Bream Head. They have established predator traps along the entire perimeter fence and employed a contractor to monitor and to maintain these traps.

While carrying out one of our regular wader counts on the Whangarei Harbour, two of our members were alerted to the presence of N.Z. Dotterel within the compound by a security guard who put us in touch with Steve Tyson, a member of the Refining Co. Environmental Team. Steve confirmed that there were Dotterel and other birds within the perimeter fencing and that they were nesting there. He later arranged for a party of four of our members to be admitted to the compound to see for ourselves the work that the Company is doing as a responsible corporate citizen.

The total area within the perimeter fence is a restricted access zone and we were processed, tagged and hard-hatted before entering a van driven by Steve who, together with Genelle Slack, gave us a running commentary as we drove slowly around the perimeter of the storage tanks pointing out the nesting birds. In case of leakage, these huge steel tanks are surrounded by earth "bunds" or mounds to contain any fluid. These bunds give the birds an elevated "look-out" and the territories are well occupied.

The birds are accustomed to the Refinery staff and their vehicles and appear to ignore the limited movement around their territory. One Dotterel nest that we saw was a scrape on top of a mound of rubble where the ground was being cleared between two tanks, causing work to stop in that area until the chicks fledged. A notice had even been erected saying "Birds Nesting, Please Do Not Disturb". At the date of our regular survey, Genelle counted 20+ pairs nesting within the compound plus Variable Oyster Catchers, Pied Stilts on the filtration ponds, many Red-billed Gulls on the water treatment plant and the occasional Black-backed Gull as well.

Because of safety rules and regulations we were not able to get out of the van to take photographs, but were very impressed by the steps taken by Refining N.Z. to protect the birds during their seasonal "visit" – a superb example of adaptation by the birds to the use of a modified predator free habitat to their own advantage. The trapping programme has intercepted rats, stoats, feral cats, and similar predators.