



Studying NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS
OSNZ®

NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2010

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I'm not expecting this newsletter to be read by everyone this month. Many members will be out in the field, catching, counting, co-ordinating, collaborating. It's a busy time! If any errors and omissions were detected in last month's newsletter, I have a fabulous excuse. My first wee granddaughter arrived in the middle of proceedings! She may be my excuse for awhile!

SHOW AND TELL

Enter Grey Ghost

The Department of Conservation has listed **South Island kokako** as extinct, but 20 OSNZ members came to our November meeting to hear Alec Milne and Rhys Buckingham talk about reports of **kokako** encounters and the difficulties of presenting, for acceptance, convincing evidence to OSNZ Rare Birds Committee, (now revamped as Records Appraisal Committee). In particular we heard about close encounters during the past decade or two, and close to home, near Onekaka and in the Upper Inangahua Valley. A new web site, greyghost.org.nz, has been set up by SIKIT – South Island Kokako Investigation Team. You can check a map for sites of recent encounters, read reports, keep up with recent news and send in your contributions, written and or monetary. Trampers, naturalists, adventurers, hunters, bush workers etc, are urged to record and report their finds and sightings at the time. A year or two later is too late, although historical evidence is still worth sharing.

BIRDS SCENE

Unusual, interesting, new records, and, dismal or cheerful observations from our members.

Over in Golden Bay Ken George didn't hear the **long-tailed cuckoo** call, but a neighbour heard it smash into her glass ranch-door sliders, unfortunately with a fatal consequence. There will be no photos of **banded dotterel** chicks from the fenced off nests on Motueka Sandspit. The nests have gone. Stormy high tides had an impact. Now the cheerful news, Willie saw two **banded rail** at Paramata Flat, near Delaware Bay, and reports 27 **caspian terns** sitting on nests on the Bells Island shell banks.

CLEAN UP YOUR ACT,

Well, your beach, anyway

With a bit of luck in future this big public event will be organised for a more bird friendly time, i.e. nowhere near breeding months, instead of 'beaches pristine for summer'! The authorities involved have been advised.

OUT AND ABOUT

Please to remember the dates of November,

With gunpowder, reason and vocs
(and godwits),

There's no reason why David and Rob,
Should ever be forgot..(With apologies to Guy Fawkes).

There will be Top of the South cannon netting again on 23-25 November. Then the arsenal is taken south for exercises at Warrington, the Catlins area, and Avon/Heathcote during December and back here to the top of the south early January. Contact Rob rschckrd@xtra.co.nz Ph 03 5765371

COUNTING ON FLORA

The second of the November Flora Track 5min bird counts is coming up on Thursday 18 and the third count, Thursday 25. On the first trip 6 members saw kea and heard kaka. A good incentive to be there for the other counts. Contact Pauline psamways@clear.net.nz Ph 03 5287257

WITH YOUR GUMBOOTS

Another reminder for the Tracking Expedition out on Waimea Estuary. Graeme Elliot will lead a **banded rail** outing on Saturday 13 November. Footprints and other sign will be looked for to establish the presence of these birds compared to their cousins, big and small. Participants should then be able to identify rail on their own future estuary wanderings. Please meet at 8.00am along Stringer Straight, on the old coastal road, near the entrance to the defunct Playhouse Theatre. If the weather be inclement, we'll try Sunday 14. Contact Willie, ph 5447189, william23@slingshot.co.nz.

ADELE AND THE ROBINS

From Pete Gaze.

In May 2009 several branch members helped DOC and the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust capture 31 robins on Motuara (an island in the Outer Queen Charlottes Sound) for translocation to Adele Island off ATNP.

Adele has had all stoats and mice removed. All birds were released successfully. The Trust has asked the society for assistance in monitoring the establishment of robins on the island and in late October we began this work. Transport was provided on one of the commercial vessels belonging to Wilsons Abel Tasman. A track exists around the perimeter of the island along which stoat traps are maintained and our observers had the task of slowly walking the track, recording whether or not robins were encountered between each trapsite. Counters are spaced apart by either going in different directions or leaving 20 minutes apart.

Few encounters were recorded on this trip but it was pleasing to see that all were unbanded and good evidence that there has been some productivity. Future counts will provide a better picture of how the species establishes.

As Willie C, Ingrid H, Rebecca B and friend completed the robin beat, they heard shining cuckoo, saw shearwaters out at sea and Willie commented on the presence of penguins on account of their smell.



Figure 1 Rebecca, Ingrid & Willie on the robin beat

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

Pete G says it's been slow progress with **black-fronted tern** breeding on the Wairau so not much to report from there, but a chance to look for other colonies is coming up soon. On 18 November there will be a **Motueka River** bird survey. A chance to look not only for black fronted terns but other riverbed inhabiting birds as well. Contact Pete, ph 5463161 (wk) or pgaze@doc.govt.nz.

The Roving Birdwatcher

Sing a Song

I don't get to hear the dawn chorus. I'm inclined to burn the candle at the other end. I'm a bit of a night owl. (Except for one memorable dawn traipsing through Puketi Forest to hear NI kokako, and yes we got a close encounter), but I love to listen during the day to avian songs and calls. Hearing a particular bird song can transport you back to a special time and or place. For me, yellow hammers on Farewell Spit, bellbirds at Peel Forest, and Canada geese in the Mckenzie Country.

Once, when describing a dunnock's song to someone as a cross between a chaffinch and skylark, a well known ornithologist overheard me and raised his eyebrows. I've since ditched that definition. When I was writing university essays a year or so ago, the thrush in my Dunedin backyard would call, 'ref'rence it, ref'rence it', and a friend near by swore her backyard songster came with a warning, 'mon-og-amy, mon-og-amy'. A.L. Tennyson put it more poetically for the throstle, 'Summer is coming, summer is coming, I know it, I know it, I know it.....' Repetition is the key to a thrush's song. . Blackbirds don't repeat themselves. From a period much older than now comes the suggestion to listen for the free use of the round vowels O and U.

My mother used to say a greywarbler warbled the words 'it's go-o-o-ing to rain'. Recently a writer in the NZ Gardener magazine said he'd heard greywarblers described as singing part of Led Zeppelins, 'Stairway to Heaven'. I wonder what part of the country they came from.

Yellow hammers are said to sing 'little bit of bread and no che-ese'. I've seen them singing from a hawthorn bush where the new leaf buds themselves are called bread and cheese. As yet I haven't sampled them.

Along with Ninox species discussion we say, more-pork, they say boo-book, (our friends over the ditch, that is).

Pied stilt call like yapping dogs, juvenile stilt, like slightly different yapping dogs, and black stilt call like other slightly different yapping dogs.

Californian quail have a distinctive call, but my rendition is not something I can politely put to paper! GDQ

LOOKING AHEAD

I will be in Wellington early December but get your bird notes sent to me by Dec 12. The bird I'll be listening to, is daughter Tess in concert.

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

As dates of field work are often altered, please confirm with the group leaders before turning up with your kit and thermos.

PROGRAMME 2010

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Building", Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). Anyone interested is welcome! Contact Stuart Wood 03-544 3932 or Don Cooper 03-544 8109.

Saturday 13 November

Banded Rail Tracking
Waimea Estuary
William23@slingshot.co.nz
ph 5447189

Monday 15 and
Thursday 18 November

Counting on Flora
5min bird counts
psamways@clear.net.nz
03 5287257

Thursday 18 November

Motueka River bird survey
pgaze@doc.govt.nz
ph 5447189

Tuesday-Thursday
23-25 November

Top of the South
Wader Cannon netting
rschckrd@xtra.co.nz
Ph 03 5765371

Monday 6 December

Indoor meeting
Speaker to be confirmed

Thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the December newsletter: please email or phone me by 12 December. Gail 03 5450456 stagefrightmusic@paradise.net.nz