

Birds New Zealand  
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**Birds New Zealand**

*Otago Region Newsletter 2/2016 February 2016*



photo courtesy of Euan Kennedy

This month's identification quiz. Who are all these warmly attired ornithologists and bird watchers setting off for Aramoana on the field trip at the 1961 OSNZ AGM conference in Dunedin? Answers on a postcard please to the newsletter editor. Solution next month.

## **Ornithological snippets**

This report covers the period from 12th January to 17th February, and includes records from Ebird and BirdingNZ.net.

**California Quails** have been regularly seen by the Clutha River in Balclutha by Suzanne Schofield, and breeding was confirmed by the sighting of 5 or 6 chicks there on 23rd Jan. Bruce McKinlay found 540 **Paradise Shelduck** at Tomahawk Lagoon on 30th Jan, while at Hawkesbury Lagoon on 12th Derek Onley counted 626 **Grey Teal** and 2 **Muscovy Ducks**.

On the Monarch cruise on 17th Jan, Mark Ayre came across 8 **Giant Petrels**, a single **Buller's Shearwater** was seen off Taiaroa Head on 3rd Feb by an anonymous ebird, and a pure white **Spotted Shag** was seen in Otago Harbour during the last week of January.

Mary Thompson reported 2 **Weka** on Mou Waho in Lake Wanaka on 14th Feb as part of the reintroduction scheme, Mary also found 161 **S I Pied Oystercatchers** at Aramoana. 349 **Pied Stilts** were at Hawkesbury Lagoon on 12th January (Derek Onley), whilst a single **Black Stilt** was seen at Kakanui River mouth by Tom Waterhouse on 7th Feb.

At Lake Wilkie in the Catlins. Penelope Gillette saw 6 **Tomtits** on 25th Jan, and an impressive total of 32 **Fernbirds** were located at Sinclair Wetlands by Mary Thompson et al on 30th Jan. Finally, widely separated **Cirl Buntings** were reported from Cardrona on 22nd Jan by Douglas Long, and from Shag Point on Feb 9th by Jim Dawe.

Please send any reports for the next summary to richard@pcconnect.co.nz.  
**Richard Schofield**

## Albino or Leucistic Spotted Shag Spotted on Quarantine Island, February 6th.



Photo taken by Kristen Bracey

Kristen Bracey and Chris Brown informed me that they spotted this white Spotted Shag during a circumnavigation of Quarantine Island on February 6th. It was in a small (about 20 birds) mixed colony of mainly Stewart Island shags with a few Spotted Shags, on the roost slope just above Nicol's passage (between Quarantine and Goat Islands) near the harbour marker. Kristen took this photo with her cell phone from the boat.

This is a very exciting observation as only 2 other records of albino/leucistic Spotted Shags are known, one by Buller in 1891 and the other in 2007 reported in *Notornis* by Andrew Crossland (*Notornis*, 2012, Vol. 59: 82-84). So this would be only the third record in 127 years! We are not sure from the photo what leucistic type this bird has - whether completely white (with pink eyes and skin and feet), or a form where the beak, skin, legs are still coloured. Hopefully it will be seen again and more close-up photos taken to sort this out.

On the 14th February, a repeat survey at high tide when many more shags were roosting, the white shag was not spotted.

**Mary Thompson**

## Report of Field Trip to Sinclair Wetlands for Summer Count

After a week of rain and gloomy weather it was great to get outdoors and head to the Sinclair Wetlands for the summer count. Seven members took part. We had enough teams to do the 5minute bird counts in duplicate.



That's 39 green ones and 19 brown.

Everyone had fantastic close-up views of fernbirds feeding, rather than the usual fleeting view when a fernbird pops up to check us out! Bruce and Andrew again surveyed the fernbirds along the track- total of 32 seen or heard compared to 6 in the winter and 19 in spring; there may have been young birds, which might account for their less cryptic behaviour. Fernbirds were also seen at all the 5 minute bird count stations.

The number of waterfowl evident was still low compared to winter, but paradise ducks were now present (probably flocking at start of moult). Several families of young scaup were seen.

|                  | Winter/July | Spring/October | Summer/January |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Greylag goose    | 39          | 5              | 0              |
| Canada goose     | 31          | 10             | 25             |
| Black Swan       | 97          | 29             | 27             |
| Paradise duck    | 0           | 0              | 87             |
| Mallard(hybrid)  | 299         | 3              | 35             |
| Shoveler         | 12          | 7              | 2              |
| Grey Teal        | 72          | 5              | 0              |
| Scaup            | 617         | 59             | 83             |
| Coot             |             | 3              | 0              |
| Black shag       | 0           | 0              | 1              |
| Little Pied shag | 1           | 2              | 1              |

5 Minute bird counts were done at 6 sites on Ram Island by Pat and Mary and Lesley, Francie and Derek, so we had duplicate counts. This is the first time brown creeper have been seen on Ram Island during our surveys; seen at two stations. Also the first record of a tui. This was the greatest count for silvereye, redpolls and fernbirds. Surprisingly, only two chaffinch were recorded compared to being very much in evidence during the spring count. No dunnock were recorded and no welcome swallows. The total species seen this time was 30. All these counts have been entered into eBird under hotspots, Sinclair wetlands and Ram Island.

### **Tuaki fights back**



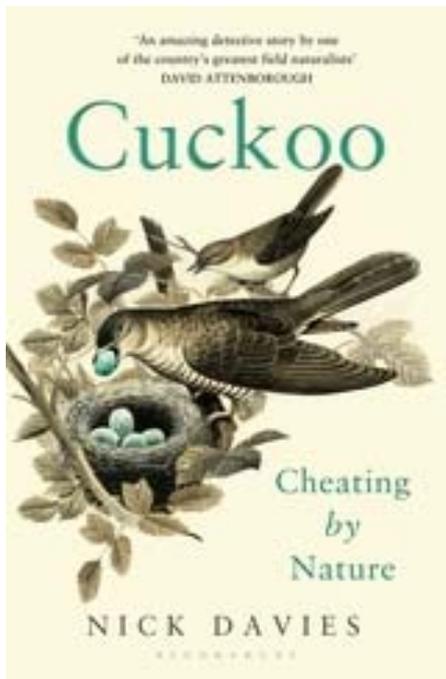
I saw this at the cockle company boatshed in Papanui inlet 24 Jan 2016. A few hours after low tide. This juvenile red-billed gull could still fly and we could not catch it. I do not know who will die first! The tongue appeared to be caught,

the lower bill could move a little. The tuaki was a good size.

**Graeme Loh**

## Notices and Business

### Items of ornithological interest added to Dunedin Public Libraries' collections in 2015



Bill Oddie unplucked : columns, blogs and musings

Cuckoo : cheating by nature, by Nick Davies

Ducks, by Raewyn Adams

Falcons, by Katie Marsico

The field guide to the birds of New Zealand, by Barrie Heather & Hugh Robertson. 2015 ed.

Gods of the morning : a bird's eye view of a Highland year, by John Lister-Kaye

The hand guide to the birds of New Zealand, by Hugh Robertson & Barrie Heather. 3rd ed.

The narrow edge : a tiny bird, an ancient crab, and an epic journey, by Deborah Cramer

Operation Nest Egg chick : a kiwi story, by Maria Gill

The penguin king [blu-ray disc, 2D and 3D]

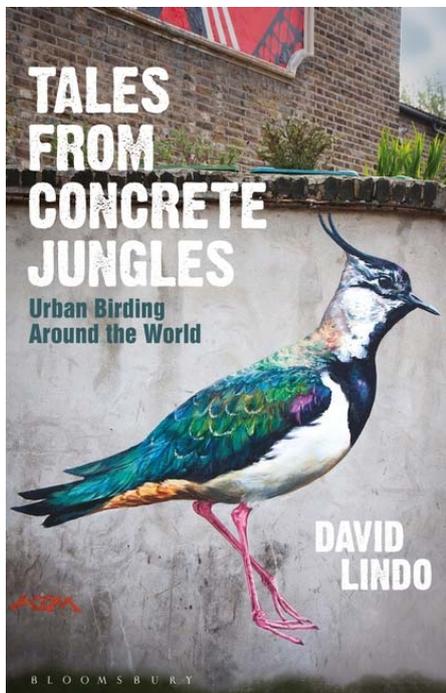
Project Puffin : the improbable quest to bring a beloved seabird back to Egg Rock, by Stephen W. Kress

Pyramid Valley and beyond, by Richard N. Holdaway

Sir George Grey and the moa, by Bruce Spittle

Swans and geese, by Raewyn Adams

Tales from concrete jungles : urban birding around the world, by David Lindo



**Alan Baker**

## **eBird Otago**

Having recently seen Cirl Buntings at Blackley's Dam on the Maniototo Plains I took the opportunity to check on Cirl Bunting validated sightings in Otago eBird. To my surprise there were 14 in all, in 2016 there has been sightings from Shag Point (1 bird), Cardrona (1 bird) and Blackley's Dam (3 birds), while from 2015 to 2000 there were sightings at Lindis Pass (1 bird), two sightings at Bushy Beach (1 bird each time), Hawea (1 bird), two at Aramoana (1 bird each time), Lauder (1 bird), Sinclair Wetlands (2 birds) and one sighting in Dunedin (3 birds). In 1991 one bird was seen in the Waikouaiti River and in 1989 a single bird was seen at Berwick.

Also I am really pleased to see that some birders are going back through their field notes and entering their historical data in eBird. In one case I have been getting observations from 1960s for validation. With the winter nights approaching I would encourage each of you to work on your field notes.

**Jim Wilson.**

## **Bird Briefings – more speakers needed for March Indoor Meeting.**

Our March Meeting this time will be a bit different. It will consist of a number of short 5 – 10 minute presentations by members about anything birdy that has captured their interest: special birds seen, unusual behaviours, great photographs taken, difficult identifications, etc. We have several offers of presentations so far, but for a good evening we need more offers. If you would like to be added to the list of speakers for the evening contact Mary (464 0787). Just put your images for presentation on a memory stick.

We still need more speakers or topics for Indoor Meetings later in the year. If you would like to talk at an Indoor Meeting or if you have suggestions please let Mary know (464 0787). Ideas for field trips, especially if you are willing to act as a leader/organiser, would also be greatly appreciated.

## **2016 NZ Bird Conference and Birds NZ AGM**

This annual event will be held in Napier (Hawkes Bay) at the Museum Theatre Gallery, Marine Parade, during Queens Birthday Weekend 4-6 June 2016. The conference will comprise two days of scientific papers and workshops, with field trips to local birding highlights on the third day. The

AGM will be held on Saturday afternoon. A variety of workshops are planned for the Sunday morning (use of GPS, triangulation methods for locating birds by sound, historical books at Napier Museum), followed by field trips on the Monday (Boundary Stream, Ahuriri estuary or Clive wetlands).

These are excellent get-togethers and a trip to Napier in mid-winter sounds a good idea. The deadline for Earlybird registration (only \$95) is 31 March. Please register online or ask Mary Thompson for a print version if you don't have computer access.

### **Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2016 – reminder!**

The annual membership subscriptions were due 1 January 2016. It is all too easy to overlook this during the Christmas New Year period, and there are quite a few of us who have forgotten to pay (actually 31!). Remember that you can pay subs online. Or ask your RR for a printed form. Thanks.

Mary Thompson, Regional Representative.

### **More Colour Banded Birds**



Black-billed gulls with bands such as “M13” have been banded in the north of the South Island this breeding season. Birds carrying white bands were caught at colonies on the Wairau River, yellow bands are from the Clarence River and red from the Buller.

Black-fronted terns have either coloured bands or flags with a two-letter combination such as “AB”. Terns with white bands or flags are from either the Wairau River or Wairau Lagoons, whereas yellow banded/flagged birds have been caught on the upper Clarence or Acheron Rivers.

For more information see:-

<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=5266&p=26290#p26290>

## Programme 2016

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed February 24th** Hamish Spencer. Experiences the birds of south eastern Brazil and the southern Amazon.
- Wed March 23rd** Bird Briefings - a chance for any member to give a 5–10 minute talk about anything birdy that has captured your interest over the summer: special birds seen, unusual behaviours, etc. Contact Mary 464 0787 to be added to the list of speakers for the evening.
- Wed April 27th** John Darby. A personal account of the Great Crested Grebes of the Wanaka Marina.
- Wed May 25th** Neil Robertson  
Birds of China and Tibet (plus fabulous videos)
- Wed June 22nd** Susan Walker  
A report on the state, trends and vulnerability of NZ's endemic birds.

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for contributions to next newsletter: Mar 17th.