

Birds New Zealand
PO Box 834, Nelson. osnz.org.nz
Regional Representative: Mary Thompson
197 Balmacewen Rd, Dunedin.
maryt@actrix.co.nz 03 4640787
Regional Recorder: Jim Wilson
PO Box 6145, Dunedin 9059
jim.wilson@actrix.co.nz

Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 10/2015 October 2015

Birds NZ National Red-billed Gull Nest Survey



This is the major national project for 2015/2016 and since the red-billed gulls are increasing in Otago region our counts will be very important.

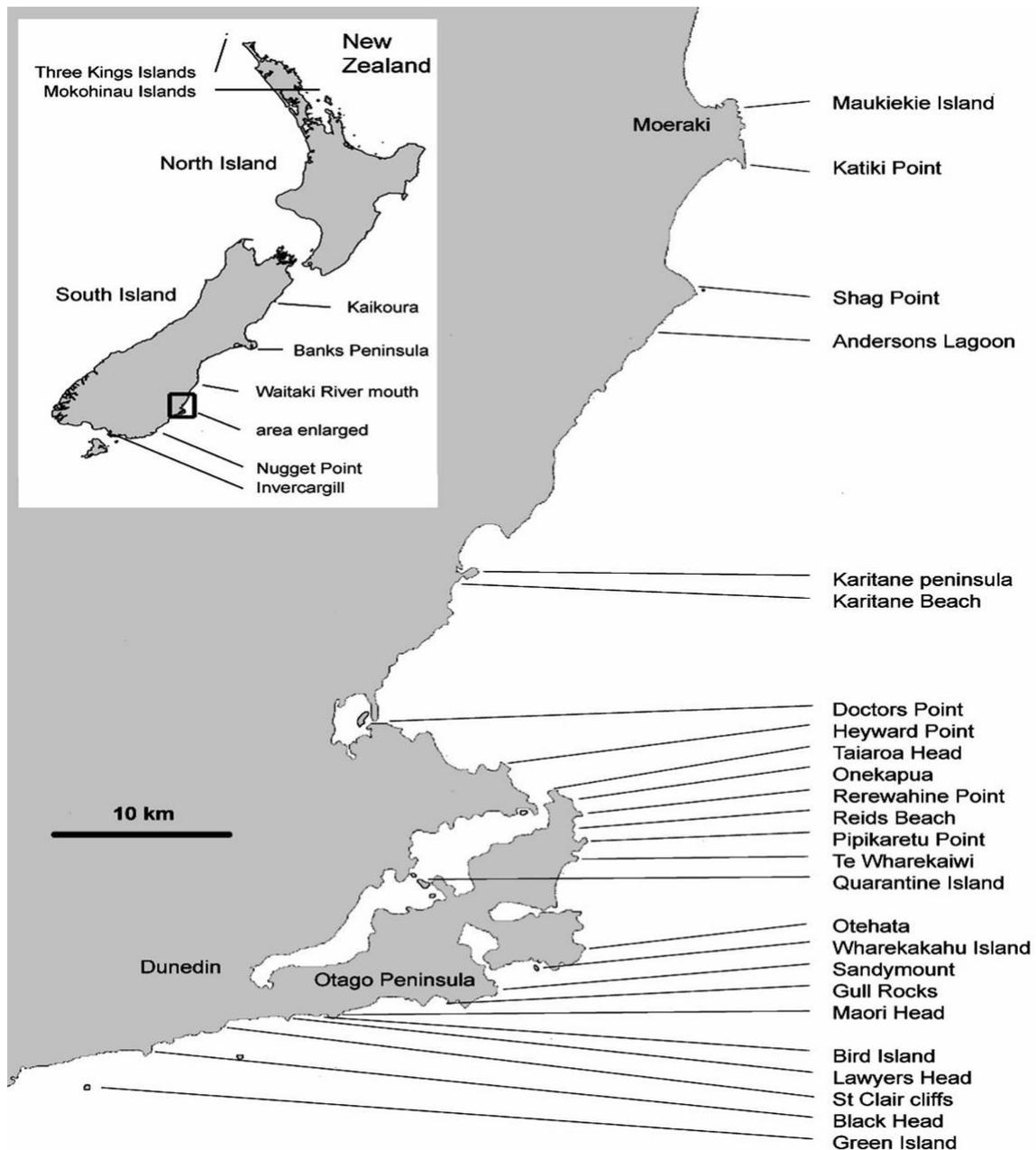
I recently met with Chris Lalas and Lyndon Perriman to discuss what Otago Birds NZ members can do to help with counting red-billed gull nests at colonies on the Otago coast. Chris and Lyndon have been surveying colonies regularly since 1992 (see *Notornis* 59:138, 2012) and will themselves carry out a census at the same sites again this season and their data will be added to the national survey database for the Birds NZ project. Graeme Loh will survey the hard to get to places around St Clair cliffs. The sites that are being surveyed (plus the Nuggets) are shown in the table along with the nest counts for 2014.

Otago members can help with this survey by checking for other colonies along the Otago coast and up the Waitaki River. If anyone discovers a colony that is not on the list below, please record its location, estimate

number of nests, take photos, and report it immediately to Chris L alas (ithaki@xtra.co.nz). If you happen to get by foot or boat during November/December to parts of the coast that would be possible sites for colonies but find no gulls, please also report this, as this is also useful information.

We are following up the idea of aerial surveys of the coast south from the Nuggets to Waikawa and also up the Waitaki; we will keep you informed of any developments.

Locations in Otago	count	estimate
Waitaki River, 1 km upstream of bridge		0-100
Moeraki: Maukiekie Island	0	
Moeraki: Okahau Point	1	
Moeraki: Midway Okahau Pt to Katiki Pt; on islet	1	
Moeraki: Katiki Point; west side between neck & tip	253	
Moeraki: Katiki Point; island off south tip	0	
Shag Point: boat harbour		
Shag Point: islet nearest shore		
Andersons Lagoon/Stony Creek; cliff ledges 2 km north		?
Karitane peninsula		?
Karitane Beach islets		80
Doctors Point		10-20
Heyward Point islet	0	
Taiaroa Head	1228	
Onkapua	4	
Rerewahine Point	0	
Reids Beach	0	
Pipikaretu: headland at north end of beach		300-350
Te Wharekaiwi		
Quarantine Island		
Otewhata		
Wharekakahu Island	0	
Sandymount		
Gull Rocks	26	
Maori Head	43	
Bird Island	0	
Lawyers Head	261	
St Clair islet		
Black Head		100
Green Island		



Mary Thompson

Ornithological snippets

Suzanne Schofield came across two **California Quail** by the river in Balclutha on 2nd October. A single **Hutton's Shearwater** was reported off Shag Point on 11th October, while the adult **Pied Shag** was still present at Karitane in early September and Mary Thompson saw another in the Waitati Stream estuary, Blueskin Bay on 10th. A **White Heron** was seen by Bruce McKinley at Tomahawk Lagoon on 20th September, while a **Spotless Crake** was reported from Sinclair Wetlands on 10th October.

The pick of the wader sightings were nine **Bar-tailed Godwits** at Hawea Flat on 6 September, seen by Andrew Crossland, and a **Black Stilt** on the river at Kakanui on 10th September (Tom Waterhouse), while a **Wrybill** at Karitane on 13th September was unusual there. More expectedly, **Bar-tailed Godwits** returned to Blueskin Bay on 25th September, with 200 there by 27th (Derek Onley).

There were several interesting parrot reports: a report in the ODT of a **Kea** at Sandymount on 5th September appeared to show a **Kaka**, presumably from Orokonui, while a **Kaka** was seen on 20th & 27th September in the Awakiki area, near Balclutha (Richard Schofield) – this was apparently also seen in early August; another was reported from the McLennan Valley at the end of September (Dave Holland). Lesley Gowans also saw a **Kaka** flying over the Oamaru Gardens and then landing in a nearby tree on 29th.

Shining Cuckoos have arrived in the south with sparse but widespread reports, ranging from the first at Logan Park in Dunedin on 30th September heard by Lesley Gowans, to birds at Lake Hawea (Mark Ayre) and McLean Falls (Catriona Gower), both on 11th October. Sharon Roberts saw a pair of **Cirl Buntings** at her property between Alexandra and Clyde; this was in early October and they were seen for several days, sometimes feeding with **Redpolls**.

Includes reports from eBird & Birding NZ
Compiled by **Richard Schofield**

Many thanks to Richard for making the editor's job easier and taking over the compilation of Ornithological Snippets. From now on please send all records to him at richard@pconnect.co.nz **Derek Onley**

Report of Field Trip to Sinclair Wetlands for Spring Count



Eight members arrived at the Sinclair Wetlands at 10am on Sunday 4th October, keen and ready to undertake the Spring count. We divided into three teams to cover all the area as quickly as possible before the forecast storm.

Fortunately the windy conditions held off most of the morning and the count was completed in warm, calm, partly cloudy weather.

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

Bruce and Andrew surveyed the fernbirds along the track- total of 19 seen or heard compared to 6 in the winter, which is probably due to the birds being more vocal and territorial at this time of year. This is certainly a good spot to see fernbirds.

The number of waterfowl evident was way down on the winter count; not known whether the birds were hidden amongst the reeds and busy breeding or had gone elsewhere. Some courtship displays of the Canada

geese were observed. Counts were done by Mary, Janet, Lesley and Francie from vantage points on the islands.

5 MBC were done at 4 sites on Ram Island by Pat and Maree. Surprisingly there were no silvereye or bellbirds recorded, whereas in winter these species were observed at all count stations. Chaffinch were very much in evidence, whereas in winter not seen. Welcome swallows were again not seen.

A SIPO pair had nested in the paddock by the gate to the Sinclair Wetlands Visitor Centre-Mary saw pair at nest with two eggs on 3rd September. Now they have two small chicks.

On the return journey, Bruce, Andrew and Mary stopped at a clump of gum trees on the Outram/Berwick Road where we had seen a white-faced heron landing in the morning on the outward journey; yes, there was a heron sitting on a small twig nest about 30 m up the gum tree. There didn't seem to be any other nests.

Along the gravel end of School Road we came across dozens of Magpies in roadside paddocks - actually counted 106! Starlings also plentiful so presume a great food source available just in this one spot.

The total species seen was 22, with 5 more on the whole trip. All these counts have been entered into eBird under hotspots, Sinclair wetlands and Ram Island.

Mary Thompson.

Beyond Orokonui Bush Bird Survey: Some notes from the first three surveys.

September 12, 2015

We did the first count of the new season on Four Rivers Station, about 50K north of Dunedin, west of Waikouaiti on Blucher Rd. The road is mainly unsealed from the McGrath Rd turnoff, long and winding but well worth the effort. The scenery is superb, tussock land converted to grass but with still enough tussock to make a pretty picture. The day was sunny, calm and cool; perfect for bird counting.

We met at Waitati at 7.45am and transferred to two vehicles, Maree, George and Jan in one and Craig and Andrew in the other. Kelvin meanwhile, (an early-bird!) was busy bird counting at the far end of Blucher Rd.

After signing in at the station woolshed (a safety requirement), we split into two groups, girls in one and boys in another and set forth in an effort to complete as many counts as time would allow. The target vegetation fragments were well separated, the gullies in most cases steep and my leg muscles and lungs protested. But the pain didn't last long and I'm hopefully a little fitter.

We had a quick lunch at 12.30pm at a spot where Craig and Andrew earlier had watched a falcon, but unfortunately it wasn't sighted again.

September 26, 2015

I can see the pine plantation and tracts of native bush from my kitchen window and at 7am there was just a little cloud hanging around the hills and no wind. So after consultation with Kelvin we decided 'yes, we'll do it' and will keep fingers crossed that the forecast rain will fall elsewhere.

Eight hardy volunteers met at the gate on Blueskin Rd at 8.30am. We divided into 4 groups, Francie going to Volco (track entrance on Mt Cargill Rd), Team Craig and Andrew (further along Blueskin Rd) and Kelvin, George, Jan, Hayley and Maree dispersing from the reservoir at the top of the road.

Hayley and I probably had the easiest sites as they were located along the main track and walking was easy. George and Jan had a difficult morning, impeded by thick undergrowth and tall gorse. Craig reported that the track to their first three sites was good but very steep; the fourth was 'a bit of a bash through manuka and flax clearings.'

Maybe the cold (5C!) and the overcast conditions affected the numbers of birds counted; Craig and Andrew's last count was zero and a couple of mine seemed low. However brown creeper, tom tit, grey warblers and bellbirds were present and an occasional kereru could be heard in the trees above. It would be interesting to repeat our counts on a fine day.

By 11am it began to rain heavily and so it was time to call it quits. We met Kelvin at the gate and handed in our sodden count sheets, not stopping to have the lunch that we had brought.

If you haven't been into this area it really is worth a visit and would be a great site for a picnic on a warm sunny day. The reservoir is approximately 2K up the road, an easy walk, but if walking's not your thing, the key can

be obtained from City Forests. However parts of the road are suitable for 4WD only.

October 10, 2015

Thankfully the weather was fine for Saturday's counting, the skies were blue (at last!) and the wind slight but variable as the morning progressed.

The area was Blueskin Bay. Kelvin had downloaded waypoints on and around Double Hill, Manse, Kilpatrick, and Thornicroft Roads and the Orokonui track alongside the inlet. As these areas were widespread we split into three groups (not easy with only 5 volunteers!); Mary and Jinty to Orokonui and Thornicroft Rd, George and Jo to Double Hill Rd and me to Kilpatrick Rd. We agreed to go our separate ways when finished, although George and I met for coffee at Blueskin Nurseries.

The area where I counted was on a very neat, well fenced farm at the end of Kilpatrick Rd, with delightful views of Blueskin Bay. The owners, Sam and Beck, are in the process of enhancing their surroundings with plantings of native trees, flowering shrubs and daffodils. Areas of native bush were fenced and while I didn't find tomtits or riflemen there were bellbirds, tui, brown creeper and woodpigeons.

To date eleven volunteers have participated and I think have enjoyed the experience. There will be new areas to explore in the next couple of months and if El Nino establishes we may hopefully strike some fine weekends. Please remember that everyone is welcome and useful, even if bush bird counting is not your thing. From a safety point of view, we aim to count in pairs or groups and you can be teamed up with someone who has bird counting experience.

If you do have bird counting experience and weekends don't suit, contact Kelvin Lloyd Kelvin.Lloyd@wildlands.co.nz for instructions on where to count on weekdays when it suits you.

Kelvin aims to send out a progress report in the near future.

If you'd like to be added to the mailing list contact me at: mareej@kinect.co.nz , cellphone 027 660 9446.

Maree Johnstone

Notices and Business

Student Conference Support

The Otago Branch of Birds NZ decided to offer a grant-in-aid of \$200 for an Otago student member to attend and present a research paper at next year's NZ Bird Conference in Napier. We hope this will encourage students to consider attending the conference and furthering their interest in bird research. Application details can be obtained from the Regional Rep. maryt@actrix.co.nz . The details will also be circulated to relevant departments of the University. Applications close 1 February 2016.

Continuation of the NZ Falcon Survey

Commencing on 1 June 2006 the original NZ Falcon Distribution Survey ran for three years till 31 May 2009 and the 1,761 records collected for that period were written up as a Short Note in Notornis.

The collection of NZ falcon observation records has continued very successfully as the NZ Falcon Survey. As we get ever closer to the 10 year anniversary (31 May 2016) it is anticipated that a further report will then be prepared that will provide a more comprehensive picture of the presence and distribution of the NZ falcon in New Zealand.

To this end we are very keen for everyone to please continue to submit one and all observations of the NZ falcon gained at least until May 2016. Online reporting at <http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/nz-falcon/report-observation-of-nz-falcon>

Spare copies of Notornis

Mark Hanger has spare copies of Notornis dating from Vol 40, 1993 through to the present day if anyone is interested. Email him and he'll drop them off. markhanger@naturequest.co.nz

Regional Recorder's eBird Report

In the September newsletter Derek commented on the lack of contributions for the "Ornithological Snippets" section of the newsletter. While this is understandable, as more and more of us are entering our personal data direct into eBird, it does mean that information is not as accessible as it has been in the past.

To help fill this gap I have summarized here the September eBird email notifications for rare birds in Otago and I plan to include this information regularly.

eBird Otago Rare Bird Notifications: September 2015

Date	Species	Observer	Site	Habitat
5 Sept 15	Yellow-crowned Parakeet	Ken George	Blue Pools Walk	Beech Forest
5 Sept 15	Mohoua	Ken George	Blue Pools Walk	Beech Forest
20 Sept 15	Kaka	Richard Schofield	Awakiki	Podocarp Forest

Should you wish to receive emails directly on rare birds you can do this by logging on the eBird and going to “My eBird”. On the right hand side (near the bottom) you will find a link labeled “Manage My Alerts”. Click here and you will be able to subscribe for both;

- “Rare Birds Alerts” and
- “Needs Alerts”.

Needs Alert emails alert for species you have not personally recorded in a particular region. Once you report a species from that region in eBird, that species will no longer appear on this alert (even if it is a rare). This is designed to deliver information particularly tailored to birds that you have not seen (either all time, or within the current year).

I have recently taken on the role of Otago reviewer for eBird. In this role I am the person who validates rare sightings in Otago and those observations that record usual numbers of a particular species.

I also will be drawing on this data to report in the “Ornithological Snippets”. Compilation of Ornithological Snippets has been taken over by Richard Schofield so if you have observations you feel may be of interest to the wider membership please email them to Richard at richard@pcconnect.co.nz.

Jim Wilson

Programme 2015

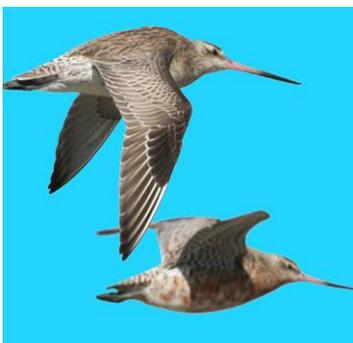
Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed Oct. 28 Mary Thompson. Everyday Birds of Alice Springs.
- Sun. Nov. 8 Summer Wader Count. High tide 1435hrs in Dunedin. Height 1.9m.
Contact Peter Schweigman 455 2790
peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz
- Wed Nov. 25 Philippa Agnew "Foraging behaviour of Little Blue Penguins at Oamaru."

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for contributions to next newsletter: November 19.



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