

Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 7/2015 July 2015

Sinclair Wetlands Winter Count

Seven of us braved the below freezing temperatures and a severe frost to head out to the Sinclair Wetlands on Saturday 11 July. Despite the chilly start, the day was perfect with no wind and warm sun for picnic lunch after completing the 5 minute bird counts and waterfowl counts. The smaller lagoons were mostly covered in ice with the areas of free water jammed with ducks. Numbers of scaup, black swan and grey teal were up from the April count but still no Paradise duck.

	Winter/July	Autumn/April
Greylag goose	39	7
Canada goose	31	91
Black Swan	97	15
Paradise duck	0	
Mallard(hybrid)	299	221
Shoveler	12	53
Grey Teal	72	0
Scaup	617	158
Black shag	0	
Little Pied shag	1	10

The forest birds were very quiet so low counts. No Welcome swallows were seen this time. Six fernbirds were recorded in the 5MBC done every 100m along the track. We had good views of several when they popped out onto the top of a coprosma shrub to look at us! The total species seen was 27, with 5 more on the whole trip. All these counts have been entered into eBird under hotspots, Sinclair wetlands and Ram Island.

There were huge numbers of groups of pukeko foraging on damp pastures beside the Flood-free highway and beside the road from Berwick to Sinclair wetlands with 47 counted at one spot.

We returned via back roads to check the cow herds for presence of cattle egrets, but no luck.

Mary Thompson

Coastal Otago winter wader count, 28 June 2015

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Purakanui	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Total 2015	Total 2014
Pied Oystercatcher	112	257	20	77	142	2	122	76	402	1210	1516
Variable Oystercatcher	18	24	20	14	3	17	13	4	30	143	86
Pied Stilt	57	19	18	3		2	60	30	8	197	148
Banded Dotterel		66		76				17	10	169	181
Spur-winged Plover	6			4	6	1	2	2	37	58	50
Bar-tailed Godwit	12	28		14				98	31	183	265
White-faced Heron			26	1		4		2	31	64	8
Little Shag				68	103	127		3	4	305	716
Kingfisher			4							4	19

Like last year the waders only have been shown here, while all other species will be on ebird. The three non waders that have been added this year could be of interest, breeding wise for our next count in summer.

Many thanks for all who helped out. The first time we had enough members to do justice to this count, in sunny weather and only light winds.

Peter Schweigman

Ornithological Snippets.



Janet Ledingham took this photo of a fine breeding plumaged **Stewart Island Shag** eating a sea-horse, off the Aramoana Mole on 12 June.

Following the **Kea** near Waikouaiti last month, a **Kaka** has turned up at Kakanui in mid July, hopefully not too distressed at finding itself alone rather than in the midst of many of its kind. Apparently it is not sporting a radio transmitter and is unbanded, so is less likely to have come from Orokonui as most birds there are so attired.

Also at Kakanui, Tom Waterhouse found a **Marsh Crake** on 10 July. It was "Feeding on freshly flooded river margin on dusk. Watched for 10 minutes through binoculars about 5m away. Light grey throat, streaky brown/black upperparts, speckled white and light yellowy legs". **Marsh Crakes** have been reported from Wainono Lagoon some way north but most records in the region are from inland. Maybe it had moved to the coast to avoid the recent hard frosts?

Off Lawyer's Head on 14 July, Bruce Mckinlay saw a **Brown Skua** and a **Black-browed Mollymawk**, the latter making a change from the more usual **Buller's and White-capped Mollymawks**.



and Graeme Loh claims this shag was drying it's wings after a wet lunch.

Tomahawk competing in winter



Winter at Tomahawk brought competition between birds of the bush and coast, including a quick surprise on the beach.

A pair of tui fly through gardens and ngaio trees near Tomahawk Lagoon. In rare spells of sun on a eucalyptus tree in late afternoon, the male tui climbs about in high branches and sends out his full repertoire of calls from melodies to croaks, rasps, wheezes and gasps. His calling continues for up to 15 minutes if there is any sun, with pauses to catch insects, and then he calls again. They flew fast just under the bush canopy, possibly investigating the human below, and rapidly became black specks hurtling over the hill. Earlier, a silent bellbird crept through ground vegetation, so I whistled a couple of very quiet whispers solely for it to hear, wanting to see it again. No response, so I silently watched. The male tui suddenly swooped into the ngaio above and down the branches. He rushed closer down, with pauses moving his head for long stares, while the female stayed up just below the canopy. Both tui stayed silent, and after intense staring he quickly whirred about and flew off with her following.

After seeing four kingfishers on Tomahawk Beach, all with yellow chests, recently there were only two birds together. One has a yellow chest with rusty fuzz under the wings, is the more plump bird, and bolder in behaviour. The other bird has a white chest, grey face near the bill, is thinner and wary. On June 29 they were on the beach by the creek. The white chested kingfisher stayed near the creek and in the trees, grabbing

prey from short flights at debris and kelp. The yellow chested kingfisher ranged more widely, flying along sand dune bluffs, under sandy overhangs, and snatching flying insects just above the beach. It was often holding an insect or tiny crustacean, which it flicks lengthways and swallows. Then they both perched in the same tree, and flew out grabbing prey off sand and kelp. The yellow chested kingfisher is more active, aware it is watched but is not afraid, while the white chested bird is wary. The yellow chested bird looked about in all directions, looking at my hiding tree, so it knew of course. Then it flew directly toward me, passing 50 cm overhead, landed nearby on the cliff and looked back at me. It continued quick return flights over kelp piles.

On July 14, the two kingfishers were further along the beach, in steep eroded sand bluffs, and grabbing tiny prey from the beach. Again, the yellow chested kingfisher was more active and bolder than the white chested bird. They were catching insects and spiders from dune overhangs and vegetation, as were two chaffinches. The narrow beach was washed by waves crashing up the base of the dunes, and the two kingfishers and fourteen red billed gulls took the same tiny prey just ahead of waves and in foam. After the sea ebbed back, a red billed gull ran along sand looking at new foam, when the yellow chested kingfisher suddenly flew straight at the gull and chased it away. Then it continued catching prey off the wave washes, launching off the same marram ledge. The white chested kingfisher stayed further away, was less active, and it ignored the gulls.

A white heron is moving around a lot around the lagoons, in trees, and on buildings.

Andrew Austin

Identifying major changes in the 4th edition of the Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand 2010, compared with 3rd edition, 1990.

The 2010 edition includes the birds of Norfolk and Macquarie Islands.

The order Casuariiformes has replaced the order Apterygiformes, and the family Apterygidae is in this order.

The order Galliformes has shifted to 4th place from the earlier 11th.

The Mollymawks in the family Diomedidae are now also called Albatrosses.

The Tropic Birds are no longer in the order Pelecaniformes, but in the order Phaethontiformes.

The Falcons are not in the Acciptriformes, but in the new order Falconiformes.

The Terns and Noddies are still in the order Charadriiformes but no longer in the family Laridae, They are now in their own family Sternidae.

The order Passeriformes has a few changes. The families remain with a few additions. However, the 10 subfamilies in the 1990 edition have gone. The Fantails were in the family Monarchidae, and changed to the new family Rhipiduridae.

The Fernbirds came in the family Sylviidae, (Old World Warblers), but are now in a new family Megaluridae.

The Thrush and Blackbird used to be in the family Muscicapidae but changed to the Turdidae family.

The Mohoua species were in the Pachycephalidae but have changed to a new family Megaluridae.

Peter Schweigman



Tom Waterhouse & Derek Onley endangered life & limb on the Winter Wader Count at Merton but they managed to survive the shotgun blasts and distinguish the decoys from the geese and ducks so as not to compromise the ebird data.

Notices and Business

Otago Branch, Birds NZ AGM, July 22 , 2015

The AGM will be held following Hamish's talk on shags.

Please think about what activities you would be keen to participate in and bring your ideas along to discuss.

Current projects: Sinclair Wetland seasonal survey; Beyond Orokonui habitat survey.

National Projects: wader count, Red-billed gull nest count

We are hoping to have a field trip to the Catlins area, maybe in conjunction with cannon netting godwits.

As usual spring is very busy bird-wise. **Mary Thompson.**

Report from Regional Representative of Birds NZ Conference and Regional Representative Meeting

75th Anniversary NZ Birds Conference was held at Blenheim at Queen's Birthday weekend. The weather, venue, food, scientific programme and field trips were all excellent. There was a record turnout of 11 Otago members – Bruce, Graeme, Lesley, Francie, Sue O., Jill, Sara, Steph, Philippa (from Oamaru), Mark (from Wanaka) and Mary, so we had a great time together. Six of us travelled up on the Thursday in the DOC van and added to the trip by counting Harriers from Palmerston to Kaikoura: 74 spotted at an average of 1 every 6.25km (highest rate between Cheviot and Kaikoura (1/4.2km) and lowest between Ashburton and ChCh (1/11km) but the tree-lined highway made viewing tricky).

Some reports and impressions were published in the June newsletter to give you some idea of what went on.



Friday was a beautiful mild, calm, sunny day and I had organized for a group including several RRs to spend the morning touring the Wairau lagoon and water treatment ponds with guide Will Parsons (he owns a private

wetlands nearby with is often visited by up to 5 Glossy Ibis I winter). We saw a total of 35 species-the usual waterfowl, but special for many of us were pied shags, many kingfishers, pipits, 8 Royal spoonbill and wonderful sights of thousands of Welcome Swallows and flocks of thousands of goldfinches with redpolls and other finches feeding on the salicornia seeds; the highlight being excellent views of a male Cirl Bunting(first spotted by Neil Robertson and a first ever for Mary T). A visit to the lagoons by Lesley and Francie also turned up a White Heron and 8 cattle egret and the glossy ibis were also seen later in the weekend by others.

Friday afternoon was spent indoors at the RR's meeting with much discussion about some new initiatives as well as old bugbears. Here are some of the key points.

Importance of eBird

- all sightings made for Regional projects, wader counts, etc. should be entered to ensure the valuable data is archived for the future
- Resource Management Assessments often now use eBird; if no birds recorded in an area, then developments will not need to consider this aspect
- entries in eBird can contribute to conservation
- eBird Notebooks are available-get your copy from Mary

Importance of archiving data

We were asked to explore placing Regional and personal data and notebooks in local library archives; Birds NZ would keep a record of where this information is stored.

Publicity Brochure: the new brochure includes an image featuring our Beyond Orokonui survey team.

Regional Funds

Regions were asked to consider providing sponsorship to a student member to attend and present a paper at Conference; we should consider this at our AGM.

Introduction to Ornithology

Sarah Jamieson (past Council member and now Banding Officer at DOC) has produced a set of 7 powerpoint lectures and notes of various aspects of birds; we have asked for a set to use for community education.

The next conference will be held at Napier.

Overall, all aspects of the conference emphasized how Birds NZ is making a difference for furthering the knowledge of birds and their conservation with its major projects, including banding schemes, Checklists, Field Guides, Atlas mapping, nest, moult and beach patrol schemes, wader counts and eBird.

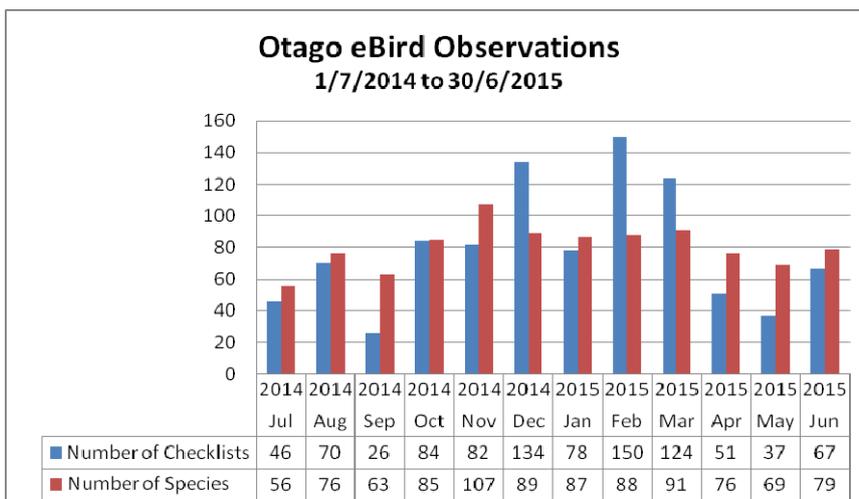
Mary Thompson

Regional Recorder's eBird Report

At the last OSNZ meeting Mary mentioned that there was a concern that there may be a risk some developers using eBird information to bypass the need for including specific ornithological reports in Environmental Impact Reports. My concern is that there is a risk that habitat may be lost because we birders have not entered all our information into eBird, thus adding another good reason for us to keep on entering both our current and historic field notes.

Have you checked out some of the functions available in eBird. If you go to the page "Explore Data" you will find a couple of windows on the right hand side, one headed "Your Totals" and the other "Species You Need".

In the window "your Totals" you will find functions "Yard Totals" and "Patch Totals" these give you the option to summarise geographic areas, use "Yard Totals" for a single location and "Patch Totals" to amalgamate multiple locations into one report. Personal I use "Patch Totals" to get a single report for all my birding on the Maniototo, 8 birding locations in to one report.



Using the "Alerts" option you can manage email alerts for rare species or those you have not yet logged in eBird. I recently set up to receive alert emails for any Otago birds I have not listed in eBird.

Jim Wilson

OSNZ, Otago Region Accounts: 1 Jan 2014 - 31 Dec 2014

Current Account				
		2012	<u>2013</u>	2014
Balance as at 1Jan.		1916.79	\$ 845.75	1614.94
<u>Plus</u> <u>Income:</u>				
Interest		0	\$0.00	0.00
Capitation		350	\$350.00	350.00
Donations/local subs		169.55	\$50.00	98.60
Transfer from closed conference account		500		3.74
OSNZ Project assistance Grant			\$953.00	
Sale of cards		10	\$0.00	
		1029.55	\$1,353.00	452.34
<u>Less Expenses:</u>				
Transfer to savings account		12	\$ 12.00	12.00
Bank fees		6.5	\$0.00	5.00
Room hire		0	\$0.00	0.00
Envelopes, stamps, photocopying		370.05	\$196.68	107.19
Speaker Gifts		71.91	\$80.91	83.92
Book prize-Science Fair		0	\$44.99	24.99
YEP Trust sub		0	\$0.00	20.00
Bittern/morepork study		1640.13	\$118.76	0.00
Spoonbill study			\$100.00	0.00
Miscellaneous		0	\$30.47	0.00
		2100.59	\$583.81	253.10
Closing Balance		\$ 845.75	\$ 1,614.94	1814.18

Breakdown of Accounts				
Running Expenses				
Balance brought forward		301.37		
Income		452.34		
expenses		253.1		
Balance			500.61	
Falcon Project				
Balance brought forward			250.00	
Project Account-acoustic				
Balance brought forward		210.57		
Income		0.00		
Expenses		0.00		
Balance			210.57	
Spoonbill Project				
Balance brought forward		853.00		
Expenses		0.00		
Balance			853.00	
Total			1814.18	
Bonus Saver account				
Balance brought forward		1789.15		
Interest		18.02		
Transfers from cheque		12.00		
transfer for projects		0.00		
Balance			1819.17	

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.

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|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Wed July 22 | Hamish Spencer | Classification of the World's Cormorants and Shags followed by AGM to discuss future projects and allocation of tasks. |
| Wed Aug 26 | Kelvin Lloyd | Update on the Beyond Orokonui project. |
| Wed Sept 23 | Catriona MacLeod and Priscilla Wehi | "Birds as measures of biodiversity." |
| Wed Oct. 28 | | to be arranged |
| Wed Nov. 25 | Philippa Agnew | "Foraging behaviour of Little Blue Penguins at Oamaru." |

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Final date for contributions to next newsletter: Aug 20.