



Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 8/2017 August 2017

Ornithological snippets

Pied Shags seem to be appearing more frequently in Otago of late, but an interesting record was of one at Sinclair Wetlands on 10th August, seen by Bruce McKinlay. Bruce also reported 2 **Grey-headed Mollymawks** from Taiaroa Head on 2nd July. Jim Young & Roy Johnstone came across 4 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** by Purakaunui Falls Road in The Catlins on 15th August. Jill Hamel reports that the local **Eastern Rosellas** seem to be learning about the bird tables where sunflower seed is put out. She has been putting out sunflower seeds for the local **Greenfinches** during winter for many years, but this is the first year that she has seen **rosellas** - 3 in June and 1 on 24th July. The birds only inspected the site from the tree above and flew off. Someone else in Roslyn/Maori Hill has mentioned them coming to their bird table. Finally, as a sequel to last month's report, Alan Baker heard a **Morepork** on his way home from the July OSNZ meeting - this time in Newington Avenue.

Recent notable flocks reported in August include at least 119 **Pukeko** at Henley on 17th (Pen Gillette), 34 **Magpies** at Sinclair Wetlands on 10th (Bruce McKinlay), 40 **California Quail** near Clyde on 11th (Sharon Roberts), 172 **Spur-winged Plover** near Balclutha on 13th (Richard Schofield) and an impressive 190 **Greenfinch** at Green Island on 16th (Francie Beggs).

Please send any noteworthy sightings to richard@pcconnect.co.nz
Compiled by **Richard Schofield**

Oops

The date of last month's Winter Wader Count was of course 2 July 2017



and there were a few more birds at Aramoana than reported in the table.

Correct version:-

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Total 2017	Total 2016	Total 2015
Pied Oystercatcher		425	34	229	78	4	3	262	1035	1192	1210
Variable Oystercatcher	7	21	2	23	65	5	2	3	128	112	143
Pied Stilt	7	20	6		12	3	16	4	68	232	197
Banded Dotterel			86					1	87	268	169
Spur-winged Plover	7	70		2	16	11	2	18	126	281	58
Bar-tailed Godwit			75				55		130	208	183

with apologies from **Peter Schweigman** and the editor

Congratulations!



At a Royal Society meeting in Wanaka recently, John Darby, Birds NZ member, and the man behind Lake Wanaka's Grebe project, was made a Companion of the Royal Society of New Zealand for his lifelong passion for and contribution to bird conservation and research.

EBird workshops



On Saturday 13th August, which typically for an indoor event was a brilliant sunny day, Nikki McArthur presented two eBird workshops in Dunedin. In the first session, aimed primarily at newcomers, a packed house of around 30 active and prospective eBirders learned about the

background to eBird, the benefits, both to birdwatchers and to science, and how to enter data. Topics covered included signing up in the first place, recording location, count protocol, and the exciting part of actually entering the data. The verification process was outlined, along with the role reviewers play (they are not ogres!) Participants then had the chance to submit a checklist or two, using data that they had brought with them.

The afternoon session was devoted to exploring eBird data, with species maps, exploring a region, bar charts, hotspots, and the McCauley Library of images, video and audio all explained. The workshop finished with some lively discussion on the merits of eBird versus other recording systems and notebooks.



photos Bruce McKinlay

All in all a very worthwhile event, and I think everybody learned something. Nikki obviously got the message across well, as correctly submitted checklists came flooding in afterwards. Thanks to Mary and Nikki for organising the day; to Graeme, Bruce and Derek, for their input; and to all participants.

Richard Schofield

Notices and Business



Robin monitoring outside Orokonui

SI robins were once widely distributed on the mainland but, mainly because of habitat loss and mammalian predation, have recently had their threat status upgraded from Not Threatened to At Risk-Declining. Nowadays, populations of SI robins are concentrated in areas at the top and down the west of the South Island, but we have always been extremely fortunate in Dunedin because two small populations managed to persist in the Silver Stream and Silver Peaks areas, despite facing threats from predators and habitat loss (the Silver Peaks population live in commercially harvested plantation forest).

To help conserve these birds, 45 robins were introduced into Orokonui Ecosanctuary from the Silver Peaks in 2010 and 2011. As a result, a breeding population has established successfully within the Sanctuary. Inevitably, some of the fledglings produced have shown their adventurous side and have left the safety of the Sanctuary to explore the surrounding areas. Since 2015, robins have been reported from around Mopanui,

Grahams Bush and several areas of privately-owned land near to Orokonui. Presumably these robins are looking to establish their own territories and settle down. To date, however, no breeding attempts have been recorded, despite efforts by OSNZ members in late November last year to ascertain the breeding status of the Mopanui robins. Chances are that as the peak robin breeding season runs from September – November, last year's survey could have missed earlier nesting attempts. As no fledglings were found, it seems that if there had been any breeding attempts, these were probably unsuccessful.

Back by popular demand

This year there has been a lot of interest from OSNZ members to have another go at ascertaining whether any of the robins living outside the Sanctuary are breeding. Therefore, there are plans to undertake breeding surveys between late August and early December, with the first proposed survey date being the morning of Saturday 2 September (with the next day Sunday as back up day in case of bad weather). If you are interested in helping with the monitoring this year, or have any questions about it, please get in touch with George (gpickerell@outlook.com; 021 163 5122).

You might be wondering what monitoring robin breeding involves before you volunteer to help! The idea is that members will go to locations around Orokonui where robins have been recorded recently. Once at the site, the 1st job is to find a robin. Then, through blatant bribery involving the gifting of many mealworms (provided), the robin will be followed for a while, and its behaviour observed. Early in the nesting attempt, a male robin will feed mealworms to its partner if it has one, and by following her, a nest can be located. Later in the breeding season, a robin will take mealworms directly to chicks in the nest or to fledglings. The tricky part of all this can be following the robin wherever it wants to go. Habitat a robin finds easy to move through can be a bit more challenging for a human being, and it is most likely to be off-trail. However, there are usually ways to manage this and with a team of helpers, people of all levels of fitness should be able to help in some way.

George Pickerell

Science Fair Bird Projects

“We decided to award the Birds NZ prize to Flynn Ellison whose poster entitled ‘Native or not?’ looked at native and exotic birds in Chingford Park. Flynn’s study involved making bird counts multiple times per day over several weekends in Chingford Park. This involved walking a set route to cover different sectors of the park, each of which had different plants. A lot of time was spent doing bird counts, and Flynn can now identify a wide variety of both native and exotic birds. Flynn hypothesized that based on the primarily exotic plants in Chingford Park, that 70% of the birds seen were likely to be exotic, and 30% native. Flynn’s bird counts indicated that there were lower than expected numbers of native birds in Chingford Park.

We also gave a high commended certificate to Talia Stuart for her poster "Where the black swans are", comparing swan counts before and during the duck shooting season on Harwood flats; she found much higher swan numbers once the season started.

There were a further 3 posters that were related to birds: Eri Lovegrove & Rosie Davison investigated bird preference to different coloured feeders with their display ‘Colourful Feast’, Maddie O’Neill & Sophie-Joe Potter investigated bird preference of the placement of bird feeders with their display ‘Sweet Tweets’, and Daniel Honey compared tui preference for store-bought nectar vs homemade sugar water.”

Natalie Forsdick

Thanks to Peter Schweigman and Natalie Forsdick who judged this year’s science fair posters.

Notes from Otago Branch AGM held on 26 July 2017.

General: Capitation grant covers photocopying, postage, speaker gifts, Science Fair book prize, and meeting refreshments. Student Travel Grants were mostly covered by our reserve funds. Travel expenses for some of the bird surveys are reimbursed by the organisations we provide the data to. Huge thanks to our newsletter editor for continuing high standard of interest and entertainment, which also gets us accolades from other regions

Projects: Successful projects and events in the previous year included the Wild Dunedin Festival events, Introduction to Bird Studies Course and Sinclair wetland and Waimataitai Lagoon surveys.

Ongoing projects include Wader Counts, Tomahawk Lagoon and Sinclair Wetlands (one more year of seasonal counts).

New Projects: Breeding Robins beyond the Orokonui Fence: we agreed to start with Mopanui area. Georgina Pickerell generously offered her expertise to coordinate this project.

Town Belt Survey; Bruce McKinlay will coordinate this project; aim for early Nov.

Otago Shags on Quarantine Island: Graeme Loh and Francesca; counts of shags on the Island from Back Beach to be entered on eBird hotspot: Quarantine Otago shag roost

Coutts Road Swamp area: bird biodiversity survey and field trip to Taieri Mouth in spring (Mary Thompson); date to be arranged

Harbour Survey-does this need to be repeated soon?

EBird news

Using eBird – shared checklists

Something that was not covered in any detail at the workshops was checklist sharing. When you are birding as part of a group, it is preferable that each member of the group does not submit an individual checklist, but rather a master checklist is entered, with each member of the group able to edit it to take account of what they saw. Checklist sharing makes it possible to copy an eBird checklist to another user's account. Each user can edit the checklist to more closely match the species he or she saw that day. This allows multiple copies of the same checklist to be associated with a single birding event and ensures that we do not create unnecessary duplicates for our scientific analyses. At the same time, this gives users the flexibility to make sure that their personal records are accurate. All that needs to happen is for the group to decide who will be keeping the list and that person can enter the eBird list for the group. That checklist can then be shared with others in the group using an email address or (preferably) an eBird username. After the list has been submitted, on the review page click “Share with others in your party”, and follow the prompts. Alternatively you can share a list on the “Manage my checklists” page. This is also where you can edit your own list, by removing species that you did not see, or adding any extra ones that are not included on the main list.

For more information, see

<http://help.ebird.org/customer/portal/articles/1010555-understanding-the-ebird-checklist-sharing-process>

Richard Schofield

Programme 2017

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

- Wed August 23** Indoor Meeting. Claudia Mischler on "From the High Arctic to the sub-Antarctic and a little in-between: life as a biologist amongst the seabirds in some of the remotest parts of the world"..
- Wed Sept 27** Indoor Meeting. Fergus Sutherland on 'Te Rere, thirty-six years helping penguins and other birds on the remote Catlins Coast.'
- Sat October 7** Sinclair Wetland Spring Survey. Carpool leaving Dunedin at 8.30 am. Backup Sunday October 8th. To join the survey teams and for information contact Mary Thompson 464 0787, maryt@actrix.co.nz
- Wed October 25** Indoor Meeting. Francesca Cunninghame on 'The future for Darwin's rarest finch - lessons learnt from 10 years conservation management of the Critically Endangered mangrove finch.'
- Wed Nov 22** Indoor Meeting. Mel Young on 'Foraging Ecology of Yellow-eyed Penguins'.
- Sun Nov 26** Summer Wader Count. High tide Dunedin at 10.10am, 1.8m. Counters needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui. New counters very welcome to join the teams.
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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for next newsletter please by 20th September.