



Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 3/2018 March 2018

Otago Summer Wader Count 27 November 2017

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Total 2017	Total 2016
Pied Oystercatcher	57	129	0	195	24	60	21	238	724	270
Variable Oystercatcher	14	12	0	26	34	47	0	4	137	45
Pied Stilt	26	16	0	0	4	15	15	6	82	97
Banded Dotterel	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	15	43
Spur-winged Plover	12	1	2	3	4	50	7	16	95	30
Bar-tailed Godwit	124	472	58	0	0	8	1050	305	2017	1723

I was told that the predicted high tide of 1.8metres was much lower. There were no waders at Aramoana and large areas of mud flats at Hoopers Inlet were occupied by feeding birds; all rather difficult to count accurately. But the results was very good with all areas surveyed by plenty of counters. Many thanks to all for this very good wader count. **Peter Schweigman**



Better late than never. Apologies ed.

Ornithological snippets

5 **Chukor** were seen & photographed at Ben Lomond on 5th March by Trevor Sleight. A pair of **Indian Peafowl** of unknown origin put in an appearance near Lake Waihola on 15th March.

A moulting **Erect-crested Penguin** was seen at Jacks Bay (Catlins) on 18th Feb, while another **crested penguin** was at Anderson's Lagoon (Palmerston) by Paul Smaill on 2nd March. Alan Baker found a juvenile **Spotted Shag** at Ross Creek Reservoir on 10th March – it was seen again on 17th. There were numerous sightings of **Pied Shags**, with birds at Catlins Lake, Otago Harbour, Anderson's Bay lagoon, Oamaru, Hampden Estuary, Kakanui and Aramoana Spit.

White Herons have been reported from Tomahawk Lagoon (several sightings), Waldronville and Anderson's Lagoon on 25th Feb, & at 12 Mile Delta campsite, near Queenstown on 1st Mar. A **Reef Heron** was at Taiaroa Head on 11th Mar, and the first **Cattle Egret** of the season was reported from Hooper's Inlet on 16th Mar. Up to 4 **Royal Spoonbill** have been seen along the river in Balclutha occasionally over the past few weeks

Matt Winter, who photographed 5 **Marsh Crakes** at Lake Hayes last year, repeated the feat with 2 in the same location on 28th Feb, followed by another 2 birds at Moke Lake on 2nd Mar. A party of **Pukeko** near Balclutha on 20th Feb comprised 3 adults and four very young chicks.

Bruce McKinlay recorded a **Black Stilt** at All-day Bay Lagoon on 18th Mar, while Suzanne Schofield came across a **Black-fronted Dotterel** by the river in Balclutha on 5th March. Graeme Loh reported a **Brown Skua** at Sandfly Bay on 21st March.

Finally, an intriguing report of 6 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, seen from the Taieri Gorge train at Mt Allen on 20th Feb.

Compiled by **Richard Schofield**. Any interesting sightings please to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Not a bird, but...

Claudia Mischler and I were checking out the Anderson's Bay lagoon wader roost on 11th March, when a shape appeared in the water between us and the island, about 10 metres away. First impression was a log, then a piece of kelp...but there was an eye watching us! It turned out to be an octopus, which we estimated to be about 1 metre long, and when it reached the island it went around it, being investigated at one stage by 2 Red-billed Gulls, who after their initial bravado decided to keep a respectful distance. When I returned about 20 minutes later with Annie, we could not find it, but as the tide had receded we could see its tracks in the mud. Definitely not what we were expecting at that location.

From the Archives: Otago Branch Newsletter 10 Feb 1967

“Royal Spoonbills. The pleasantest piece of bird watching that I did over Christmas was to go and look at 5 Royal Spoonbills that spent about a week in the Dunedin district. Betty Kelly saw one first on Jan 10th at Waitati and then on an 15th Mrs Hannah was startled to see on her tidal creek at Merton these five big white birds lording it over the gulls and herons. They were definitely adults; they still had thick short nuptial crests that blew back from their heads in the breeze and were completely white... They were seen on and off around Merton until 18 January. If they were breeding adults from Okarito, it is difficult to understand what they were doing gallivanting round the country in the middle of the breeding season. They could have been stragglers from Australia.... They could have been immature birds that had acquired adult plumage but not the correct physiological state for breeding.. or it is possible that they were adults who had tried to nest this year but whose nest had failed.. Your guess is as good as mine.” Jill Hamel

Great to have this record of the first observation of Royal Spoonbill in Otago.



From a letter from Kim and Jenny Morrison, our most far away members who live at Reay in the very far north of Caithness, UK.

“We have been in our new place since 31 March 2016 and have kept records this year in the garden of our "new patch" at Reay.



We have two feeders in the garden and 46 bird species visiting the garden; 1 nest box had a successful Blue Tit pair and two house Martin nests fledged young. Two unusual summer visitors were 1 female Black redstart for 4 days in April and 1 Turtle Dove in May.”

Notices and Business

Bird Briefings - members night for April Indoor Meeting.

Our April 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. I’m sure there will be some interesting contributions. 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.

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2018 - last reminder!

The annual membership subscriptions were due 1 January 2018. We hope you are still keen to be members and to get news of bird research, sightings and updates via newsletters, Birds NZ magazine and the Notornis journal, and have just overlooked the sub notice. Students and researchers are eligible for funding for bird research too. Remember that you can pay subs online. Or ask your RR for a printed form. Thanks. **Mary Thompson, Regional Representative**

Birds NZ Conference and AGM, 2nd to 4th June, Waitangi

The annual meeting of Birds NZ is being held in the Bay of Islands at Queen's Birthday Weekend. This is a great chance to have some warm weather in the middle of winter, along with some very interesting research presentations, with a variety of workshops including use of drones, eBird, difficult bird ID, to choose from. The field trips have some exciting options: pelagic trip, Urupukapuka predator-free island, estuary kayaking and extended two day trips to Ninety Mile Beach or mist netting at Russell. **Early Bird Registrations by 30 March 2018.**

eBird News Images & other media in eBird

Most eBird users will be aware that in addition to submitting checklists of birds seen or heard, you can also add media to the observations, which can be photos, video or audio. Images do not have to be top notch, though it's obviously good if the quality is reasonable, but they do have to show the actual bird(s) referred to in the checklist, and not one taken elsewhere of the same species. It's especially beneficial to have a photo of a species whose identity may otherwise be questioned.

All media can be viewed through the Macaulay library, which can be accessed via "Explore" > "Search Photos and Sounds". This shows photos arranged by the date they are submitted, rather than the date of observation. They can be filtered by species, location, date, contributor, and also by more detailed criteria. Any user can rate the quality of each photo, and so photos can be filtered by quality also.

In addition, photos taken in a particular region are eligible for inclusion in the relevant "Illustrated checklist". There are plenty of gaps here for Otago, especially of more common species, so here's an opportunity to show off your photographic skills. Finally, with the exception of rare birds (those flagged at the submission stage) photos are not reviewed prior to appearing online, so if you do find an image which may have been misidentified, click "report" (lower right-hand side), follow the instructions, and it will be sent to a reviewer for verification.

Richard Schofield

2017 Otago Bird Report

I am currently compiling a report for Otago birds in 2017. It is mainly based on eBird reports & newsletter items, and covers all records of scarce birds, high counts, general distribution of records etc. If you have any sightings from 2017 that I may not have already come across and that you would like include, please send them to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield



This year's **Global Big Day** is on Saturday 5 May. The aim is to see how many species can be seen throughout the world in one day. NZ has many unique species so our sightings are an important addition to the total.

Last year's Global Big Day featured more than 20000 people across 162 countries, collectively reporting 6637 species of birds—more than 60% of the world's bird diversity. Last year Otago was top region in NZ for number of species with 76 species recorded on the day.

On Saturday 5th May, we can be a part of the fun again. Everyone can be involved. You can do individual birding or it might be fun to join a team and head out to a birding hotspot. We will try to make sure teams are visiting birding hotspots throughout Otago. It will also be great to have members from Queenstown, Wanaka and Alex. going birding in their areas to increase our total species list. Last year Rachel did a trip into Haast and added kea, mohua, rifleman and morepork, but we missed Great Crested Grebe and Californian Quail! We could get some good seabirds from Sam on the Monarch or Graeme by sea kayak. Think up your favourite spots so we can spread out and find as many species as possible. Let Maryt know (maryt@actrix.co.nz) if you would like to join a team; there will be car teams and some walking teams. Also let me know your ideas of where we should go.

It is important to do is complete an area count, travelling count or stationary count (incidental reports will not be used in the official totals); you need to spend at least 5 minutes birding, count all birds seen or heard, and, most importantly, submit complete data for 5 May to eBird by 8 May at latest to count towards the grand global, NZ, and regional totals. No matter what you do—have fun, enjoy the birds you find, and record your sightings on eBird!

Mary Thompson



The Penguin is easy? but what's the ship?

Programme 2018

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

- Wed March 28** Indoor Meeting. Bruce McKinlay on “Results of Town Belt Survey”.
- Saturday April 7** Sinclair Wetland Autumn Survey. Carpool leaving Dunedin at 9.00 am. Backup Sunday April 8th. To join the survey teams and for information contact Mary Thompson 464 0787, maryt@actrix.co.nz
- Sunday April 22** Tomahawk lagoon guided birdwatching. 10-12am This is our contribution to the Wild Dunedin Festival. Meet by the large Tomahawk Lagoon just after the bridge on Tomahawk Road. We aim to have telescopes to let the public see birds close-up and to help identify them, etc. Contact Andrew if you can help; phone 454 5830
- Wed April 25** Indoor Meeting. Bird Briefings - Members Night. A chance for any member to give a 5 –10 minute talk about anything birdy that has captured your interest recently: special birds seen, unusual behaviours, great photographs taken, difficult identifications. Contact Mary 464 0787 to be added to the list of speakers for the evening.
- Sat May 5** Global Big Day for eBird. Teams will be heading to Otago hotspots; to join a team contact Mary maryt@actrix.co.nz or phone 464 0787. Carpooling will be arranged.
- Wed May 22** Indoor Meeting. Natalie Forsdick on “Conservation management of kaki/black stilt.

- Wed June 27** Indoor Meeting. Derek Onley on “Hawksbury Lagoon - Gettin' yer Ducks in a Row?”
- July 1–8** Garden Bird Survey. Record maximum number of each species seen at one time during 1h observation of your garden.
- Wed July 25** Indoor Meeting. Graham Parker on his research on our local falcons, “The Otago falcon project; the why, what and how, with early results.”

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the next newsletter by 19th April please.