



Studying NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS  
OSNZ®

## **NELSON REGION NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2011**

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Recently I mused over the good folk in the UK spending thousands of British pounds on garden bird feed, correction, I've since read it's actually a multi-million pound industry. I wonder if Auckland's Chelsea refinery would be interested in sponsoring projects on our honey-eaters.



From Rebecca Bowater's garden.

*'I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read.'* Oscar Wilde.

## THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER HAS A TRAVEL THEME

### FROM INTERNATIONAL FLYWAYS

Our shores are once again attracting visitors flying in for summer. This year has a bit more pizzazz than usual, with flags fluttering from balconies, car windows, shops, and certain sports fields, with camper vans and foot traffic numbers swelling. Breweries are sure to benefit. I haven't seen any faces painted like a godwit but Arctic waders are turning up with zero carbon footprints and a dedicated number of fans are giving them a warm welcome.

Our correspondent, Pauline Samways.

Motueka has welcomed the return of the **godwits** with a grand celebration that included bells ringing, speakers, art work, photographs, information, singing and dignitaries.

The show was opened by the Minister of Conservation, Kate Wilkinson, who wanted to see the birds before her appearance. She was in luck, as they dutifully lined up just off the old wharf and stayed long enough for her to have a good look. And when the speeches were over the "Ukes of Hazzard" sang the Godwit Song with Paul Bond.

The godwits also timed their arrival to coincide with the first event on Thursday 15 Sept, - speaker Keith Woodley, Author of "Godwits: Long Haul Champions." Brilliant talk with lots of information. And there has been great positive feedback about the other speaker, our very own David Melville. He presented even more up-to-the minute research which kept 60 people riveted for over an hour.

The paintings and photographs were of a high standard, along with the children's art works, and a centre-piece by the Steiner School. Beth Bryant had mud from the estuary and photos of 'Godwit grub' for the children to learn about as they made creatures and crabs, worms and birds.

Then on Sunday, the godwits again made an appearance with 7 telescopes spying on them for the public to get an almost-closeup look. Thanks to David, Don, Ingrid, Gillian and Til.

### FROM WARMER CLIMES

Our correspondent, Don Cooper

On Saturday afternoon 17 September in the company of Til and friend on the Bells Island shellbank we were lucky to see **three gull-billed terns**. We were sitting on the grass edge front beach spotting the BTG flock when we were treated to an aerial ballet by these three terns, in non-breeding plumage.

They alighted ca.30 m away in a pool left by receding tide which gave us time for a closer inspection. I did manage a reasonable bit of video footage especially of the aerial antics. The next day, 18 September, David had been checking out the godwits on the Motueka sandspit and also recorded **two gull-billed terns** (in different plumage). I think earlier in the year reports from the east coast SI and Manawatu had noted some of these terns.

**AND, GREY WARBLERS, (not to be confused with Grey Power) BETTER WATCH OUT.**

Chris Petyt is the first reporter of **shining cuckoo** this year. Calling was heard at Tukurua on 19 September, and Gillian Pollock recorded calls from Harley Road on 23 September.

**AT THE ARRIVAL GATES**

Godwits and knots are presenting themselves daily,( 16 knots with the former at Motueka on 25 September), and on 26 September, Til reported ca 750 very restless bar-tailed godwits on Bells Island shellbank before they quickly pushed off with high tide.

**RAPT OR REPOSE**

From Peter and Charmaine Field

On Saturday 24 September , we went to check out the kookaburra sighting at Kowhai Park Peter Gaze emailed about. There was no sign of a kookaburra, but an agitated tui and three chaffinches alerted us to a **falcon** lying on top of a branch in one of the bare branched trees at the top of the park. We watched it for 15 to 20 minutes and apart from moving its head from side to side it made no other movement at all - it appeared utterly oblivious to the other birds mobbing behaviour. When we left the tui and chaffinches had flown off and the falcon was still lying flat out on the branch. Unfortunately we haven't been able to check it out since.



## **SHOW AND TELL**

Come and join us this Monday evening to swap birding stories, photos or videos, all with convivial chat. We may even get to see the first episode of David Attenborough's DVD that's been on the agenda twice before but never got off the ground.

At our previous evening talk a gathering filled the meeting room to hear Ralph Powlesland's presentation on 'Shags of Mainland NZ'. His lifetime interest and enthusiasm for bird study shone through his talk as he enthused about the different biologies of four of our shag species. Population, foraging and prey, breeding biology, threats, and gaps in knowledge were all covered. Thank you Ralph.

## **THE ROVING BIRDER**

### **Back In Your Own Backyard**

The first thing that grabbed my attention on entering Hong Kong from the airport was the number of large raptorial birds hanging around over the harbour and using the air currents between the many high rises. I was only there for 24 hours and had trouble keeping my eyes and binoculars downwards. The other tourists on the open top of the double decker didn't seem that interested. As I don't own a Hong Kong bird guide Mr M's advise on identification was needed when I returned to NZ. Black kites, he said straight away. Last year I thought I was lucky to have a single raptor in my neighbourhood.

I didn't see the approach or the landing, but one afternoon in November, I looked up from the kitchen sink and saw a falcon sitting on the corner of my neighbour's roof, right over the site of a sparrow's nest in the guttering. The bird of prey didn't seem to be interested in what lay beneath and after a few minutes of deciding which way to leave, took off in the direction of the chook house of another neighbour. Sparrow domestic activities appeared to continue as normal.

Harriers are becoming bold and clever at quartering over built-up areas. A couple of years ago while walking along a common driveway off Brooklands Road, Atawhai, a harrier flew over me and dropped down into a back section and came up with a mouse in its talons. That same area has a sizeable winter covey of Californian quail and a summer family or two regularly fossicking in gardens.

In early February, a female blackbird was still feeding her very round and slothful juvenile in my backyard. One afternoon I saw her fly up to my wee patch of feral blackberries and take something on the wing. I thought she had robbed me of the first ripened sweetest and fattest blackberry at the tip of the stalk but she landed on the path with what appeared to be a small twig, then I realised she had zapped a brown stick insect about 6 inches long. She worked on the hapless insect avoiding the flailing legs and appeared to be winning but I missed the final outcome. I presume she flew off to deliver the meal as there was no trace of any battered and beaten insectivorous remains on the concrete when I returned later. **G D Q**

## **PROGRAMME 2011**

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at **7.15 pm** in the "Solander Building", Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). All birders are welcome! Contact: Don Cooper 03-544 8109 or Peter Gaze wk 03-5463161.

**Our new feature is a security issue.**

**DOORS WILL BE LOCKED AT 7.30pm**

(You will still be able to leave when you wish!!)

Monday 3 October

Evening meeting  
Members night to tell tall  
bird stories, and if time,  
watch 'Life of Birds' DVD

Monday 7 November

Evening meeting

Thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the October newsletter: please email or phone me by 20 October.. Gail 03 5450456 [stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz](mailto:stagefrightmusic@xtra.co.nz)