

# TARA

Newsletter of Auckland Region OSNZ

July 2008

## Make the most of your bird sightings

Have you had a look at OSNZ's wonderful new system for bird data recording on eBirdNZ yet? We recommend you give it a try.

eBird is a user-friendly bird sighting recording system intended for use by everyone - from casual observers to keen birders, to scientists.

It's so easy and so accessible. Get a cuppa, sit down at the computer, and go online to [www.eBird.com/nz](http://www.eBird.com/nz)

Have your latest birding trip notes from your notebook, beside you, and go through the simple registration process (once only).

Your first stop should probably be the 'About eBird' page and from there, the 'How to eBird' page, but after that, the easiest way to learn the system is to enter your sightings.

You might have a five minute count you did at your favourite birding spot, or a survey of all species you saw and heard while out walking the dog? It might be a major study on a particular species, or a pelagic trip you did last week, last month or last year. There is a place in eBird for all of these.

It keeps your own bird sightings and species lists separate for you to access at any time, but can also show you and others, how these sightings fit into the bigger picture for any location and any species. (Of course the bigger picture relies on people using eBird and inputting the data).

Online eBird is an easy and efficient new way of making the most of your bird sightings. And a great system for recording them for your own use and for sharing them for present and future research studies. In the past we had Classified Summarised Notes that appeared at times in the Notornis journal. OSNZ is now producing the NZ Bird Report that will still take choice sightings from eBird and elsewhere and publish them in hard copy.

Ebird is the online archive of the future, and better still, it's easy to access by everyone, from anywhere, at any time. So do have a look and have a go. But be warned, it's fun and can be addictive. **Suzi Phillips**

For more information on eBird go to page 6.



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# Good species count at summer picnic

On the balmy evening of Tuesday 22 January, 15 members of the Auckland branch of OSNZ and friends enjoyed a picnic by the lakeside of Ayrilies, Bev Connell's property at Whitford.

The weather really 'turned it on' for us, being fine and part cloudy with a very light north east wind. Visibil-

ity was excellent, with the sun behind us to observe the numerous birds on and over the lake, while we ate at the tables kindly provided for us by David Johnstone, the head gardener.

After our repast we sauntered to the second lake in search of further species. The Coot spotted by Bruce Keeley during a recce that very morning was not to be found; instead a party of about 60 Canada geese dominated the scene.

The lakes held a very large flock of paradise shelduck, with Black swan, Mallard, Grey teal (7 ducklings in one family), Shoveler, Scaup and Dabchick to keep our interest alive.

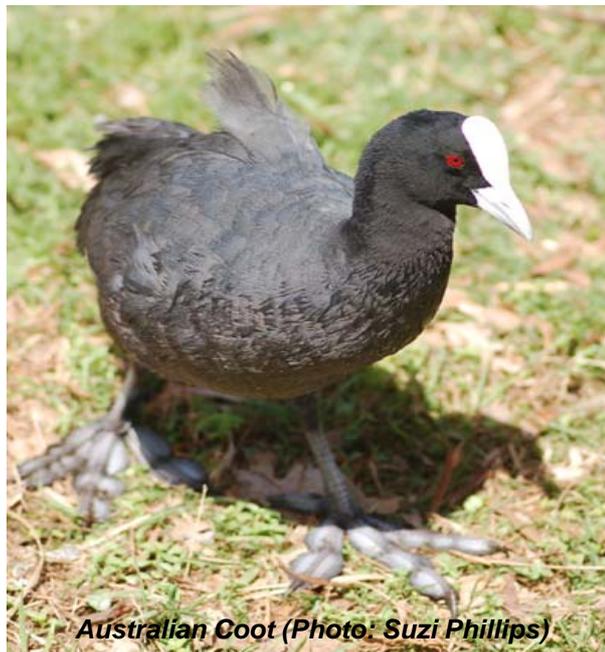
Then it was back to the cars for a short drive along Potts Road to the end of the spit for good viewing of the various waders and seabirds.

Some of these had nested on the sandbanks in the estuary, notably a first colony of Black-billed gulls which raised five chicks. NZ Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers had also hatched eggs and small chicks were seen earlier.

Beside the several VOC pairs, Pied stilts, NZ and Banded dotterels, we observed sizeable flocks of SIPO and Godwits intermixed with Knots. All told, we reached a total of 40 species - our best yet for a summer's evening picnic!

Species list: Black Swan, Canada goose, Paradise shelduck, Mallard, Grey duck, Grey teal, Shoveler, Scaup, NZ Dabchick, White-faced heron, Pukeko, Black shag, Little shag, Variable oystercatcher, SI Pied oystercatcher, Spur-winged plover, Pied stilt, NZ Dotterel, Banded dotterel, BT Godwit, Knot, Black-billed gull, Black-backed gull, Caspian tern, A. Harrier, Eastern rosella, Rock pigeon, Spotted dove, Barbary dove, Sacred Kingfisher, Welcome swallow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Skylark, Song thrush, Blackbird, House sparrow, Myna, Starling.

**Ken Bond**



*Australian Coot (Photo: Suzi Phillips)*

## TARA - Newsletter of the Auckland Region of OSNZ

Auckland Branch OSNZ meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm in the School of Natural Sciences, in the grounds of Unitec on Carrington Road in Point Chevalier. Enter via Gate 1 or 3 and follow signs to building 23. There is ample free parking. (Map available from Suzi). Admission by donation.

### VISITORS AND FRIENDS ALWAYS WELCOME

#### Regional Representative

Mel Galbraith, Ph 480-1958 (a/hours) or email melgar62@slingshot.co.nz  
62 Holyoake Place, Birkenhead.

#### TARA Editor:

Suzi Phillips, Ph 09-479-5395 or email suzi@dialogue.co.nz

#### Regional Recorders :

##### Landbirds, Waterfowl & Rails;

Suzi Phillips, Ph 09-479-5395 or email suzi@dialogue.co.nz

##### Waders, Herons, Spoonbill & Egrets;

Adrian Riegen, Ph 814-9741 or Email riegen@xtra.co.nz  
231 Forest Hill Rd, R.D.1, Henderson.

##### Seabirds, Gulls, Terns & Shags;

John Simmons, Ph 828-8642 or email johnsimmons@clear.net.nz  
4 Bamford Place, Avondale.

#### Census and Surveys

All members are invited to take part in the OSNZ Auckland branch census and surveys that take place during the year. There are always experienced regulars on these trips and they welcome new members to get involved in identifying and recording the birds. For wader and shorebird counts, the group usually meets about two hours before high tide. Contact the organiser (whose name and phone number appears alongside the survey or census date) to find out what time and where to meet. (See Activities Programme).

# Regional Report

From Mel Galbraith



## OSNZ AGM and Scientific Day 2008 - Kaikoura

Over Queen's Birthday weekend, the annual AGM and Scientific Day event was held at Kaikoura in the South Island. As RR, I represented the Auckland Region, but for most of the proceedings it was a learning curve as I was introduced to the ins-and-outs of our Society. One particular highlight was the presentation at the AGM of Meritorious Service Awards for services to the Society. One of the recipients was Auckland member, Roger Sharp, in acknowledgment of an invaluable contribution to the Society as Membership Secretary. We offer our congratulations to Roger for this well deserved commendation.

The Scientific Day is a sequence of presentations of a range of aspects of ornithology, highlighting the advances in our knowledge and the many projects that members undertake. Of particular value is the opportunity to network, and place faces to the names that appear regularly in print in *Southern Bird* or on the Birding-NZ email network.

As interesting and enjoyable as the formal events were, nothing had prepared me for the ornithological spectacle that I experienced on my field trip. I chose to join the "Albatross Encounter" crew in a boat trip that took us 12km over the deep Kaikoura Canyon. Our species tally was 18 seabird species, with the southern albatrosses and petrels and mollymawks dominating the scene. Most birds ventured to within 5m of the boat, attracted by a block of frozen fish liver. This brought the birds within remarkable camera distance. I had allowed camera capacity for one photo per minute for the trip, but ended up having to ration my shots long before we headed back to shore. (See photo above: Buller's Albatross by Mel Galbraith).

We in Auckland are to host the AGM and Scientific Day next year, and I look forward to putting together a range of experiences to repay the hospitality and efforts of the Canterbury region this year. I hope that many of the region's members will take the opportunity to attend the event while it is in our region. I commend the event for gaining knowledge, and for socialising and networking with fellow ornithologists.

## Motu Kaikoura bird surveys - an update

Last year, I presented the findings of a preliminary bird survey of Motu Kaikoura (near Great Barrier Island) to one of our monthly meetings.

Since that presentation, there have been two further surveys that have confirmed a low avian diversity for the island. The species tally stands at 36, most with extremely low population numbers.

The eradication of rodents on Motu Kaikoura is set to take place over July and August this year, so the ongoing monitoring of birds, we hope, will indicate a change for the better. The vegetation is already showing signs of recovery with the reduction of browse by deer. The removal of rats will increase the availability of invertebrate food, and will reduce predation. Bird populations are then expected to increase sharply.

Management of the island's restoration has adopted a minimal interference approach once the pests are removed.

This is an opportunity to step back and observe a process of ecological recovery as natural as possible. There is unlikely to be a rush to translocate species to boost natural diversity of the island. I believe there is a high probability of additional species arriving to the island from nearby Great Barrier Island, or even from Little Barrier Island for those species capable of flying the 17km gap. It is intended that regular monitoring of the birds will track these changes in the years to come.

# Easter bird counts at Tawharanui

Bird counts to help estimate Bellbird numbers was one of several bird surveys that took place at Tawharanui Regional Park over Easter.

More than 20 Auckland OSNZ members gathered at the park's bunkhouse over the weekend to undertake surveys for Bellbirds, Robins, Whitehead, and Grey-faced petrels. They also took part in radio tracking and listening for Kiwi and locating Brown Teal and Kaka in the park.

"It was a great weekend with a dedicated group of birders," says organiser, Suzi Phillips. "We had all ages and stages of birders, from youngsters to old hands, enjoying the wonderful birding that the park offers."

"They worked really hard to get the transect counts done each morning, and still had energy to explore the park and locate other species during the day," she says.

A full report on the transect counts that were done with the objective of estimating Bellbird numbers, has been circulated to those who took part and is available to anyone who is interested.

The full report was prepared by Heritage Scientist for the ARC, Dr Tim Lovegrove, who set up and designed the transect counts for the weekend.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the sighting of a pair of Fairy Martins along the lower entry to the Ecology Bush, beside the wetland. Many birders saw the Fairy Martins and confirmed their presence over the weekend. These were most likely vagrants from Australia.

Those taking part over the weekend included Geoff Arnold, Mick Cleland, Barbara Hughes, John, Roy and Bryce Collin, Detlef and Carol Davies, Annette Evans and family, Ellery McNaughton, Caroline Parker, Suzi Phillips, Jonathan Pote, Anne Rimmer, Heather Smith, Alison Stanes, Nick Terry and Elise Terry.

*A Whitehead near Ecology Bush in Tawharanui Regional Park. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).*

## Transect counts in Ecology Bush - Tawharanui at Easter

(Abridged from a report by Tim Lovegrove)

Transect counts took place each morning with participants working in groups of 2-3 and usually doing two consecutive counts.

The three 500 metre slow walk transects were set up in the Ecology Bush area and placed so that they sampled the three main forest habitats in the bush; forest and retired pasture edge; mature coastal forest; and regenerating kanuka/kauri/tanekaha forest on slopes and ridges.

An objective of these counts was to estimate the numbers of bellbirds at Tawharanui. During the mornings of 22 and 23 March, the three transects were counted 20 times in fine, calm conditions. The results of the counts are shown in Table 1.

In total, 34 species were counted. This included some non-forest species, recorded flying over the transects. The most numerous species in descending order of abundance were Tui, Bellbird, Fantail, Kereru, Silvereye, Grey warbler, Blackbird, Robin, Myna, Californian quail, Song thrush, Whitehead, Pukeko, Chaffinch, Rosella and Magpie. The six most numerous species were all native forest birds.

Species diversity was highest (31 spp) in Transect 1, which sampled forest edge habitat. This transect ran through and alongside a strip of riparian forest from the pumpshed at the dam to the edge of Ecology Bush and sampled more open habitat.

It also gave observers a clearer view above, making it easier to see birds flying over. Eighteen species were recorded in Transect 2 and 13 species in

Transect 3.

Assuming even dispersal, the number of bellbirds present in Ecology Bush during the counts can be estimated from the total number counted, divided by the number of counts (to give a mean count per hectare), multiplied by the area in hectares of Ecology Bush (62 ha). i.e.  $402/60 \times 62 = 415$

Ecology Bush isn't the only bellbird habitat at Tawharanui. There is a similar-sized but younger area of bush and scrublands at the eastern end of the park at Takatu Point, and there is also mature coastal forest and scrublands along the South Coast and in Possum Gully.

These other bush areas also have bellbirds. The total population on the park is probably well over 500. Bellbirds have now had three summers at Tawharanui, and in all three breeding seasons, we have seen plenty of locally-bred young.

Since early 2005, bellbirds have also been seen in various places in the neighbouring Rodney District, such as at Pakiri and Leigh, in the Dome Valley and at Baddeley's Beach. Bellbirds will have been dispersing away from Tawharanui. New birds could also be arriving all the time from Little Barrier.

There are probably now sufficient numbers of bellbirds at Tawharanui for the park to be a source for translocations to other places.

I would like to thank everyone who assisted with the counts. **Tim Lovegrove (The full report and results table is available on request).**



(Photo: Martin Sanders)

## Spoonbills around Auckland

*This group of Royal Spoonbills on the Manukau Harbour in May (right) was taken from Orpheus Drive. (Photo Paul Bennett). Spoonbills are seen in the Kaipara and Manukau Harbours all year with the greatest numbers in autumn and winter when birds have dispersed from breeding grounds. They are also seen in smaller numbers at coastal sites around Auckland such as at Sandspit (above), and on the Weiti River estuary.*



# Go to [www.eBird.com/nz](http://www.eBird.com/nz)

OSNZ are encouraging all members and members of the public to enter their bird data into eBird. This will give us a comprehensive database of bird distribution in New Zealand for the 21st century. We encourage 5 minute bird counts and travelling counts, but single observations (and casual observations) of species such as kaka and falcon are also encouraged. We hope that all OSNZ data will eventually be available in eBird.

**eBird is a simple way for your day to day birding to be useful on a national scale.**

What we really want are members to enter backyard bird counts, what they saw while walking the dog, the birds seen on a tramp to a rarely visited place plus your important single species observations.

An important part is the mapping facility which gives us the opportunity to geolocate each record ex-

actly - something that has always been problematic with CSN.

Although we have only been going three months, we already have 200 observers using the system and over 30,000 records entered - we have over 180 species recorded and good numbers of records for rarer species (i.e. 80 falcon records, 50 brown teal and more than 200 kaka sightings).

The great thing about this system is that it keeps lists and analyses your own data whilst giving you maps and seasonal trends for any species in NZ and enables anyone to produce great looking maps on a national or regional basis.

Why do we want so much data? Birds are a critical environmental monitor. It is becoming increasingly important for environmental monitoring (both at the regional and national level) to have access to quickly available data on population trends of birds.

**Paul Scofield, (Chair, Scientific Committee, OSNZ Council).**

## Fairy Terns delay Te Arai hearing

The existence of Fairy Tern breeding sites between Te Arai and Pakiri have reduced and delayed the coastal subdivision development proposed for the area.

The hearing of submissions for an 850 house development planned for Te Arai Beach has been delayed until at least October.

The developers, Te Arai Coastal Lands, now intend to revise their plans in response to the more than 1600 submissions opposing the coastal subdivision.

The main objections are the impact the proposal would have on planning for the area and on the critically endangered Fairy Terns that inhabit the beach.

Two of only four Fairy Tern breeding sites in New Zealand are on the Pakiri-Mangawhai coastline, and the Te Arai Stream that runs through the site is important for resting and feeding and for birds too young to breed or who can't find a mate.

Rodney District Council planning commissioners were to begin the hearing of a request for a plan change and a variation to the district's major planning documents in late July.

The commissioners have now approved a request by the developers to put the hearing on hold so it can respond to an RDC staff

recommendation that the plan change be withdrawn. The earliest date now for the hearing is late October. The developers seeks a special zone for 616ha of pine forest at Te Arai Beach, south of Mangawhai Harbour, to build a resort settlement.

Last year, they reduced plans for a settlement of 1400 homes to 850 in response to public comment. But this plan drew 1666 objections with only 58 in support. The site includes five kilometres of frontage to an area which is of national significance, because it is used for breeding by the Fairy Tern.



*Fairy Tern juvenile and adult at Pakiri. (Photo: Suzi Phillips)*

# Auckland OSNZ Activities Programme 2008

- Aug 5** Tuesday 7.30pm, Kookaburra in NZ - Dr John Perrott
- Aug 9 Sat 9.15am, Muriwai Beach Patrol, contact John Simmons, ph 8288642
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- Sept 2** Tuesday 7.30pm, Kea conservation - Tamsin Orr-Walker & Dr Lorne Roberts
- Sept 6/7 Motutapu Island survey, contact Mike & Sharen Graham, ph 8175537
- Sept 13 Sat 9.15am, Muriwai Beach Patrol, contact John Simmons, ph 8288642
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- Oct 7** Tuesday 7.30pm, How to Save Kiwi - instructional DVD and contributions about kiwi monitoring and protection.
- Oct 11 Sat 9.15am, Muriwai Beach Patrol, contact John Simmons, ph 8288642
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- Nov 1 Mangawhai Harbour wader census, contact Adrian Riegen, ph 8149741 (HT 1000)
- Nov 2 Firth of Thames wader census, contact Adrian Riegen, ph 8149741 (HT1050)
- Nov 4** Tuesday 7.30pm, What is the quail species on Tiritiri Matangi? - coming to grips with bird genetics - Mark Seabrook-Davidson
- Nov 8 Sat 9.15am, Muriwai Beach Patrol, contact John Simmons, ph 8288642
- Nov 15 Kaipara Harbour wader census, contact Adrian Riegen, ph 8149741 (HT 1240)
- Nov 16 Waitemata Harbour wader census, contact Adrian Riegen, ph 8149741 (HT 1330)
- Nov 22/23 Tiritiri Matangi Island census, contact Sharen Graham, ph 8175537
- 
- Dec 2** Tuesday 7.30pm, Annual quiz and Christmas festivities.
- Dec 6 Sat 9.15am, Muriwai Beach Patrol, contact John Simmons, ph 8288642

## 2009

- Jan 20 Tuesday, **Summer picnic, Orewa Estuary** (Meet just over the bridge near the mini-golf - picnic at 6pm, walk at 7pm.), contact Chris Thompson, ph 4789781.
- Feb 3** Tuesday 7.30pm, **Members' summer activities/short talks & brief AGM.**

**HH May 30 - June 1 (Queen's Birthday weekend)**  
**ANNUAL AGM and SCIENTIFIC DAY**, hosted by [Auckland Region](#).

*For the latest information on contacts, speakers, and venue locations, email Mel Galbraith at [mgalbraith@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:mgalbraith@unitec.ac.nz) or phone 4801958.*

Contributions welcomed for the next TARA - please email to [suzi@dialogue.co.nz](mailto:suzi@dialogue.co.nz)

## Seen a kookaburra recently ?

Kookaburras were first introduced into the North Auckland area by Governor George Grey in the 1860s when he added them to his collection of exotic animals on Kawau Island.

Since then, they have spread sporadically across this part of the Auckland isthmus, making it across to the Waitakeres. They are regularly spotted in areas like Matakana, Wainui, and Puhoi.

Auckland researcher, John Perrott, is hoping to observe Kookaburra nesting behaviour this spring, so if you have one or two Kookaburra resident near you, please contact him on 027- 289-8330 or by email on [jperrott@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:jperrott@unitec.ac.nz). Don't miss John's talk to Auckland OSNZ on August 5th.



*Kookaburra (Photo: Mel Galbraith)*

***Please send your Kaka sightings in the Auckland region to [kakawatchnz@gmail.com](mailto:kakawatchnz@gmail.com)***

*Kaka at Torbay last year.  
(Photo: Rose Bolton).*



Sender: TARA Newsletter, Auckland OSNZ, C/o Private Bag 1, Helensville 0840.

***TARA - Auckland OSNZ***

