



TARA

Newsletter of Auckland Region OSNZ

October 2009

Franklin's Gull first for Auckland



This vagrant Franklin's Gull, originally from North America, defied the odds to arrive on the shore's of the Manukau Harbour at Kidds Beach, in early September where it was spotted by Ian Southey and Tony Habraken. (Photo: Ian Southey).

The arrival of a visitor from North America has caused quite a stir among the Auckland region's keenest birders.

The Franklin's Gull that arrived at a small beach on the Manukau Harbour in early September, has probably travelled at least 20,000 kilometres from its breeding grounds in the prairie swamps of central North America. It appears to have over-reached the species' expected winter migration down the west coast of South America, to survive a wild ride in the "Roaring Forties" to Auckland - little wonder it has enjoyed the relatively calm environs of South Auckland ever since. This is the first record of a Franklin's Gull reaching Auckland and only the second record of a Franklin's Gull in New Zealand. (The first was in Dunedin in 2002.) Since it was noticed at Kidd's

Beach on the Manukau Harbour on September 5th, (astutely picked out by Ian Southey and Tony Habraken), the Gull has gained quite a following and been seen by scores of birders from all over New Zealand. Almost as soon as Ian and Tony got their first sighting of the Gull, it took off towards Weymouth, and it took two weeks of searching before it was found again. This time it was Phil Hammond who deduced that it had probably moved inland, and found it at Ardmore Airfield near Takanini. It regularly commutes the short distance between there and Bruce Pulman Park where it is often seen on the rugby fields, netball courts, or the ponds on Walters Rd. It has undergone a seasonal moult in the past month, but remains in the area, including a recent return visit to the shores of the Manukau Harbour.

Motutapu Survey Pg 3

Grey-faced Petrels Pg 6

Conference photos Pgs 4-5

Shakespear Survey Pg 7

Busy year for Auckland OSNZ

There have been a number of significant events in our calendar so far this year – no time to relax in the bird world!

The ornithological highlight for our region has to have been hosting the Society's annual Scientific Day and AGM over Queens' Birthday Weekend. Feedback from attendees indicated a most successful weekend, from both the sharing of knowledge and social perspectives.

The event ran smoothly, largely thanks to the many that collectively formed the organising team – but I know we will all welcome next year's event in Nelson without the responsibility of the organisation!

A big thank-you in advance to Nelson region! Tiritiri Matangi Island is a restoration project that

is close to the heart of many Auckland ornithologists.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the start of the revegetation of the island, and many of the initial planting trips were organised under the auspices of the Ornithological Society.

Our association with the project has been maintained through annual bird surveys conducted by the Auckland region, generating an invaluable data set of bird populations over the restoration period.

This year is also the 21st anniversary of the formation of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi, the formal collective of Tiritiri volunteers that again, particularly in the early years, involved many OSNZ Auckland members.

To celebrate, SOTM held a commemorative dinner with guest speaker, conservationist, David Bellamy. David delivered a powerful message commending the contribution that volunteers like ourselves make to restoring our stressed environment.

Of note were his comments that a plethora of small projects like Tiritiri across the globe are collectively making a significant progress in improving environmental quality - we take heart in that!

Two recent book launches – Keith Woodley's "Godwits: long-haul champions" and Tui de Roy's "Galapagos: preserving Darwin's legacy"; have provided the Auckland region with delightful presentations additional to our monthly guest speakers.

We are fortunate to be able to 'piggyback' on such events that celebrate the natural world. Our monthly meetings, however, continue to be an informative and enjoyable gathering of like-minds, with guest speakers covering an eclectic range of ornithological topics.

I must recommend the regular meetings to all our region's members, and look forward to meeting more of you in the coming months.

Mel Galbraith, Regional Representative.

TARA - Newsletter of the Auckland Region of OSNZ

Auckland Branch OSNZ meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm, at Unitec on Carrington Road in Point Chevalier. Admission by donation.

VISITORS & FRIENDS ALWAYS WELCOME

Regional Representative:

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TARA Editor:

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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 members on these trips and they welcome new members to get involved in identifying and recording the birds.

New meeting venue for next year

Our monthly meetings will be in a new venue for 2010 - still at Unitec, but in a different (easier-to-find) building. Details will be included in the activities programme for the first half of 2010 to be sent out soon.

Kakariki appear on Motutapu

This year, Kakariki or Red-Crowned Parakeet became the 44th bird species recorded on Motutapu during the annual weekend survey.

A pair was recorded in the bush remnant transect near Home Bay twice on the Saturday, and was seen several times on Sunday in the same general location.

This and the behaviour of the birds strongly suggest they have taken up residence in what is a very suitable location for them.

The third annual bird survey on Motutapu Island was conducted over the first weekend of September in perfect weather. A total of 28 counts were done on the various transects, that are organised into Wetland, Coastal and Bush in three different areas of the island.

This survey is significant as it closely follows the recent pest eradication aimed at ridding the island of rodents and mustelids.

The early spring timing meant it was too early to record any effect of pest removal on the bird breeding population.

Positive effects should be apparent in the 2010 survey, but the effect of the eradication operation was reflected in significant changes to certain species.

The results mirror what happened on Tiritiri Matangi Island following a similar operation in

September 1993 and an extract from OSNZ survey data on that island illustrates the dramatic decline and equally dramatic recovery of the Pukeko population. We anticipate this pattern repeating itself on Motutapu for all the affected species.

The duck population was also greatly reduced, and in the case of Paradise Shelduck – a New Zealand endemic species – numerous dead birds were found between transects suggesting that the numbers lost are far greater than what was recorded on the transects. Harrier numbers were also much reduced no doubt as a result of feeding on eradication victims, and as on Tiritiri the Blackbird count was down.

Predictably the omnivorous and opportunist species such as House Sparrow, Myna and to a lesser extent Magpie were also in much reduced numbers. All three species would compete for food with rodents and a combination of this and re-establishment by visiting birds will in all probability see the numbers back to normal next year. In addition to the losses there were some gains but only one – Goldfinch – was due to what is an indirect result of the eradication operation.

Stock were removed and the grass has grown long and lush with big flocks of Goldfinch taking full advantage of the seeding heads.

The other significant increase was in the number of Tui who had moved on to the island to take advantage of a superb Kowhai flowering season and early Rewarewa. The Tui population should increase on the island over time, but as on Tiritiri the numbers of this highly mobile bird will fluctuate with seasonal variations in the flowering time of nectar bearing trees. The major gain is probably a result of pest eradication on neighbouring islands where Red-crowned Parakeet - Kakariki - have been introduced. The birds were only seen in flight from above so leg bands were not recorded, but it is planned to return to the island before Christmas to check on progress and try to establish the identity of the pair. Thanks to the participants: Enid & Paul Asquith, Chris & Peter Thompson, Gillian Eller, Mike & Sharen Graham. **Article and survey table provided by Mike Graham.**



Kakariki (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Species	2007	2008	2009	Trends	2007	2008	2009
	Overall Total	Overall Total	Overall Total		Overall Average	Overall Average	Overall Average
Blackbird	43	19	7	↓	1.8	0.7	0.3
Chaffinch	23	40	5	↓	1.0	1.4	0.2
Dotterel - New Zealand Dotterel	10	12	2		0.4	0.4	0.1
Duck - Grey Duck	7	5	0	↓	0.3	0.2	0.0
Duck - Mallard	30	52	2	↓	1.3	1.8	0.1
Duck - Paradise Shelduck	67	160	44	↓	2.8	5.5	1.6
Fantail	40	48	66		1.7	1.7	2.4
Gannet	3	3	6		0.1	0.1	0.2
Goldfinch	133	187	412	↑↑	5.5	6.4	14.7
Greenfinch	16	2	3		0.7	0.1	0.1
Gull - Black-backed Gull	55	217	39		2.3	7.5	1.4
Gull - Red-billed Gull	42	14	51		1.8	0.5	1.8
Harrier	24	19	8	↓	1.0	0.7	0.3
Heron - Reef Heron	1	2	0		0.0	0.1	0.0
Heron - White-faced Heron	4	11	10		0.2	0.4	0.4
Kingfisher	45	49	52		1.9	1.7	1.9
Magpie	29	29	13	↓	1.2	1.0	0.5
Mercspurk	0	0	0		0.0	0.0	0.0
Myna	99	82	49	↓	4.1	2.8	1.4
Oystercatcher - Variable Black	70	75	45		2.9	2.6	1.6
Parakeet - Red-crowned Kakariki	0	0	6	New	0.0	0.0	0.2
Penguin - Little Blue	1	1	1		0.0	0.0	0.0
Pigeon - New Zealand Pigeon	14	9	6		0.6	0.3	0.2
Plover - Spur-wing Plover	7	13	9		0.3	0.4	0.3
Pukeko	184	485	8	↓↓	7.7	16.7	0.3
Rosella - Eastern	11	4	14		0.5	0.1	0.5
Shag - Black	0	1	1		0.0	0.0	0.0
Shag - Little	5	7	2		0.2	0.2	0.1
Shag - Pied	6	5	5		0.3	0.2	0.2
Silvereye	98	112	105		4.1	1.9	1.8
Skylark	22	18	15		0.9	0.6	0.5
Sparrow - Hedge Sparrow	3	4	0		0.1	0.1	0.0
Sparrow - House Sparrow	274	342	15	↓↓	11.4	11.8	0.5
Starling	36	106	128		1.5	3.7	4.6
Stilt - Pied Stilt	1	2	0		0.0	0.1	0.0
Swallow	75	33	52		3.1	1.1	1.9
Tern - Caspian Tern	4	1	1		0.2	0.0	0.0
Thrush - Song Thrush	9	12	9		0.4	0.4	0.3
Tui	4	23	58	↑↑	0.2	0.8	2.1
Turkey	20	66	0		0.8	2.3	0.0
Warbler - Grey Warbler	59	87	91		2.5	3.0	3.3
Yellowhammer	2	63	27		0.1	2.2	1.0

OSNZ Conference 2009



All photos courtesy of
Chris Thompson

Hosted by Auckland at Orewa



First petrel chick for sanctuary



*Grey-faced Petrel
near nest. (Photo:
Mel Galbraith)*

Oi, I'm down here! Faint peeping from a burrow has revealed the presence of a long-absent seabird at Tawharanui Open Sanctuary.

Oi, or grey-faced petrels, along with other burrowing seabirds, have been absent from the park for decades, but the recent discovery of a chick is cause for celebration for ARC rangers and volunteers at the pest-free sanctuary.

"The return of long-lost grey-faced petrels to the Auckland mainland is without doubt thanks to the success of the pest free open sanctuary at Tawharanui," says ARC Chairman Mike Lee.

"The building of a predator-proof fence and the eradication of rats, possums and other pests by the ARC in 2004 has been paying enormous dividends in enhancing natural biodiversity."

The discovery of a three week old petrel chick in a burrow on the north coast was made when the calls of the seabird were overheard by park volunteer and seabird researcher Chris Gaskin using a bio-acoustic monitoring device at Tokatu Point.

Follow-up listening surveys detected activity overhead and out to sea nearby and a ground search found petrel-like burrows in several locations – one containing a peeping chick.

The chick is expected to emerge from the burrow in late November, and in the meantime, indications are that it is being visited and fed regularly by its parents.

"The importance of seabirds re-establishing at

Tawharanui is more than the return of another absent species. This is the beginning of the restoration of a significant ecological process," says Chris.

"Seabirds play an important role providing nutrients from the sea which is a main source of soil fertility in ecosystems across most of New Zealand's mainland and islands. The absence of seabirds results in a fundamentally broken ecological linkage."

Grey-faced petrels are known to visit their burrows after dusk and leave again before dawn, also feeding at night, mainly on squid, small fish and crustaceans.

They start to breed from six to seven years of age, visiting breeding areas between March and April to clean out their burrows and take part in pair bonding.

Egg laying starts from late June to the end of July, and one white egg is laid in a burrow. The egg hatches after 51 – 58 days of incubation and is attended by a parent for the first few days. Later it is visited every few days with food. Fledging takes place from early December to the end of January.

Activities Programme

The Auckland OSNZ Activities Programme of meetings, surveys and field trips, will be distributed separately later this month.

New species appear in survey

A Brown Teal pair with duckling, and calls from Spotless Crake, were two new records for the survey at Shakespear Regional Park recently.

The park is at the eastern end of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula.

To avoid the city traffic the survey team met at 10 instead of 8am, beside Waterfall Gully. The birds were surveyed in six allotted areas by the 'free-range' method, also used in the previous survey of 28/10/2007. This year only selected 'indicator' species were counted for comparison with previous numbers (as shown in the list below). The volunteers recorded fewer Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Skylarks - possibly due to counting after their morning song period, but increased numbers of Grey Warblers, Kingfishers and Kereru (NZ Pigeon), which bodes well for the future of the park as a sanctuary.

The Tui count of 40 will be a considerable underestimate; many being airborne while we were taking our lunch. Interestingly, only one Shining Cuckoo was heard in late October two years ago, but this spring on an earlier date there

were at least eight in Shakespear Park - perhaps they had not yet dispersed inland after a recent arrival.

In 2007 we tallied 533 Pukeko which remains the most abundant bird in the park. Six more species were found this time, notably Reef Heron, Kakariki and Brown Teal - a pair with one surviving duckling. The lake also held Mallard, Paradise Shelduck, Shoveller, Little

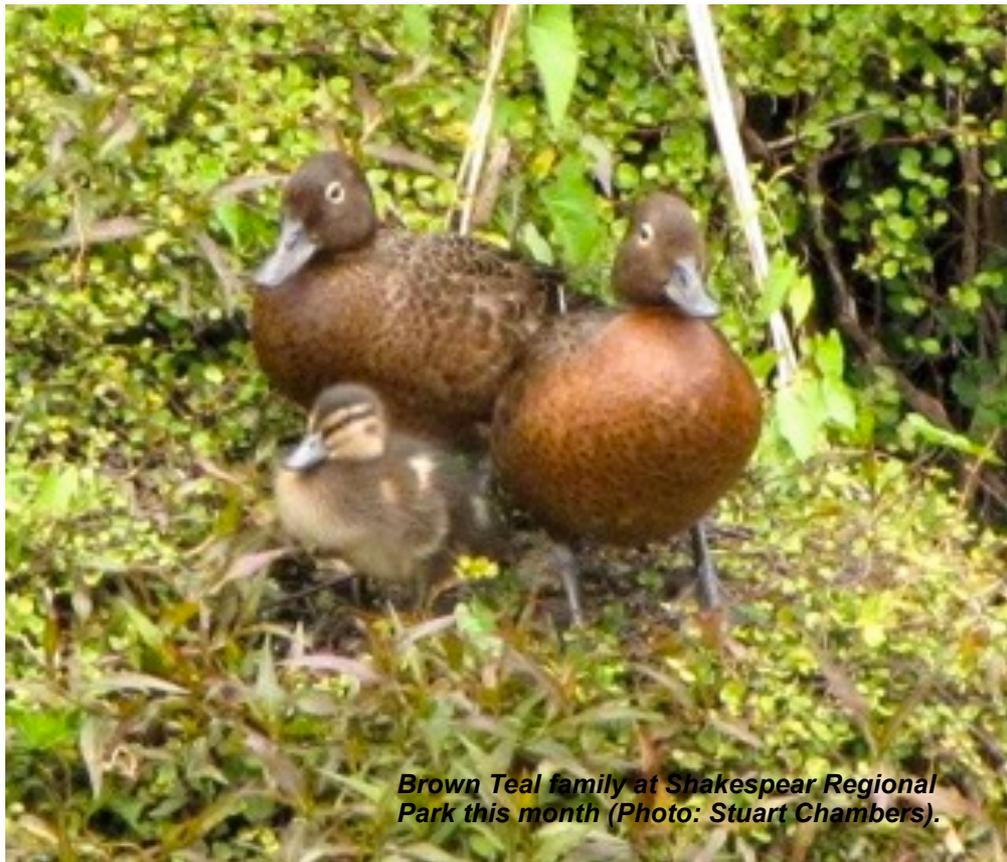
Shag and Pied Stilt. Following the survey, three people stayed behind with a calling tape and were rewarded by the clear response of a Spotless Crake in the marshy area beyond the gully.

Annotated list (numbers in brackets are from 2007 survey): Blackbird 28 (63), Black Swan, Brown Teal 3, Bellbird 3 (3), Californian Quail, Caspian Tern, Chaffinch, Fantail, Godwit 32, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Grey Warbler 49 (42), Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Harrier 1 (4), Reef Heron, White-faced Heron, House Sparrow, Kakariki 2, Kingfisher 27 (16), Magpie, Mallard, Myna, NZ Dotterel 6 (1), Kereru/NZ Pigeon 22 (13), Pied Oystercatcher 1, Variable Oystercatcher 11 (16), Paradise Shelduck, Peacock, Pheasant, Pied Stilt 16 (20), Pukeko, Rosella 40 (69), Shining Cuckoo 8 (1), Silvereye, Skylark 12 (19), Song Thrush 24 (44), Little Shag, Pied Shag, Shoveller, Spotless Crake, Spur-winged Plover 26 (34), Starling, Tui 40 (59), Turkey, Welcome Swallow, Yellowhammer 8 (28)

A total of 47 species

Participants: Paul Asquith, Stuart Chambers, Caroline Parker, Suzi Phillips, Gwenda Pulham, Anne Rimmer, John Simmons, John Stewart & Kay Milton, Michael Taylor (organiser).

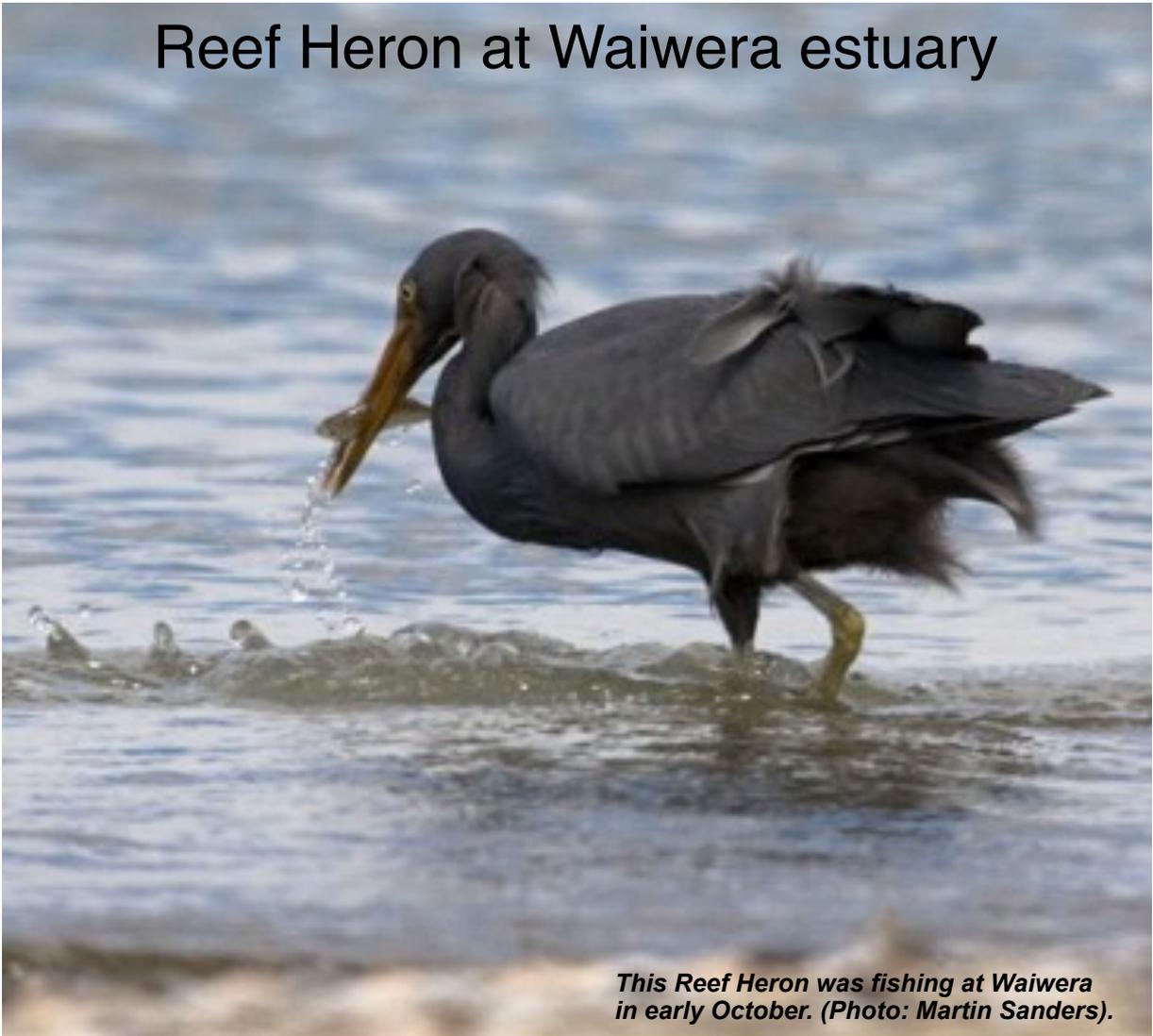
We hope to continue these surveys in support of the Shakespear Open Sanctuary Society project,



Brown Teal family at Shakespear Regional Park this month (Photo: Stuart Chambers).

Work is expected to begin within the next few months on the predator-proof fence across the peninsula. More details are available from SOSI via email: info@sossi.org.nz, or website: www.sossi.org.nz. **Report by Michael Taylor**

Reef Heron at Waiwera estuary



This Reef Heron was fishing at Waiwera in early October. (Photo: Martin Sanders).

Tuesday 19th January - Auckland OSNZ Annual Picnic

Waiatarua Wetland Reserve, Remuera

Meet 6pm at the picnic tables next to the playground, on Grand Drive, near corner of Abbotts Way. Picnic at 6pm, wetland walk at 7pm. For further details, contact Chris Thompson on (09) 478-9781. All welcome.

TARA - Auckland OSNZ

