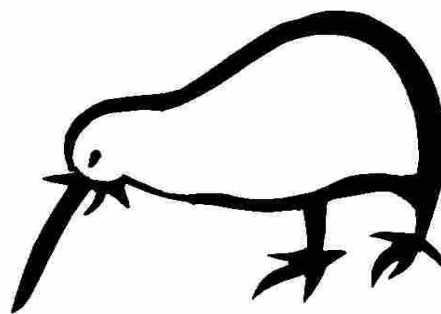


# APTERYX

Issue 14  
April 2006



## NEWSLETTER OF THE FAR NORTH REGION OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



Kingfisher recovering  
after hitting window,  
Landing Road (DD)



### REGIONAL REP'S REFLECTIONS

A warm welcome to 3 new members, Pauline Stephinson and Tim Robinson both from Kerikeri and Bill Smith who joins Lynette as a 'family member'. We hear rumours of more potential new members and I look forward to the appropriate email message from membership secretary, Roger Sharp with confirmation of joining.

An anonymous member has donated a further \$200 to the cost of producing the newsletter (or to other Far North expenses) which means that we can produce more copies for distribution among prospective members and perhaps increase pages with colour.



North Island Brown Kiwi, Purerua (Carol Davies)

Most Far North members have an email address. From time to time I circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times & meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email & would like to be kept informed this way, please let me know & give me a phone number so that I can contact you with such information.

With the latest issue of Southern Bird & Notornis you will have received a ballot paper for the election of OSNZ President. You should then have had an email saying that the vote is probably unnecessary and a very recent message confirms that Stuart Nicholson has withdrawn & Richard Holdaway is the only candidate.

The Far North Regional Officers are as follows:

**Regional Representative:**

Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri.  
Phone: 09 407 3874  
Email: [detlefdavies@yahoo.com](mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com)

**Regional Recorder:**

Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri.  
Phone: 09 407 8747  
Email: [laureen.a@xtra.co.nz](mailto:laureen.a@xtra.co.nz)

**Treasurer:**

Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa Road West, Kerikeri  
Phone: 09 407 8058  
Email: [godbert@xtra.co.nz](mailto:godbert@xtra.co.nz)



Australasian Bittern,  
Henderson Beach  
Road. 22 Jan (DD)

**RECENT EVENTS**

**Wed 17 Jan INDOOR MEETING**

We had the pleasure of an illustrated talk by **David Crockett** who has for more than 30 years played a major part in the protection of the Magenta Petrel or Taiko on the Chatham Islands. The Taiko is one of the rarest seabirds in the world & was almost unknown until 1978 when David & his team rediscovered the species; 10 years later the first breeding burrow was found. A predator-proof fence now separates the area where over a dozen pairs are known to breed but the world population is not thought to exceed 150 birds.

**Late Jan to early Feb WADER COUNT**

Our main field event of the last 3 months lasted 4 days over a period of over 2 weeks and was very rewarding. We thank Bill & Lynette for the use of their boat & the results are on a separate appendix. Apart from waders, some of us had excellent views of a Bittern; Little Terns were in double figures, Spoonbills seen at great distance & a Fairy Prion was resting on the sand.



Fairy Prion, Kokota Sandspit, 21 Jan (DD)



Wandering Albatross, 5 March (DD)

## **Weekend 4 – 5 March FAR NORTH PELAGIC**

Detlef joined 4 other birders on a day & a half's pelagic from Houhora. Recent strong winds had died down & we headed off NNE to deeper waters on both days, anchoring off Matai Beach on Saturday evening. Highlights were Subantarctic Skua, an adult Northern Royal Albatross, several Black-winged Petrels & one New Zealand Storm Petrel. On Sunday 11 Wandering Albatrosses were seen on the sea together. We also had 2 pods of Common Dolphins close to the boat.

## **Thurs 9 March INDOOR MEETING**

The oceans surrounding New Zealand are home to a great variety of seabirds, both species & individuals are more numerous than anywhere else in the world. **Chris Gaskin** who runs Kiwi Wildlife Tours & Pterodroma Pelagics gave a detailed presentation of the species we can expect to see within reach of our coasts & showed some excellent photography. In particular he explained the very recent efforts to find the breeding sites of the New Zealand Storm Petrel.

## **PROGRAMME**

## **Fri 5 May INDOOR MEETING**

**Greg Blunden** will give a presentation on Aroha Island which he & Gay have been operating as a reserve & cottage accommodation for some years.

## **Weekend 26 – 28 May FAR NORTH PELAGIC.**

Kiwi Wildlife Tours are running another pelagic from Houhora. Cost for the weekend is \$550. If you would like to go, please let me know or email [info@kiwi-wildlife.co.nz](mailto:info@kiwi-wildlife.co.nz)

## **1 – 5 June ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM, Wellington**

A reminder that the OSNZ AGM & Annual Conference takes place in Wellington from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June. If you would like to go & have not yet booked or do not have sufficient details, please let me know. It is hoped to run a trip to Kapiti Island during the event.

## **Fri 9 June FAR NORTH AGM**

This will take place at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri at 7.30 pm. Drinks & nibbles offered as usual from 7 pm & the meeting will be followed by a social evening with slides or a video. Please let me know of any points you wish to raise as Agenda items.

## **17 – 18 June WADER COUNT**

This weekend high tide will be around midday so we hope to do the winter wader count at Parengarenga, Walker Island & the other usual sites we cover. Good support would be welcomed.

## **June KIWI MONITORING**

**Greg Blunden** and **Tim Robinson** have been looking into continuing the NZ Kiwi Foundation call monitoring this June but this year they aim to put results forward to the national monitoring programme. To do this they need 4 nights of 2 hour duration at each site (they want to cover 6 sites on the Kerikeri Peninsula & 4 sites on Purerua - not including the one national monitoring station already carried out on each peninsula). If you can help please contact Tim at 9 Pounamu Place, RD1 Rangitane, Kerikeri, 09 4017104, [tim\\_mrobinson@hotmail.com](mailto:tim_mrobinson@hotmail.com)

## **Sept Advance Notice – WARAWARA FOREST**

As many of you know we tried to arrange a trip to this exciting place in March but were defeated by the news of cyanide poisoning at the site. This is just to let you know that we haven't given up & will be in close contact with DOC in Kaitia with a view to going in Sept.

## BEACH PATROLS

## MAY - AUGUST 2006

These are scheduled for the following Saturdays:

**90 Mile Beach:** 27 May, 24 June, 22 July, 19 August.

**Karikari Beach:** 13 May, 10 June, 8 July, 5 August.

However, these may change & you should check dates with the organisers: **Isabella Godbert** – 09 407 8058 or **John Dawn** – 09 407 8658. Beach patrollers are in demand. John indicates that to make it worth covering 90 Mile Beach we need a minimum of 4 people to cover around 30 kilometers. We can cover Karikari with 3. It would be good to have one or two extra people to call on when necessary. Any members interested in the experience, can walk 7+ kms, don't mind travelling in a van & don't mind handling dead birds, please make contact. A prospective member, Les Small, recently found a young Wandering Albatross alive on 90 Mile Beach.

## RECENT REPORTS

## January – April 2006

This is a resume of the more interesting species seen in our area in the last 4 months. It excludes the commoner waders listed on the wader census sheets & the commoner pelagic seabirds.

**NORTH ISLAND BROWN KIWI** Regular sightings on Purerua, Rangitane & Doves Bay area  
**AUSTRALIAN LITTLE GREBE** 11 on Lake Rotokawau (the one near Lake Ngatu) on 22 Jan  
**NEW ZEALAND DABCHICK** 1 Henderson Beach Road & 4 on Lake Rotokawau 22 Jan  
**NORTHERN ROYAL ALBATROSS** Adult on Far North pelagic 5 March  
**FLUTTERING SHEARWATER** Although common offshore, Mike Bryan estimated 10,000 off Puheke Beach on 24 Dec.  
**FAIRY PRION** One on Kokota Sandspit 21 Jan, only 4 on March pelagic  
**COOK'S PETREL** c.20 on March pelagic  
**BLACK-WINGED PETREL** 4 on March pelagic  
**WHITE-FACED STORM PETREL** 20+ on March pelagic  
**NEW ZEALAND STORM PETREL** One on March pelagic, well north of suspected breeding area  
**AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN** 2 Henderson Beach Road on 22 Jan, one giving great views for many of us  
**ROYAL SPOONBILL** c.20 at Nillson's Dam 21 Jan, present Unahi Wharf 25 March  
**NEW ZEALAND SCAUP** 1 Henderson Beach Road 22 Jan  
**CURLEW SANDPIPER** 3 Paua 21 Jan  
**SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER** 4 Kokota Sandspit 21 Jan  
**RED-NECKED STINT** 1 Kokota Sandspit 21 Jan  
**EASTERN CURLEW** 3 Walker island 4 Feb  
**TATTLER Sp.** One with Godwits at Kowhai Beach 22 Jan  
**SUBANTARCTIC SKUA** One on March pelagic  
**ARCTIC SKUA** 1 Henderson Beach 22 Jan, 3 on March pelagic, 2 Rangaunu Harbour 25 March  
**LITTLE TERN** 7 East Beach 22 Jan, 1 Walker Island & 13 on East Beach 4 Feb  
**PARAKEET Sp.** Carol D heard & saw one fly over our garden 2 April  
**LONG-TAILED CUCKOO** Lynette & Bill saw a juv perched outside their home on 9 April  
**SHINING CUCKOO** Bet & Frank saw a juv in Kerikeri in late February  
**FERNBIRD** Regular sightings along the road between Opuia & Kawakawa & at Aroha Island.

**STOP PRESS:** At Aroha Island on 25 April, 3 **Cattle Egrets** flying west, 2 **Spoonbills**, 2 **Little Terns** (or perhaps Fairy?) (with White-fronted & Caspian), **Banded Rail**

Note: the above is a selection of sightings which have come to our notice. With more information on sightings communicated to Laureen, our Regional Recorder, or to Detlef, we will get a better picture of what is around. Frequent sightings of some species may make specific mention unnecessary, e.g is New Zealand Scaup really commoner than the sole sighting suggests? Has anyone recently seen Shoveler in our area? Undoubtedly some species need only be mentioned if exceptional numbers are seen or at unusual times of year.

## MEMBERS' TRIPS

### FAREWELL SPIT, Dec 2005

Laureen Alston

Photos by Laureen



In our December newsletter CJ Ralph gave us a report about the Australasian Ornithological Conference which he attended in Blenheim. Laureen Alston attended the Australasian Shorebird Conference which took place in Nelson shortly afterwards and now describes the subsequent trip to Farewell Spit.

*After two days of intensive presentations by many very knowledgeable experts and students on subjects covering aspects of Wader Study in Australasia such as NZ Endemics, Population Monitoring, Distribution, Migration, Population Biology, and Conservation, often in very warm conditions and with sound effects from the flyway into Nelson airport, the Field Trip to Farewell Spit came as a welcome change.*

*The 45 strong group travelled by road bus to Collingwood with a stop at Motueka Spit for a walk and views of our first waders. From there we transferred to two 4WD buses for the trip to Farewell Spit and along the ocean beach to the lighthouse compound where we were to stay overnight.*



*On the way we climbed one of the big dunes and received information on dune formation and habitat problems from our local DoC guides. Clouds had been gathering all day and on our arrival we walked about 40mins out the eastward stretching tip of the spit to view the Gannet colonies, quite different from our northern variety as they were nesting on low knolls of sand and guano and on the small beaches surrounding them. There had been a large storm in September during their breeding period and all but the highest placed nests were washed away. However re-nesting had taken place so we had views of small chicks right up to young as big as their parents. There were also Caspian Tern and Black-backed Gull colonies on nearby shellbanks. We were lucky to have an almost complete lack of the usual strong winds but the lateness of the day and cloudy conditions made photography difficult and very soon heavy rain began to fall and continued overnight – there were some very wet campers around the dinner tables that evening!*

*The next day dawned overcast but dry and still no wind to speak of and a large group set off westwards towards the inside shore of the spit and were lucky enough to see a Fernbird flying with nesting material as we walked through the scrub to the shore. There it was telescopes out*

and flocks of roosting waders inspected until the rising spring tide forced us to higher ground and we made our back over the vegetated old dunes (following deer trails!) to the large sand pans behind the fore dunes of the ocean side and while we ate our picnic lunches, it was once again telescopes to the fore. A good variety of waders were seen including flocks of Godwit, Knot, a Curlew Sandpiper in breeding plumage, Golden Plover, Turnstone, Banded and NZ Dotterel and one Godwit with a white rump identified by the experts as being a Bar-tailed but of the race *menseria* which breeds in Siberia, not Alaska and migrates to NW Australia, obviously found the NZ lot interesting and came to try out our side of the Tasman! Some flagged birds were recorded including one from Dandong, China, which was a thrill for the 3 Chinese students attending the Conference, one of whom came from that area. As the birds moved out with the falling tide the keen types climbed dunes to fill in the time waiting for the buses with our gear and companions to come trundling along the sand for the trip out to the gate where we transferred to the road coach for the ride back to Nelson, all no doubt tired but inspired.

## BOAT TRIP FROM UNAHI WHARF

25 March

White-fronted Tern (DD)



Mike Bryan sends the following report:

As a 40th birthday present I went out from Unahi Wharf minus children but accompanied by some friends for a day on the water, fishing, birdwatching and getting away from our busy lives. The forecast was for rain with the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Wattie due in the next few days.

Our skipper was Merv Payne who is a commercial scallop fisherman on the East Coast. The fishing was good with enough Kahawai and snapper for a good feed. The birding was good too even though I forgot to take my bins. We trolled through shoals of kahawai which were indicated from a long way away by the concentrated flocks of White-fronted Terns. The terns are attracted by the presence near the surface of the small fish that the kahawai are chasing. Another name for White-fronted Tern is apparently "kahawai bird". There were 20-30 terns in each flock, and hanging around the flocks we saw a couple of Arctic Skuas, chasing the terns for distances of up to 1 km to force the terns to drop their feed. The Skuas were agile and powerful compared to the superficially similar juvenile Black backed Gulls.

Out at the mouth of the harbour were large flocks of Fluttering Shearwaters flying restlessly around in circles. This sighting ties up with my observations of up to 10,000 shearwaters moving west past Puheke Beach towards Rangiputa in late December. There were small numbers of waders flying around, mostly Pied Stilts. On the *Macrocarpas* at the wharf there were Spoonbills.

I can thoroughly recommend a trip out in this harbour. Merv is an excellent skipper, very hospitable with a well ordered boat. The rate for 5 passengers was also very reasonable. Next time I will remember the bins and see even more.



Fluttering Shearwaters with one Buller's Shearwater off Houhora (DD)

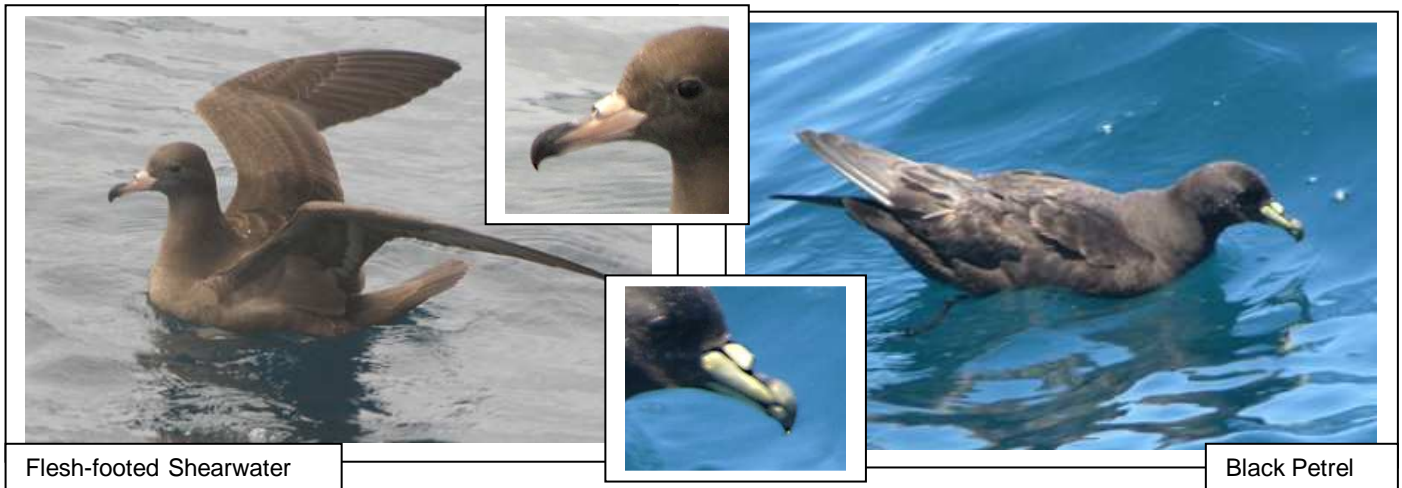
## ID. SPOT

Detlef Davies

Let's look at some pairs of similar species which often cause confusion.

### 1. FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER & BLACK PETREL

These are both quite large blackish seabirds which are in different genera so not closely related, but easily confused at sea. The petrel is stockier, broader-winged & has black feet, Flesh-foots are browner & have pink feet but these features are hard to see. The pattern & colour of the bills are distinct on a reasonable view, as per these photos. Flesh-foots are sometimes seen in the outer Bay of Islands but Black Petrels are usually well offshore & are much less common.



### 2. GREY-TAILED (SIBERIAN) TATTLER & WANDERING TATTLER

Tattlers are wading birds which breed in the Arctic, Grey-tailed in NE Siberia & Wandering in Alaska. Both migrate south in the northern winter & are not uncommon in parts of Australia, especially on rocky or pebbly shores. Both are rare in New Zealand but they are probably more frequent than people realise because of the huge extent of suitable habitat around our coasts & the birds are often solitary & inconspicuous. They are distinct from most other waders in showing no white markings in the wings or tail in flight so they are very plain grey above, both have yellowish legs & feet.

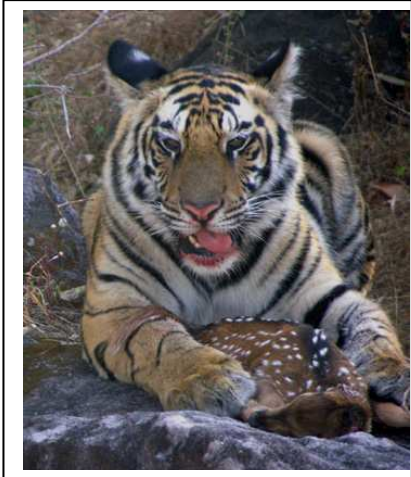


Wandering Tattler is slightly larger & darker grey than Grey-tailed, more heavily barred below & the white supercilium is more obvious in front of the eye than behind. In Wandering, the folded wings extend beyond the tail, Grey-tailed is more likely than Wandering to occur also on mudflats with other waders. The most reliable difference is the call which in Grey-tailed is an upslurred whistle & in Wandering, a longer trill. So what about the 2 photos? I took these at Boona Point near Sydney where there were about 20 of them, at no time did I hear a trill so I suspect they are both Grey-tailed. What do you think?

**NEW YEAR IN INDIA**

**Detlef & Carol Davies**

We enjoyed a holiday in India in Dec / Jan with a tour company from the UK looking for Tigers at Bandhavgarh Reserve in northern India. Birding was excellent both at the tiger reserve & at Bharatpur, one of the best wetland reserves in the world. Some of the more memorable species included Lesser Adjutant Stork, Tickell's & Orange-headed Thrushes, Blue-bearded Bee Eater, Sarus Cranes & 7 species of owls. All these owls were seen at daytime roosts which the reserve guides were expert at finding; 2 Brown Fish Owls were above the entrance road at Bandhavgarh.



In spite of this the highlight had to be the elephant ride on New Year's Day to the spot where a large Tiger cub was feeding on a Spotted Deer carcase.

As well as the wildlife, we enjoyed seeing the Taj Mahal & Agra Fort & as internal flights in India are rather haphazard we twice travelled by overnight train. A stop-over in Singapore on the return journey gave us the chance to see this interesting city & we visited the Botanical Gardens for a little more birding; we saw Striated Tit-Babbler, Black-naped Oriole, Grey-rumped Tree Swift and a Yellow Bittern here.



Orange-headed Thrush (Carol Davies)



Greater Spotted Eagle (Carol Davies)



