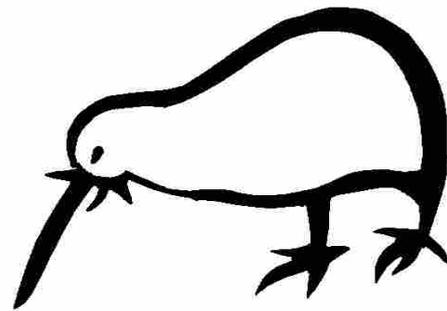


APTERYX

Issue 23
April 2009



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



Red-tailed Tropicbird

Far North
New Zealand
waters at
33.5°S

19 March 09

Detlef Davies



EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Apologies for the late production of this newsletter due to my absence on board ship in the Pacific Ocean for much of March and April. Many thanks to those who have contributed in the last few months with articles and photos. The summer has had its exciting moments in the Far North with a great selection of unusual species, some being found by visitors to the area. It shows what is out there for those who spend time searching our coasts, wetlands and forests. We welcome Dave & Mavis Hill, summer managers at Aroha Island, as new Far North members.

I often circularise news by email such as programme changes, confirmation of times and meeting places of events, etc. If you do not have email, please give me a phone number so I can contact you with this information.



Cape Brett from ship c.11 miles out with False Killer Whale blowing in the foreground, 18 March 09, Detlef Davies

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RECENT EVENTS**23 Jan Indoor Meeting, Coopers Beach**

We had a very absorbing presentation tonight by Evan Ward, assisted by Lynda McGrory-Ward on their experiences in the Kermadec Islands in the course of their work for the Department of Conservation. The photography and video quality were excellent.

14 – 15 Feb Wader Count

9 of us took part in the summer wader count of which the results appear on page 8.

6 March Indoor Meeting, Kerikeri

We were delighted to welcome our speaker, Suzi Phillips, former Auckland OSNZ regional rep who spoke with enthusiasm about her studies on the Kaka north of Auckland - parrots being one of her favourite subjects. Kakas are now attempting to breed outside the perimeter fence at Tawharanui.

RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Laureen Alston & Detlef Davies

This covers the Far North region and seas to the north from December 2008. Contributors include the authors and Anthea Goodwin, Kevin Matthews, Bruce Collett, Carol Davies, Isabella Godbert, Steve Amon, Ian & Norma Smith, Wayne Parsonson & Yvonne Steinemann, Carol & CJ Ralph, Willie Cook, Heather Alston, Peter Ladd, Paul Asquith, John Metcalfe, Michael Winch, Ian Wilson, Chris Chadwick, Sav Saville, Brent Stephenson, Dan Hawthorn & Alan Cordery.

Records include seabirds seen on Wrybill Tours' annual 4 day pelagic to the north of Cape Reinga (designated 'WTP') from 4 - 7 April (although no Far North members were on board this year) and seabirds recorded in the early part (mainly 18 March) of Heritage Expeditions' West Pacific Odyssey ('WPO') while passing the Far North on route to Japan (on which Detlef was on board).

North Island Brown Kiwi Calls heard from usual sites in Te Puna inlet, Motuarohia, Moturua and Moturoa islands during Jan & Feb, regular sightings on Purerua Peninsula & some on Aroha Island.

New Zealand Dabchick 4 on Lake Rotokawau on 15 Feb.

Australian Little Grebe 4 on Lake Rotokawau on 15 Feb.

Northern Royal Albatross 1 on WTP on 5 April

Wandering Albatross c.15 on WTP including 2 probable Antipodean.

White-capped Albatross 20 on WTP

Black-browed Albatross 1 on WTP

Campbell Albatross c.20 on WTP, one on 18 March c.11 miles off Cape Brett on WPO.



Campbell Albatross Can be seen not far beyond Cape Brett (Detlef Davies)

Buller's Albatross c.10 on WTP

Northern Giant Petrel 2 on WTP

Flesh-footed Shearwater Small numbers seen in Bay of Islands and along adjoining coasts, also on WTP & WPO.

Buller's Shearwater 10+ seen feeding with gannet flock between Moturoa and the mainland, Bay of Islands, on 23 Jan. Regularly seen in the Bay and along adjoining coasts, also on WTP & WPO.

Sooty Shearwater 1 on WTP

Fluttering Shearwater Flock of 100-200 feeding around Simmonds Island, Henderson Bay on 2 Jan. Photo below by Michael Winch. Smaller numbers at other sites.



Little Shearwater 4 on WTP

Common Diving Petrel c.100 on WTP

Black Petrel Many on WTP, a few on WPO in Cape Brett area

Fairy Prion Many on WTP, 2 passing Cape Brett on WPO

Cook's Petrel c.15 on WTP, few distant birds on WPO

Black-winged Petrel Low total of 5 on WTP, common well north of NZ on WPO

White-necked Petrel 3 on WTP (fewer than last year)

COLLARED PETREL One dark phase bird seen on WPO on 19 March at c.33°S is thought to be the first record for New Zealand waters

Grey-faced Petrel Low total of 8 on WTP, c.6 in Cape Brett area on WPO.

Kermadec Petrel 1 on 6 April on WTP (there were more last year), some well north of NZ on WPO

Wilson's Storm Petrel 30+ on WTP, 2 in Cape Brett area on WPO

White-faced Storm Petrel One seen in Bay of Islands on 26 Jan, recorded on WTP & WPO..

NEW ZEALAND STORM PETREL 4 seen on WTP & 2 some distance north of the Mokohinaus on WPO so this species surely passes our region regularly.

Blue Penguin Small numbers seen and heard Bay of Islands and adjoining coasts. Up to 40 seen on trip from Opunga Cave to Kerikeri Inlet on 20 April, before a storm. Also larger numbers of Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters.

Australasian Gannet Flocks of 25+ feeding between Moturoa and the mainland, Bay of Islands, on 22 to 25 Jan. 6 at Walker Island on 14 Feb. Several seen shallow dive feeding off Moturoa, some with one or two Fluttering Shearwaters in close company and joining in the feeding, 20 April.

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD One over the ship on the WPO on 19 March at c.33.50°S.



New Zealand Storm Petrel,
Hauraki Gulf, 14.1.09, Detlef Davies.
A species to be looked for in our area.

GREATER FRIGATEBIRD A male seen in flight about 1 km from heads of Hokianga Harbour on 2 Feb (John Metcalfe via Paul Asquith).

Shags One juvenile Black, 2 Little and 4 Pied on Bird Hide dam, Urupukapuka Island, on 4 Jan. c.20 Pied at Oke Bay roost and c.54 at Urupukapuka Bay colony, some with nests on 26 Jan, Bay of Islands. 6 Pied on Ahiaruhe Shellbank on 14 Feb, 23 on Walker Is on 15 Feb.

Cattle Egret 9 in paddocks by Unahi Road on 7 May.

Reef Heron 1 at Te Haumi, Paihia on 4 Jan. 1 on Urupukapuka Island, 22 Jan. 1 feeding along rocks, Waipoa Bay, Moturoa, 24 Jan. 1 Mangonui, 25 Feb. 1 feeding on Milford Is, Whangaroa, 1 sharing a small rock with a Black-backed Gull in Panaki Cove, Cavalli Islands on 27 March. 2 in Tom Bowling Bay on 5 April.

Royal Spoonbill 50 feeding on mudflats at Unahi Estuary on 29 March. Numbers built up greatly by May when at least 280 were in the paddocks there on 8th.

Brown Teal A pair on 4 Jan and 1 bird on 5 Feb at Bird Hide dam, Urupukapuka Island, Bay of Islands. Several visiting grass area around Camping Ground at Urupukapuka Bay in Jan-Feb.

PLUMED WHISTLING DUCK At least 6 seen in paddocks near Kaitaia in early May; see Kevin's article on page 11.

Brown Quail 2 on track from Waipoa Bay, Moturoa Island, Bay of Islands, 7 April.

Banded Rail Seen on Moturoa Island on 25 & 26 Jan, 3 on Aroha Island causeway on 12 Feb.

Pied Oystercatcher 446 on Kokota Sandspit, 300 on Ahiaruhe Shellbank, 14 Feb. 500 on East Beach, 4 on inner shellbank, 26 on Walker Is and Rangaunu Harbour, 15 Feb. 355 on East Beach, Rangaunu on 29 March.

Variable Oystercatcher Flock of c.20 feeding in intertidal water, Rarawa Beach on 29 Dec. January – pairs with young at Moturoa, Parekura Bay & Mangahawea, Moturoa. Pairs also seen at Norwegian Bay, Wai-iti Bay & Otupoho Bay, Moturoa; Lagoon Bay, Motuarohia. February – pairs with nests or young at Otehei Bay, Cable Bay & Otaio, Urupukapuka. 4 on Kokota Sandspit, 10 on Ahiaruhe Shellbank, Parengarenga on 14th, 15 on Kowhai Beach, 30 in Walker Island & Rangaunu Harbour area on 15th, 5 on East Beach, 29 March. A flock of 26 on Opito Bay which increased to 42 by April. Flock of 40 on Orokawa Beach, Bay of Islands on 7 April.



Reef Heron, Mangonui foreshore (DD)



New Zealand Dotterel One pair with 3 chicks on beach at north end of Motukawanui on 14 Dec (see photo above by [Michael Winch](#)) At least 3 pairs with young on Moturoa in January. Pairs seen in usual territories on other islands. 10 on Kokota Sandspit, Parengarenga, 11 on Kowhai Beach on 14 Feb 14, 1 on Taipa Estuary on 15th. 64 on East Beach, Rangaunu, on 29 March.

Highest number recorded for this area. Flock of 15 on Urupukapuka Bay, including 6 with colour bands, on 11 April, 9 there on 19 April, 2 with bands.

Banded Dotterel 2 present at Kerikeri Airport grounds in January. 242 on Paua Road paddocks, 2 on Kowhai Beach on 14 Feb.

Wrybill 40 on Kowhai Beach on 14 Feb. 3 on Tokeroa Beach on 23 Jan, 5 there on 25 Feb. 27 on East Beach, Rangaunu on 29 March.

Pacific Golden Plover 63 on Kokota Sandspit, Parengarenga on 14 Feb.

Turnstone 100 on Kokota Sandspit, 2 in Paua Road paddock on 14 Feb. 20 at Kowhai Beach on 15th. 40+ on East Beach on 29 March.

Lesser Knot 300 on Kokota Sandspit, 14 Feb. 140 at north end of Kowhai Beach, 240 at south end, 15th. 40++ with godwit in Walker Is, Rangaunu Harbour area on 15th.

Curlew Sandpiper 1 at Kowhai Beach on 15 Feb.

Whimbrel 40 on Kokota Sandspit & 1 on Ahiaruhe Shellbank on 14 Feb.

Bar-tailed Godwit 466 (incl some Knot) roosting at Kowhai Beach on 4 Jan. 2500 on Kokota Sandspit, 120 on Ahiaruhe Shellbank, Parengarenga on 14 Feb. 471 at north end of Kowhai Beach, 290 at south end. 2500+ on Walker Island, Rangaunu Harbour, East Beach on 15 Feb, 32 on Taipa Estuary also. 160+ on Walker Is, 283 on East Beach on 29 March.

Tattler species On 28 Jan a tattler was observed for some time on the rock shelf by Governor's Bay, Moturoa Island. Unfortunately it did not stay long enough for a detailed identification.

Arctic Skua Two seen in the Bay of Islands on 22 Jan. 1 on East Beach, Rangaunu on 15 Feb. 1 on WTP.

Brown Skua 1 on WTP

SOUTH POLAR SKUA 2 on WTP, one very pale-headed one.

Caspian Tern 2 on Kokota Sandspit, Parengarenga on 14 Feb. 5 on Kowhai Beach, 11 including 6 juveniles on East Beach on 15 Feb. Pair on Black Rocks on 25 Jan. Singles in various other sites.

White-fronted Tern 73 on Kowhai Beach, c.10 on Walker Island, Rangaunu area. A pair raising a chick, not yet fledged on the deck of a disused fishing boat, Unahi Estuary, also on 15 Feb. Fledged by 27 March.

BLACK-FRONTED TERN One moulting bird on Takou Beach (Chris Chadwick via Ian Wilson). A very unusual species this far north.



Banded Dotterel at Kerikeri Airport, Jan 2009 (DD)



Moulting
Black-fronted Tern
with White-fronted
Terns at Takou
Beach.

Eight species of tern
have been recorded
in the Far North so
far this year

April 2009

Chris Chadwick



COMMON TERN One in non-breeding plumage on disused fishing boat at Awanui Wharf on 7 & 13 April, seen again on later dates. Photo (left) by Kevin Matthews.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN One with the Common Tern on disused fishing boat on Awanui Wharf on 7 & 13 April, a very good record to find these 2 species together, also seen subsequently.

Little Tern 1 or 2 on East Beach, 15 Feb, 10 there on 29 March.

BLACK (WHITE-CAPPED) NODDY One seen fishing alone on inshore waves at Te Werahi Beach just W of Cape Reinga on 5 April by Dan Hawthorn & no doubt the same bird was seen on WTP off Cape Maria Van Diemen on 4 & 5 April. The very nice photo (right) was taken by Dan. This is the first sighting of this species in mainland New Zealand for many years.

Grey Ternlet 2 south of Cape Brett area on WPO, 9 on WTP

New Zealand Pigeon 15 near Manginangina Boardwalk, Puketi Forest on 4 Jan. Flock of 7 over Landing Road, Kerikeri on 8 May.

Red-crowned Parakeet On Moturoa Island, 1 seen chasing a Tui above Ponga Track beach on 1 Jan. A pair breeding near the Ralph's house on the island.

Shining Cuckoo One by Detlef & Carol's deck in Landing Road, Kerikeri on 21 Jan. Calls heard around Kerikeri area until end of January.

Long-tailed Cuckoo One heard calling in Honeymoon Valley in week to 28 Feb. One by Puketi / Kaeo road on 25 Feb. One by Kevin Matthews' house in Brott Road, Kaitaia.

Morepork Up to 2 together at Redcliffs / Rangitane road junction in February, one very visible bird in Detlef & Carol's garden in Landing Road, Kerikeri.

Barn Owl The pair in the Kaitaia area is still around & seen in early April.

Dunnock One seen from Ponga Track, Moturoa, carrying prey in bill, 1 Jan. 2 seen on Te Uenga beach, Parekura Bay, 3 Jan. Seen on Moturoa during January. One feeding young near Mangahawa on Moturoa, 23 Feb. Several seen in summit area above Otupoho Bay, Moturoa, 10 April.

New Zealand Pipit Recorded from Cable Bay, Tokerau Beach, Ninety Mile Beach, Cape Reinga & other sites.

Fernbird Present near stream on 2 Day Trail in Puketi Forest, 6 Jan. 1 by causeway on Aroha Island on 12 Feb, 1 in Hall Road, Kerikeri in early May.

Tomtit A pair using pool at waterfall, Moturoa Island on 14 & 27 Jan. Seen from Manginangina Boardwalk Puketi Forest Jan – March. One heard from Rainbow Falls track on 4 April. A female seen near start of Waihoanga Gorge track, a male seen near junction with Takapau Track, 6 April.

North Island Robin Several pairs seen along Ponga Track, Moturoa, 1 pair courting, on 1 Jan. One singing loud and long from north headland of Otupoho Bay, Moturoa late afternoon on 26 March and again from 7.30am on 27th, another seen and heard singing in high tree near the waterfall. One answered a call, another seen nearby, close to waterfall, Moturoa on 10 April.



PROGRAMME

(July and August meetings have yet to be arranged)

All Far North OSNZ indoor meetings take place at Detlef & Carol's house at 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri unless otherwise stated, 7 pm for 7.30. We provide soft drinks & nibbles, entry free to members, \$2 requested from guests. From now on we hope to make these meetings at least bi-monthly but cannot really make the day consistent, it will usually be Thursday or Friday.

Weekend 29 – 31 May OSNZ Conference & AGM, Orewa

This is the Society's annual major event which this year is as close as it is likely to get to our area. It is not too late to book for this.

Friday 19 June Far North AGM & Members Evening, Kerikeri.

We will have a short AGM at 7.30 followed by short presentations and general chat. Detlef & Carol will talk about their experiences with Kakapo on Codfish Island but hope there will be contributions from other members or guests.

Weekend 27 – 28 June Winter Wader Count, Parengarenga & Rangaunu Harbours.

There is a good midday high tide this weekend so we will make the usual arrangements to stay in the Pukenui area & get a boat to Kokota Sandspit. Please contact Detlef or Carol if you would like to take part. If weather prevents us going, we will postpone this until mid-July.

27 June – 5 July Garden Bird Survey 2009

Members should have received a leaflet from Eric Spurr about this survey. Hopefully lots of readers will take part. This is a pleasant pastime with little effort; you don't have to go anywhere!

NEW ZEALAND BEACH PATROLS

During the winter, beach patrols take place at 90 Mile Beach only (not on Karikari Peninsula). Dates for next 4 months are 24 May, 21 June, 19 July & 16 August. Please phone Isabella Godbert on 09 407 8058 for further information.

'COUNTING WADERS' a poem by Kevin Matthews

*Weather fine, wind or rain,
With a scheduled time we birders meet,
Aligned by the midday tide,
Perfect for waders to congregate.*

*With packs on backs, scopes in hand,
We birders tramp to the building flock,
Getting not too close or not too far.*

*Heads peek watchful from the hide,
Bins pressed against eyes,
Perhaps a vagrant of renown to report?*

*With scopes erect the count begins,
Eye focussed on wader heads,
Some with beaks tucked in feathers,
Others darting forward,
Like school kids tagging friends.*

*An impossible task some ask,
But old hands count with ease,
A fellow birder interrupts the order,
And a disgruntled counter bites a lip,
Should a profanity slip?*

*The sandflies are there to annoy,
Sun screen lotion stings the eye,
These discomforts one allows,
No distractions accepted.*

*With a final number close,
Suddenly wader heads lift,
The unseen signal is set,
With the sound of wing and chatter,
On the wing they head off up harbour,
Oblivious to a birders need.*

*Undaunted we birders watch in pure
pleasure,
All's in another day of counting waders.*

SUMMER WADER COUNT 14 – 15 February 2009

Detlef Davies



Godwits & Knot on
Kowhai Beach
4 Jan 09
Michael Winch

Ornithological Society of New Zealand - WADER CENSUSES 2004 - 2009

OSNZ REGION **FAR NORTH** MAIN SITE **Parengarenga Hbr, Kowhai Beach, Rangaunu Hbr**
 YEAR **2009** COMPILER **Detlef Davies**
 MONTH **February**
 CENSUS DATE **14 - 15 Feb** Tide Height, Time, Weather etc. Sat. tide 1.04 m at 12.07 (Pareng); Sun. tide 0.95 at 12.48 (Rangaunu).

DATE >	14-Feb	14-Feb	14-Feb	15-Feb	15-Feb	15-Feb	15-Feb	15-Feb			
TIME >	10 - 2.30	2.30 - 2.45	3:00 PM	10.30 - 12	12.15 - 2	9.30 - 11	12 - 12.30				
PRINCIPAL COUNTER >	DD et al	DD et al	DD et al	DD et al	DD et al	KM et al	KM et al	AG			
LOCAL SITES >	Kokota Sandspit	Ahiaruhe Shellbank	Paua Paddocks	Kowhai Beach N	Kowhai Beach S	Walker Is area	East Beach	Taipa estuary			
SITE TOTALS >	3463	442	640	631	601	2566	3000	32 BtG			

SPECIES TOTALS v											
Pied Oystercatcher	946	446	300				500				
Variable Oystercatcher	55	4	10		4	11	26				
Pied Stilt	405		11	394							
New Zealand Dotterel	21	10			6	5					
Banded Dotterel	244			242		2					
Black-fronted Dotterel											
Wrybill	40					40					
Pacific Golden Plover	63	63									
Spur-winged Plover	4			2		2					
Turnstone	122	100		2	9	11					
Lesser Knot	720	300			140	240	40++	?			
Curlew Sandpiper	1				1						
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper											
Pectoral Sandpiper											
Red-necked Stint											
Far-eastern Curlew											
Whimbrel	41	40	1								
Bar-tailed Godwit	5793	2500	120		471	290	2500+	2500+	32		
Black-tailed Godwit											
Grey-tailed Tattler											
Marsh Sandpiper											
Terek Sandpiper											

OTHERS											
Black-backed Gull	100+	50					Many				
Red-billed Gull	50		50								
White-fronted Tern	73					73					
Caspian Tern	18	2				5		11			
Little Tern	1 or 2							1 or 2			
Arctic Skua	1							1			
White-faced Heron	26			10		16					
Pied Shag	6		6								

MAIN SITE TOTAL > 7955

Return June sheet by 31 March to Adrian Riegen. riegen@xtra.co.nz Fax 09-814-9741

231 Forest Hill Rd, Waiatarua, Auckland 8

COMMENTS

1. Counters & band-spotters were: Detlef & Carol Davies, Isabella Godbert, Anthea Goodwin, Kevin Matthews, Steve Amon, Ian & Norma Smith, Bruce Collett
2. Site totals do not include 'Others'.
3. Most round-figure totals are estimates.
4. Taipa Godwits are only included out of interest as it is only an occasional migrant spot. Other species not included here.
5. One orange flag on a Godwit in flock at north end of Kowhai Beach was only one found. Most flocks were too distant to check accurately.
6. The wader flock on Kowhai Beach were divided into 2 quite separate groups which did not mix.
7. All birds at Rangaunu (Walker Island & East Beach) were distant & Knots could not always be picked out.
8. Kokota & shellbank SIPOs are same birds.

Some Ornithological Highlights of a Holiday in the South Island in November 2008

Starting at Akaroa

“ Bellbirds chime their vespers, calling evening in.”

They really do make our local Tui sound like musical peasants.

I found I could just sit back and listen to them.

The morning after a wonderful day of solid West Coast rain at Haast, having a New Zealand Pigeon outside our unit, chomping its way through the leaves of a Kowhai hedge, and what is more, showing very little concern about us.

On to Okarito to fulfil a desire that we have had for years. No prizes for guessing. Of course, a most worthwhile trip. It is an amazing sight to look across the water and see all those Kotuku, along with a number of Royal Spoonbills. I keep asking myself, why is this the only place they breed? The trip was very well organised, jet boat to the landing site, then boardwalk of about 300 meters to the hide directly opposite the nesting area. Binoculars supplied. I would like to do the trip again in say September when the Kowhai were out, as these trees line the bank in quite significant numbers. On the way back I wondered if I saw a NZ Falcon. From the Jet boat, it was just a fleeting view. It was smaller than a Harrier, darker colour, longer tail, and had narrower wing. It looked like a bird for attack and pursuit. I have only seen a Falcon once before, so am quite uncertain about it. Could I have comments from the members on this ?



White Heron, Okarito Nov 2008 Detlef

That evening I went out on the walk to see the Rowi. I reported to the base at Okarito, gave my name and address, smugly thinking they probably don't see many people from Northland. They said we had Carol and Detlef through last week. Again this was a very well organised trip. From memory there are 3 pairs in something like 300 hectares. Certainly by Northland standards they were very thin on the ground. They have radio transmitters on the birds and with those numbers in such an area, it would be a necessity. There were about a dozen of us in the group. The leader went ahead to try to locate the Kiwi, while his assistant brought us along the path. It was an old forest track, quite long but easily walkable. The evening was a soft mild late spring. Clear and still. In the tall Rimu, (I think,) the South Island Robins were singing. Superb, wonderful to listen to. We reached the spot where a pair of Kiwi had been "overdaying" and were due to wake and give the tourist a viewing. We had to stand in a row and were not allowed to talk or move. It gets very uncomfortable when you have to stand in the same spot for half an hour. I now know how the guardsmen must feel outside Buckingham Palace. Anyway we did it. We were told that the Kiwi were moving, and saw a pair of legs moving off into the scrub. It seemed that they were moving away, when quite abruptly we were told there had

been a change of direction. All of a sudden the Kiwi emerged onto the track and after a second realised that the situation was not quite normal and dashed across the track between two of us and into the bush on the other side. We then left the area. Our guide made the comment that area belonged to the Kiwi and we should not disturb them. One the way back to the cars we saw another Kiwi. I thought seeing two Rowi in one evening was rather good.

The guides had seen Kiwi on 14 nights out of 15. That is certainly better than I do when I do Kiwi walks around Aroha Island. A pleasant and very worthwhile evening.

Editor's comment: From the description of the bird of prey at Okarito, it probably was a New Zealand Falcon.

TAUMARUMARU RESERVE - COOPERS BEACH

Dave Panckhurst

Administered by DoC, Taumarumaru is a recreation reserve between State Highway 10 and the coast at the western end of Coopers Beach, with access opposite the Bowling Club. The 20 hectares (50 acres) reserve has spectacular sea and inland views, contains 3 pa sites and a number of walking tracks. It was used for grazing for many years which resulted in pugging in winter and stock occasionally getting on to the beach. Since the removal of stock, tracks have been mown and it is regularly used by locals and visitors for walking, jogging and exercising dogs.

Friends of Taumarumaru is a small group of volunteers, including some members of OSNZ, which has since 2000 worked on improving the reserve by controlling weeds and planting native species. The first planting was in 2000 when 80 pohutukawa were put in at a community planting along the seaside boundary. Since this time annual plantings have included many other species such as flax, karo, coprosma sp, puriri, kahikatea, manuka, kanuka, cabbage trees and others.



Planting day in June 2008 (Dave Panckhurst)
Group of planters working near the stock water pond
with Otanenui Pa in the background.

Stock for the plantings comes from local seed raised at the Kerikeri Shadehouse by yet more volunteers and between 200 and 400 plants have been put in each year from this source. Most of these plantings are close to the entrance carpark and around the stock water pond high on the reserve and some planting has also been done in the bush block. The bush area of about 2 hectares has been fenced off for some years and is now returning to a more natural coastal scrub ecosystem. Volunteers have removed many of the weeds, mainly gorse and tobacco weed but smilax, asparagus, ginger, privet and others have been targetted and there are 3 tracks to give easy access for working bees.

A number of birds have been recorded in the bush such as fantail, silver eye, tui, grey warbler and morepork and it is hoped that extensive trapping for rats and possums will enhance this area for breeding. The aims of the volunteer group also include clearing the pa sites and apart from ongoing gorse control these sites are now easily accessible. Features such as defensive trenches and kumara pits are visible. Weed control has been done using "minimum spray" methods such

as hand pulling and cutting weeds at ground level then painting the cut stump with herbicide. DoC has a programme for controlling the larger gorse areas by mowing and follow up spraying.

Friends of Taumarumaru have a regular working bee day each Thursday at 1pm and would welcome any new workers to join the group. Phone Dave Panckhurst (4060 559) or Gerald Messenger (406 2201) for more information.

PLUMED WHISTLING DUCKS – A SAD TALE

Kevin Matthews

The good news is that at least 6 Australian Plumed or Grass Whistling Ducks were observed just west of Kaitaia on sodden paddocks prior to the Game Bird Hunting Season. The bad news is that 3 of these rare vagrants were mistakenly shot on Saturday 2nd of May. I was grateful to those for seeking identification of the birds and being able to forward 2 of the birds to Te Papa for eventual display. There could more than 3 birds remaining in the area although to date I've been unable to find any of them on several revisits. With this number of PWD making the trans-Tasman crossing there is no reason why they could not breed here if they found suitable habitat.

This is a reminder for hunters to make sure that they identify their target and for Fish and Game to emphasise this. In my opinion smaller duck like the Australian Shoveler should be removed from the game licence, this may help reduce mistaken identity deaths with our teal and scaup. The Plumed Whistling Duck is also about the same size as our Shoveler. As an added note it would be more than timely that Fish and Game seriously considered the predicament of our native Grey Duck which is has been elevated to the nationally critical list and still ironically remains on the Game Bird Licence.



Plumed Whistling Ducks (Kevin Matthews)

COMMUNICATION

We are trying to maintain good relations and links with other local like-minded organisations. Many of our members also belong, are employed by or have contact with these which include:

- Forest and Bird
- Dept of Conservation
- The Kiwi Foundation
- Guardians of the Bay
- Puketia Forest Trust
- Local Landcare groups

STOP PRESS

4 Cape Barren Geese on Te Werahi Beach
(W of Cape Reinga) on 2 May (Rob McColl)

Although our Society is more orientated to birds than the other groups, their emphasis on general conservation would give the Society opportunities to take part in a wider range of activities Those of particular interest to bird enthusiasts include voluntary Kiwi monitoring, bird counts & surveys (often in areas of difficult access such as islands in the Bay), bird relocation, trapping & banding & some indoor meetings with presentations. If you hear about such activities, **please let OSNZ know in good time** as it would benefit everybody; it is often difficult for our local group to find new ideas for field trips and this would help to offer more variety. Although hard copies of 'Apteryx' only go to members, our email circulars go much further. We are happy to advertise events in the newsletter for these other organisations when we hear about them.

WEST PACIFIC & JAPAN

Detlef Davies

Each autumn for the past 3 years Heritage Expeditions, a New Zealand company based in Christchurch and offering cruises to the Polar regions, has relocated its cruise ship, the 'Spirit of Enderby' from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere, ready for Arctic trips in the northern summer. This journey has been operated as a one-way 'odyssey' in itself and offers various landings so that the voyage, from Auckland to Yokohama, Japan takes 32 days.

I had my name down for this trip a year ago and finally, on 17 March, we set sail with 46 birders on board. Our familiar seabirds were in quantity for the first couple of days, including rather distant views of New Zealand Storm Petrel. The first setback was rough weather around Norfolk Island preventing a landing there. So our first port of call was Noumea in New Caledonia which gave us an afternoon & the following morning to check out the forests at the southern end of the island. In spite of rain most of the time, we found many of the endemic species including the strange Kagu, a bird in a family of its own.



Kagu 24 March 09 (Detlef Davies)
Parc Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia

Heading further north towards the tropics, weather became warmer & seabird activity tailed off a little although a few very special species were eagerly awaited; the very localised Heinroth's Shearwater & recently rediscovered Beck's Petrel both put in an appearance.



We had an amazing welcome on Makira in the Solomon Islands when the whole village of Anuta was at the shore to meet us. The 'show' began with a troop of painted and spear-wielding men running around our zodiacs, giving us a mock version of the kind of reception we would have had in the years of cannibalism! We all had to walk through a gateway with the 'Welcome' placard above us and shake hands with each of a long line of young Solomon Island girls in costume. Then we were treated with singing and dancing in the village 'square' after which we all had to introduce ourselves. It was explained that last year's visit by Heritage Expeditions was the first visit to the island by a passenger ship for many years.

After several island stops in the Solomons, Caroline Islands & the southern Japanese Islands, we docked at Yokohama in Japan. I stayed in Japan for a few days before returning to Auckland airport. There will be a presentation on this trip, hopefully later in the year.

Short-tailed Albatross (adult & imm.) Torishima, Japan, 16 Apr 09
The rarest albatross in the world, population c.700. (DD)

