

MARLBOROUGH OSNZ NEWSLETTER

January 2007

It is suppose to be summer time, but the cooler weather makes it seem as if it isn't. We had a great turn out of OSNZ members, friends and family, for the Wairau River survey. Thanks to all of you who gave up your time to help, throughout the weekend we had over 40 people involved. The results have not yet been fully analysed but black-fronted tern and banded dotterel numbers appear to be a little up on last years count. A good number of nesting colonies were found, some of which were monitored by DOC staff as part of their black-fronted tern research project. Unfortunately most of the breeding colonies were lost in late November during a heavy rainfall event which caused extremely high river levels in the Wairau. A small number of terns have re-nested, some as late as January, but productivity this year is going to be well down on previous years. We will be repeating the count again next year as it is important to get a few years worth of data to iron out any fluctuations in counts caused by differing counting conditions. The count will be the second or third weekend in October, so please keep this in mind.

Recent Sightings

The regions two long standing vagrants are still being seen; the **black kite** in the Waihopai Valley, and the two **red-necked phalarope** at Lake Grassmere. Both birds attract a lot of attention and have been seen by most birders passing through the region. If you haven't been out to see these birds I recommend that you do while there is a chance. These are the only records of these two species in NZ, so a great chance to see two neat bird species. A **white winged black tern** has been seen regularly on the Wairau River over the past two months. Will Parson is still seeing a **Glossy Ibis** on his wetland. On one outing into Queen Charlotte Sound six **Arctic skua** were sighted.

Notornis on-line

One of the last major advancements of OSNZ is the launch of the Societies Journal *Notornis* onto the web. Every issue of *Notornis* is now available online a www.notornis.org.nz You can search this site to find references to species, locations or authors. This is a huge resource, and makes readily available over 60 years of ornithological information. Take a look and find out how much valuable information is out there, or what is known about you favourite bird species.

Falcons

Falcons are much more in the public eye lately with the Falcons for Grapes Project going on in Marlborough. However less known is that at the last AGM the Raptor Association launched a falcon survey, where they are asking OSNZ members to send in sightings of falcons. It is hoped that over time they will build up a picture of the distribution and number of falcons in the country. They have set up a new website with an on-line sightings entry; visit www.ranz.org.nz and follow the links under survey. Those with no internet access who need forms let me know and I can print off some and send them to you.

Subscriptions and AGM

Everybody should have by now received their subscription renewal, either by email if you have provided OSNZ with these details, or in the post. Our Society is dependent on its membership, and although a small group of us here in Marlborough we are an active group which achieve a lot. I encourage your to continue your membership and become involved in Society activities which interest you, or suggested ones that will. Paying your membership on time saves the Society time and money, making the life of the membership secretary easier. For any further details on membership visit the OSNZ website at www.osnz.org.nz

The Societies AGM is to be held in Taranaki from May 31st to June 4th. Information and registration details were included in Decembers *Notornis*, or can be found at www.osnz.org.nz The AGM is a great place to catch up with birders from across the country and become involved in the future direction of your Society. I hope to see some of you there.

Up coming events

Lake Grassmere counts

As the backbone of our local birding calendar we will continue our monthly meeting/ counts at Lake Grassmere. Counts are on the third Sunday of every month; so the next few months are January 21, February 18, March 18, and April 15. Either met at the Brian and Sue Bell's (35 Selmes Road, Rapaura) at 9am to car pool; or at the salt works gate at 10am. Lately there has been some great birds turning up; golden plover, sharp-tailed sandpiper, red-necked stint and of course the two red-necked phalarope.

Passerine banding at Ward

In February I will be starting the summer passerine banding season at Jack Taylor's farm in Ward. At this stage I will be planning to set the nets on the weekends of 3-4 February, and 17-18 February. I will travel down to Ward on the Friday evening, readying the nets for a dawn start on the Saturday. I will also be keen to do a few weekends in March, anyone keen to be involved should stay in touch and I can confirm dates nearer the time.

Everybody is welcome to attend, either for the whole weekend or just part of one. You need not have any previous banding experience, we will provide you with training and everyone gets the opportunity to handle and band birds. The weekend is very much focused on teaching people to catch birds, remove them from nets, handle and band them. It is a great opportunity to get your hands on, and see birds close up. In addition this year I will run a few harrier traps to try and catch and band some hawks.

The camp site is reasonable well set up, we have a BBQ and gas cooker, with tables and bench tops set up for all to use. We usually all pool food, but it is no problem if you want to cook your own. You will need a tent, chair and eating utensils.

Beach Patrol

During April, May and June I am keen to do a few beach patrols along the Clarence coastline and am looking for any keen volunteers to be involved. I was thinking of the second Sunday in each month. With sections between 5-10km long depending on how many we can get involved. The beach patrol scheme is one of the Societies longest running schemes, yet our region does not cover many beaches. With the large numbers of seabirds feeding off the Kaikoura coast and seen through Cook Strait it is possible that we will have some interesting birds turn up. Watch this space for more details coming up in the future.

Hutton's shearwater transfer

In early March DOC is transferring Hutton's shearwater to the Kaikoura Peninsula. The chicks are put into artificial burrows and need to be fed daily for three weeks until they fledge. The process of making up the food, weighing and feeding birds and cleaning everything up requires a lot of man power. DOC are looking for volunteers to be involved, this is your chance to be involved in an exciting conservation project. For more details contact Steve Cranwell at the DOC Renwick Office; Phone 5729100, email scanwell@doc.govt.nz

An invite by the Forest and Bird Society

The Marlborough Forest and Bird Society have two up coming events which they are inviting OSNZ members to be involved with.

Sounds trip Pete and Takutai Beech; Saturday Feb 24th

Meet at Waikawa Bay wharf from where we will leave at 9.30am. Expect to return about 5pm. This trip will take us to Blumine Island to experience the increased bird life and song which has occurred over the last year's mice and stoat eradication. Then on to Motuara Island to see saddleback and robins, before heading to Ships Cove to explore the new visitor information area. We will take a half hour walk up the upgraded track to Resolution Point. Bring your own lunch, but hot drinks will be served on board. Numbers are limited so early booking is advisable. Price \$40 per head. Back up day will be 25th Feb.

Evening Meeting, Thursday May 17th

Rob Schuckard will be speaking at F&B monthly meeting; 7.30 pm Blenheim School Hall. Rob is a member of the Ornithological Society who is co-managing the wader banding study project in NZ; he is a vastly experienced wader researcher. Rob will present an illustrated talk entitled "What's at the other end of the Flyway – bird studies in Russia". It's no use looking after the New Zealand habitats of international migratory wading birds if other stopover countries don't do the same.

Please feel free to contact me at anytime for further information or to report bird sightings. I hope the rest of your summer provides you with some good birding.

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