

**MARCH 2010**

(Issue 1)



Studying NEW ZEALAND'S BIRDS

OSNZ<sup>©</sup>

## **Newsletter of Nelson Region**

[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

### **Monthly Meetings in Nelson**

We meet usually on the 1st Monday of the month, at 7.15 pm in the "Solander Building", Akersten Street, Port Nelson (opposite the red Cruising Club building). Anyone interested is welcome! Contact Stuart Wood 03-544 3932 or Don Cooper 02-544 8109.

**APRIL:** Due to the Easter Holidays we will have our monthly meeting on Monday the 12th April.

Daryl Eason or Ron Moorhouse will give a talk on "**Recent advances in Kakapo conservation**".

**MAY:** Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Peter Gaze will give a talk on "**The threat of electrocution to birds in New Zealand.**"

### **UP DATE : OSNZ AGM 4-7 June 2010**

The OSNZ AGM is to be held in Nelson over Queen's Birthday weekend (4-7 June). The Venue is the Conference Centre at the Tahuna Beach Holiday Park.

Registrations are coming in, but there seems to be a dearth of registrations from the Nelson Golden bay region.

**Please support** the AGM being held here in our own region.

There is still good accommodation available at the holiday park and the 10% discount will apply whilst accommodation is still available.

Late entry fee will be applied to registrations received after the 31st of March

## OSNZ Book Auction

Please note that the OSNZ BOOK AUCTION is still accepting bids:  
The latest bids can be seen on the OSNZ web site : [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

There is a tremendous amount of interesting books on offer.  
The minimum bid of \$5.00 would get you most items at present.

## Programme for April and May 2010

There are no programmes organised for the immediate future except our normal monthly meetings for April and May

## Recent meetings, talks, events

**1 March:** David Melville gave the monthly meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March an illustrated talk on the "eBird" Web site. He showed how easy it was to enter bird sightings on to the Data Base. A live, on the web demonstration was also given, showing how easy it is to keep your own private lists of birds you have seen and want to record.

The talk generated a good deal of interest and many questions.  
It is hoped that more members will use the data base to enter their bird sightings  
For further information see: <http://ebird.org/content/newzealand>

**On 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010** Peter Field, David Melville and Rob Schuckard gave a talk about Bar-tailed Godwits at Clifton Terrace School Nelson. The school, which has "Expanding Horizons" in its log, has quite appropriately incorporated the godwits in their thinking. The hunger to knowledge about this amazing bird was overwhelming and leading the whole talk in different, unexpected directions. After the talk we went to Nelson Haven where the birds, for the first time since a few days, landed straight in front of the children. Couldn't go better!!

## Interesting recent sightings

Over this summer and autumn weka have been seen more often within their usual range and there have been unusual records of birds dispersing into areas where I have never known them to be. This includes two separate records from Nelson city as well as birds in the Brook Sanctuary and Motorcamp. Residents along the Richmond foothills have had weka virtually in their back yards. I saw a dead bird on Reay's Saddle and another was seen on Kerr's Hill near the old Golden Downs village. An even more surprising record has come of a bird at Waiwhero near Ngatimoti. And this phenomenon is not restricted just to Nelson, a record of weka in Inland Marlborough at Ferny Gair and records of weka reappearing at Arthur's pass after an absence of many years. As the causes of such dramatic changes in weka numbers are poorly understood it would be good to document more of these incidents. Please make a note of any such observation or reports that you come across, I'd be very keen to hear of them.

**Peter Gaze**

**Motueka Sandspit** - the godwit numbers were high this year, up to 3000 at times. The majority have left now, with 200 remaining on Sunday 21 March. We are continuing to monitor the rat/stoat traps at the end of the spit. In the 8 months since the traps have been there, no stoats have been seen and 8 rats trapped.

**Pauline Samways**

### **Godwits: Rabbit Island**

Taken through a spotting scope. Godwits getting ready to go ! The most advanced coloured birds are the ones which will make it to the most northern breeding sites in Alaska



Picture by Don Cooper

### **Farewell Spit**

During the February Wader Count on Farewell spit, 3 Fernbirds were heard near Banana Pan, 2 around the Lighthouse and 3 at Bush end Point. In March, two Fernbirds were heard from around the lighthouse. A few dead Fairy Prions were found and of great interest were the records of a living Fairy Prion feeding in surf of Pakawau and Collingwood.

16<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – 5 Grey Plovers, 15 Golden Plover, 1 Whimbrel and a Bar-tailed Godwit with Black Alpha Flag 3E. Jesse Concklin responded: 3E was a juvenile flagged in AK by the USGS on 29 Aug 2008 at Punaorat Pt., who then showed up at Foxton on 19 Oct 2008. Bird was caught at 30 Oct 2008, and he was last seen at Foxton 2 Nov 2008. He is the subject of his own short note in WSGB for a rare demonstration that youngsters are still growing their bills when they prepare to migrate (73mm in AK, and 81.5mm two months later in NZ).

**Sooty Shearwaters** - Mike Ogle showed us the fascinating recovery program that DoC is doing with Sooty Shearwaters near Puponga/Fossil Point. After a few years stoat trapping, the population is expanding. Small remnants of the past making a come back on the mainland! Hugely important work.

### **Falcon**

One for the record book - Falcon at Edwards Road, Lower Moutere



Rachel Hamilton

## Beach Patrols

No Beach patrol reports have been received for many months

## Nelson/Golden Bay Wader Studies

Wader Census in Top of the South took place at the end of January and early February. The count areas were well covered by a team of 13 people with good weather conditions. Almost 58,000 shorebirds of 15 species were counted, 60% of them Arctic Migrants.

At Farewell Spit, the highest number of Bar-tailed Godwits was counted since 2000 and it seems that the years of noticeable good breeding seasons have made a big impact on the totals at Farewell Spit. Also the big difference in godwit numbers between February (16,000) and November (7,000) is of ongoing interest as OSNZ considers the future timing for wader counts. Red Knots at Farewell Spit are hovering around the 10,000 birds. This species faces a very dire future with major industrial developments in the Bohai, Yellow Sea China which holds the biggest known staging area for Red Knot in the east Asian-Australasian Flyway. A team of people is working on an update of the population estimate of this species – it is thought that current published estimates are too high.

Remaining species and numbers were very average. On 1<sup>st</sup> February, 5 Wrybills were recorded at Farewell Spit, including 2 juveniles. Only a meagre 5 juvenile Variable Oystercatcher could be found between Lighthouse and Fossil Point, reflecting a poor breeding season – and only 2 young were still to be seen on 18<sup>th</sup> March.

Ingrid Hutzler, Peter Pay, David Melville, Mike Ogle and Rob Schuckard visited Farewell Spit between 12/3 and 17/3 to document departing godwits for the 2009-2010 season. All observed 180 departures (about 1% of Farewell Spit summer population) took place in late afternoon and early evening, between 16:42 and 19:50 with groups varying between 12 and 60 birds. All departures were heading in NW directions with wind varying between W and NE. Four colour banded birds were recorded in two departing groups. Their departures may well have provided significant tailwind by big tropical cyclone Ului. We know from the satellite work that the birds will normally go straight through the path of the cyclone. This tailwind stopped and turned into headwind from about 20/3 with the westerly movement of the cyclone. Jesse Conklin recorded flat days with no migration on 20, 21 and 22 March. **WHAT DO THESE BIRDS KNOW!!** We have contacted the Australians to look out for possible colour banded birds that will land in unexpected places along the Queensland coast.



Godwits in front of Gannet colony  
Farewell Spit (Ingrid Hutzler)

## Gannets at Farewell Spit

The population of banded birds at Farewell Spit is steeply declining, 712 adults were marked between 1994 and 2003, but only 40 are known to be alive during the 2009/10 season. Of these living birds, 5 dating back to 1994. These birds have now the respectable age of at least 19 years; 16 plus another three years, the time to grow from juvenile to adult. 6% of the original marked adults is still alive.

	Adult (711)	2009/10	Alive	Chicks (960)	2009/10	Alive
1994-'95	262	5	<b>2%</b>	66	6	<b>9%</b>
1995-'96	108	2	<b>2%</b>	199	6	<b>3%</b>
1996-'97	123	9	<b>7%</b>	0	0	
1997-'98	99	6	<b>6%</b>	151	17	<b>11%</b>
1998-'99	4	0	<b>0%</b>	228	20	<b>9%</b>
1999-'00	115	18	<b>16%</b>	240	21	<b>9%</b>
2000-'01	0	0		0		
2001-'02	0	0		76	21	<b>28%</b>
2002-'03	1	0	<b>0%</b>	33	9	<b>27%</b>
	712	40	<b>6%</b>	993	100	<b>10%</b>

Of the original 993 banded chicks, 100 (10%) are still alive and breeding in the colony. During this season, two birds from Cape Kidnappers were a part of the breeding population. These are the first records from cape Kidnappers.

A paper about the gannets from Farewell Spit will be presented at the AGM.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NELSON/GOLDEN BAY NEWS LETTER

This newsletter can only be continued on a regular basis if members contribute articles that are of interest. **Please** do contribute and make the Newsletter a regular and interesting contribution to the region

## Nelson/Golden Bay Region Contacts

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