

The Wrybill

**Newsletter of the Canterbury Region,
Ornithological Society of New Zealand**

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July 2006

**What's On at OSNZ Canterbury:
July to December 2006**

Bird Feeding Preferences

Geoff Henderson took a year off his day job after being awarded a Royal Society Fellowship. He spent it investigating the feeding preferences of native and introduced birds for native and introduced plants. He spoke to members at the June indoor meeting.

Working with Professor Dave Kelly of the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Canterbury, an expert in bird-plant interaction, Geoff came up with a series of study areas of differing vegetation composition. His interest was particularly in frugiverous species, and issues to do with seed dispersal of native and introduced (adventive) species.

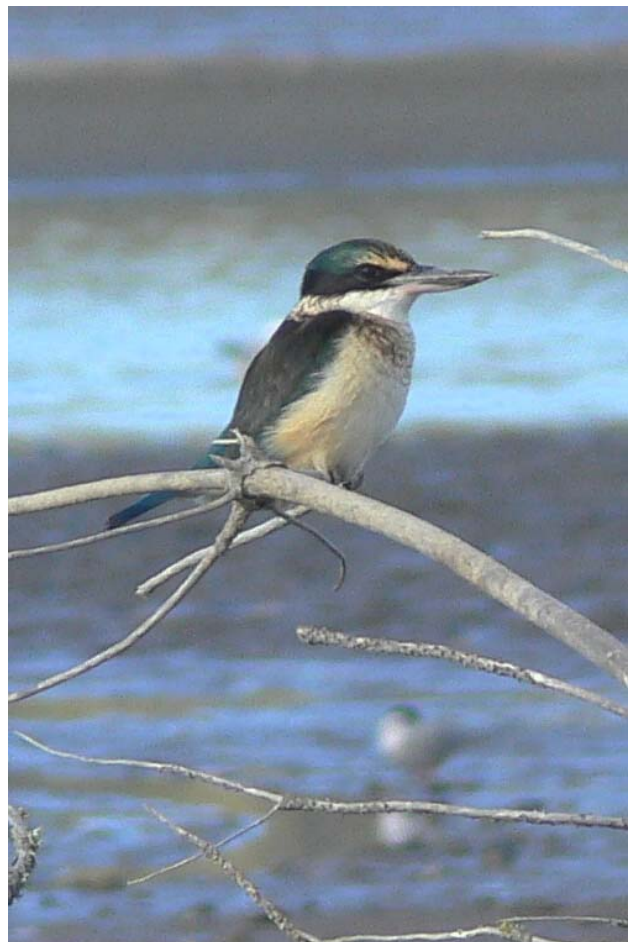
The study emphasised the importance of native species for dispersal of native fruits, especially the large fruits of many of our native plants. In fact the data showed that natives visit natives 99% more in native habitats, where even in urban sites 54% of visits were by native bird species. New Zealand Pigeons are especially important for larger native fruits.

Another significant difference was that native plants tend to have significantly longer seasons, rather than the boom or bust cycles of exotics.

The study reinforced other work that showed that native species are vitally important for the continued success of our native flora.

Indoor Meetings

Evening indoor meetings take place at the Spreydon Bowling Club rooms, down the driveway roughly opposite 80 Domain Terrace, beginning at 7.30pm. Use the parks down the drive and walk past the tennis courts to the clubroom entrance.



A kingfisher at the Ashley Estuary. Large numbers of juvenile birds put in a winter appearance. Photo Tony Crocker

July 31st – Tony Crocker will present one of his popular and entertaining visual tours, this time to Southern Africa.

August 28th – members evening and report on the June AGM conference and field trips in Wellington. Show others with a common interest what you have been doing recently either studying or watching birds. Contact Nick Allen with details of what equipment you require to illustrate your presentation.

September 25th – Andrew Crossland will tell us what he did when living in Asia a few years ago ‘Chasing Wading Birds in Indonesia’.

October 30th – Kerry-Jayne Wilson will give us a presentation about her recent visit to Mongolia.

November 27th – several Canterbury members will regale others on their July tour to southern Queensland, from Brisbane to Cunnamulla and the Eulo Bore and back.

Field Meetings

July 15th – (note date change from previous edition of The Wrybill). Ashburton Lakes Census. Counting water birds in the beautiful surroundings of this group of lakes. Contact Barry Armstrong on 03 942 4784 for car-pooling and details of when and where to meet.

August 19th – Kaikoura. A good time of the year to take a pelagic trip to see good numbers of albatrosses and petrels escaping colder waters to the south. Contact Jan Walker on 322 7187 or at shesagreen@gmail.com

September 16th – Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula. A chance to visit this patch of regenerating bush and beech remnants with its large populations of Brown Creeper and Tomtit, and smaller numbers of New Zealand Pigeons and Riflemen. Contact David Clarkson for details of where and when to meet for car-pooling on 352 1448 or at anneanddavid@xtra.co.nz

October 7th – Ashley River Survey. The first survey of this spring to count riverbed birds as part of a long-term study in conjunction with the Ashley/Rakahuri River-care Group. We will meet at the picnic area on the Rangiora side of the bridge over the Ashley on the road between Rangiora and Loburn at 9am. Bring stout footwear suitable for walking on river gravel and fording the river, clothing you don't mind getting wet and something to eat and drink. Contact Eric Spurr on 03 313 8283 or at spurre@landcareresearch.co.nz for more details.

November 4th and 5th – Twizel Weekend. A couple of days in the Mackenzie District searching out the area's special birds in spectacular surroundings. We plan to stay in holiday homes in Twizel to keep costs reasonable. Contact Jill West on 980 7111 or at jill.west@xtra.co.nz

November 25th – Ashley River Survey. The second survey of the spring, and so a further chance to find breeding Wrybills, Black-fronted Terns and maybe Black-billed Gulls. Details as per October 7th.

December 2nd – Summer Wader Count and Christmas Barbecue. Counting wading birds on the shores of Canterbury's best wetland for birds, hopefully finding something unusual or two – we are due something rare after a lean couple of years. The count is followed by the annual barbecue and social get-together at Colin Hill's farm, with delicious locally-reared meat supplied by Colin, and the rest of the food, drink and convivial atmosphere by you. Contact Colin on 325 5891 or cherryhill@xtra.co.nz

Wader Band-spotting Weekends

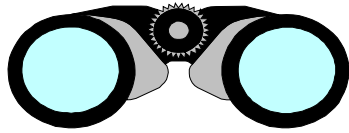
On the weekends of the 15th and 16th July and the 7th and 8th October (and nearby dates if the tides are less than optimal) we are to visit all sites where Bar-tailed Godwits are probably present to check the birds there for colour bands. The rationale is to increase the data-set produced following the recent colour-banding of Bar-tailed Godwits, Lesser Knots and Turnstones around the coast of New Zealand to study how these birds move between estuaries and other wetlands and site-fidelity. It is important that as many sites are visited and birds observed so that the results produced in this national study can be as meaningful as possible.

Contact Nick Allen (see front page for how to do this) if you are able to help. Details which must be recorded are total number of godwits, number checked for bands (i.e. the birds you could see both legs of clearly), any band combinations (including the position of the white leg flag, left top-to-bottom, then right top-to-bottom), date, time, what the tide was doing, and what most of the birds were doing. Nick is happy to receive your data, or send a form for you to fill the details in yourself.

Beach Patrols

Beach patrols generally take place on the first Saturday of the month. They involve a group of members getting together in the morning and spending a few hours working their way up a designated stretch of beach and finding any dead birds that have been washed up, classifying them, and filling in a report card to be sent to the national office. This valuable information is collated to reveal clues about what is happening out at seas.

The Canterbury beach patrols are co-ordinated by Jan Walker. Please contact Jan at shesagreen@gmail.com or 322 7187, to get details of when the next patrol will take place.



Through the RR's Binoculars

By Nick Allen

OSNZ's AGM and conference was held over Queen's Birthday weekend in Wellington. In a departure from previous years scientific presentations were given over two days rather than one, there being more than sufficient people wanting to talk to allow this. The two scientific days may be repeated in future, it being such a success this year. As is traditional the sun shone during the scientific days, but as soon as the field trip days came round the weather turned nasty, with rain and gale force winds. Thus I returned from a nocturnal trip to Karori soaked to the skin, having seen tuatara, but missed Little Spotted Kiwi. All the other special species in the reserve had been viewed earlier in the rather soggy day. Thankfully the birds were very visible, with four Stitchbirds in one binocular view being a particular highlight.

Notornis online was launched on the second scientific day. All copies of Notornis, its precursor publications from the 1940s, OSNZ News and Southern Bird are available online at www.notornis.org.nz. The entire run will be available until the turn of the year, when the previous two years' publications will become available to paid-up members of OSNZ only.

At the AGM Richard Holdaway was elected President of OSNZ. Congratulations to Richard, and I look forward to the Society moving forward in leaps and bounds in the next few years. Richard is the first South Island President of the Society, at least for many decades.

This will be my last roundup for The Wrybill. At the AGM in March Jan Walker was elected to be RR for 2007. She will take over the reins in the next few months. Many thanks to Jan for agreeing to take on this job. Tony Crocker has also taken over editorship of the Wrybill, so thanks to Tony, and also to David Clarkson who has done a magnificent job over the past seven years, despite his life becoming increasingly hectic. I must also thank all the other members of the committee and other members of OSNZ over the years for making my RRship a lot, lot easier and sharing the work. It would have been impossible to cope without you.

NICK ALLEN

Local news

Saturday 24th June was the date of the 2006 winter wader count but the weather pushed it back to the Sunday. Bird numbers were good although species diversity was not particularly high.

Three Australian (White) Ibises were reported from near the Waimakariri River mouth in late May although the sighting was not confirmed.

Up to 12 Whimbrels/curlews were reported from the Avon-Heathcote Estuary also in late May. Two Eastern Curlews were reported there on 27 and 28/5 by Rob Schuckard. Steve Wratten reported an Eastern Curlew at the Ashley Estuary on 6/6.

Bellbirds are being reported from areas of Christchurch they may not have been heard or seen before, such as the New Brighton supermarket and Parklands.

A Falcon has been seen occasionally at Windsor Golf Club (near Bottle Lake) in the past few months, the last occasion being 11/6 when it was seen to do a spot of Feral Pigeon control. It seems to like perching on a big pine near Burma Road (no. 12 hole).

At the Ashley Estuary on 17/6 highlights were 3 Black Stilts, about 300 Pied Oystercatchers, 2 Wrybills and 140 Black-fronted Terns. One of the Black Stilts, obviously a male, (probably banded KG??) was seen to mate with a Pied. It also chased off another nearby Black Stilt - so that may be a male as well.

A beach patrol in early June at the southern end of Kaitorete Spit produced a good range of species, including Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Spotted Shag, Australian Magpie, Cape Petrel, a mollymawk sternum and a few other species. A highlight was a pair of wings belonging to a Soft-plumaged Petrel, The patrol on another part of the spit in early July included two giant petrels, at least one of which was a Southern Giant Petrel.

Contacting *The Wrybill*

The Wrybill is issued to members of the Canterbury branch of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, and to other branches of the society, every four to five months.

Ideas, suggestions and contributions are welcome. If you have been involved in any birding activity, within the region or in some far-flung corner of the country, or the globe, please consider writing us something about it. Your information will certainly be worth placing on the record. Digital photos are welcome.

The advertising rate is \$15 for a half A4 page.

Contact details: Editor Tony Crocker is on Christchurch 385 4602 (eve), 364 2163 (day), or email tony.crocker@canterbury.ac.nz