

The Wrybill

Newsletter of the Canterbury Region, Ornithological Society of New Zealand

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June 2009

Droppings from the Regional Rep

A lot of birdwatching has occurred around the Province since January and now the weather has deteriorated it's time to summarise it all:

In early February the other summer wader count at Lake Ellesmere was held. There were not quite enough people and some parts of the shoreline had to be surveyed during the following days. The count produced good numbers of some species but others were missed completely or had left for better feeding places. No Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were seen, surprisingly, as good numbers were around previously. But there were nearly 200 Bar-tailed Godwits. Nick's analysis shows that the lake had 41% of waders surveyed during that week in Canterbury, spread through 20 species. Only the Avon/Heathcote Estuary had more - 44%, but comprised of only 7 species, the most numerous being SIPO [South Island Pied Oystercatcher]. This is no doubt due to the differing substrates at the two sites producing different food for the birds.

In late February, Great Crested Grebes were counted for the George Chance Census. An article in the March Southern Bird covered the Otago branch's adventures over this weekend. The Canterbury contribution was again organized by Rosalie Snoyink, in a rare break from heading the campaign against Central Plains Water, whose bid to abstract water from both the Waimakariri and Rakaia rivers to irrigate a huge portion of the central Canterbury plains has drawn wide opposition from conservationists. Grebe volunteers were able to count most of the high country lakes in Canterbury. In addition, Nick Allen did the

Canterbury side of the Waitaki Lakes and those in the Mackenzie Country, such as Lake Alexandrina. We Christchurch folk were left with the daunting task of covering the huge shores of Lake Ellesmere and Lake Forsyth. With only 10 people available we visited most of the accessible parts where birds had bred the previous year, but all to no avail. Seemingly they had finished breeding and moved over to Forsyth where Andrew Crossland counted 39. An additional 2 were seen at Coopers Lagoon, perhaps having nested there, a new location for them. (See Note p9)

The total population is now nearly 600. There is something advantageous for them in places where they were not found before, like Forsyth, Ellesmere and Coopers Lagoon and they have increased greatly on Lake Alexandrina, while decreasing in other High Country lakes.

In March the field trip was again to Lake Ellesmere, this time to farewell the migrant waders before they departed for sunny Northern breeding grounds. An amazing 15 people attended this morning, cut short by a howling southerly at about 11am. A few Red-necked Stints were the only migrants seen, but on later occasions it was obvious that other species were still present. Everyone spent a long time comparing telescopes and talking about optics etc. Good stuff.

In April, 9 of us went to the Wonderful West Coast, staying at the University of Canterbury's Harihari Field Station where we rattled around with a bunkroom each. Beautiful weather meant lots of survey work could be carried out, masterminded by Nick Allen, who at the last moment was unable to come. We spent a day

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birding at and around Kathy Gilbert's property, including a paddle through her swamp.



Photo: Ann Sherlock
The team in action

The Okarito Brown Kiwi seen by means of a tour with Ian Cooper were perhaps the highlight of the trip. We saw four birds and heard perhaps five. Atmospheric calling with a dazzling full moon overhead.

The May trip should have been up the Hawdon River in Arthurs Pass National Park, to find Orange-fronted Parakeets, New Zealand's forgotten most endangered species. John Kearvell has returned from England to work with them again and had nest sites ear-marked for us to go close to. Unfortunately proper winter weather set in a few days before and a raging Nor-West wind and pouring rain put paid to any trip inland. A few of us compensated with a walk around the settling ponds at the Christchurch Sewage Works with Niall Mugan, a keen young Irish ornithologist who was running a trip for Forest and Bird. Here the weather was hot and windy and the tide was full, so birdlife was scarce. However, we were able to see where Little Black Shags had their first breeding success in Canterbury and perhaps even the South Island.

Indoor meetings in the new venue, the DOC Area Office meeting room, have been very popular and the comfort and good acoustics are very welcome. Members' evening was crowded with items, mainly on waders, from breeding Wrybill to mystery birds in Alaska. Fortunately there was time to fit in Nick's account of his visit to Korea [with birds] during a trip to meet his wife's family. We look forward to his

honeymoon talk [with birds] which he spent in the Bay of Islands, checking out sites for the birding hot spots atlas.

In early April Sheila Petch, Tina Troup, Nick and I helped with a Bioblitz at Lincoln Domain. This event was stuffed with experts, mainly from Lincoln University, but also included Rudd Kleinpaste who really drew the crowds. The public came in hordes and the event was most successful. Bioblitzes are supposed to find every single species of living thing, down to algae, that are present in a defined area. We only managed 21 of the avian kind in the desert of the domain in the middle of a suburb in the Canterbury Plains. But Lincoln, being near Lake Ellesmere, actually produced a White Heron and an overflying Royal Spoonbill. The importance of Lake Ellesmere becomes ever more clear.

Jan Walker

Recent Sightings

Late January: Andrew Crossland reported a Pectoral Sandpiper, sighted by rangers at Travis Wetland in the backwater lagoon, the second year this species has been seen there. Sheila Petch found 1 juvenile Black Stilt, 1 hybrid F Node, 500+ wrybill and 1 Curlew Sandpiper at Lake Ellesmere. A White-flipped Little Blue Penguin was seen on the Avon River in Christchurch city centre by Israel Didham! Two pairs of Chestnut-breasted Shelduck were reported at Lake Ellesmere by Grant Bawden. The four birds were subsequently seen by Sheila, Bev Alexander and Jan Walker, who identified 2 male, 1 female and one unknown.

February: At Yarrs, Ellesmere, Sheila observed 32 Royal Spoonbill fighting with gulls for food, something she had not seen before. She found 3 Curlew Sandpiper and 1 Pectoral Sandpiper at Embankment and 1 F Node Stilt at Kaituna Lagoon. Erik Forsyth reported 4 Cape Barren Geese at Ashburton River Mouth. Andrew sighted an Australian Wood Duck at the settling ponds. Peter Langlands saw adult and juvenile Crested Grebe at Cooper's Lagoon and good numbers of Marsh Crake in the raupo. Pru Stringer and Brian Darlow saw Reef Heron on

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the shore of an island near Port Levy when on a kayaking trip and Nick Allen and Peter Langlands confirmed seeing them each year at this site since 2004. On two occasions Bev saw 2 Crested Pigeon – one day on Gardiners Road and another on Cavendish Road, and Andrew reported hearing of sightings of Crested Pigeons in Tullet Park. Andrew found 39 Crested Grebe, including two pairs with young, at Lake Forsyth. John Allen observed 2 Eastern Curlew at Ashley Estuary and the first reported sighting this year of the Glossy Ibis at Travis Wetland. Israel reported seeing 49 Cockatoos at Little River roosting in pines next to a white house, not far up Price's Valley Road, although this number was queried by Andrew, who regularly monitors 38 birds.

March: Andrew observed 3 free-flying Cape Barren Geese, a new species for Charlesworth Wetland Reserve, which were being endlessly mobbed by a group of Caspian Terns. At Lake Ellesmere Colin Hill and Steve Wratten, who had expected most Arctic waders to have left, found 2 adult Pectoral Sandpipers, 3 adult Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 32 Red-necked Stint, a few in breeding plumage. At our monthly meeting Roger Louis described a squadron of 20 Native Pigeons in flight at Kumara. Nick reported 2 Black Stilt at Ashley Estuary, a likely female Common Koel seen by Bev Elliott at Cape Campbell (Marlborough), a Straw-necked Ibis near Tarras – a first for New Zealand – and a Lesser Yellow-legs at the Karamea Estuary, seen by Kerry Jane Wilson. Andrew tied up the month by reporting a Falcon sighting at McQueen's Valley, Banks Peninsula.

April: Jan and Sheila took part at the Lincoln Bioblitz and were amused to see a White Heron enjoying a two-hour snooze on the balcony of the Country Club in the township. Phil Hammond from Auckland observed the Black Kite at Renwick, Marsh Crake at Cooper's Lagoon, 11 Chukor at Mt John, 17 Black Stilt at Glentanner as well as the Travis Wetland Glossy Ibis and the Straw-necked Ibis at Tarras. Andrew's survey of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary revealed 224 Godwit, 68 Caspian Terns, 915 White-fronted Terns (the usual autumn influx), 17 Black-fronted Tern and 82 Royal Spoonbill. There were a couple of Falcon sightings around the base of the Port Hills. And at Greenpark

Sands, Lake Ellesmere he counted 37 Red-necked Stint, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, 3 Red Knot, one in breeding plumage and 40+ Wrybill. Grant observed a Chestnut-breasted Shelduck and 1 Cattle Egret with traces of breeding plumage at Lake Forsyth. At the same site Sheila later saw 6 Royal Spoonbill, 47 Crested Grebe and 1 White Heron, and an additional White Heron, Crested Grebe and 62 Royal Spoonbill at Lake Ellesmere on the Kaituna side. Kevin Baker observed a New Zealand Falcon attack on feral pigeons in the Christchurch Botanical Gardens and Bev sighted a Bittern at Cooper's Lagoon.

May: At Charlesworth Wetland Jan and Sheila found 1 Cattle Egret and a number of Spotted Shags, one with a (very early) breeding plumage crest. Janet Bray observed a successful Falcon attack on feral pigeon in the University grounds. Eric sighted a pair of Crested Grebe and 1 Mute Swan at Lake Hood. Andrew reported that Travis Wetland was seeing regular appearances of the Glossy Ibis, a few Cattle Egret had passed through, and the sighting of 1 unbanded Brown Teal confirmed the survival of at least one of the 4 ducklings hatched last year. (Andrew says eight out of the 20 birds released 2 years ago have survived, suggesting they are learning the ways of the wild). A Grey-tailed Tattler was spotted at Ashley Estuary by Jan and Bev, together with 2 Bar-tailed Godwit, 2 Wrybill, 1 Black Stilt, 2 Little Owls, 12+ Quails and 30+ Black-fronted Terns with about 200 White-fronted Terns. Sheila counted 88 Crested Grebe on Lake Forsyth, including one pair displaying, who took no notice when she told them they were too early! Eric reported an immature Black Stilt at Ashburton River Mouth. And Tom Marshall created quite a stir when he found an unusual tern amongst 65 Black-fronted terns at their roost at the Ashley River mouth, "similar in size (to the Black-fronted tern) but with a blood-red bill and feet, and of paler plumage." Tom's excellent photograph, which he has kindly let us use, confirms his sighting to be an Arctic Tern in breeding plumage. Two black stilt are regularly at the Ashley River Mouth. Bev has seen 1 Cattle Egret at Lake Road, Ellesmere and another at Tulls Road, Rangiora. Eric spotted 4 Cape Barren Geese feeding in a field near Westerfield, Ashburton and Phil

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Crutchley saw 4 Eastern Rosellas in Victoria Park, Port Hills. Ann reported Hugh Wilson of Hinewai was excited to see a Falcon harassing a Harrier "before zipping back into the bluffs" of Taraterehu/Stony Bay Peak. He is hoping the Falcon has a partner and is intending to breed.



Photo: Tom Marshall
Arctic Tern at Ashley River mouth

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR HUTTON'S SHEARWATER

What a flight of discovery I have had over the past 45 years studying Hutton's Shearwater (*Puffinus huttoni*), known as titi or pakaha to Ngai Tahu, or simply muttonbird to most New Zealanders. Birds had always interested me having joined the New Zealand Forest and Bird Protection Society in 1936 as a 10 year old, but it has been this particular species that has resulted in my lifelong quest to ensure their preservation.

It all began with a chance conversation with a Kaikoura deerstalker, Ivan Hislop during Christmas 1964. On autumn deer shooting expeditions before World War II he had come across masses of burrows with muttonbird carcasses lying about, at over 1,800 metres above sea level. I was intrigued by Hislop's story. I was an experienced mountaineer and deerstalker and I thought I should follow this up. I had hoped that these birds might be the mysterious, elusive Hutton's Shearwater, about which little was known. Expert ornithologists seemed to be unaware that shearwaters bred at such high altitudes in the Seaward Kaikoura mountains.

Two months later I swagged up the Kowhai

River and confirmed the Hislop story. This huge colony was the long-sought breeding ground of Hutton's Shearwater. Over the next 10 years I found a further seven colonies in widely scattered, remote sites in the Kaikoura Ranges. The furthest colony might take up to 15 hours of difficult climbing to reach. The nearest could be gained in just four hours, but was menaced by occasional rock falls.

As an amateur ornithologist I was able to work out a superficial lifecycle for this shearwater, which is about the same size as the common Red-billed Gull seen around our coasts and city parks. It was found that these shearwaters arrive back from Australian waters in mid-August each year. They fly up to their snow-covered burrows under cover of darkness during spring. Although these burrows may be covered with a couple of metres of snow the birds know exactly where their own particular nest chamber is located.



Photo: Deborah Nation
Geoff Harrow in Kowhai Colony, 9.08.08

The female lays only one egg annually, and the chick hatches after 52 days of incubation, just after Christmas. The birds are very long lived, possibly as long as 40 years, but they don't start breeding until they are six or seven years old.

Research found that stoats were having a significant effect on Hutton's Shearwater breeding success, killing adults, and eating eggs and chicks. Despite this predation shearwaters were surviving.

It is fortunate for the Hutton's Shearwater that their last two colonies are so high in the mountains. It is too cold a climate up there for

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rats to survive. Rats would be a disaster for the shearwaters. Years later when I revisited some of the breeding colonies, it was found that pigs had totally destroyed six of the eight breeding sites I had earlier described. This was alarming. It became apparent that the only reason the last two breeding sites remained was that they were guarded by a series of massive waterfalls that pigs were unable to penetrate. As these were the only remaining breeding sites in the world, action was urgently required. The Department of Conservation and the University of Otago commissioned Richard Cuthbert to do a doctoral thesis and come up with a management plan to save the now endangered species. It was to be a critical point for the fate of the shearwaters.

Cuthbert recommended intensive control of pigs on all approaches to the breeding colonies. He also made a strong plea for a third colony to be established near the township of Kaikoura by translocating chicks to artificial burrows and feeding them until they fledged with the aim that they would 'imprint' on the site and thus think it was home when they returned to New Zealand from Australia to breed a few years later. Creating an artificial colony meant Hutton's Shearwater could be managed safely behind a predator-proof fence. DoC advised that they would finance four years of translocation of half-grown chicks from the mountain colony to man-made burrows built on land generously provided by Whale Watch on Kaikoura Peninsula. DoC appealed for help from volunteers to assist in feeding the chicks for several weeks, a massive undertaking. Unpaid conservationists came to Kaikoura from throughout New Zealand and overseas to successfully complete this project each March between 2005 and 2008.

There was some scepticism surrounding whether or not the translocated chicks would imprint on the artificial burrows and return to Kaikoura Peninsula. To the great joy, excitement and relief of the scores of volunteers and DoC staff who toiled long hours on chick-feeding, between seven and 12 young translocated Hutton's Shearwaters returned to the artificial burrows in December 2008 proving that the translocations had succeeded. DoC has been unable to finance the \$250,000 fence needed to protect the new colony. Therefore, last August at

a DoC Hutton's Shearwater Recovery Group meeting, I offered to establish and settle a 'Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust'. Its



Photo: Department of Conservation
Hutton's Shearwater

purpose is to raise sufficient funds to pay for a full predator-proof fence around the new colony, and to fund other vital research to help protect the remaining two natural colonies in the Kaikoura Mountains. The Trust was duly incorporated in February 2009. Since then it has raised \$98,000 of the estimated \$250,000 needed for the fence and other related research projects, and it is optimistic that it can raise the remaining funding needed to ensure that a fence is in place prior to the arrival of birds back to the peninsula colony in November 2009. The Trust of 10 includes representation from Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, Whale Watch, DoC, the landowner of Shearwater Stream (where one of the colonies is located), individuals with a passion for seeing this project succeed and myself.

In future years the Trust plans to raise money for satellite-tracking transmitters to be placed on a number of shearwaters. This will enable monitoring of the birds' movements around the Australian coastline during the winter months when the birds migrate there.

Funds are also required to assist with research into the breeding success of the two mountain colonies, and to make sure that stoats, pigs, goats, chamois and deer are controlled to avoid damage to the breeding colonies.

Hutton's Shearwater is an amazing species. In the dark they can fly at 45 km/h, steeply

gaining altitude to reach their mountain burrows while carrying a heavy load of semi-digested fish for their chicks. On leaving their burrows to head back out to sea, about two hours before dawn, they have been tracked at speeds of up to 150 km/h. The birds gather food for their chicks as far south as Otago peninsula and often fish around Banks Peninsula bays. Kapiti Island and Cook Strait are common feeding areas in the north and they have been recorded near the Chatham Islands.

Research into feeding patterns using pressure gauges attached to the legs of these birds has shown they often dive 25 metres beneath the surface of the sea, and one shearwater has been recorded as deep as 36.6 m seeking fish.

These shearwaters have often become entangled and drowned in set nets along the Kaikoura coastline, with sometimes as many as 80 having perished in a single net. With the banning of set nets to protect Hector's Dolphins this hazard has now reduced.

Historically, before the arrival of man in New Zealand, Hutton's Shearwaters would have nested in their millions. Their burrows may have been from sea level to the mountains, over a widespread area of the eastern South Island. Scientists have studied marine elements in South Island soils that could only have been brought onto the land by seabirds such as Hutton's Shearwater. It would appear that they had been 'top-dressing' the eastern South Island for thousands of years, building up the fertility of our soils. The introduction of the Polynesian rat (kiore) would have wiped out any low altitude shearwater colonies.

Ngai Tahu has had a very close relationship with Hutton's Shearwater. Old diaries written in Maori describe muttonbirding expeditions into the Kowhai Valley. The survey vessel Acheron under the command of Captain John Lort Stokes with Mr J W Hamilton as surveyor undertook survey work along the east coast of the South Island between Wellington and Lyttelton in 1849. In Hamilton's diary entry of Tuesday 13th November he gave an account of the first ascent of Mt Tapuaeunuku by his party, and gives the following account of Maori taking

muttonbirds. "I was afterwards informed at Kaikoura Peninsula by the Natives that Titi (muttonbird) breeds in large numbers on the Mountain (Tapuaeunuku), and that many persons have been killed hunting for them."

Follow-up investigations I have made in the last 45 years suggest that these muttonbirds were Hutton's Shearwaters. It was a lucky chance conversation in 1964 that saved Hutton's Shearwater from likely extinction. The combined efforts of enthusiastic volunteers and management agencies, firstly the former New Zealand Wildlife Service (Department of Internal Affairs), and later wonderful work by DoC, have given this iconic species a better future.

Geoff Harrow

**Anyone wanting to donate to this worthy cause to ensure the future of this endangered species can send a cheque to:
Lindsay Rowe, Treasurer,
Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust,
PO Box 58, Kaikoura**

Tribute to Geoff Moon

I first met Geoff more than 45 years ago. At that time I used to surf at Pakiri Beach. Travelling home I decided to call in to see Geoff and ask his advice about hides for bird photography, another keen interest of mine. He graciously showed a bunch of scruffy, long-haired surfies his hides, explaining how he could have one in place in less than a minute. Periodically I called in to his home in Warkworth and eventually showed him some of my transparencies. He told me how nice they were, but I knew he was just being polite. When he realised I didn't mind criticism he pointed out all their faults. From then on my bird photography improved markedly.

From time to time we went on bird photography expeditions together. He would drive up Pakiri Beach in his Volkswagon car. He had an extra set of wheels which he bolted on to the rear

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wheels. Somehow we avoided getting bogged. Once, when he visited us in Christchurch, we took his Cortina down Kaitorete Spit and that time we did get hopelessly bogged! Geoff let me use the hide in his Warkworth garden so I could photograph Kingfishers diving and when I found the first nests of Spotless Crake on the South Island I invited Geoff down to use my hide. I believe every Spotless Crake photo Geoff published was from my hide.

Only a few weeks ago we were visiting Auckland and I was able to have a good chat with Geoff. Invariably polite and gracious, always helpful, New Zealand has lost not just a brilliant bird photographer but a fine gentleman in the true sense of the word.

You will be sadly missed Geoff.

Don Hadden
Canteen Creek Aboriginal Community,
Northern Territory

Hinewai Tui Restoration: my part in the story

Recently I was hosting visitors from Melbourne, people I first met when I was on a tour in the Kimberleys in Western Australia a few years ago. We have remained in touch and David took me out birding for a day when I was in Melbourne in June 2007. I am a keen square dancer and David and Heather came along to watch one evening while they were in Christchurch. During the evening I was approached by Susan Stevens, mother of Dr Heidi Stevens, the scientist heading the release programme, who asked if I would sponsor one of the Tuis. I said I would consider it and David then suggested we could jointly sponsor.

We then had to find a name and a mutual friend suggested that considering our Trans-Tasman connection, "ANZAC" could be appropriate. So we now have an adult female Tui in Hinewai called ANZAC. Susan and Alex Stevens run a square dance club called Harmony Squares and Alex has recently retired from flying Boeing 747s for Air New Zealand, so the two birds they

sponsor are called "HARMONY" and "BOEING"!

A few facts from the Information sheet that we received:

- Tui are found in 60.2% of NZ
- They vanished from Banks Peninsula about 15 years ago
- The closest populations today are 100-140 Km away at Lake Sumner/Hope Valley
- The translocated birds have come from Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds where the habitat is similar to that of Hinewai Reserve
- Hinewai has excellent restored habitat, ongoing pest control, on-site management and many years of monitoring
- There is supplementary feeding available at sugar water feeders near the release site
- 30 birds have been released and there is a plan to transfer a further 50 next year
- About half of the birds are fitted with transmitters and can be located regularly
- Most of the others have been seen at the feeders
- ANZAC does not have a transmitter but has been seen at the feeders on at least 2 occasions

There are 3 levels of sponsorship:

Sponsor a bird - \$500 The sponsor gets to name the bird and receive updates

SILVER Sponsor - \$500 to \$999

GOLD Sponsor - \$1000 or more.

For Silver and Gold there is a supporters sticker and names are listed on the website, www.tuisong.org.nz.

I have received several updates from Heidi. All but two of the birds are still at Hinewai and have been located by transmitter, or have been sighted, since the release in April.

Hopefully these birds will stay locally, breed here and in a few years we will see Tuis again in Canterbury.

Heidi can be contacted at 03 322 4714 or info@tuisong.org.nz or www.tuisong.org.nz.

Jill West

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What's on at OSNZ Canterbury: June to December 2009

Indoor Meetings

Evening indoor meetings take place at 7.30 pm on the last Monday of the month at the Mahaanui Area DOC office, 31 Nga Mahi Drive, off Blenheim Road, Sockburn. Plenty of parking is available at the premises and on the road.

Monday June 29: This evening's meeting will start at 6.30pm with a pot-luck social of snacks and nibbles, followed at 7.30pm by a talk from Ron Nilsson about the genesis and development of Codfish Island as a sanctuary.

Monday July 27: Craig Alexander has created curiosity by calling his talk "DoC by a New Age Ranger." Come and be illuminated!

Monday August 31: Michelle Crowell, Senior Technical Support Officer in DoC's Research and Development Division, will give us an introduction into the processes used by DOC staff to manage pesticide operations safely and effectively.

Monday September 28: Dr Richard Holdaway will speak on "Relative neighbours: a very close look at North Canterbury moa and their world" based on research undertaken over the past two years.

Monday November 2: (the Monday after Labour Weekend): A talk by Sara Kross, a PhD student at Canterbury University, on "Falcons in a Marlborough Vineyard – a study with photographic evidence."

Monday November 30: Dr Richard Holdaway will inform us on "Seabird migrations and distributions: New Zealand seabirds and the oceanic food web." Our seabirds range widely yet return to breed on tiny specks of land. This talk will attempt to provide some answers to the puzzle of how they do this.

Field Meetings

Saturday June 27: Winter Wader Count, Lake

Ellesmere. Meet at Embankment Rd, 9.30 am with warm, waterproof gear, some food and hot drinks, gumboots, binos and scopes. Contact Jan 322 7187, shesagreen@gmail.com or Colin 325 5891, cherryhill@farmside.co.nz

Saturday July 18: Ashburton Lakes Waterbird Count. Early start to get to Mt Somers where groups are sent out to each lake. Contact Jan so she knows who will attend and can arrange car pooling.

Saturday August 15: Banks Peninsula Reserves Survey and 5 minute bird count. Contact: Ann Sherlock 355-4194, robnann@paradise.net.nz or Sheila Petch 348 1889, birdo@snap.net.nz

Saturday September 12: Trip to Hinewai Reserve over the hill from Akaroa to see how the Tui (and other native birds) are getting on. Contact Jill West, 980 7111, jill.west@paradise.net.nz

Saturday October 3: Ashley River Count. Contact Nick Ledgard 03 312 8799, n.ledgard@xtra.co.nz or Bev 03 313 7009, birdiebev@xtra.co.nz

Saturday October 17: Mystery outing to somewhere nice to have a picnic and do some twitching. Contact Ron Nilsson: ronandsue@xtra.co.nz

Saturday November 21: Ashley River Count of Wading birds. Contact Nick Ledgard or Bev, see above.

Saturday December 5: Summer Wader Count, Lake Ellesmere. Meet Embankment Road, 9.00 am with usual gear. Bring food and drink for BBQ at Colin and Cherry's afterwards. Contact Jan or Colin, see above.

Documenting Casual Sightings

Bev Alexander is our Regional Recorder. She is collecting documentation of casual sightings for Classified Summarised Notes. She needs dates, time, location, habitat and numbers sighted for the following areas of interest:

- Rare Sightings
- Interesting and unusual observations

- Signs of early/unusual breeding
- Bushbird sightings in places they are rare

The year runs from 1st July to 30th June and Bev would like recordings for the current year by the end of this month. For ease of reporting Bev has a printed form which is available at monthly meetings or a copy can be obtained from her direct. Bev's contact details are listed in the right hand column.

Urban Paradise Shelduck

In late April there were nice flocks of Paradise Shelduck in the Christchurch peri-urban area, including one of about 500 birds feeding in stubble fields in the Heathcote Valley. This is a record number for that part of the city.

Paradise Shelduck are highly seasonal in Christchurch with peak numbers during the moulting period (December to February) and lowest numbers in the breeding season. Over the last 12 years they have recolonised the urban area as a resident species and now perhaps a quarter of the football fields and parks in Christchurch have a resident or frequently visiting pair. The birds are also distributed right through the city centre with pairs on the Avon River, two minutes walk from the Cathedral.

I carry out a city-wide census of Paradise Shelduck and other waterfowl on a fairly regular basis as part of Christchurch City Council bird population monitoring. Twenty-three core wetland or grassland sites are covered in the census, which includes about 90% of the Paradise Shelduck in the Christchurch urban area. An idea of the seasonal abundance of these birds is shown by the peak moult numbers on Christchurch waters during December 2008-February 2009, which reached record levels of 5597 birds.

Andrew Crossland

NOTE: Nick's analysis for the February Canterbury Wader Count is available as an Excel Spreadsheet. Please contact Jan or Nick if you would like it emailed to you.

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Contacting The Wrybill

The Wrybill is issued to members 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 rate for advertising is \$15 a half A4 page.
Contact: Editor Ann Sherlock, Ph 03 355 4194
email robnann@paradise.net.nz

Acknowledgement

This Newsletter was produced using free open-source software - the Scribus desk-top publisher, GIMP image processor, OpenOffice word processor, pdftk and shrinkpdf running under a Gnu-Linux operating system. We are grateful to the open-source community for providing such excellent tools.