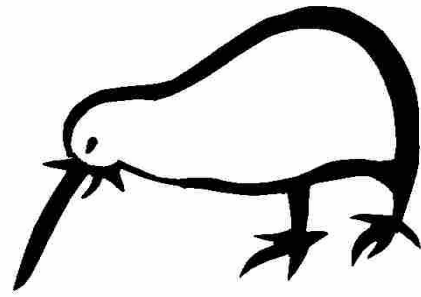


APTERYX

Issue 26

April 2010



Photos by Detlef Davies (DD)
Kevin Matthews (KM), Colin Salt,
Iris Riddell & Karen Milton

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



EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Wandering Albatrosses – Whangaroa Pelagic trip, 17 Jan (DD)

OK, so I said I would try & keep the newsletter to 8 sides. It didn't work – there's so much to report!

We are perhaps coming to the end of a long drought in the Far North but birds do not seem to have been badly affected by this. It has brought water birds out into the open, many flocks of Paradise Shelducks have gathered in paddocks, small ponds have been crowded with Mallards & Kiwis have been forced out of cover (see Colin Salt's notes on page 11).

We have had a spate of new members (or some omitted previously) and we welcome **Gary Little & Asta Wistrand** from Diggers Valley, Kaitaia, **Jennifer Rickett** from Paihia, **Cinzia Vestena** from Kaeo, **Mary Foley** from Kaitaia & **Melanie Kinghan & family** from Kerikeri as Far North members.

Members, especially those actively involved in conservation groups, are reminded that the Far North branch of the Society is interested in any bird-orientated projects taking place in the region. Ideas for field trips and opportunities for activities like bird-banding are eagerly sought. New members too will benefit from added knowledge and expertise from such projects.

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.

The Far North Regional Officers are:

<p>Regional Representative & 'Apteryx' Editor Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 detlefdavies@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Treasurer Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 godbert@xtra.co.nz</p>
<p>Regional Recorder Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8747 lm.alston@actrix.co.nz</p>	<p>Secretary & Publicity Carol Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 carolanndavies@yahoo.com</p>

RECENT EVENTS

We have had just 2 indoor meetings since the issue of the December newsletter. On 17 Dec **Dr CJ Ralph**, during his 6 week stay at his home on Moturoa Island, gave us a very enlightening talk entitled '**Adventures in Monitoring Costa Rican Birds**'. CJ is involved in this monitoring project in Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica where thousands of small birds pass through on migration.

On 9 April local member **Jenny Rickett**, Conservation Biologist & Masters student, gave a talk on '**Dispersal and survivorship of reintroduced Pateke in response to experimental techniques, supplementary feeding and wing-clipping**'. Jenny displayed intricate knowledge of her research into this unusual crepuscular endemic duck.

Our recent Pelagic trip reports are set out on pages 7 – 10.

RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Laureen Alston & Detlef Davies

This covers the Far North region from January 2010. Contributors include Laureen Alston (LA), Lindsay Alexander (LyA), Mike Bryan, Detlef & Carol Davies (DCD), Kevin Matthews (KM), Alan Cordery (AC), Tony & Shelley Day, Derry Godbert, Kerry Walshe, Bridget Manning, Carol & CJ Ralph, Terry Cottier, Angela Newport, David Bergum, Cinzia Vestena, Dan O'Halloran.

WP = Whangaroa Pelagic, OP = Opuia Pelagic; Lindsay's records are from 2 fishing trips to 30 nm N of Cape Brett on 7 – 8 Feb & to 50 nm N of Cape Brett on 14 – 15 Feb.

North Island Brown Kiwi Heard in usual places. One male heard calling from Awa-awaroa Bay, Moturua, 6 March. Many birds forced into the open by the drought – reports of birds in daylight at Opito Bay; many seen on Purerua, sightings from Kaitaia Airport (KM) & Berghan Point (see Colin Salt's article),

New Zealand Dabchick 4 on Lake Rotokawau, one on Lake Ngatu, 18 Jan. One on Lake Waiporohita on 7 Feb & again on 20 March. Also recorded Lake Owhareiti & on lake 15 kms south of Kaikohe.

Australasian Little Grebe 7+ Lake Rotokawau, 18 Jan; 2 Lake Waiporohita 7 Feb & 8 there on 20 March.



North Island Brown Kiwi – Purerua, Karen Milton

Wandering (Gibson's) Albatross 8 including a juv on WP, 17 Jan; juv on fishing trip 14 - 15 Feb (LyA);
Northern Royal Albatross Probable adult on fishing trip 14 - 15 Feb (LyA).
White-capped Albatross 6 on WP, 3 on OP
Salvin's Albatross A distant one on WP, 17 Jan, a probable one on fishing trip 14 – 15 Feb (LyA)
Campbell Island Albatross One on OP, 13 March.

Buller's Shearwater Small numbers regularly in the Bay & along adjoining coasts, numerous on pelagics.
Sooty Shearwater 2 on WP on 17 Jan

Short-tailed Shearwater 1 on WP, 17 Jan

Flesh-footed Shearwater Regularly seen in BOI and along adjoining coasts, common on pelagics.

Fluttering Shearwater Numbers regularly seen in Bay of Islands area. 1000s in a tight feeding flock well offshore at Spirits Bay on 31 Jan. Between 2000 & 3000 off Tokerau Beach 28 March. Clearly very common in Doubtless Bay.

Hutton's Shearwater About 5% of the Tokerau Beach shearwaters on 28 March were Hutton's (KM). We are surely overlooking this species.

Little Shearwater One on fishing trip 14 – 15 Feb (LyA).

Common Diving Petrel One on OP on 13 March

Black Petrel Common on both pelagics & fishing trips

Fairy Prion About 10 on each of the pelagics

Cook's Petrel 30+ on WP giving good views, c.10 on OP were more distant; also on fishing trips (LyA).

White-necked Petrel One on WP on 17 Jan was highlight of that trip

Black-winged Petrel Close one on WP, 1 or 2 more briefly.

Grey-faced Petrel One on the sea off the Poroporos, Rawhiti Inlet on 16 Jan (LA). Also on fishing trips – lots in eve of 7 Feb (LyA). None on pelagics.

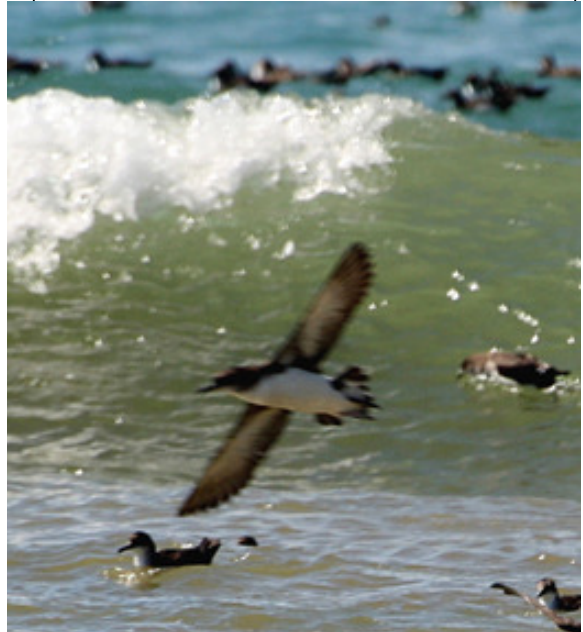
White-faced Storm Petrel 100s on the WP on 17 Jan, surprisingly none on OP, lots on fishing trips (LyA).

Storm Petrel sp A distant stormie with white rump seen on WP was probably a NZ Storm Petrel

Blue Penguin Two birds in Moturua area 14 March, one answering the others calls with a distinct squeak.

Australasian Gannet Flocks of up to 30 seen fishing regularly in the Bay of Islands area. 20 or more seen at Spirits Bay on Jan 31.

Hutton's Shearwater, Tokerau Beach (KM)



North Island Weka – Long Beach, Russell

Black Shag A few regularly at Lake Waiporohita

Pied & Little Shags Usual numbers at Urupukapuka Bay colonies. 15+ Pied in trees at Taipa Estuary on 20 March.

Little Black Shag 6 at Stone Store Basin, Kerikeri 4 March, 14+ seen fishing together around the jetty at Waipapa Basin on 11 March.

White-faced Heron 37 at low tide on sea grass beds, Paua mudflats, on 2 Jan.

Reef Heron One on 15 Dec on Mangonui Harbour. Two flying together along coast of West Arm, Whangaroa Harbour on 1 Jan. One at Taipa Estuary, low tide on 7 Feb.

Royal Spoonbill 3 at Unahi Road roost on 24 Dec. Numbers now well built up with 140 there on 18 April & 256 on 21 April.

Black Swan 155 counted on Paua mudflats on 2 Jan. 2 swam round Governor's Bay and

away through Kent Passage, Moturoa, on 7 Jan.

Canada Goose 7 flying over property in Waima Valley, eve of 1 March. Often seen on Lake Waiporohita.

North Island Weka Regularly seen in a garden near Long Beach, Russell (Tony & Shelley Day via AC) & along road east of Russell (AC). The above photo is courtesy of Tony & Shelley.

Banded Rail One in the open on far side of lagoon, Spirits Bay 31 Jan. Recorded Roberston Island.

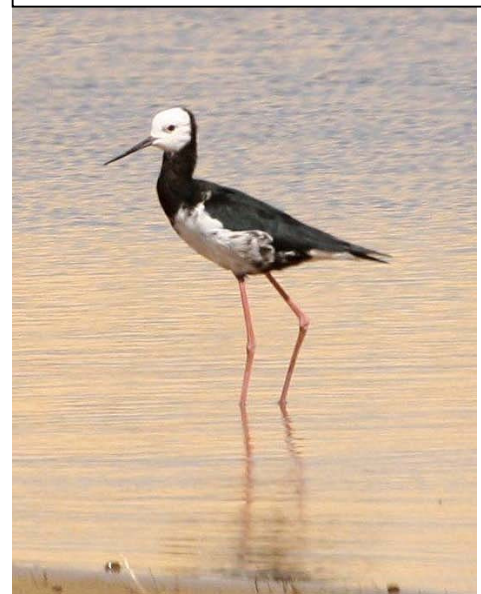
South Island Pied Oystercatcher 40+ Taipa Estuary 30 Jan. 20+ at Taipa Estuary on 7 Feb, 20+ there 20 March.

Variable Oystercatcher A pair with 2 young flexing their wings on Otehei Bay, 24 Dec. Pair with 2 well grown young, E end of Urupukapuka Bay 24 Dec Pair with well grown young on Governor's Bay, Moturoa on 25 Dec. Regularly on Taipa estuary at low tide. Pair with a small youngster seen on Awa-awa-roa Beach and Norwegian Bay on 22 & 23 March.

Pied Stilt A 'Smudgy Stilt' (hybrid Pied x Black Stilt) was on Tokerau Beach on 28 March (KM)

New Zealand Dotterel 6 at Aurere Beach on 24 Dec & 9 on 30 Jan. 2 birds WG-OG & mate with young one, on 24 Dec. OR-GW & YR-BW displaying on grass at east end of Urupukapuka Bay on 24 Dec. A nest there later confirmed by Angela Newport. 3 birds on top of hill behind Cable Bay, Urupukapuka Is. on 24 Dec. Most grass around this area recently mowed. YW-OW and mate on beach at Cable Bay on 28 Dec, no sign of breeding behaviour. Also GO-YR and an unbanded bird on grass at junction of track to Otehei Bay. OR-GW & YR-BW with 2 small chicks seen on gravel beach around the rocks from west end of beach on 30 Dec. Must have walked from their nest site at east end of beach! Pair with 2 chicks on Long Beach, Moturoa on 2 Jan. 8 birds, incl 1 juv on grass behind Project Island Song Centre, on and off during the day on 6 Jan. One on Tokerau Beach 18 Jan & 2 there on 30 March. 2 at Taipa Estuary, 30 Jan. (most reports: LA)

Pied x Black Stilt, Tokerau Beach (KM)



Juv Black-fronted Tern,
Spirits Bay (DD)

Estuary, on 30 Jan. Enormous numbers congregated along western shore of Kokota Sandspit, afternoon of 31 Jan. 37 on Taipa Estuary 20 March.

Arctic Skua One near terns off Moturoa on 30 March. One near Rangaunu Harbour entrance on 31 March. 2 at Tauroa Peninsula, Ahipara 11 April. Up to 3 off Cable Bay harassing terns on several dates.

Brown Skua One over the boat on WP on 17 Jan.

Black-fronted Tern One juvenile with the White-fronted Terns at Spirits Bay, 31 Jan (DCD).

White-fronted Tern About 15 birds fishing in East Arm, Whangaroa Harbour on 31 Dec. 40 or more on beach, up to 200 with those on rocks at Spirits

Banded Dotterel 10 seen in scrubby field next to fish farm sheds at Paua on 2 Jan. 4 on strip of mud far side of lagoon at Spirits Bay, 2 in breeding plumage, others probably juveniles, on 31 Jan. 3 at Tokerau Beach on 20 March.

Wrybill 6 at Tokerau Beach on 20 March.

Turnstone 5 Parengarenga Harbour 31 Jan.

Lesser Knot About 300 flew in to Kokota Sandspit on 3 Jan.

Bar-tailed Godwit 30 seen on Aurere Estuary on 24 Dec. About 1500 flew in to Kokota Sandspit on 3 Jan. About 20 feeding and flying about, low tide Taipa



Bay, 31 Jan. 328 roosting on wharf at Otehei Bay early on 6 March. 270 or more resting at Houhora Heads, East Beach on 31 March.

Little Tern 4 seen in vicinity of Rangaunu Harbour entrance on 31 March.

Kaka 4 seen flying over Otehei Bay towards Urupukapuka Bay on 4 March (from visitors book).

New Zealand Pigeon / Kukupu One on Robertson Island was 1st there for 37 years.

Shining Cuckoo At least 2 calling from Jones Island, East Arm, Whangaroa Harbour on 31 Dec.

Long-tailed Cuckoo One heard calling repeatedly from pines on hill to east of Lagoon Bay, Motuarohia, on 8 March.

Morepork 2 birds perched on lights & signpost at junction of Rangitane Rd, 19 Jan & often seen there later. Regularly in garden in Landing Road, Kerikeri & on Purerua.

Barn Owl At least 5 birds are still present south of Kaitaia throughout period (KM)

Fernbird Often seen along Kawakawa – Opuia road, several dates. One Te Wairoa Road (the track joining Inlet Road & Haruru), Kerikeri 13 April.

New Zealand Fantail
One black phase bird seen at Whatuwhiwhi on 10 April (KM)



Tomtit in Puketi (DD)

New Zealand Pipit 2 by carpark at Spirits Bay, 31 Jan. 2 at Tokerau Beach 20 March.

Tomtit One female seen on east listening route on Urupukapuka Island, 19 Jan. Male seen from Manginangina Boardwalk, Puketi Forest, 18 Jan. At least 10 seen in Waima Forest, 24 Jan. Female and 4 males seen on 2 Day Trail, Puketi Forest on 22 March.

North Island Robin Most of the translocated birds in Puketi Forest are heard and seen regularly. At least 2 heard calling from the Mangahewa Gully, Moturua Island on 19 Jan.

Bellbird One heard by the Waitui Stream behind Deep Water Cove (Cape Brett) on 28 Jan (Dan O'Halloran via Cinzia)

Kokako Southern end of Waima Forest north of Tutamoe: one heard near entry gate and another in clearing 10 mins further on, 24 Jan (DCD).

Redpoll One in Puketi Forest 22 March



Black phase Fantail – Whatuwhiwhi (KM)

PROGRAMME – INDOORS and OUTDOORS

Saturday 15 May KIWI MONITORING – As reported in December, “Whakaangi, bordering Doubtless Bay, is home to the most northerly population of Kiwi in NZ. For 6 years Whakaangi Landcare Trust have been carrying out an intensive pest eradication program over 2,400ha resulting in a very satisfying increase in numbers Now it is planned to hold an additional one off intensive call count”. . . .so this is the date for the first full Kiwi census. We hope to monitor 20 sites on this one night. A big team is needed! Great chance to visit an exciting area. Wendy Sporle will conduct a training session beforehand and we will listen for 2 hours after dusk. Please contact Anthea Goodwin initially. Email: bushcrank@actrix.co.nz or phone 09 406 1533.

Friday 28 May – FAR NORTH AGM

180 Landing Road, Kerikeri, 7 for 7.30 pm. Please come prepared to discuss the future of our group. Detlef & Carol propose to stand down from running the region at the end of 2010 and the tasks they undertake had best be divided between several group members. The formal part will be followed by a showing of Alan Shaw's excellent video of New Zealand birds with his commentary. There may be time for a glimpse of our Thailand birding trip.

We hope that further meetings will take place at our home during the winter but dates and speakers are still to be organised and will be communicated by email.

Fri 4 – Mon 7 June – OSNZ Annual Conference & AGM – NELSON

Members will have received details of the Conference in the mail. It is not too late to book for this, a great opportunity to meet fellow enthusiasts & enjoy both indoor & outdoor activities.

May – June FOREST TRIPS

WAIMA FOREST – KOKAKO MONITORING

This is an extract from a message received from Matt Calder recently about Kokako at Waima:

"The pest control has gone well here for this season, and the kokako have fledged good numbers from what I can tell. The adult pairs are now a bit more vocal with their singing, and so over the course of the next months until mid-September I was going to try and map the territories' of the pairs as part of the 3-yearly census. Last one was done over the course of the 2007/8 breeding season and 27 pairs were confirmed.

If you are still interested, through May and June I could training a few of your group up, and as you can over the following months the group could cover areas as time allows and help determine the current size. No doubt it has gone up a few, in one area alone that I have spent time in, it has gone from 1 pair to 3 pairs using the general area. This is consistent with the theory that the birds will cluster and fill an area in rather than rapidly expanding outwards".

Please let me know by phone or email if you would like to take part in a weekend at Waima and dates will be arranged to suit.

WARAWARA – SEARCH FOR RIFLEMEN

Simon Fordham's proposed talk on the translocation of Riflemen to Tiritiri is postponed until November. If there is interest in a repeat visit to Warawara Forest in May or June (and we are keen!) a date will be arranged; please contact me soon by phone or email.

CONSERVATION ROUND-UP

PROJECT ISLAND SONG

Things have moved on after the eradication of mammalian predators on the islands last winter. Based at the Visitor Centre on Urupukapuka, the Weedbusters have had a busy summer controlling invasive weeds. Volunteers will be needed soon for bird monitoring – this is where we come in. The former Project Manager, Paul Padfield has now left & taken on a new venture so please contact Laureen Alston, our main liaison with the Project, on 09 407 8747 or lm.alston.actrix.nz.

PUKETI FOREST TRUST

About 80 volunteers turned up on Easter Monday to assist with the release into the forest of another 30 NZ Robins (15 males & 15 females). Like last time these were flown up from Rangitoto south of Auckland by helicopter. The birds have been fitted with orange & metal bands so should be distinct enough from the red & metal of the earlier birds. Assistance with monitoring would be welcome, contact Ian Wilson on 09 401 9056.

KIWI FOUNDATION

This season's Kiwi monitoring will take place between 30 May & 19 June. For details contact Peter Ladd on 0210238130 or peter.ladd.nzkf@gmail.com. The AGM will take place on Aroha Island on 22 May from 3 pm. Guest speaker is Don McKenzie, manager of biosecurity at NRC.

PELAGIC TRIPS – JAN & MARCH

Detlef Davies

With the knowledge of the variety of seabirds around New Zealand waters I thought I would investigate the seas within easy reach of Kerikeri. This involved finding local boatmen or fishermen willing to take us out to the deeper water from about 12 nm beyond Cape Brett or Stephenson Island. After much preparation and gathering together of interested people, compiling email lists, obtaining berley, dealing with last minute weather reports, coping with cancellations and re-scheduling, the first trip went ahead on 17 Jan & a 2nd on 13 March.

Sunday 17 Jan 2010 - PELAGIC from WHANGAROA HARBOUR

The first trip went ahead today in Brian Candy's 35 x 12 foot cruiser, 'Kuri II'. 10 of us were on board, Brian Candy, Detlef Davies, Ian Wilson, Dave Hill, CJ Ralph, Paul Asquith, Dave Riddell, Annette Taylor, Iris Riddell & Igor Debski. We left Whangaroa Harbour at 7 am. Weather was calm, sunny & dry, seas a little choppy on return trip.

We headed out of the harbour past Stephenson Island & to NE for c12 nms. Then we turned NNW along 220m & 320m ocean shelves (& Ruahini Reef) before returning SSW & we were back at Whangaroa by c.5 pm. Birds in the harbour included **Red-billed & Black-backed Gulls**, **White-fronted Terns**, a **White-faced Heron**, several **Australian Gannets & Pied Shags**. At least 4 **Blue Penguins** surfaced close to the boat before Stephenson Island and flocks of 100s of **Fluttering Shearwaters** were common early on. **Buller's Shearwaters** were consistently common throughout, also numbering 100s and forming rafts on the sea, **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were quite numerous (up to 100).



White-faced Storm Petrel (DD)

On route north-eastwards there was a **Short-tailed Shearwater** and (later) 2 **Sooty Shearwaters** in mixed shearwater flocks on the sea, both also giving good flight views; several **Fairy Prions** (10+ during day). The first distant albatrosses suggested that it was time to stop and bring some birds in. Used a large berley bomb, chopped frozen pilchards & fish oil sprinkled with rices.



White-necked Petrel (Iris Riddell)

Started chumming at the most easterly point and soon had flocks of birds around the stern of the boat and putting on a great show, including 4 species of shearwaters accompanied by several **Black Petrels** (30 or more during the day), the first **White-faced Storm Petrels** and frequent good views of **Cook's Petrels** circling around. **White-capped Albatrosses & Wandering (Gibson's) Albatrosses** seemed to arrive from nowhere and joined the feeding flock. Estimated 6 **White-capped** (mostly juvs) and 8 **Wandering Albatrosses** during the trip, the latter including a wholly brown juvenile with a white face.

Moving on to the NNW many species followed, the commoner shearwaters in good numbers, more **Cook's Petrels** (at least 30 seen today) and the highlight of the day, a **WHITE-NECKED PETREL** flew around the

bows and allowed a couple of nice photos, Iris producing the best one. There was a distant **Salvin's Albatross** and a pod of **Short-beaked Common Dolphins** followed alongside us for a while.

A second chumming session at our most northerly point brought in another exciting variety of birds including **albatrosses** and lots of **White-faced Storm Petrels** (100+ during day) were bobbing around us on the fish-oil slick. Then Paul spotted a **BLACK-WINGED PETREL** very close to the stern and there may have been 1 or 2 more but not always showing the underwings sufficiently. There were at least 3 sightings (by Detlef & Igor) of a distant storm petrel with a white rump. It had some white on the underparts so not Wilson's; Igor thought it was unstreaked but views were poor and **New Zealand Storm Petrel** is the most likely.

On the return leg an adult **BROWN SKUA** passed slowly over the boat, yet another surprise on this highly productive trip. Closer to shore there were 2 **Arctic Skuas** near Stephenson Island.

Species List

- Wandering (Gibson's) Albatross
- White-capped Albatross
- Salvin's Albatross
- Buller's Shearwater
- Sooty Shearwater
- Short-tailed Shearwater
- Flesh-footed Shearwater
- Fluttering Shearwater
- Black (Parkinson's) Petrel
- Fairy Prion
- Cook's Petrel
- WHITE-NECKED PETREL
- BLACK-WINGED PETREL
- White-faced Storm Petrel

Wandering Albatross (DD)



'Storm Petrel with white rump'

- Blue Penguin
- Australian Gannet
- Pied Shag
- White-faced Heron
- BROWN SKUA
- Arctic Skua
- Red-billed Gull
- Black-backed Gull
- White-fronted Tern

Mammals

- Short-beaked Common Dolphin

Saturday 13 MARCH 2010 - PELAGIC from OPUA HARBOUR

Day trip on David & Melita Mair's 55 ft boat 'MV Zeus' leaving 7.10 from Opuia Harbour. On board were David & Melita Mair, Detlef Davies, John & Georgina Owen, Derek Bettsworth, Soozee McIntyre, Richard Robbins, Kevin Matthews, Steve Amon and Peter Yates. Weather warm & sunny, southerly breeze, mainly calm but occasional rocking when travelling south & while chumming.

Birds seen in the harbour: **Red-billed & Black-backed Gulls, White-fronted Terns, Pied Shags, Australian Gannets** & (on the return) 2 **Variable Oystercatchers**. From the harbour to Ninepins (Bay of Islands) we saw many **Buller's Shearwaters**, a few **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** but not as many **Fluttering Shearwaters** as usual; also a couple of **Blue Penguins**. At least one juv **Gannet** was on the Ninepins suggesting successful breeding, a few **Starlings** here too. One **Dolphin** (probably **Bottlenose**) was leaping clear of the water close to a 'Dolphin Encounter' tourist boat.

From the Ninepins we headed out to sea in north-easterly direction to the Nine Pin trench where the depth reaches 400m and spent the rest of the day in this general area. There were many more of the 3 common shearwaters (but **Buller's** was by far the commonest). A **Spur-winged Plover** over a fishing boat well out at sea was a surprise. One **Common Diving Petrel** gave good views as did a **Black Petrel** early on and a

White-capped Albatross took off from the sea with prey looking like a squid. Kevin suggested that a hook might be preventing the bird finishing its meal. Among some of the rafts of **Buller's Shearwaters** were at least 2 **Sooty Shearwaters**. A pod of **Short-beaked Common Dolphins** was spotted well ahead of the bows and they performed quite nicely for us alongside the boat. The first of about 6 **Cook's Petrels** flew quickly by to the north of us and the other birds seen all gave rather distant views.



With a few distant shearwaters & **Black Petrels** around, we tried a chumming session c.11.30 am, this was unsuccessful, no birds coming any nearer. There was another distant **White-capped Albatross** but birds were very sparse over the next hour or so. At about 1 pm we tried another chumming session and this time a group of

c.30 **Black Petrels** came to feed at the back of the boat, along with a few **Flesh-footed Shearwaters**. Our first 2 **Fairy Prions** came in sometimes settling on the water, there were several more during the rest of the day.

Flesh-footed Shearwater & Black Petrel (DD)
Check out those feet!



Then an albatross with a bright orangy-yellow bill and thick black underwing margins suddenly appeared, crossed the stern but then headed on past, identified later from photos (showing a pale eye & extensive black under secondaries) as an adult **Campbell Island Albatross**; a short while later another **White-capped Albatross** put in a close but equally brief appearance.

The return trip to Opua taking 3 hours produced more of the same species, we returned c.5.30 pm. Our impression was that there were rather few seabirds in the area and no evidence of big shoals of fish; not many fishing trawlers were patrolling the region. We did see a few Flying Fish. We were surprised at the complete absence of storm petrels (*White-faced* regularly occurs in the Bay of Islands). Although the species list for the day was shorter than might have been expected, it was an enjoyable day for all, the weather turning out to be much calmer than forecast. The brief but close albatrosses were the highlight of the day.

Species List

- White-capped Albatross
- CAMPBELL ISLAND ALBATROSS
- Buller's Shearwater
- Sooty Shearwater
- Flesh-footed Shearwater
- Fluttering Shearwater
- Common Diving Petrel
- Black (Parkinson's) Petrel
- Fairy Prion
- Cook's Petrel
- Blue Penguin

- Australasian Gannet
- Pied Shag
- Variable Oystercatcher
- Spur-winged Plover
- Black-backed Gull
- Red-billed Gull
- White-fronted Tern
- Starling
- Common Myna
- Mammals**
- Bottlenose Dolphin
- Short-beaked Common Dolphin

Our hosts for these pelagic trips were Brian Candy (Whangaroa) & David & Melita Mair (Opua). They are happy to do trips again & will offer available dates. If anybody would like to get a group together for another trip, please contact these boatmen direct & then let me know as I can publicise the dates & help to get enough people. Contact details are:

Brian Candy: 09 405 0307 – kcharters@orcon.net.nz
David & Melita Mair: 09 402 6093 – info@mvzeus.com

Kevin Matthews has a possible contact for pelagics out of Ahipara so watch this space! . . .who knows what might be out there.

SCHOOL TRIP – PARENGARENGA – Sun 9 MAY

Mike Bryan



We received this message from Mike Bryan a while ago & mentioned it in an email.

I am arranging a trip to the Kokota Sandspit in the Parengarenga tentatively for Saturday May 1st. The trip is intended to benefit the pupils of the e-learning unit at the Te Hapua School. They have spent the first term learning about kuaka and pingao, and will study glassmaking as an example of chemistry in Term 2.

The teacher, Te Aroha Wihapi, says that she can arrange transport across to the spit from Te Hapua on an oyster barge. We will watch birds on the way, have a walk on the spit to check out roosts, whale skeletons and the general environment. We will do some sampling for invertebrates in the sand to see what the kuaka are eating. We might have a fish as well. I will be travelling up on the day from Kaitaia and returning at night and can offer overnight floor space on either or both Friday and Saturday nights as required.

The invitation is for a few (no more than 4) birders to come along for the ride. The ownership of a telescope would be a big advantage, as would familiarity with wader id. Most of all a desire to interact with and share enthusiasm for wild places with teenagers.

There are 8 pupils involved (5 girls and 3 boys) aged about 14.



Photos DD Nov 09

Please contact me on biomikebryan@msn.com or by phoning **09 408 1008**

It has now been changed to **Sunday 9 May**. Detlef & Carol are going but there is still space for 2 more. Please contact Mike direct.

WELCOME SWALLOWS BY THE BACK DOOR

Report & photo by **Kevin Matthews**



Watching Welcome Swallows build their mud nest is very entertaining especially when it's literally at your backdoor. This gave me the opportunity to record some of their behaviour during nest construction. They chose the nest site under the veranda just below the ceiling at the busiest entrance to the house. Nest building commenced in the in the last week of November, however it took a week before they got the mud the right consistency to stick to the wall. They attempted to attach the nest on the same weatherboard a few centimetres apart before finally succeeding with their third attempt. At first it appeared that only one of the

birds were carting nesting material while the other stood sentry signalling to its mate that the coast was clear to deposit the mud and straw. It took a few days before I realised that my presence was at least one factor in the role of the sentry bird. With more discrete observation I was able to witness both birds actively carting and building the nest. The birds worked from first light till dusk making up to 10 trips an hour either with pellets of mud or straw to bind in with the mud. The weather had been very dry and I had wondered where they were collecting the mud from; as it turned out the farm tank reservoir had overflowed enough to create the perfect conditions for them.

It took six days to complete the mud nest interlaced with straw; another day was spent carting and lining the bottom and sides of the nest with soft dry grass. Then on the eighth day they carted feathers for the final lining. The following day the first egg was laid, then every second day until the fourth and final egg was laid the next day after the third.

At the time of writing they are in incubation and I've yet to devise a plan to manage the mess the chicks are going to create at the backdoor, perhaps they'll reward me by cleaning up a few of the mosquitoes!

KIWIS ON THE LAWN

Report & photos by **Colin & June Salt**



Kiwi photographed on our lawn near house. They are out each night around 8.30pm. This photo taken 30 mins ago (Friday 16 April).



A sight I have never seen before and they do not appear scared at all (we don't go too close) and the male actually does

his call in front of us to the female a short way away. He looks at us while he calls.

We only stay a few minutes so we don't frighten them off forever. On the far side of the lawn is another smaller kiwi. Wondering if it is the drought that is bringing them out of the bush and near the house. Makes what we are doing worthwhile and interesting, we do not seem to bother them. Even cars coming down drive to the garages at night do not worry them at all and they stay feeding near where people get out of the cars. You can imagine our guests' reactions.

Absolutely unreal and a thrilling experience. They call through the night so they must be staying on lawn at least till midnight. They leave their droppings on the concrete path to the front door so they must be coming into those house gardens. From the calls in the bush in the valley near the streams they are down there as well. They seem very healthy with deep brown beautiful feather coats. There are many probe holes in the lawn so they are covering a big area.

Cheers to everyone and share our experience.

Colin Salt is convenor of Whakaangi Landcare Group : - see www.whakaangi.co.nz

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

We have access to bird & wildlife books through a book club so are able to offer these to members and guests at meetings at very economical prices. In particular, Keith Woodley's Godwit book & George Watola's Discovery of NZ Birds have proved very popular. If anyone has items with a wildlife aspect which they wish to sell, please bring them to meetings.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

This is a subject which will be discussed at the Conference. One national project in the pipeline is the Caspian Tern census which is to begin later this year. We will also be enquiring about opportunities for bird banding which at present are confined to a few small groups outside our area. If you have a subject which you would like us to raise at the Conference, please let us know.

CHRISTMAS CROSSBIRD PUZZLE SOLUTION

© DETLEF DAVIES

Here is the Crossbird solution. In an email, I announced a prize for the first correct entry received. Congratulations to SIAN WILLIAMS who sent in the winning entry! She said it was hard but not impossible, and enjoyable. I felt the same when devising it! There were no other entries.

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