



# Out 'n' About

Newsletter of the Southland  
Natural History Field Club

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**Thursday 10 May at our usual meeting place, the Hearing  
Association 126 Leet St 7.30pm  
Committee meeting 7pm**

## Shore plovers

The Shore plover is one of New  
Zealand's rarest birds. Are we  
winning the battle?

by Rose Collen



Coming up:...

**Wearable Art.** Even if you think that this isn't for you, you *must* go along – you will be impressed

**Friday evening 18 May** 7pm Otatara Landcare Group's evening exploration of the Bushy Point Reserve. You might like to bring a torch, drink and a snack. Meet at the reserve entrance at the end of Bryson Road Otatara.

**Sunday 20 May trip to Dunedin** Suggestions wanted as to the best way to spend the day there. Any good ideas? Let Lloyd know if you are interested.

**18 August** National Spoonbill Count.

**Climb up Fortification** Ken Buckingham from Fortification has offered to lead a walk up Fortification sometime. Let's take him up on that.

**Cattle egrets** Brian Rance reports about 15-20 Cattle egrets on the South Coast Dairy Farm at Curio Bay on 24 April

**An out-of-place who** Helen Kowalewski (Fortification)

On Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> of April we had a who arrive at our place. It was a very stormy afternoon and the who was having trouble with the outside elements so we put it in the grain shed and when the storm was over took it to a safe haven (nice bush and pond place) Unfortunately I didn't get a photo but the people that verified the who with me are avid duck hunters. The who was juvenile. They took the who away and placed it on a pond at Quarry Hills. I rang them to see if I could come and take a photo but they checked the pond and the who had flown away. It's a shame that we can't track the bird. Maybe it was blown our way in the storm as it was terribly exhausted and we caught it without much trouble. So would there be a population of who in the Catlins?

## SOUTHLAND BIRD STUFF

### Gull-billed Tern and Cattle Egret at Pleasure Bay (Tip) Lagoon

The Lagoon continues to throw up more surprises with recent reports of a Gull-billed Tern and a Cattle Egret seen at the lagoon.



The Cattle egret was in the company of a White heron and spotted by Paul Jacques while he was hunting for the Gull-billed tern. This is not usual territory for Cattle egrets and they are often associated with stock, especially cattle (as the name implies). The photo attached is one that Glenda Rees took on the recent Otago OSNZ/Forest & Bird trip to selection of Inchclutha.

Gull-billed terns have been seen in record numbers both this year and last year in New Zealand and it

was only a matter of time before they started appearing again in Southland. The bird was photographed by several people who were attending the NZ Photographic Society conference in Invercargill. Historical records show that a pair overwintered in Invercargill in 1955 and a single bird was reported from Waituna Lagoon by Roger Sutton in 1985.

waders were seen around Cow Island on the

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### Nankøen Kestrel at Awarua Bay

Paul Jacques and Matt Jones spotted this Aussie raptor while scanning for waders winter



afternoon tide including a very smart

near Cow Island recently,

this is the second bird

reported from the Awarua

Bay area. In 1985 one

stayed around for several

months. More recently a

kestrel was reported from

the outskirts of Invercargill

when a home owner noticed

a strange bird grabbing the

Silvereyes that came to

drink in his bird bath. We

think this bird then moved to

a farm on Forest Hill

Crossing Road and was

seen by members of the Southland OSNZ society. It stayed around for a week or

more. The bird that Paul and Matt saw was feeding on skinks and they will take a wide

range of prey. In Australia they are known as Australian Kestrel. The photo attached is

a file photo.

plumaged Lesser Sand Plover in amongst the banded and

Southern NZ Dotterels. Other waders included about 40 Bar-tailed Godwits and a good haul

of 121 Turnstones including a handful of striking breeding plumaged birds.

### What rhymes with expedition?

hexpedition - witches on the warpath

Mexpedition - a trip to Mexico

Texpedition - a journey to oil country

rexpedition - a frantic hunt for a missing dog

sexpedition - umm... six expeditions simultaneously



**White heron.** This bird was photographed by Uli at the mouth of the Waiau River. She also sent a picture of a number of Spotted shags which had been shot at the rivermouth. The shags there are very vulnerable as they are quite approachable and slow fliers.



**Bittern.** This bittern was spotted on the banks of the Waituna Stream. It is seen there quite frequently apparently.

**Sooty shearwaters** An article from the New Zealand Herald Some muttonbirds returning to New Zealand for the mating season have been in bad condition - and the Fukushima nuclear disaster could be to blame. Photo / supplied

The meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant may be responsible for a decline in New Zealand's muttonbird population.

A Department of Conservation study found only two-thirds of birds returned to an area near Auckland, after spending the northern summer in Japan - some only 20km from the plant, which was crippled in Japan's earthquake and tsunami in March last year.

The birds return to New Zealand in November to mate, but DOC seabird researcher Graeme Taylor told Radio New Zealand the ones that returned were in poor condition.

"We won't know if they've died up there in the north Pacific until another year goes by, because sometimes these birds skip a breeding season- where if they are in a poor condition they don't attempt to breed, and so they may turn up again and breed.

"But if the birds never turn up again then you have to start to wonder what's gone on with the population."

Mr Taylor said the research only looked at a small sub-sample of the breeding population, but it was the drop in numbers was the "most unusual event" in 20 years of studies of the birds' numbers.

He said many of the birds which arrived back had old feathers on their tails, wings and body.

"I've never seen birds in that poor of a condition come back to New Zealand."

He said the condition of muttonbirds suggested they did not get the food in the north Pacific they usually do.

The Fukushima disaster may be responsible, he said, although the La Nino weather pattern which lay over New Zealand last year may have been a factor.

Meanwhile a second study, undertaken Ngai Tahu and Te Papa, found 30 muttonbird chicks from the Titi islands near Stewart Island had no radioactive traces and were safe to eat.

**Falcon** One at Bluff Cemetery 20 April 2012

**Unfortunate blackbird** Malcolm McKenzie collected this dead blackbird. Around its neck is a twirl of pampas which may have choked it or interfered severely with its ability to gather food.

