

Lake Wairarapa shorebird survey results - February 2014

A mixed team of DoC, GWRC and OSNZ staff and volunteers carried out the latest of a semi-regular series of shorebird surveys along the eastern shoreline of Lake Wairarapa on Monday, 3rd February. Three teams surveyed 18 km of shoreline during perfect weather conditions and recorded a total of 24 species and 4802 individual birds.

A highlight of the day included encountering two white-winged black terns, an Asian-breeding species that is a very rare summer visitor to New Zealand. Only three previous records of this species are known from the Wairarapa Moana wetlands, all of single birds seen in February 1974, January 1983 and January 2014 (the latter record was made by Joanna McVeagh, a GWRC staff member who also assisted with Monday's survey).

Another highlight was four Pectoral Sandpipers encountered between the Tauherenikau Delta and Oporua Floodway, a relatively high count for this rare Siberian-breeding migrant.

A record high count of 239 black-billed gulls was also a very promising result. The relatively large number of birds counted and good number of juvenile birds seen suggests that this critically endangered species has had a relatively successful breeding season in the Wairarapa this year.

In contrast, the 99 Canada geese we counted was a record low count for February. The large number of Canada goose carcasses seen on the shoreline between Willow Island and Alsop's Bay suggests that a recent culling operation has successfully reduced the numbers of this problematic agricultural pest.

A full list of the bird species encountered during our survey can be found below. For anyone who wishes to test their bird ID skills, or read some background information about any of the species we recorded, the hyperlinks alongside each species listed below will take you to the relevant species page on the New Zealand Birds online website (<http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/>).

<u>Species</u>		<u>Number of birds counted</u>	<u>Species link</u>
Black shag		86	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/246
Little black shag	2		http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/251
Little shag		3	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/244
White-faced heron		37	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/277
Australasian bittern		1	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/285
Royal spoonbill		30	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/292
Black swan		2471	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/69
Canada goose		99	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/74
Feral goose		152	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/73
Paradise shelduck		172	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/79
Pukeko		1	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/329
SI pied oystercatcher		1	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/392
Variable oystercatcher		25	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/391
Pied stilt		582	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/394
Banded dotterel		457	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/406
Black-fronted dotterel		12	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/414
Pacific golden plover		23	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/398
Spur-winged plover		145	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/417
Pectoral sandpiper		4	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/355
Bar-tailed godwit		86	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/670
Black-backed gull		133	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/26
Black-billed gull		239	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/430
Caspian tern		39	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/449
White-winged black tern		2	http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/?q=node/450

Many thanks to Hugh Robertson, Lynn Adams (DoC), Joanna McVeagh (GWRC) and Delia Small (OSNZ) for their help carrying out this survey.

Nikki Mac Arthur, GWRC