



# OSNZ news

No. 3 June, 1977

Edited by BARRIE HEATHER, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream,  
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Deadline for September issue will be  
24th August.

## Election of Officers - A.G.M.

The results of elections to Council, announced at the Auckland AGM, are:  
President: Mr B. D. Bell.  
Vice-President: Mr M. L. Falconer.  
Councillors: Dr P. C. Bull.  
Mr D. E. Crockett.

## New Regional Representatives

Canterbury: Mr Paul Sagar, Flat 2, 362  
Hereford St., Christchurch.  
Nelson: Mrs Jenny Hawkins, 772 Ata-  
whai Drive, Nelson.  
Wairarapa: Mr David Sim, Lake Ferry,  
R.D. 2, Featherston.  
Waikato: Mrs Betty Seddon, 11 Grey St.,  
Cambridge.

## January Field Week

Members are reminded that a week of field study in the Bay of Plenty is being planned for 8-15 January 1978. Accommodation at the camp site at Papamoa Beach is limited so that numbers may have to be restricted. Details and request form will appear with September *Notornis*.

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Not all members will be aware that DON MERTON, of Wildlife Service, who has resigned from Council, has left New Zealand temporarily. He has been seconded for at least one year to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and will be acting as conservator of wildlife on Christmas Island. A complete tropical contrast to the rigours of Kakapo research in Fiordland.

## Back numbers of 'Notornis'

With the decision in May not to order further reprints of *Notornis*, some parts will soon be in short supply; in fact, no complete sets are now available. If members have been thinking of ordering older parts of the journal or replacing lost items, they would be well advised to do so soon.

Costs per part are inside back cover of *Notornis* but details will be given in a later newsletter.

Any member wishing to sell back numbers of *Notornis* may do so through

*OSNZ News*; this could be of benefit to a younger member.

## NZ Bird Distribution Atlas

The first fruits of the efforts of OSNZ members chasing squares and filling in cards for the Mapping Scheme are almost with us. Your local RR should now have a copy of the draft Atlas for you to inspect *urgently*.

The Atlas, produced by PETER BULL, PETER GAZE and CHRIS ROBERTSON, helped by a computer, is an impressive affair. 83 pages of maps show distribution of all species other than Arctic waders and pelagic birds. 1 page shows number of species recorded per square, 1 shows the squares covered in the survey (90% of North Island, 82% of South Island), 1 shows squares where only one card was sent in, and 1 shows the final form all maps will have.

The final maps, unlike the draft, will have coastline drawn in. Sometimes two or three species are shown on one map, when they are rare or of limited distribution. Extra maps are planned, to reflect seasonal variation of such as Wrybill and cuckoos.

The draft copies must be returned to Wellington by 31 July. They have been issued so that members can examine them for errors — species recorded from local squares that you would seriously question, and species omitted from local squares. Members are asked also to decide which squares in their area clearly need further investigation, as the first Atlas can only be provisional while there is an imbalance of records from different districts.

It is splendid that the Atlas is being produced so soon; please be sure to check it carefully and promptly, so that it can be as accurate as our present knowledge permits.

\* \* \* \*

A Pallid Cuckoo, the fourth recorded in NZ of this common Australian bird, was reported by DUNCAN SUTHERLAND of Wildlife Service from the southern Wairarapa on 6 May. On a farm near Pirinoa it was perching on fence posts and feeding on a field of chou moellier.

\* \* \* \*

Dr R. T. Baker's account of Mallard

X Grey Duck killing and eating a House Sparrow recalls an incident related to BOB STIDOLPH many years ago by Fred Archer, a resident of Tuna Bay at the head of Tennyson Inlet, Pelorous Sound. During a plague of mice, he placed some dead mice in a paddock frequented by his ducks. The ducks picked up the mice, dipped them in water and ate them. Later they caught live mice and killed them; and ended up by killing and eating a chicken.

## Marked Red-billed Gulls

Red-billed Gulls have been marked with individual colour combinations at the Kaikoura colony since 1967. About 600 pairs under study have been marked and Dr JIM MILLS of Wildlife Service is relying largely on the help of members to follow the winter movements of the birds.

It is important to the study to find out the extent to which pair bonds last in winter (some certainly do) and the extent to which individuals stay put in winter quarters or wander about. Therefore repeated sightings of the same bird must be reported.

It is an easy project to head forth with some bread to the nearest gulls on beach or city park and bring them close — two or three bands per leg may be involved so bread is very helpful. Marked birds have been recorded already from Auckland to Invercargill, with particular concentration from Wellington to Dunedin, but far too little is yet known of the movements of individuals throughout the winter.

Please send findings to Dr Jim Mills, Wildlife Service, Dept of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

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The White-winged Black Tern at Nelson was apparently two birds. As well as the observers mentioned in No. 2, PETER GRANT of Christchurch saw them on 1 and 3 January at the Boulder Bank and COLIN O'DONNELL saw them for 3 weeks after 16 Jan., still at the pond at the north end of Nelson Haven. One bird on 14 Feb. was feeding along a tidal channel filled with spartina by the bridge to Rabbit I., some 20 km away. A Little Tern was nearby, too, roosting with a small group of Red-billed Gulls.

## Regional Meetings

Most regions cannot hold regular evening meetings but, to help members visiting other regions, the following are known to me:

**Northland/Far North:** 11 August, 13 Oct., 8 Dec. in Whangarei. 9 July and 5 Nov. Whangarei Harbour survey. 23-25 Sept. Far North survey; beaches and shag colonies. 21-24 Oct. Bay of Islands islands survey. 10-11 Dec. Northern Kaipara survey.

**Auckland:** First Tuesday of the month. Auckland Museum, 7.45.

**South Auckland:** Second Tuesday of the month. Papakura, 7.45. 22-24 Oct. survey of Coromandel Peninsula.

**Wellington:** Second Monday of the month. National Museum, 7.45.

Members should write to the RR concerned in case of changes. Meetings in other regions and surveys planned well in advance will be notified whenever I hear of them.

## Marked Black Swans

Are you, like me, accustomed to looking through and past Black Swans? If so, try looking at them in future for coloured neck bands. Some 3000 were last breeding season given white, pink, orange, yellow or green plastic bands which sit at the base of the neck.

Surprisingly few have been reported so far, though I have found it easy since I started looking. Particularly with the sun at your back, the bands show up vividly from a great distance. They are not visible only when birds are feeding. Each colour represents a district, either Rotorua, Hawkes Bay, Lake Wairarapa, Farewell Spit or Lake Ellesmere. 5 minutes spent scanning swans at their usual cruising distance can be well worth while.

From results so far, Rotorua and Hawkes Bay swans seem fairly sedentary, Wairarapa ones can move to Nelson/Marlborough and Farewell Spit ones have been seen as far afield as the Wai-kato, and Kaipara in Northland. Little is known of Ellesmere swans yet. Yellow and pink bands have black numbers on them but you must be unusually close to read them correctly.

Very few of the 3000 birds have been reported however and, with our widespread membership, we hope that hundreds of reports will start to flow in to Dr Murray Williams, Wildlife Service, Dept. Internal Affairs, Wellington. South Island areas from Christchurch southward seem particularly to have been neglected. Nil returns would be valuable—if, for example, you have scanned a flock of 500 and seen no bands, this should be reported.

## Falcon aerobatics

These notes by PETER CHILD are from the Harris Basin, at about 4400' in the upper Routeburn.

At about 11 a.m., with a fine mist clearing, we suddenly came across an adult (female?) Falcon which was sitting on a boulder 8m from the track, having just completed a meal of a Silver-eye (identified by the plucked feathers left). We watched it closely for a minute or two until it flew to a boulder further up the track from where, after several minutes, it flew uphill to land out of sight fairly high in a bluff, bouldery, shrubby area on the steeper wall of the basin. A few seconds later it emerged chasing a Kea. An aerial dogfight ensued in which each in turn became the attacker, the kea, to our surprise, sometimes out-maneuvring the falcon. At intervals one or other would land on a rock or ledge, only to be chased off by the other and the chase would continue. This lasted at least 4 minutes, by which time the scene had shifted a kilometre along the bluffs. It ended when the falcon swooped off downhill into the main part of the basin. Was this some kind of play?

The same afternoon, at about 3 p.m., we were returning down through the beech forest when, from a clearing, we saw a female falcon being chased very fast in a slight downward path by a male. The male periodically attacked the female which continued, more or less unconcerned, on her direct path. The female was uttering the food-begging 'swee-swee-swee' drawl while the male was uttering the high-pitched territorial 'kek-kek-kek-kek' call.

Peter wonders whether the Falcon is declining. In a nine-day trip up the Dart and some of its western tributaries in January (including 5 days above tree-line) he recorded only one bird. Someone remarked to him that they are more common outside Parks. Have members any comment? ?

GEORGE GUY of Sumner, Christchurch, has discovered a champion bird watcher, a young lady showing great patience, tenacity, keen sight and hearing, ability to climb nests. Her owners left her, while overseas, to be free but fed daily by neighbours. She managed to kill the young in every nest in George's garden, except for one Blackbird clutch abandoned. Nests of Thrush, Blackbird, Silvereye and Goldfinch were pulled away. None of the usual young warblers or fantails have been seen and Hedge Sparrows have gone. Name FLUFFY.

George once had a cat — he noticed that it usually brought in hen birds heavy with eggs, seldom males. Whenever magpies nest up the hill and bring their chicks down, he notices that small birds, esp. warblers, fantails, silvereyes, leave. He has seen an adult magpie pull down a sparrow nest and devour the young on the ground.

A juvenile Shore Plover recently turned up on the shore of Mangere Island in the Chathams but whether it stayed will have to await the return to base of the party at present stranded on Mangere. At last report the Black Robins were seven strong and healthy on Mangere; the first juvenile bred there has turned out a female and a mate has been provided for it.

A banded Wrybill picked up freshly dead on Pataua Beach near Whangarei Heads on 24 Jan. by Mrs DIANA SHAND had been banded by Rod Hay as a one-week chick on the upper Rakaia on 1 Nov. 1976. It had had a chequered history, having survived one flood in the egg, a second flood by swimming as a small chick and was last seen in the south, almost fledged, on 24 Nov.

Mrs Shand also picked up a dead Grey Ternlet on the same beach on 13 Feb.

A further Blue Duck report from the central North Island comes from DONALD SCOTT of Dannevirke who saw 7, two pairs and a group of 3, on the upper Tongariro in late March while he was on an Outdoor Pursuits course at Ruapehu.

## Nest Record Scheme

At 31 May 1977 there were 11,684 cards in the Scheme, covering 146 species, yet only the Song Thrush (1648 cards) and the Blackbird (1400) have a significant number of cards for analysis. Obviously there is plenty of scope to study whatever species you wish. (See *Notornis* vol. 22 (2) June 1975 for full summary to that date).

Last year only 334 cards were received from 37 members, covering only 54 species. CHRIS LUSK of Carterton, Wairarapa, made a commendable contribution of 78 cards.

"Nest recording is a job you have to do on your own and a lot of our members reject activities which are non-communal. If this is the case, it is time for a change of heart." (Sandy Edgar at Nelson study week). Data on the cards can be used for laying routine, clutch size, variation within NZ of clutch size, breeding season, number of clutches, loss of eggs and chicks, fledging success, predation, and so on.

Prepare now for the spring. Get cards from your RR or from David Crockett, 21 McMillan Avenue, Kamo, Northland.

*One card per member would quadruple contribution input!*

## Forest fauna surveys

A little-publicised aspect of the Wildlife Service is its Forest Fauna Survey Unit, formed several years ago with the function of (a) determining the presence, distribution and relative abundance of native birds in, and the wildlife values of areas of indigenous forest destined for logging (b) delineating areas which should be retained as nature reserves for the protection of individual species or assemblages of species, or to be examples of different types of habitat.

The first function is achieved by sampling representative blocks of habitat, in each block sampling 40-100 stations on a grid system at 450m intervals. The second is achieved by investigating the habitat requirements of individual species (e.g. Kokako), the minimum size of habitats that will sustain populations of various species, and methods of forest management that will prove least harmful to wildlife.

Your reporter, in conversation with HUGH BEST, found that over 300,000 ha. of indigenous forest may be open to exploitation in the next 5-10 years; in addition, areas already called reserves need to be examined for their value, and also other forest areas which may in later years be called on for timber. The work involved is very demanding, particularly as the need for urgency with large areas adds to the difficulty of producing carefully researched reports.

In the 3½ years of its existence, the FFSU has surveyed 148,000 ha. of indigenous forest, based on 7100 stations, working by necessity in the October-March period. Work has been completed for the West Coast and Southland beech project areas, the Kaimai Range/Mamaku plateau of Bay of Plenty, the King Country and central North Island and the northern half of south Westland.

The survey is planned to cover the rest of Westland, Coromandel Peninsula, inland Taranaki/Wanganui and Northland in the next stage.

Some implications of the survey results were explained by IAN CROOK in the *NZ Listener* of 2 April.

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While on a beach patrol of the Peka-peka to Waikanae stretch of Wellington west coast, MICHAEL TURNER of Tawa picked up a rather odd strange passerine — an Oriental Cuckoo.

The report of Weka introduction into Auckland's Waitakere Range in No. 2 was based on a newspaper cutting and therefore not fully correct.

After several years of agitation by JEAN SKINNER, backed by Dr David Robertson and the Auckland branch of OSNZ, the ARA agreed to the project and to provide material for a holding pen, and food and ranger help to care for the birds, and the first batch of 40 birds was supplied by Wildlife Service in Dec. 5 birds escaped because part of the wire of the pen was allowed to touch scrub within the pen, and 15 were released in early Feb. The final 20 were released on the official day before reporters and TV. Further releases are planned for the next three years to boost the population.

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While cultivating a paddock in Southland in November, 1975, I saw a Black-backed Gull persistently pick up and drop a well-developed non-flying juvenile oystercatcher from a brood of three. Next day I found one dead chick but no signs of the other two. The bereft parents stayed in the vicinity for several days.

I have had reliable reports of black-backs doing the same with Spurwing chicks and ducklings. I have also seen a black-back take a thrush, a blackbird and a starling after very skilful manoeuvring. On another occasion I saw a blackbird barely reach a gorse hedge ahead of a pursuing black-back.

During a visit to a nearby black-back colony, I picked up a black-back pellet containing bones and feathers which appeared to be of a blackbird. (MERVYN JUKES)

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Land reclamation by the Wairarapa Catchment Board has greatly harmed wetland birds, according to DAVE SIM, Lake Ferry, but the Black Shags have gained a bonus. The Lake Wairarapa control gates have a fish trap so that fish can still pass through when the gates are closed. The shags have capitalised on this and up to 40 together can be seen, feeding mainly on herring, mullet and small perch.

## Colour marked Harriers

Since August 1976, 156 Harriers have been banded at Pukepuke Lagoon in the Manawatu sand country. They have been individually marked also with brightly coloured plastic wing-tags. This population is the nucleus for an MSc thesis study of Harrier hunting behaviour and natural history.

18 of these birds were the basis of the local breeding population and were present until February, since when they

have disappeared. Perhaps one is hunting in your area? It is important to the study to trace the movements of the breeding adults as well as their young.

The wing tags are conspicuous and you are asked to look rather than glance at every Harrier you see. Harriers are known to be capable of wide dispersal, so no region can be excluded.

Even to know that a tagged bird is sighted is valuable but, in case you get a closer look, some or all of the following details may be visible:

- Tags may be on one or both wings.
- Pink, orange or light blue denotes a male.
- White, yellow or lime green denotes a female.
- A tag may be of plain colour, or have a lateral black stripe as well, or be all-black, with a lateral stripe of colour. This gives identity to individual birds.

If you see a marked bird, please send your name and address, the date, the locality (preferably with an official name and a map reference), an estimate of whether the plumage is light or dark in colour, and as much detail of the tag colours as you saw for certain.

Send to David Baker-Gabb, Botany & Zoology Dept, Massey University, Palmerston North.

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In February MICHAEL TAYLOR of Orakei, Auckland, visiting Melbourne, was shown the river flats at Banyule on the Yarra, only 12 km NE of the city centre, in the suburb of Heidelberg. Fortunately preserved from development, this splendid area quickly furnished over 35 species, including Brown Goshawk, Little and Peregrine Falcons, herons (White-faced, White, Nankeen Night), White Ibis, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Japanese Snipe, Black-fronted Dotterel, Spur-winged Plover, shags (Large Black, Little Black, Little Pied, Darter), waterfowl, mostly familiar: Coot, Dusky Moorhen, Eastern Swamphen (= pukeko), Black Swan, Black Duck (= grey), Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Little Grebe. The area is 5km from La Trobe University which has established its own wildlife reserve on campus; present director Dr Richard Zann, Zoology Dept.

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Seen being pursued by a magpie in Wellington near the museum one day in April was a goshawk, presumably a Brown Goshawk or Collared Sparrowhawk from Australia. It could not have done better than to appear before one of the few who can tell a goshawk from a falcon at a glance, FERGUS CLUNIE from Fiji.

The western Taranaki coast is not often regarded as rewarding wader territory but during a beach patrol on 26 Feb between Cape Egmont and Sandy Bay, Oaonui, D. G. MEDWAY and R. GALLIENNE saw between Rahotu and Oaonui 2 Reef Heron, 19 White-faced Heron, 5 Variable Oystercatcher, 2 SIPO, 11 Banded Dotterel, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper and 1 Wandering Tattler. The best spot was near the mouth of the Pungareere Stream, near Rahotu.

So far this year, Taranaki region has patrolled 67 km of beach for 78 birds, including a Grey Petrel, a White-headed Petrel and 2 Little Shearwaters.

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A welcome sighting from Christchurch by FRANK HOLLAY was of a Falcon flying over Riccarton recently; presumably a juvenile wandering in the autumn.

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An episode experienced by RAY PIERCE during his study at Lake Wainono, north of Oamaru, was caused by a sudden hailstorm for 15 minutes in the evening of 10/11/76. About 200 Pied Stilt, 13 Knot and 12 Godwit were feeding on a mudflat when the storm struck; all flew about 2 km to the shelter of clumps of *Juncus*. After about five minutes of panic, the mudflat was devoid of waders and, soon after, all the waterfowl had disappeared too. Many swans flew out to sea.

During the middle of the storm the only bird seen over the flats was a Southern Skua which had come in from the sea.

The hailstones were of up to 30 mm diameter. After the storm a freshly dead godwit was found with its eye smashed in and the base of the bill damaged. Ray comments bravely that this was the only time his crash helmet has been vital to his study.

He quotes D. D. Dow (*Effect of a catastrophic hailstorm on bird populations*, Emu 72: 22-23, 1972) who experienced a 30 minute hailstorm in Queensland and afterwards found 41 dead stilts (*H. himantopus*).

\* \* \* \*

Further to comments in No. 2 about the Welcome Swallow diving on other birds, Mrs GILLIAN ELLER of Glendowie, Auckland, has recorded two separate incidents in Northland in January. Once beside the Te Paki Stream, a swallow chased a Banded Dotterel for about a minute; once over sandhills behind Ninety-Mile Beach, a swallow chased a NZ Dotterel for nearly three minutes. In both cases there was no apparent cause and the dotterels did not retaliate.

Not only swallows dive on other birds, as MERVYN & HELEN JUKES remind us in this note from their son, a ditching contractor, who was clearing a channel at the time. A mother duck with a large brood had been busily occupied shifting the brood ahead of the fast-moving machine, when she decided to abandon the channel for the safety of the bank.

Down swooped a Harrier and, in the split second before impact with a duckling, a Black-backed Gull appeared from nowhere, giving the Harrier a strong peck in the nether regions.

The mother, with brood intact, retreated to the cleared channel and safety.

\* \* \* \*

Not only Wandering Tattler wanders, as in Taranaki, but the Grey-tailed Tattler does too. PADDY LATHAM, while taking his family for a walk round the Mount at Tauranga on 8 May, surprised a bird feeding on the reef outcrops at North Rock, which gave its thrice-repeated "troo-ee" call.

\* \* \* \*

From 8 Nov. 1976 to 4 March 1977 a party of five from Zoology Dept., University of Canterbury, were on the Snares. PAUL SAGAR was the ornithologist, studying the breeding biology of the Antarctic Tern and the Snares Cape Pigeon. Among endless high-lights was a day spent on islet 5 of the Western Chain, where he found a breeding Buller's Mollymawk originally banded by Dr Richdale in 1948. A log of species was kept and 3 new species for the island were seen: Black Shag (flocks of up to 49), Shining Cuckoo and Long-tailed Cuckoo.

### Quotation for June

*"These bird lovers, you know, we must do something about them. We should use our collective strength, as these people must be combated. They could be a minority few, but they are getting word around. You can't progress with them around."*

From Christchurch Press 8/2/77; chairman of Buller Chamber of Commerce speaking; supplied by Mrs A. G. BROADBENT of Cashmere, Christchurch.

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Collectors of Les McPherson's discs of NZ bird songs and calls will be interested to know that his eighth record is due out in June or July. Includes Bartailed and Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit, Hudsonian Godwit, Japanese Snipe, Turnstone, Asiatic and American Whimbrel, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Golden

Plover and Upland Plover. His catalogue and prices: McPherson Natural History Unit, Box 21083, Edgware, Christchurch.

Future plans are for discs on tropical seabirds and on wetland birds. He is considering a cassette tape containing some 40-50 species linked by commentary and would welcome suggestions as to species members would like included. He also is building up a slide collection of all NZ species and will pay costs for duplicates members may care to offer.

Les points out the reviews of discs, including NZ ones, in *Aves* 13 pp. 1-228, *Discographie zoologique critique* by G. H. Parent, which may interest some members, despite the French text.

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During a climb of Mt Tapuaenuku in the Inland Kaikouras, ROD HAY saw falcons and large numbers of Rifleman in open country, mainly scraps of scrub along river margins. It is time someone in the south wrote up something on the use by S.I. Rifleman of habitats other than beech forest.

### Tiritiri studies

The April issue of University of Auckland News (University Information Office, Private Bag, Auckland) contains a 10 page account of research on Tiritiri Island, 5km off Whangaparaoa Peninsula, Hauraki Gulf, by Dr JOHN CRAIG and co-workers of the Zoology Dept of the university (MICHAEL TAYLOR).

The study opportunities are similar to those at the Cavalli Islands (see *OSNZ News* No. 2). In 1972 grazing stock was removed and, although bush remnants were few and battered, regeneration has been considerable. The Kiore rat thrives in the long grass that at this stage replaces pasture, and is a major subject of study. Spotless Crane and Pukeko are widespread; Diving and Grey-faced Petrels breed. Particular studies are being made of the Tui, the Bellbird (the nearest remnant to the Auckland mainland), the Blue Penguin and the Red-crowned Parakeet which is doing well after releases in 1974, 1975 and 1976 from Mt Bruce stock. The Fantail and Grey Warbler are present and casual visitors recorded include NZ Pigeon, Pied Tit and Kaka which will presumably recolonise the island in the future.

The work of continuing generations of students should, if published regularly, provide endless interest.

An item by Peter Child in *OSNZ News* No. 1 on SIPO feeding on an alpine snowfield in Otago has begun a correspondence with Dr JOHN S. EDWARDS, formerly of Auckland, now at University of Washington, Seattle. John has for some time been interested as a sideline project in alpine insect fallout and the use of this food source by birds. He has sent a copy of a relevant paper *Arthropod fallout and nutrient transport: a quantitative study of Alaskan snowpatches* by John S. Edwards & Paul C. Banko, *Arctic and Alpine Research* 8 (3): 237-245. It seems there is a considerable literature on the subject. John's work at this topic is continuing on Mt Rainier near Seattle, where Rosy Finches and Water Pipits are the main birds using insect fallout.

### Auckland University work

PETER JENKINS is continuing to work on the social behaviour and song of the Saddleback and with Murray Douglas we are also working on the song and social behaviour of the Fernbird.

JOHN PAYNTER is studying the social behaviour of the Starling at the nest site. This study includes the song and song mimicry of the Starling.

MELVYN GALBRAITH has just completed a study of song dialects in the Chaffinch including comparison with the parental song behaviour in Europe.

ROD HAY is continuing his work on the Wrybill.

JOHANNA BISSETT is studying the territorial and song behaviour of the Pied Tit including work on the geographic variation of song.

ANDREW McCULLOUGH is working on the general breeding biology of the White-fronted Tern with special attention to vocal communication, individual recognition and the possibility of creche formation.

JOHN CRAIG and MURRAY DOUGLAS are working on the social organization, behaviour, song and breeding and feeding ecology of Bellbirds on Tiritiri Island.

GRAHAM JONES has just completed a study on the Little Blue Penguin on Tiritiri Island.

ANNE STEWART has just taken over the study on Tuis. It is similar to the Bellbird study and is based primarily on Tiritiri.

MARKE DAWE is studying the general biology of parakeets. Part of his work is on populations founded from liberated birds.

PAUL WILLIAMS has just completed a study on aspects of the breeding, feeding and spatial biology of blackbirds and thrushes.

Peter and Margaret Child report a resourceful Redpoll which, just as they turned the car into their driveway, fluttered at a tall dandelion stalk close to the cyclone netting fence until the seedhead could be held on the wire with its feet. It then proceeded to strip the head of its seeds, later repeating with another seedhead.

CHARLES & PEG FLEMING found at Waikanae that in a pre-Christmas storm a Grey Warbler nest 3 m up in an Akeake had collapsed and the female, perhaps numbed with cold, had been caught by the neck in a twig fork 0.5 m below and had died.

### Classified Summarised Notes

A final reminder to get all notes together up to 30 June and send promptly to A. T. Edgar, Inlet Road, Kerikeri. Include material already sent to *OSNZ News*, as this should be permanently recorded. To prepare CSN is a fearful task and Sandy should be allowed ample time to work at it.

Canterbury members KATHLEEN HARRISON and PHIL HOWELL are interested in comparing notes with others on their favourite birding places. They offer their favourite:

It has long been the Ashley River estuary, 33 km north of Christchurch. On checking our records for the last two or three years, we realise that the south bank of the Ashley mouth is a birdwatcher's paradise — only time, patience and energy is needed to search carefully the shingle banks and large area of sandflats exposed at low tide.

Of the less common species, the bird most troublesome to identify recently has been a Mongolian Dotterel. This pugnacious little bird, which we call G.K. (short for Genghis Khan), was first seen by us last October and still commands his modest piece of shingle territory, although constantly challenged by juvenile Banded Dotterels.

A lucky sighting by two of our friends two months ago was a *Black Stilt*, in company with several Pied, and there are good slides to prove it. An Asiatic Whimbrel, in the area for several months, complains vociferously if disturbed. One day we found 16 Golden Plover; we have often seen Turnstones and several times a Pectoral Sandpiper. Just now two Little or Fairy Terns are a problem of identification and we have asked Don Brathwaite to assist us.

White Herons should arrive soon, and we hope to see Little Egrets and Cattle Egrets on the water-meadows at Waiuku, where Scaup are breeding successfully and White Swans raised a fine family

last spring. Our best tally to date has been 44 species at one time and, with rarely more than an hour or two to spend, we think this very encouraging.

The ecological impact study of the Auckland Thermal No. 1 power station was later extended a further six months to cover up to Sept. 1976. One result is a 44 page bird report on Clark's Bay in particular and the Manukau in general, which will be available in *OSNZ Library* by courtesy of Dr Larcombe and Bioresearches Ltd. This gives a valuable picture of the use of the area for feeding and roosting by summer and winter populations and during transition periods when large flocks of migrating waders enter and leave the Manukau.

Through the study period the birds using Clark's Bay rose steadily from 3800 in Sept. 1975 to 18000 in March 1976, declining through June/July numbers of 8000 to 1500 in Sept. 1976.

The extension has allowed winter feeding to be studied for the report. One fact which emerges is that supplementary pasture feeding by all waders occurs near the Seagrove roost over high tide periods. This reinforces the importance of conserving the headland.

An important part of the report is based on *OSNZ* census data since 1960. As is well known, striking features are the increase of SIPO (3000 to 18000 for whole Manukau) and the decrease of Wrybill (2000 to 500). Clark's Bay is important for these species and also Banded and NZ Dotterel. Its future and that of the power station with its huge estuarine cooling ponds are still uncertain. (MICHAEL TAYLOR)

While investigating a limestone cave about 50m long, 7m underground, 45.5m above sea level in the Browns district of Southland, MERVYN JUKES found heads and bills and other kiwi bones, a complete head and most of the keleton of a Kakapo, and moa bones.

Further investigation has produced a good sample of bones of *Aptornis defossor* (see Oliver p. 597) and a very small duck-type bill which may be of the extinct duck *Euryanas finschi* (Oliver p. 600). All bones are in remarkably good condition.

Not being capable himself of completing a large helping of porridge at the Routeburn Falls hut, Peter Child one morning in April scraped the remnants on to a large boulder outside the hut, thinking that Keas would finish them off. To his surprise, on his return mid-afternoon, the rolled oats were being shared by a Hedge Sparrow and a bloated mouse!

A S.I. Robin discovered recently in the Cashmere suburb of Christchurch greatly interested Mrs A. BROADBENT who has had previously to travel to Kaikoura to see them. It is the first she has heard of there or for many miles around.

Peter and Margaret Child record a 'rubbergut' Robin in the Red Beech forest up the Routeburn which, while they were resting on a log, started pecking bits of synthetic rubber from a patch on the inside of Margaret's gymbot. Furthermore, it swallowed them.

\* \* \* \*

Three Terek Sandpipers and a Dunlin were among the super-rarities at Miranda in March. What next?

### Cattle Egrets

The Cattle Egrets at Rangiriri, north of Huntly in the Waikato, have become fairly regular winter residents, according to JOHN SEDDON, arriving about May and disappearing about November. The 24 reported for Sept/Oct 1976 were on the farm of Mr Hamish Henderson, 6km along Plantation Road, Rangiriri. The birds would fly in early in the day and late in the evening would fly south towards Lake Whangape. On 3 Oct. John found two-thirds of them coloured up, with bill orange rather than yellow and with pink crown, mantle and breast feathers.

Where do they go for the summer? There seem to be no reports of them until late April at the earliest. This year, WILF & JULIE MAWSON saw 12 in April near Ellesmere. Taranaki members have seen at least 6 in the Waitara district and one at Okato from about 22 April, and there are rumours of several near Hawera. 4 turned up near Otaki Beach on 8 May (start of shooting season) and were seen by PETER BULL, 1 spent two days on a farm near Masterton 11-12 May (MIKE DENNISON, BOB STIDOLPH), and 1 was at Punakaiki, West Coast (CRAIG BURRIDGE). In Northland up to 42 have been seen near Awanui (SANDY EDGAR, ROSS MICHIE), 4 near Te Kao (VIC HENSLEY), 2 at Titoki, west of Whangarei, and 4 at Dargaville (DAVID CROCKETT), all during late April/early May. Others have been rumoured from Wanganui, Waikato and Nelson districts.

It seems that many birds are at present moving about the country and it may be profitable to hold a country-wide count later this year.

Little Egrets are still about in small numbers. PETER GRANT saw one in breeding plumage at Rabbit I. bridge, Nelson, on 31 Dec. There have been

2-4 in north Taranaki in April/May (R. W. WHEELER, R. E. LAMBERT), one at Waikanae (LES GRIFFIN, STUART CHAMBERS) in early May, one near Otaki Beach on 8 May (PETER BULL), one at Westshore, Napier, in late May (ALAN GOLLOP), one at Punakaiki (CRAIG BURRIDGE), one at Cobden Lagoons, West Coast (JO DOUGLAS).

\* \* \* \*

The Black-fronted Dotterel is almost certainly breeding now in the Bay of Plenty. Feeding on a sandy edge just inside the mouth of the Rangitaiki River on 7 May were an adult and a juvenile, and on 15 May two adults with two juveniles. This is where 3½ years previously, Noel Hellyer saw a lone juvenile. Perhaps a larger population occurs upstream, for this species normally avoids estuarine conditions (PADDY LATHAM)

\* \* \* \*

In the same area Paddy found an Australian Tree Martin on 25 April feeding with about 40 swallows over the 'dilute molasses' of the Tarawera River at its mouth. Apart from the obvious silhouette and plumage differences, it was easy to pick out by behaviour. It flapped its wings more frequently than the swallows and, when hawking close to the water surface, it readily ducked itself when picking up floating insects whereas the swallows were far more careful. It has not been seen again.

\* \* \* \*

The 12 March survey of Whangarei Harbour and nearby Marsden Bay and Waipu River gave good totals of common waders: Pied Stilt 930, Godwit 3768, SIPO 940, Variable Oystercatcher 92 (all but 1 at Waipu), Wrybill 228, NZ Dotterel 20. Rarities included Hudsonian Godwit 2 (at Waipu), Little Whimbrel 2.

Beach patrols of the Dargaville west coast in Jan/Feb. and the Far North peninsula during 25-31 Jan. covered 305 km for 669 birds. Most numerous were Blue Penguin, Sooty, Short-tailed, Buller's and Fluttering Shearwaters. The larger petrels and albatrosses were much fewer but a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, and a White-chinned Petrel were among them. (DAVID CROCKETT)

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BILL CAMPBELL has compiled an impressive list of 20 recoveries of banded birds found during Northland beach patrols. 1 Blue Penguin, 1 Grey-headed Mollmawk, 1 Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (from Macquarie to Dargaville in 5 months), 4 Giant Petrels from Antarctica and 1 from Kerguelen, 1 Lesser Broad-billed (from Crozets) and 3 Fairy

Prions (from Stephens I), 1 White-faced Storm Petrel, 1 Gannet, 1 Black-backed Gull, 5 Caspian Terns (one from Pal-liser Spit, Wairarapa).

\* \* \* \*

A Kookaburra was seen one day early in February near Paraparaumu by PAT & LES GRIFFIN. Where had it come from?

### Coots — where are they?

On Lane's Dam, a small irrigation dam on a hill on the outskirts of the housing area of Alexandra, Peter and Margaret Child were delighted to find on 13 March a new colony of Coot. One pair had 2 well-grown chicks, another pair 3 and one other adult seemed a loner — 10 altogether. The dam is densely bordered with raupo and supports a healthy variety of aquatic algae and weeds. The nearest colony is at Lake Hayes, Arrowtown, about 40 miles in a direct line.

The Coot seems now to have dispersed widely in New Zealand but to have settled in remarkably few and widely separated places. The draft Distribution Atlas shows that few localities appear on the mapping cards, so that the record is not clear.

While the Coot is still at an early stage of establishment but has had a chance to select the most favourable habitats, it should be possible to ask what all the present localities have in common.

From a perusal of CSN in *Notornis*, I have come up with this list of localities where Coot apparently have a permanent breeding population, and a list of uncertain localities. Could members correct this list by deletions or additions (exact names of lakes or dams and where they are), and comment on the features of the habitat the Coot is using. My impression is that raupo backed by overhanging willows are a prime preference. Agreed?

*North Island:* Hamilton Lake (J. P. Whittle, *Tara* No. 5); Lakes Rotoma, Rotoiti, Okareka, Tarawera in Rotorua district; Lake Tiniroto between Gisborne and Wairoa; Lake Tutira, and Horse-shoe Lake east of Waipawa in Hawkes Bay; Lakes Virginia, Westmere and Kaitoke at Wanganui; Te Parae, east of Masterton in Wairarapa. *Uncertain:* Okere Falls, Te Pohue Lagoon (Napier-Taupo road), Hokowhitu Lagoon, Manawatu, Long Range Lake (north of Porangahau), Lake Poukawa.

*South Island:* Lake Elterwater in Marlborough; St Anne's Lagoon, Cheviot in N. Canterbury; Lakes Tekapo, McGregor, Heron in inland Canterbury; Lake Hayes and Lane's Dam, Alexandra in

Otago. *Uncertain*: Lake Poerua, east of Greymouth, Lakes Alexandrina, Clearwater, Emma, Waipori.

There are large, obvious gaps in the record from all parts of the country.

\* \* \* \*

The lone Fairy Tern at Tauranga continues to confuse. It is clear that a pair did breed and was observed almost daily by Miss K. FLETCHER of Tauranga in Dec. 1975/Jan. 1976. 3 eggs hatched on 29/30 Dec. and 2 chicks were seen several days later. Later observations have been of only one definite Fairy. This year this bird has been seen frequently, often in the company of 9-10 Little Terns, and on at least one occasion displaying at one (JOHN SEDDON). What may ultimately happen to this lone bird, well out of the normal Northland breeding range, will be interesting. The *Emu* paper (see Publications) gives food for thought.

\* \* \* \*

The Black-fronted Terns of the eastern Bay of Plenty, wherever they come from, have been building up again. PADDY LATHAM found 4 at the Rangitaiki mouth on 25 April and 24 on 15 May plus 5 at the Tarawera mouth. Presumably more will turn up yet.

\* \* \* \*

3 Yellow-eyed Penguins have been picked up recently on Wellington beaches. One on Petone Beach (SHANE COTTER) and two at Makara (BILL CASH, COTTER family).

\* \* \* \*

The two White Ibises are still with us, one at Maketu Lagoon, Bay of Plenty, after a long absence (Paddy Latham), the other at Manawatu Estuary (Mike Dennison). Glossy Ibises seem to have faded away.

\* \* \* \*

There has been a big mortality of Spotted Shags, both adult and juvenile, in the Wellington and Nelson districts in April/May, reports SANDY BARTLE. Starvation, aided perhaps by intestinal parasites, seems to be the immediate cause of death but may not, of course, be the fundamental cause.

\* \* \* \*

Are these altitude records? A Long-tailed Cuckoo at 3150' in the last patch of stunted Silver Beech near the Dart Hut, and a Kingfisher (rare in this area) at 2250' feeding in a backwater of the Routeburn River (PETER CHILD).

\* \* \* \*

In early May an Oriental Pratincole was seen by DARYL MUNRO of Wildlife Service near the Turnbull River, south of Haast in south Westland. This is the fourth recorded occurrence in NZ of this species which migrates south from Asia.

## Publications

\* = in OSNZ Library.

*Australasian Seabird Group* of RAOU. Aims to foster trans-Tasman co-operation in seabird study. Sub. \$3. NZ reps Brian Bell and Chris Robertson, Wildlife Service. Newsletter No. 7, Sept. 1976. Reports activities of seabird groups in other parts of world; planned activities, esp. in SE Australia. An interesting working list by M. Carins of seabirds of Papua-New Guinea and Solomons. Newsletter No. 8, May 1977. *Exceptional numbers of white phase Giant Petrel in NZ waters during Sept. and Oct. 1976*, by N. Cheshire. *Some data on the distribution of Giant Petrels in the Tasman Sea and the South-west Pacific* by J. Jenkins, N. Cheshire & P. Nesfield. Summary of 15 years' observations between NZ, Fiji, Tonga and Norfolk. BDH, J. A. Bartle).

*\*Interbreeding of Little and Fairy Terns* by J. B. Cox & D. H. Close. *Emu* 77: 28-32, Feb. 1977. Australian races of Little (north and east coasts) and Fairy (west and south) have in recent years overlapped in breeding range between Gulf St Vincent, S.A. and eastern Bass Strait. Some interbreeding has occurred since 1975 at least, thought to be only when a mate is lacking. Hybrids seem fertile. Detailed comment on field characters of the three forms.

Little Terns in NZ are probably Asiatic; nevertheless interbreeding in the absence of a normal mate could occur. (BDH, A. Goodwin).

*\*Moult, measurements and migrations of the Grey Plover* by N. J. B. Branson & C. D. T. Minton. *Bird Study* vol. 23 (4): 257-266, Dec. 1976.

*\*Breeding of the Mottled Petrel* by John Warham, Bruce R. Keeley & Graham J. Wilson. *The Auk* vol. 94 (1): 1-17, Jan. 1977. Results from four Univ. of Canterbury summer expeditions to the Snares 1967-1971.

*\*Age determination of six species of North American shorebirds* by Jean Burton & Raymond McNeil. *Bird Banding* vol. 47 (3): 201-209. Canadian MSc study based on juvenile plumage, mainly primaries and secondaries and changes into first and second moult cycles. (BDH)

\* \* \* \*

JOHN HASTIE, of Hastings, reports that on 19 May his parents counted 102 Kingfishers between Gisborne and Putorino, most of which were near Gisborne, especially near maize fields and where road and rail were parallel and with telephone lines above. Groups of 3 were frequent.

## For Sale

*In search of birds in New Zealand*, by H. R. McKenzie. Several copies are now available, preferably for members who will use the book and younger members who have had no chance to buy it. Let me know if you want it but send no money as prices vary slightly (\$6-\$7) and there may be more orders than copies.

*A guide to the larger oceanic birds (albatrosses and Giant Petrel)* by J. Moreland (50c + 10c postage) and *Guide to identification of shearwaters and petrels in NZ waters* by J. P. Croxall (75c + 10c postage). From Mrs A. Howell, 27 Tiri Rd, Whangaparaoa.

\* \* \* \*

Further records of the Kokako have come in from the middle and southern Coromandel Peninsula where Beth Brown hopes to place extra teams in the Labour Weekend survey this year. DAVE PANKHURST of Thames had a Kokako answer on Mt Maunaupaki when he whistled to attract small birds. When he continued, it answered him several times, until he finally saw it. This is the spot where Dr Peter Jenkins, Murray Douglas and Maurice Field saw one and recorded calls on the last survey. (BETH BROWN)

\* \* \* \*

A White-faced Storm Petrel was found dead in a boxthorn hedge on farm property, Beach Rd, Omata, near New Plymouth on 9 April (R. W. Wheeler).

\* \* \* \*

Among the many bird specimens seized not long ago from an illegal collector was a Plumed Egret (*Egretta intermedia*) which had been "collected" 3-4 years ago at the Manawatu River mouth. The first record of a bird found in northern and eastern Australia, the skin is now in the National Museum.

\* \* \* \*

The house and garden of Mrs MARGARET DIVERS lie in the farmland of the central Oreti River valley, north of Winton, Southland. The garden includes some fine kowhais and several large Lowland Lacebarks, gnarled and contorted by wind and age, and densely covered with Mistletoe.

Usually the Lacebarks are the home of a Little Owl but in April/May, when the white mistletoe berries ripen, they are alive with birds — tuis, bellbirds, silvereyes, thrushes, blackbirds, even starlings, and a pigeon occasionally on the fringes. Fantails and warblers feed on the insects disturbed by all the activity.

At the time of writing, despite a gale with rain, hail and snow falling, the frenzy of feeding was undiminished.

## Black Stilts

Information is required from members who have observed Black Stilts in winter on some of the North Island estuaries, by RON NILSSON, Wildlife Service, Dept of Internal Affairs, Box 927, Dunedin. Please send Ron all the details you have.

For four years the Wildlife Service has been studying the population and distribution of the Black Stilt, which is our rarest mainland endemic wader, with a total adult population of about 60 birds. Almost all the Black Stilts remain within the McKenzie Basin area during the winter, but occasionally odd birds seem to be caught up in the Pied Stilt migration and turn up in the North Island in winter.

Last year Ron wrote to all regional Reps and found that one was seen on Kawhia Harbour, two on Lake Wairarapa and, several months later, one on the Wairau Lagoon near Blenheim. Is this all that has been seen?? What about the winter of 1977?

\* \* \* \*

RAY PIERCE of Zoology Dept, University of Otago, is drawing to a close his year's study on Lake Wainono where he has been particularly concerned with the winter feeding of the Pied Stilt. It is fitting that he has been awarded a scholarship for a three-year study of the Black Stilt in the McKenzie Country, as his approach is intended to be ecological and a comparison with the Pied Stilt will be an essential part. We wish him well — he deserves a change from the bleak scenery of Wainono.

\* \* \* \*

The big flock of SIPO at Karaka, south Manukau, at present includes two partial albinos, one lightly flecked with white, the other with extensive white patches on the wings. Karaka has had 1-4 Gull-billed Terns from Feb. to April and KEN FISHER saw 6 at Waimahia Inlet on 15 March. DAVID LAWRIE, who is now running South Auckland's beach patrols, saw 3 Asiatic Whimbrel at Karaka on 19 March (BETH BROWN).

\* \* \* \*

A bird survey is currently being conducted in the Mount Cook National Park. Rangers MAL CLARBROUGH and MARTIN HEINE ask for any records members may have for the Mt Cook region. Park HQ, Box 5, Mt Cook.

They ask also whether anyone can comment on these groups of berries found in mid-January during a routine survey of the middle of the Tasman riverbed, about 4km south of the glacier terminal. 130 red *Coprosma* berries on

a small shingle bar; 60 fresh Totara berries, with green seed still attached; 111 Totara berries; 140 Totara berries, dried out and partly buried in silt; 3 regurgitated pellets of Weta remains. All were over 1km from any berry source and over 200 metres from the nearest Black-back colony (the presumed source). The weta pellets were within 100 metres of a Black-back colony but have not been seen before or since.

\* \* \* \*

During a short stop at Lake Tutira several years ago, KATHLEEN TODD, Hastings, and others saw a Harrier swoop over a large bird which escaped only by diving into the lake from a height of about 15'. After some 3-4 minutes, a Mallard drake surfaced and at once left, flying fast just above the water.

## Southland Harriers

The banding of Harriers in central Southland by MERVYN JUKES is reaching mammoth proportions for a one-man, part-time project. Beginning in earnest in 1967, when 32 were banded and 9 retrapped, with similar figures each year to 1973 when 49 were banded and 17 retrapped, there was a phenomenal increase to 346 banded and 176 retraps in 1975, and 345 banded and 211 retraps in 1976. The total from 1964 to 5 March 1977 is 1306 banded and 572 retraps.

The reason for the increase is 3 cage traps which Mervyn, after much trial and error, designed and built from conduit pipe and netting. Previously a clap net was used which, by comparison, was slow and primitive. The bait, being exposed, attracted every cat, dog, black-back, hedgehog, etc., which would become entangled in and often damage the net. His sheep would spring the trap and sometimes chew the net. A new net was needed every season. The net had to be sited within view of the house, to be tripped whenever a bird arrived, so that trapping was in effect limited to one paddock. This regularly gave Helen double duty in the kitchen.

The cage traps entail more work as many more birds are caught, but are highly satisfactory as the birds suffer no physical damage, are easier to handle and are much cleaner since the trap can be shifted about.

Mervyn tries to start trapping when the juveniles appear, usually about the beginning of February. Trapping usually finishes by 20 August when the birds leave the area to start mating. Bait (sheep meat) must be renewed at least every three days in warm weather as the Harrier take little notice of meat which is decomposing or has darkened

in colour. This means that a lot of meat is used. The traps are checked at least twice a day. Birds are never left overnight, as they have been found quite unresistant to cold, wet or frosty conditions.

Mervyn's farm at Springhills, near Winton, may prove to be on a flight path of Harriers and certainly is within 8km of four peat bogs which are proven Harrier roosts. So far he has had 92 bands returned from dead birds, from as far as Ranfurly in Central Otago and Tahakopa in SE Otago, with a scattering from most of Southland and the highest concentration within 30km of the banding site. An interesting recent re-trap was of a bird banded in the Blenheim area.

## Parakeets released in Waitakeres

MARK DAWE, who is studying as MSc work the behaviour and ecology of captive-bred Red-crowned Parakeets released in the wild, has recently liberated 14 aviary-bred juveniles (supplied by Wildlife Service) and 3 from Auckland University aviaries, at Karamatura Valley, Huia. This release into the southern end of Auckland's Waitakere Range will supplement his study of the parakeets on Tiritiri Island.

The birds arrived in Auckland on 3 May and were held in aviaries at Huia for a week. They were individually colour banded and released directly from the aviaries in two groups on 11 and 12 May. The weather throughout was unusually fine.

Birds were seen to eat a variety of native and exotic foods within minutes of release. They still return to the aviaries for sunflower seeds but will be weaned off as they increase their natural foraging.

The release has been successful so far. Although one bird is known to have been killed by a ferret, up to 19 May at least 10 were known to be alive. There has been no sign of inability to coexist with the Eastern Rosella which is common in the area. Mixed flocks, with no sign of animosity, have been fed by a local resident. Further liberations are likely.

Part of Mark's work is to sort out criteria by which areas suitable for future release can be judged. Therefore he is very interested in any records of foods taken by parakeets, and also in breeding records. Any such information and sightings of banded (or we hope unbanded, next summer) parakeets at Huia or Tiritiri should be sent to Mark, c/o Zoology Dept, Auckland University, Private Bag, Auckland.