



# OSNZ news

No. 4 September, 1977

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for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

*Deadline for December Issue will be 30th November.*

## Dabchicks

Is the NZ Dabchick extinct in the South Island? To judge from CS Notes over the years, it must be close to it. Ones and twos have been reported in the 50s and 60s from tiny Lake Wombat near Franz Josef, from Hurunui (N. Canterbury), Lakes McGregor, Gunn, Mapourika and Angus, but none recently. In the 1940s Lakes Kanieri, Brunner and Wahapo had a few and there are odd records from Eglinton Valley and Dunedin. Some of these may have been birds wandering from the north, or even Little or Hoary-headed from Australia.

Even if a small population does remain, there seems to be a wide-open niche for Little and/or Hoary-headed Grebes to become established. All the more reason, too, for the status of the Dabchick in the North Island to be better investigated in most districts.

Would the North Island birds total 1000? Less than this would classify it as a rare species. This year, some members in Wairarapa, Manawatu and Wellington regions have been keeping records as a sample of Dabchick wintering numbers on known favoured flocking places. Although many birds undoubtedly stay on their breeding lakes, many others, often without apparent reason, flock in relatively few places, sometimes where they are not otherwise known or, in the case of rural sewage ponds, where they have not been seen before.

In addition, it has been found that many birds seem to be pairing while still in winter flocks; and it seems that there is a considerable movement of Dabchicks in and out of flocking places during the winter. Flocking may begin in late February and continue as late as August.

How many of us can recognise a juvenile or winter plumage Dabchick as opposed to a breeding-plumage bird? Or a juvenile or winter Hoary-headed? These points need basic field study. Are we ready to distinguish these species, and the Little Grebe, if they occur together in a few years?

It is being seriously proposed that 1978 be made a study year for the Dabchick, particularly its flocking habits and numbers. It is hoped that North Island regions can set about discovering flocking places, which sometimes are in districts where they are not normally regarded as common. Sewage ponds are a favourite place and certain lar-

ger lakes. It is hoped that RRs, many of whom are pretty fully committed, can be relieved by a person or group in each district adopting this project as their own for the year. More precise ideas in Christmas OSNZ NEWS.

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## Bird mapping scheme

Members may or may not be aware that the provisional Atlas of Bird Distribution (of which RRs have had draft copies) is to be published later this year or early next year. The published maps should be much clearer than in the present draft copies. It is hoped that members will be stimulated to visit squares at present poorly covered so that a greatly improved "final" atlas can be published about 1980.

Although it is now too late to add new material to the provisional atlas, the mapping office urges members to continue sending in bird lists for any interesting squares they happen to visit. All such lists will be included in the final atlas. Please don't stockpile your cards; just keep sending them in. (PETER BULL)

Those who have examined the draft Atlas may have noticed that the Spotless Crake, for example, seems to be largely confined to the Wellington West area. Wellington members are very proud of this and firmly believe they have rights to a regional tie featuring Spotless Crake.

## Nest Record Scheme

Many species of common birds will have begun breeding before you read this and many will be using sites "close to homes".

Get Nest Record Cards and make observations on a common species. Let's make 1977/78 the Season of the Blackbird — a species found near most residences. Many aspects of a life cycle are revealed during observations of nests.

Get cards from your RR or from David Crockett, 21 McMillan Avenue, Kamo, Northland.

## OSNZ tie

Now available at \$6.00 from B.D. Bell, 9 Ferry Rd, Seatoun, Wellington. Medium grey weave, with repeated patterns of Notornis in red, blue and green colouring. Stocks are limited so get one now and cut a dash on the beach this summer.

## KAIPARA HARBOUR SURVEY 1978

Kaipara Harbour, with its enormous shoreline, has always been an extraordinarily difficult area to study. Many of the choice places are known and surveys have been attempted before but with only limited success. If we are to keep ahead of regional planning schemes that now often call for submissions and informed views on the value of various areas for wildlife, the Kaipara must become better known ornithologically.

A major survey is proposed for 24-27 March (Easter), 1978. It is at present planned to work from 3 main centres called (imaginatively) North, Central and South sections, each the responsibility of one of the 3 local regions. Each section will be worked from a series of independent camps. This survey promises to be an exciting one, in often unknown territory. Members from regions further south than South Auckland will be very welcome and it is hoped that many will wish to join in. So start planning for next year, put children in an orphanage, sell that farm while there is time, forget that trip overseas. Think of that warm, subtropical Northland mud instead.

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## Hugh Robertson, conservator of the year

OSNZ NEWS on behalf of all members, congratulates Hugh on his selection by the Nature Conservation Council for the award of Young Conservator of the Year. This award is a recognition of valuable contribution to the cause of conservation in NZ by a person under 20. Hugh's name appears regularly in OSNZ NEWS but not as a seeker for glory, rather as a leader of and contributor to many activities, not least being the Massey Bird Group and Manawatu studies in general.

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## Back numbers address change

From now on, back numbers and other publications should be ordered from Mrs H. Hagen, 53 Minnehaha Avenue, Titirangi, Auckland 7.

Laurie and Alison Howell of Whangaparaoa have moved to Hong Kong for 2½ years. We wish them well and hope to have exotic news from them from time to time.

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## Redcliff wetland reserve

An exciting local project, in which ROGER SUTTON has been heavily involved, is the creation of this new wetland by Southland Acclimatisation Society and which is now in its first year after completion.

The site lies in inland Southland between the east bank of the old Waiau River and the western end of the Takitimu Mountains, about 5 miles downstream of the Mararoa River mouth.

Offered several years ago as a gift to SAS by Mr W.A. Speight, owner of Redcliff Station, this area of swamp has been converted, at remarkably small cost, into a wetland area of about 251 acres (c.102ha). During February, two earth dams were built, roughly 4'6" and 2'6" high to create two ponds of about 72 and 40 acres. Ample provision is made for marginal and emergent vegetation in the ponds and, although a fair compromise has been set with farming needs, stock will be excluded from marginal vegetation, from regenerating scrub, flax and tussock and from areas to be planted in oaks, eucalypts and kowhais. Already there has been an interesting build-up of birds, with all the usual waterfowl, plus Grey Teal, Scaup, Marsh Crane, Fernbird and Bittern present and likely to increase. Further developments will be watched with interest.

## Wanted to buy

Rothschild & Clay, FLEAS, FLUKES AND CUCKOOS, 1952. Collins New Naturalist series. Wanted by I.L. Esler, C/— John McGlashan College, 20 Pilkington St, Dunedin.

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Members of the British Trust will be aware of the sightings of a group known as "Word Botchers" in the BTO newsletter. Apparently there are NZ members also, for this report has been sent in by Rob and Gillian Guest on behalf of ALBERT ROSS and MOLLY MAWK.

"Sir, Here in Canterbury, the local WORD BOTCHERS have been busy ticking off new species. Down at the estuary, the sighting of a REEF KNOT and some GREAT EEL caused excitement, whilst a LITTLE SNAG was observed with consternation. Reaction to an alleged relationship between a FORD FALCON and ATLANTIC PETREL was greeted with a STERN TONE. A FURRY TURN was nearby.

"However, such species were surpassed by some of the bush birds found. The extinction of the KARKER seems imminent. The discovery of a YELLOW RED caused a LAUGHING HOWL. Other rarities are reported as being present."

There may be other Word Botchers in the country who enjoy this kind of work and would like to report their sightings (personally, I think WORD BOTCHERS are a pack of YELLOWBELLIEDREDFACED-COOTS — Ed).

An adult Brown Booby was seen on 8 August by BRIAN BELL off Motutapu Island in the Hauraki Gulf.

## Mapping scheme in use

DAVID DAWSON, Ecology Division, DSIR has supplied this note. Members may be interested to know that the information they have provided for the scheme is receiving increasing use, even before the provisional atlas appears. Both Ecology Division and Wildlife Service hold computer listings of the records from each 10,000 yard square in New Zealand. These can be used to answer questions about particular sites, although often the site is smaller than the mapping square concerned and so the information can only be indicative. Lands and Survey Department were recently given information on birds of two areas for which they were preparing management studies. For this we mapped the number of records of each species in each square concerned. However, uneven coverage of the squares made interpretation difficult, particularly species apparently absent or of uneven concentration.

While there is no good way of measuring searching effort, by using an idea first published by Graeme Caughley (EMU 65: 115-118), we found that there was a significant relationship between the number of cards per square and the number of species recorded. At Lewis Pass, for example, the average number of species per card was about 18, and each successive doubling of effort added about 3 extra species. South Westland cards, however, averaged about 15 species, and each successive doubling of effort added about 8 extra species. Such relationships between number of cards and length of species-list on them allow us to make a rough correction for effort and so identify what seem to be the species-rich and species-poor squares.

At Lewis Pass, the species-rich areas were of generally lower altitude and featured many birds of open country, wetland and scrub. However, a few interesting native species were found in the beech forests along and immediately west of the main divide. In South Westland, 2 rich areas were identified: one, comprising Okarito Lagoon, the adjacent coastline and the low altitude forests of Okarito, Saltwater and lanthe State Forests, was rich largely because of a variety of wetland birds; the other, comprising Jackson Bay and several squares in the Waitoto and Arawata Valleys, had many interesting native species. Gaps in coverage spoilt any conclusions about Landsborough Valley and the mountains to its west or about another large block of country southwest of Jackson Bay. Indeed, deficiencies in coverage and effort make all conclusions at best tentative.

An unusually large North Island flock of about 1000 Black-billed Gulls was reported by SYBIL QUIN of Palmerston North in a paddock near Flock House, Bulls on 3 July.

The mid-winter census of Firth of Thames on 26 June was carried out by 16 South Auckland, 6 Waikato, 20 Auckland and 6 visiting members. Wintering birds included: 628 Godwit, 422 Knot, 1945 Stilt, 7430 SIPO, 101 Turnstone, 2240 Wrybill, 14 NZ Dotterel, 131 Black-billed Gull, 1 Red-necked Stint, 1 Terek Sandpiper, 19 Curlew Sandpiper, 1 Asiatic Whimbrel, 1 smudgy stilt, 16 Banded Dotterel.

The mid-winter census of the Manukau on 3 July, carried out by 25 Auckland and 15 South Auckland members, included: 1501 Godwit, 270 Knot, 3993 stilt, 20,636 SIPO, 54 Turnstone, 607 Wrybill, 17 NZ Dotterel, 312 Banded Dotterel. 135 Little Black Shag were in various parts of the harbour, as were 4 White Heron. And in Firth of Thames, guess what? A Cattle Egret.

(From results supplied by Beth Brown).

## Rifleman in exotic plantations

As a result of a mention in OSNZ NEWS No. 3 of S.I. Riflemen being frequent away from beech forest, we have this note from ROGER GOULD, Timaru, Reserves Ranger in South Canterbury for Lands & Survey Department.

He and his staff are clearing emergent and self-sown poplars, flowering cherry, broom and young pine from an old-established woodlot at the old Monavale School site. This area, nearly 100 years old, is about 45km from Timaru on the Hunter Hills. It is now a Crown domain and may shortly become an historic reserve.

In the plantation, which is nearly 2ha, they have seen this winter a pair of Rifleman whose chosen habitat is a totally isolated island of mainly deciduous exotics in a sea of tussock land. The closest native bush is a 70ha remnant about 5km away at 600m a.s.l. Roger has previously seen Rifleman and Brown Creeper at this remnant but not at Monavale. There has been a cold wet winter with many low-level snowfalls in the region, which may explain the appearance of the birds.

Earlier observations of Rifleman and Brown Creeper in South Canterbury reserves have shown, says Roger, that they flourish with a wide distribution but restricted to the foothills bush (very scattered remnants of the once luxuriant Te Waimate and foothills forest). The main composition of present bush is broadleaf/coprosma/fuchsia but with little or no understorey because of grazing by wallabies and domestic stock.

The Lands Department is doing extensive fencing and noxious animal destruction in its reserves to rehabilitate the flora. Bird distribution work is going on at present as in the national parks.

Mid-winter counts at the Manawatu Estuary showed a wintering population of 15 Godwit, 15 Knot, (the 3 Curlew last seen on 8 May), 4 Curlew Sandpiper, c.30 Wrybill. July figures may have been different, however. (Manawatu newsletter).

The big excitement of the year for PADDY LATHAM has been a male Grey Phalarope at the Kaituna Cut lagoon, Bay of Plenty. Seen first by him and BETH BROWN on 19 June (joined later by TONY PALLISER), it was watched for most of the day. Luckily, being in our mid-winter, the bird was in its characteristic summer plumage and could readily be identified. Although it did some of the traditional spinning on the water of the lagoon, it fed mainly on flies on the weed near the margins. The bird was very tame, as it needed to be, with members flocking from all directions to see it in succeeding days. It was last seen by Paddy on 25 June.

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An unexpected windfall on a farmer's lawn 30km inland from Gisborne in mid-June was a Black-capped Petrel. If ARCHIE BLACKBURN's identification is accepted, this will be the first NZ mainland record for a petrel regarded as a rare breeder on the Kermadecs. It was a juvenile, with grey down still adhering to the back, a very striking bird with its black cap surrounded by a half-inch white collar, and strikingly bi-coloured feet. It was thoroughly photoed by Jim Henley and released with apparent success by its foster parents Archie and Jim next day.

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These notes are from MERVYN JUKES, Springhills, Southland.

A pair of Goldfinches nesting in a golden elm provided interesting watching from a hide last spring. Whenever the cock approached with food, the hen began vibrating even before he came within my sight and hearing.

After the young hatched, the cock brought all the food, which was Dogstail seed in a light jelly form. The hen moved on to a branch, pleading to be fed, but he fed the two chicks first. When he overflowed one chick, he cleaned up around its face, sucking back the surplus, then fed the hen. She returned to the nest, and five minutes later regurgitated food and fed the chicks again.

Last spring I watched from a hide the activities of a pair of Greenfinches which nested in a *Juniper albomarginata* shrub alongside our house drive. During incubation of the 4 eggs the cock screeched raucously from the power wires nearby, but when the young hatched, his tune changed to a melodious trilling.

When the hen brought food to the young, she worked the food up from her facial sacs, feeding each one several times. Each young was then given a peck in the anal region and, as each released its faecal sac, she swallowed it and flew off.

The cock also helped with the feeding but not once did I see him carry out the faeces.

For some time after fledging the family returned to the nest each night, until it became fouled with droppings.

**Westland National Park survey**

The Park Board has begun a 5 year survey, to last from June 1977 to June 1982, of the distribution, population and seasonal activities of birds within the park. It aims to find out which birds occur within the park and its immediate environs, to plot distribution, population sizes and seasonal activities and, using specially printed cards, is based on the NZMS1 map series.

The help of people visiting or travelling through the Park would be welcome: call at either Franz Josef or Fox park centres, or write to the Chief Ranger, Box 14, Franz Josef.

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How often does one see 17 Bittern in one day? This was the lot of PADDY LATHAM and COR DE LANGE of Papamoa Beach on 7 August. 3 were at the Kaituna Cut lagoon, 1 in a field near Matata and 13 at the Thornton Lagoon (8 at once shot out of the reeds beside them).

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Kakas do get about in the winter. PETER BULL recorded one in the middle of Lower Hutt on 14 June and HELEN OLIVER saw perhaps the same one nearby the week before, while Sir ROBERT FALLA reported one from Days Bay, Wellington Harbour. In Auckland, MICHAEL CLOUT and his wife watched one being pursued through large Moreton Bay fig trees by a tui, in Cornwall Park, at the foot of One Tree Hill.

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The Crested Grebe are still on Marlborough's Lake Elterwater. JACK TAYLOR has seen the young of last season grow to maturity but they seem to have gone before the winter. On 9 August the adult pair was displaying, facing each other with heads high and crests raised, shaking their heads with bills almost touching. In mid-April there were 3 small grebes on the lake, two (doubtless the Australian Little Grebes) keeping together and a third at a distance. Two were seen again in late August.

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On a June-July trip to Rarotonga, MIKE and JOY SOPER saw these species: Wandering Tattler (c.50), Golden Plover, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Reef Heron, Common Noddy, Brown Booby, White-tailed Tropic Bird, White Tern, Rarotongan Fruit Dove, Pacific Pigeon, Rarotongan Starling, 1 Long-tailed Cuckoo and, of course, mynas, mynas and mynas. They did see the remains of a Greater Frigate Bird recently eaten by their motel owner, but found no sign of the Rarotongan Flycatcher.

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PETER GRANT reports an incident recounted by a friend in Canterbury when a Falcon made 3 passes at a Skylark singing in the usual way on high. Without pause in its song it merely moved aside each time and then the falcon went away.

MAIDA BARLOW and OLGA SANSOM reported a pair of Spurwing Plover in early July with a chick at least 3 weeks old; the earliest breeding yet by far. Incubation must have started not later than mid-May, which beats even the Paekakariki pair which began in early June for several years. A Mallard was found incubating 15 eggs in early May also. What prompts this breeding so early in the Southland winter?

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During experiments with a squeak bottle in various parts of the West Coast, Mrs PEN SMITH had an unusual experience with a Harrier. Having heard one making a few mewing calls, she left the rough grass where she was and stood under a tall tree on the edge of a patch of bush, and started squeaking the bottle. The harrier flew over, called loudly and then swooped down until about 10' above her. It then caught sight of her under the tree but continued to hover for about a half minute. When she stopped squeaking, it flew away but, at least 3 more times, it responded in the same way when he started again. Each time it made repeated calls, swooped down and hovered once it got close.

Similarly unusual experiences with squeak bottles would be interesting.

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An amusing item in TARA No. 6 (August) recounts a drive by ROBIN CHILD and his wife along the Waitemata shore from St Heliers to Mission Bay early one Sunday (15 May) in company with a Gull-billed Tern. This recalls a similar day (25 May 1975) when Barrie Heather and Ben Cook pursued 2 Gull-billed Terns through the Sunday traffic up the gully from Plimmer-ton to Pukerua Bay. Still, a tradition of driving on the wrong or shore side of the road in such places as Miranda makes such "thrill-seeking" drives innocuous.

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In late April, JOE DOUGLAS passed a Rock Wren in a sunny alpine meadow just above Chancellor Hut (4100'); Fox Glacier. In the next three days, 2' of powder snow fell on the Fox neve and when she came back down, Chancellor meadow was under almost a foot of snow. The wren was not seen but the snow ended 400' lower down, where there was a smattering of scrubby bush and the wrens could perhaps winter. She saw two more at about 2500' on the moraine rock, near the same place she had seen two in 1974.

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Shortly after the severe S.E. storms of early May LES HENDERSON of Otatara, near Invercargill had a chance on 7 May for a quick look at the wader roost at the Old Neck, Paterson Inlet, Stewart Island. Here he found 72 SIPO, 60 Black Oystercatcher, 250 Godwit, 2 Banded Dotterel, 2 Harriers and 4 Welcome Swallows. Remarkably few Banded Dotterel and notable absence of NZ Dotterel.

## CATTLE EGRET CENSUS

I think this was our first-ever synchronised national count of any species. That we could even *think* of such an exercise, let alone complete it so well is a tribute to the enthusiasm and skill of members in all regions.

The enthusiasm was greater than originally intended. Press and radio were enlisted, Wildlife staff and catchment boards. Several regions copied the flying Seddons of Waikato and took to the air. Weather on *the* weekend was not ideal, particularly in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa where we know birds had been flooded from usual localities and were missed. However, TV1 and 2 gave Beth and Roger further auditions for *Close to Home*.

The chart is provisional, as several regions have not sent in results and others are expected from several wildlife field staff. Final totals in December OSNZ NEWS. In the chart, the "cheating" totals are probably correct, including birds known to be present but not seen on the actual weekend or a day or two either way.

|                  | <i>Cattle Egret</i> | <i>White Heron</i> | <i>Little Egret</i> | <i>Royal Spoonbill</i> | <i>Yellow billed Spoonbill</i> | <i>Glossy Ibis</i> | <i>White Ibis</i> |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Southland        | 17                  |                    | 2                   | 2                      |                                |                    |                   |
| Otago            |                     |                    |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| South Westland   | 2                   | 2                  |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| West Coast       |                     |                    |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| South Canterbury | 2                   | 3                  |                     |                        |                                |                    | 1                 |
| Canterbury       | 9                   | 9                  | 2                   |                        |                                | 4                  |                   |
| Marlborough      | 22                  | 3                  | 1                   |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Nelson           | 15+                 | 13                 | 1                   | 22+                    |                                |                    |                   |
| SOUTH ISLAND     | 34+                 | 30                 | 6                   | 24+                    |                                | 4                  | 1                 |
| West Wellington  |                     |                    | 1                   |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Manawatu         | 12                  | 2+                 |                     | 18+                    |                                | 4                  |                   |
| Wanganui         | 9                   |                    |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Wairarapa        | 5+                  | 1                  |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Hawkes Bay       | 1                   | 2                  | 3                   | 2                      |                                |                    |                   |
| Gisborne/Wairoa  |                     |                    |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Taranaki         | 26+                 |                    | 2                   | 1                      |                                |                    |                   |
| Rotorua          |                     |                    |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Bay of Plenty    | 7                   | 2                  |                     |                        |                                |                    | 1                 |
| Waikato/Sth      |                     |                    |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Auckland         | 97                  | 8                  |                     |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Auckland         |                     | 7                  | 3                   |                        |                                |                    |                   |
| Far North        | 25                  | 14                 | 2                   | 2                      | 1                              |                    | 1                 |
| NORTH ISLAND     | 182+                | 36+                | 9                   | 23+                    | 1                              | 1                  | 2                 |
| GRAND TOTALS     | 233+                | 66+                | 15                  | 47+                    | 1                              | 5                  | 3                 |
| (with cheating)— | 249                 | 67                 | 1                   | 49                     | 1                              | 5                  | 3                 |

Several points emerge already. (1) There has been no general influx of various egrets and ibises in 1977. Therefore the number of Cattle Egrets represents either a deliberate migration of growing and surprising size or a *resident, breeding population*. (2) In general, birds appear on the same farms year after year — typically, where there were one or two in the last couple of years, there may now be up to 30. (3) There seems to be a general wandering around of small groups in April-June, followed by a shift to fewer, larger groups. (4) Many birds on count weekend were showing first signs of change into breeding plumage — pinkish bill, buffy on crown, chest and back.

Further points: —

1. All this year's notes on egrets must go to Sandy Edgar for Recording Scheme.
2. May I have names of those who took part from regions who have not given them to me already (and records not sent in also).
3. If I have not had them already, could I have summaries of this year's history of Cattle Egret, so that someone can collate them all for NOTORNIS publication next year. Up to end of August should be got ready now.
4. This year's work must not be confined to one weekend and its frenzied preliminaries. Wherever possible, please keep an eye on the Cattle Egrets you have found. What will happen? Will they all head for Australia in October/November? Will they breed en masse in the Kaipara mangroves or a Waikato swamp? Will they break up into small groups scattered in farm macrocarpas? We should also follow the onset of breeding plumage, and learn how many birds in our flocks are therefore adult or immature.
5. Let me know what happens to your flocks in the end for December or March OSZN NEWS.

Our apologies to those who worked hard and still haven't seen a Cattle Egret. Never mind. The rate they are going, in a few years you'll have to push through them to get to work.

## REGIONAL RESULTS

**SOUTH CANTERBURY:** Ian McVinnie covered from Waitaki R. south to Waiana-karua R., without success, save for resident White Ibis (since Feb. 1976) of Peebles which lives with Paradise Ducks. Ray Pierce counted 2 CE and 3 WH at Lake Wainono and found 1 WH and 1 LE at Ahuriri R. mouth.

**CANTERBURY:** Members checked from Pareora R. and Washdyke, all points north to Waipara. Paul Sagar, Joy Woods, Wilf Mawson, Frank Hollar, Paul Neutze, Phil Howell, Kathleen Harrison, Brent & Brenda Odgers, Rob and Gillian Guest covered all coastal places for the results on the chart. Phil and Kathleen also checked Lakes Heron, Camp, Clearwater, Maori and Emily without result.

**MARLBOROUGH:** Richard Holdaway, Pauline Jenkins, Jack Cowie, Jack Taylor, Lynda Budgeon, Stephen Donaldson, Bill Chisholm, Stuart Kennington, with helpers Pam Thynne, Alan Inglis, Philip Housiau, Roger Frost, Donald Gaulter, Rhys Morgan; 12 Cattle Egret lower Wairau and 10 at Kairour, after a very thorough search of the province.

**SOUTH WESTLAND:** Margaret Hall, Fox Glacier, 2 CE and 2 WH three miles from Bruce Bay.

**NELSON:** Jenny Hawkins, Frank Boyce and Keith Owen (other names not available) covered from Nelson to Westhaven and Farewell Spit; 15 CE near Takaka and 5 others missing on the day.

**OTAGO:** Peter Schweigman covered Bal-clutha area without success. Other results not available.

**WELLINGTON/WAIRARAPA:** Colin Scadden and 4 other members covered central Wairarapa without success and the rest of the area was covered by: M. Falconer, W. Cash, D. Goodall, Miss P. Coker, Miss K. West, S. Payne, C.A. Fleming, A. & L. Gollop, G. Woodward, C. Duval, B. Dunlop, P. & C. Gaze, S. Cook, D. Palmer, T. Alby, M. Turner. 5 CE at north end Lake Wairarapa and 2 others known in area not found. Dabchick, Spurwings and a variety of colour-marked swans also.

**MANAWATU:** Lindsay Davies and others (names not available) covered the province; 6 CE at Turnbull's Lagoon near Waiterere (+ a Black Stilt) and 6 CE at Opiki near Palmerston North.

**HAWKES BAY:** Kathleen Todd, Jim Watt, Cara Saxby and others (names not available) covered the area and river mouths around the Bay, but most known birds had shifted in the flood conditions. Quite a few Dabchick were found.

**TARANAKI:** Rob Wheeler, David Medway, Grant Dumbell and Ron Lambert covered north as far as Mokau and south to Opunake; 5CE near Waitara. Barrie Heather covered from Opunake to Waitotara; 7 CE near Patea, 14 near Waitotara (30 roost there but split into 2 groups by day — only one group seen on the day).

BAY OF PLENTY: Paddy Latham, Ray Jackson, Tony Palliser and Roy Weston; 7 CE near Matata.

SOUTH AUCKLAND/WAIKATO: Worked jointly by J. Charteris, H. McClymont, D. & V. Wilkins, I. & J. Johnson, R. Lacey, J. & B. Seddon, P. McLean of Waikato; Ken Bond, Ken Fisher, Bob Hadden, Bruce Keeley, Colin Miskelly, Dick Sibson and Nan Rothwell of Auckland, Beth and John Brown, Barbara Burch, Terry Hatch, Bill & Mim Ringer, Pam and David Walter, Joy and Peter Wilkinson, Gordon Jockny, John Bell, Stuart Chambers, Anthea Goodwin, Tom Hart, David Lawrie, Dave Panckhurst, Jack Wootton, Tony Habraken of South Auckland. Covered whole Waikato and as far south as Mokau River, Hauraki Plains, Firth of Thames, south Manukau and Waikato River. 97 CE — 7 at Lake Ngaroto; 1 at Waitetuna estuary; 23 at Onetea Stream, Rangiriri; 43 on Churchill East Rd, off Plantation Rd, Rangiriri; 23 at Aka Aka.

AUCKLAND: Covered from southern Kaipara Harbour south to north Manukau. 4 CE at Parakai near Helensville. Doug Booth, Geoff & Jane Wells, Colin Miskelly, Russel & Tina Thomas, Maurice Field, Fred Short, Jean and Phil Skinner, Doug White, Pat Crombie, Sylvia Reed, Patricia Fooks, Joyce Key-Jones, Norah Peachman, Robert Peachman, Forrest Cardon.

FAR NORTH: From north and mid-Kaipara to Parengarenga. M.K. Twyman, Sandy Edgar, M. Hows, K. Brash, C. Clunie, M.P. Kearns, Marian Wallace; 25 CE (and Yellow-billed Spoonbill) near Awanui.

WANGANUI: Dave Johnston and Kerry Horgan of Wildlife, 9 CE at Lake Whiritoa.

Space prevents enlarging on some of the experiences and impressions that have come in. We hope the exercise has been of interest to all who took part, often very wet, cold and muddy.

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### Painless killing

Most people interested in birds have from time to time had to kill birds that are badly injured or are required as specimens for study, points out LIONEL LOBB, Gorge Road, Southland. How to do this as quickly and as painlessly as possible has worried most people. The method which Lionel had used for some time is to place the bird or birds in a clear plastic bag and then place the business end of an aerosol-type can of 'starting fluid' into the top of the bag. Return the can to an upright position and release a squirt of gas. Starting fluid is an ether mixture and is used to aid the starting of diesel and petrol motors in cold weather. Death to the birds will be almost instantaneous and will not damage the specimen.

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Les McPherson's Vol. 8 disc (No. PR829) is now available at \$1.80 plus postage to OSNZ members (normally \$2.50). See OSNZ NEWS No. 3.

### Warbler/Cuckoo study

Members will be interested in the work being carried out by BRIAN GILL of Zoology Dept, University of Canterbury, as part of a PhD thesis. He has completed his first year's study of the breeding of the Grey Warbler and the Shining Cuckoo at Kowhai Bush near Kaikoura. We are grateful to Brian for this detailed note.

Kowhai Bush was chosen as the study area because it is Kanuka forest with a relatively low canopy and open interior, which makes observing birds and especially finding their nests easier than in tall forest.

The study involves spending the entire summer at Kaikoura and making daily visits to the bush to find as many nests as possible. Once found, the nests are followed closely to record the various activities of breeding. Last summer 38 occupied and 18 deserted nests were found, thanks in part to the sharp eyes of the other ornithologists working in the bush. Only two nests could not be reached easily from the ground, or with the aid of a light aluminium ladder extendable to 5m.

The Grey Warbler is a very accommodating bird to study. It tolerates persistent visits to the nest, and carries on its activities indifferent to a quiet observer only a few metres away. The nature of the covered nest with its small entrance presents few obstacles to examining or counting its contents, although slender fingers are a useful asset. Eggs can be counted by touch, but are seldom handled for fear of breaking them. Nestlings, however, are removed every day to be weighed and measured. This causes no apparent harm since every care is taken to keep them warm and dry. For a brood of four this usually means removing them in pairs and keeping one in a shirt pocket while the other is examined. Older nestlings show no tendency to "explode" prematurely from the nest, as occurs with many Northern Hemisphere song-birds, so it is possible to measure even on the day of fledging. To identify individual nestlings in a brood after hatching, their toes are marked in various combinations with a dab of red nail varnish. This mark must be re-applied every three to four days until banding. The young are banded as late as possible because the legs are so thin that even the tiny size A bands are apt to slip off.

From November onwards, when the Shining Cuckoo is about, it is necessary to check the identity of eggs in nests every day, in case the warbler's clutch is parasitised. A small dental mirror is used to view the nest's contents, and any cuckoo eggs are recognised at once by their distinctive colour (uniform olive-green, compared with the brown-speckled pinkish-white of the warbler's). In the interests of science, the nasty work of the young cuckoo must be watched without interference. It is fortunate if the young warblers are dead when a nest is visited on the day of their eviction,

for one is then spared the agony of deciding what to do with hungry nestlings on the forest floor. Many cuckoos reap as they have sown, for several parasitised nests were preyed upon by mammals, and only three cuckoos fledged. The young cuckoo is at first very ugly, and it becomes decidedly bizarre when the long waxy pinfeathers project from all its surfaces. However, all shortcomings and misadventures are redeemed when the sheaths eventually give way to a plumage of exquisite beauty.

Outside the breeding season, one week a month is spent in the bush. The main task is mist-netting as many adult warblers as possible, so that, as with nestlings, they can be marked with colour bands. The resighting of banded birds is the means by which home ranges are plotted and the incidence in the population of movement, divorce and re-marriage ascertained. A warbler in the hand is worth two in the Kowhai Bush, so extensive measurements are taken and the plumage examined for ectoparasites and signs of moulting.

The Grey Warbler is in every way an excellent species for study and is available to almost all ornithologists. It is hoped that in due course it will become New Zealand's scientific counterpart to the much-studied tits of Europe.

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### Egrets, etc. 1975

BEN BELL has produced some interim results from the records sent in by members in 1975, when there was a spectacular invasion of egrets and ibises. The chief disadvantage was that there was no way of accurately fixing the number of birds involved, as records cover a wide range of dates.

By mapping and carding by grid squares and other manoeuvres, Ben came up with monthly totals, the highest of which were:

|                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| White Heron     | 62 (in May)   |
| Little Egret    | 18 (in April) |
| Cattle Egret    | 68 (in May)   |
| White Ibis      | 11 (in April) |
| Glossy Ibis     | 75 (in April) |
| Royal Spoonbill | 53 (in June)  |

By taking the number known nationally to be present in one day a much smaller absolute minimum is gained. As this is unreasonably low, if birds present in an area on two or more dates are added, one gets an assumed minimum.

|                 | <i>Maximum any one day</i> |                |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------|
|                 | <i>Absolute</i>            | <i>Assumed</i> |
| White Heron     | 12                         | 35             |
| Little Egret    | 8                          | 11             |
| Cattle Egret    | 21                         | 38             |
| White Ibis      | 3                          | 6              |
| Glossy Ibis     | 23                         | 30             |
| Royal Spoonbill | 38                         | 38             |

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MERVYN JUKES has continued his archaeological ornithology. He writes: A chance invitation to look at a small cave on a farm at Browns, Southland, has provided interesting results. From 4 bags of lime and sludge, which I laboriously washed and sieved, I obtained quite an assortment of bones which I sent to Ron Scarlett for identification. Ron's analysis showed there were 3 pelvises and other bones from the moa *Aptornis otidiformis* (Oliver p.597), parts of *Gallirallus minor* (Little Extinct Woodhen), parts of *Euryanas finschi* (extinct NZ duck) and several bones of the moa *Anomalopteryx didiformis*. Also there were Kakapo, including an excellent skull and bill, the smallest bones of *Notornis mantelli hochstetteri* Ron had seen, parts of a very large Red-crowned Parakeet, NZ Shoveler, the kiwis *Apteryx oweni* and *australis*. I have presented all these specimens to the Southland Museum.

### Cape Kidnappers

The Gannets at the Cape are alive and well! Again last season the three nesting areas (the Saddle, Plateau and Black Reef) were well occupied and, from the number of young to be seen last autumn, it seems the season was successful, unlike the 1975-76 season when heavy rain in the Christmas - New Year period caused severe loss of chicks. Reserves ranger Mr Ron Fisher reported many young birds still present in early May this year. Census work and general research continues under the watchful eye of Chris Robertson of Wildlife Service and we hope to hear of the status and trends shown by the colony.

The 13 hectare sanctuary is owned by the Crown, although part of the Plateau colony is on private land and only the islets themselves are in the sanctuary. Control is vested in the Cape Kidnapper Bird Sanctuary Board under the chairmanship of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Napier. Recently the Board has dropped the permit system for entering the sanctuary and instead a ranger of the Lands & Survey Department is stationed at the Cape from mid-November to February.

While many people enjoy the 8km walk at low tide under the cliffs (a new booklet on the geology of the cliffs is now available), most prefer the easier ride along the beach on Neil Burdon's tractor-drawn trailers. 4 x 4 buses of the Hawke's Bay Motor Company's Gannet Safari also operate an overland route to the Cape.

According to Ron Fisher, up to 200 people per day got to within 2-3 metres of nesting birds on the Plateau colony last season. Including an increase in school parties and a Japanese TV crew, perhaps more than 10,000 visited the gannetry. No harmful effect has been seen, and a close watch is kept by the Board. The sanctuary is closed to the public from July to Labour Weekend, to protect the birds during mating and the main egg-laying period. (JIM WATT).

The Black-fronted Dotterels of Otago and Southland continue to baffle and aggravate those who expect to find them breed. Since 1963 one or two birds have been seen off and on, sometimes for long periods (a) near the mouth of tiny Waimatuku River west of Invercargill (b) on the Taieri or Silverstream Rivers near Mosgiel. Either these birds are immortal or all of one sex or unusually secretive about their breeding. PETER SCHWEIGMAN of Dunedin has been following closely the two near Mosgiel this winter but so far no developments.

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In Bay of Plenty, the 7 Black-fronted Dotterels have been spending the winter on the Kaituna Cut lagoon, carefully watched by PADDY LATHAM. Whether they have been breeding has still to be resolved. Paddy has carefully watched some of these birds 'foot-trembling', a characteristic which seems to be more typical of the species in winter than was realised (see inspired paper in March 1977 NOTORNIS). Manawatu members have found that foot-trembling is very frequent with Black-fronted (rather rudely called B.F. Dotts) on their winter sludge at Longburn and Feilding settlement ponds.

As Mike Soper has pointed out, foot-trembling is very characteristic of the Shore Plover on the Chathams. A letter from PETER DANN of Melbourne University reports foot-trembling by Spurwinged Plover on two occasions during a 2-year study. Both involved two birds, for about a half-hour; once in winter round the edge of a slightly brackish, muddy 'soak' and once on a tidal mudflat in mid-autumn on the drier mud that had lost its surface film of water. Food items were too small to identify and feeding seemed to be more rapid than normal. Perhaps NZ members could watch for this in NZ Spurwings.

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An interesting observation comes from ALAN JONES of Whitianga who in December 1974 on Buffalo Beach watched a New Zealand Dotterel feeding in loose sand where the top of the beach merges into the dune. It was standing on left foot, rubbing its right sideways over the sand surface, with toes roughly parallel to the surface. After about 6 such passes of about 1 sec., it would stand on both feet, watching the ground in front of its right foot; before long it had picked up a grub or two. The purpose seemed to be to flush creatures from the loose sand, but this is the only time he has seen such behaviour.

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JACK TAYLOR estimates he had at least 12 singing male Cirl Buntings on his farm at Ward last season. A remarkable number for this European bird which has such a strange distribution in NZ and about which so little is known in NZ conditions.

### Catlins survey

The Lands & Survey Department coastal reserves survey of the Catlins coast in South-east Otago is being carried out now and we hope to hear regularly from this often ignored area. TIM JACKSON, Reserves Ranger, reports that on 21 July at about 4 p.m., 6 Yellow-eyed Penguins were watched coming ashore in a small cove on the north side of Longpoint; there appears also to be as many or more on the southern beach at Longpoint. Odd birds had been recorded there before and it seems there are many more than had been thought.

Tim saw his first Reef Herons for this coast in March, 2 at Sandy Bay south of Nugget Point lighthouse; reputedly Reef Herons, formerly quite common on this coast, have been replaced by the plentiful White-faced. Reputedly, too, the oystercatchers and stilts formerly on farmland at Tahakopa have been largely driven away by Spurwings. Groups of over 40 Spurwings have been counted in the district and Tim wonders whether the reports of their attacking oystercatchers and stilts have been repeated elsewhere.

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With the spread of the noxious weed wild turnip in Southland, MERVYN and HELEN JUKES have noticed large flocks of finches mostly Greenfinches (estimated at 1000-3000 per flock) feeding on the seed between Feb. and July this year. Although the spread of this weed pest is alarming to the farming community, its seed certainly provides an excellent winter food source for finches.

### Ducks Unlimited

A progress report from this organisation has been received. Their current projects are (a) operation Pateke, to hand-rear and liberate 1300 Brown Teal over 10 years, (b) operation Gretel, to raise the Grey Teal population to 100,000 over 10 years, by erecting nest boxes in favoured areas.

17 DU members currently have 21 pairs of Brown Teal and 20 were reared last season; better results are hoped for the coming season so that liberations can begin. Nearly 150 Grey Teal nest boxes have been erected, and 7% used last season, a disappointing result but the preferred type of nest box is now known.

A new project is to establish permanently the Canada Goose in the North Island. With all the hue and cry about geese on farmland, it is interesting that DU has a long farmer waiting list for the geese. Already, in co-operation with Wellington Acclimatisation Society, a number of geese have been transferred to Wairarapa farms.

On 30 July, Canterbury members completed their annual count of NZ Pigeon wintering in Christchurch. 13 birds were found (8 in Botanic Gardens and 5 in suburbs), compared with 6 at the same time last winter (PAUL SAGAR).

## Adventures in Papua-New Guinea

Members who know DON HADDEN (formerly in Auckland, then at Waingaro and RR for Waikato, then in Martinborough briefly, then in Christchurch 2 years) or know his papers on Spotless Crake (e.g. NOTORNIS Sept. 1970) will know that he left NZ in 1975 to teach in Papua-New Guinea. There he has had a mixed bag of tropical illness and high-class experience. Don has on request sent an interesting account of his experiences which we will spread over several issues, leaving out the gory parts.

TARI. I began teaching in early 1975 in Tari, a remote valley in the southern highlands 5200' up. It is accessible only by plane through a 9000' gap in the surrounding mountains, cut off by cloud each afternoon. I had a motorbike flown in and used that extensively. The climate is beautiful — warm days and cool evenings, year round. The Huli tribe live here but not in villages. Each man has his own house and his wife lives separately. A man may have several wives each up to 3 miles from her husband. The staple diet is KAUKAU (kumara). The Huli were first settled among by Europeans in the early 50s and have retained their primitive ways. Women wear grass skirts still and the men a 'string' cloth down the front and a bunch of leaves tucked in a string down the back — commonly referred to as "arse-grass". The men are famous as wig makers and constantly wear wigs of human hair, decorated with such as cassowary 'top-knots', tail feathers of Yellow-billed Mountain Lory, breast shield and cape of the Superb Bird of Paradise, cockatoo feathers. Every man wears the beak of a hornbill at the back of his neck and most carry a cassowary leg-bone dagger.

Among many bird species, several were of special interest. Birds of Paradise. The Superb was the common one in Tari and I watched its display several times. When *Sylvia Reed* was with us, she saw one display just 50 yards from our house. A native girl from our school, knowing my interest, brought a good-sized chick in a nest to school. I didn't know it but sent a slide of it to the PNG Bird Society. They wrote back very excited, asking me to collect the next *in situ* and send it to New York, as it was the nest and chick of the Blue Bird of Paradise, which had not been seen before. I wrote back to say I was sorry but the girl had eaten the chick and thrown the nest away! All Hulis eat birds and chicks whenever possible, so that photography at the nest is impossible in Tari.

I camped up in the mountain gap and there saw 4 high-altitude species — Princess Stephanie's Astrapia; King of Saxony B.O.P. (which has an astonishing rattling hissing call and long, plastic-looking plumes about the head); the Sickle-billed B.O.P. (with an incredible call exactly like a machine-gun burst); the Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, the last to be discovered, I think in 1937.

Silvereye — there are 8 species for PNG and I had the first mainland record of one, *Zosterops fuscicapilla*. In fact, one nested literally at my back door. McGregor's Gardener Bower Bird — one of the maypole builders. It constructs a tower of sticks intertwined around a living sapling and decorated with berries, etc. Round the base of the sapling the bird constructs a saucer-shaped mat of moss. Incredible really. These birds were deep in the jungle round Tari. A Huli man took me for a 1½ hour scramble (no tracks) up and down steep ridges to one where he built me a bush hut as a hide and left me for a day. If he hadn't come back I could never have got out by myself. I saw the bird though couldn't photograph it successfully.

There are of course species familiar to New Zealanders. White-faced Heron, Pukeko, Banded Rail (one nested near the school but the children ate the eggs), Marsh Crake, Spotless Crake (mine the second record for PNG — a boy brought me 2 birds and 2 eggs, so no doubts. Every March/April in Tari (and now in Bougainville too) we were inundated with Sacred Kingfisher (*H. sancta*); then in Oct. all would disappear south. There is no record of its breeding in PNG. It has often occurred to me that many of these may be from NZ. Does anyone know for sure what NZ Kingfishers all do in winter?

The only open space in Tari was the airstrip and on the grass verges we would get migratory waders. I saw Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Australian Pratincole, Golden Plover.

Next issue, we shall hear from Don about his 6 week tour of remote places, and his experiences on Bougainville where he teaches now.

CHRIS BELCHER of Gore reports the sighting of an exhausted specimen of a new species of NZ Ratite and sends this information.

NAME: *Taggus scientificus* (Many-coloured Mournful Babbler)

FIELD MARKS: multi-hued, blue, red, green and yellow, daubed over body, each specimen seemingly with own variants. Multicoloured legs are particularly characteristic, the colours arranged in transverse bands.

HABITS: despite well-formed wings, the bird shuffles along ground due to evolution of wing coverts of plastic-like metallic feathers.

VOICE: a half-hearted sigh, followed by a groan.

MATING: not known due to continual interference.

DISTRIBUTION: generally occurs within environs of university centres and on some offshore islands. An erratic distribution, with a separate race in Kaikoura district.

## Riverton estuary reserve

Among various successful objections made by Southland Acclimatisation Society to the Wallace County's district scheme, outstanding is the case of the Jacobs River estuary at Riverton. Based largely on evidence accumulated by OSNZ members, a convincing case was presented to have the estuary preserved while still relatively clean and unmodified. As an interim measure, it has been defined as a Wildlife Reserve, until an imminent law change allows it to be treated as a fisheries and wildlife management zone. This means that the activities of man detrimental to the estuary can be restricted and clearing of existing vegetation and reclamations can be prohibited in the meantime. This case could serve as a first-rate precedent for other NZ estuaries not yet highly modified by human activities.

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A report from ALAN WRIGHT on the Dunedin albatross colony at Taiaroa Head. In the season there were 10 eggs, 8 chicks, of which 4 died due to (a) fly blow of embryo cord area (b) parent standing on chick (c) blood poisoning (d) 42 stones in stomach. A fifth has been deserted and has been hand fed. At Taiaroa, the Stewart I. Shags were first seen carrying nesting material in the last week of April and Spotted Shags in first week of July. In Hooper's Inlet, on Otago Peninsula, Grey Teal have increased and c.180 were counted just before game season.

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25,000 house sparrows and 8000 starlings roosting in Civic Square, Hastings in winter are causing local concern by fouling grassed areas, footpaths, flower beds below the trees, creating an obnoxious smell and danger to people walking over paths made slippery from excrement. The birds roost mainly in four oaks, but some settle in silver birches. The sparrows start entering the roost about an hour before dark, with starlings arriving in the last 20-30 minutes.

Attitudes towards the birds vary, one being that the sparrows and starlings are, or could be, a great attraction for people in the city in winter, while another is that they are only a nuisance.

The "problem" has been given coverage in local press, radio, and as a television news item. Many suggestions have been made to cure it, including the use of poisons, chemical repellants, scaring devices, and freezing techniques. Another idea was to cut down the trees, some of which have an historical significance to the city — but this would only cause the birds to move to another area, probably still within the city. An appealing suggestion is to seal or pave the area beneath the trees to enable the droppings to be washed away with a sprinkler system. (IAN BECK, Hastings).

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## The Waterfowl

The second instalment from PETER CHILD from his Mount Aspiring work.

Shoveler, Mallard and Scaup are evidently high-altitude birds, but are in the main confined to more eastern, low-altitude ponds and lakes up to the level of the great southern lakes at about 300m (1000'). I have recorded no Shoveler in the Park so far, only one Mallard (evidently a stray), and had only one second-hand report of Scaup. However I expect we shall continue to encounter the odd straggler in the high country.

Because of the virtual absence of Mallard, all the Greys recorded seem to be of the pure wild stock and not the typical hybrid mixtures one sees so frequently at Wanaka, Queenstown and other places near habitation. Greys are not very common and those encountered are pretty wary and soon take flight. No doubt they have often been shot at by deerstalkers and others. Although there are often considerable flocks at the lakeheads such as Glenorchy and Makarora, in the Park the more typical sighting is of a solitary pair in a river backwater or valley pond, usually away from 'the beaten track'. The largest flock recorded was 16. They, too, are not usually found at very high altitude, an exception being 5 swimming on Lake Harris (1220m, 4000') in January.

Although a common species in Charlie Douglas's day ninety years ago, the Blue Duck must unfortunately now be regarded as a relatively rare one in the Park, only 22 adults having been recorded in more than a thousand square miles. Furthermore its breeding success is extremely low, only two broods, one of one duckling and another of two, having been reported in recent years. The more rugged valley systems west of the Main Divide were disappointing in that they yielded no better returns than the eastern side. Dozens of kilometres of what appeared to be ideal Blue Duck habitat were searched to no avail. By its nature the Blue Duck would be very easy prey for the stoat, as would its eggs and young. (Stoats are common throughout all habitats of the Park, right up to subalpine zones).

The Paradise Duck is the only waterfowl species which can be said to be commonly and widely distributed throughout the valley systems. Nearly all river flats and extensive valley-floor clearings carry one or more pairs in the summer, and in some areas, more especially lower reaches, winter flocks numbering several dozen individuals may assemble. It is not typically a bird of the higher altitudes although small flocks may sometimes be seen in summer in suitable localities above treeline, e.g. at moraine lakes at the head of the Waipara, Waitoto & Wilkin. Unlike the Blue, the Paradise Duck is a very successful breeder, with broods of 4 to 9 ducklings frequently encountered every season.

During a June trip to Tautuku Beach in South Otago, LLOYD ESLER of Dunedin found a number of tails washed ashore which he thought were of *Eudyptes* penguins. As he could not understand their coating of wax, he sent them to National Museum. Sandy Bartle explained they were tails from young Sooty Shearwaters; to aid plucking, muttonbirders dip the fledglings in hot wax and thus remove the feathers in one lump.

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In Northland, another survey of the Pouto dune lakes has been planned for mid-September and a further 3 day visit to the Cavalli Is. during Labour Weekend — this time concentrating perhaps on the offlying islets and the bush areas on the eastern side of Motukawanui.

The results of the Oct. 1976 visit to the Cavallis were outlined in OSNZ NEWS No. 2 but the results of the Dargaville and Pouto lakes survey on 19-20 Feb. are now available (this is the 30+ miles of dune country from Dargaville southward to the mouth of the Kaipara Harbour). 66 lakes were inspected, many too small or dry to carry birds regularly. Among the totals were some 1000 Grey/Mallard and cross; c.300 Black Swan and Paradise Duck, 15 Shoveler, 294 Scaup, 47 Grey Teal, a rather low 69 Dabchick, many shags, mainly Pied and 26 Little Black Shag, 80 Stilt. Bittern was seen on 7 lakes, 6 Coot on one and about 200 swallows altogether.

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A note from PADDY JANSEN, Waikanae, speaks of the nesting of Welcome Swallows in a boathouse on the shore of a small lake in the Rapanui district, Wanganui. The interesting point is that every year nesting begins in April, continues through May and then ceases.

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A note from JENNY HAWKINS describes an unusually large number of gulls and shags in Nelson Haven on 26 June — at least 1000 shags flew towards the harbour as the tide receded. About that time there were reports of large quantities of krill in the harbour and elsewhere. On 22 July FRANK BOYCE saw a flock of about 150 Redpolls cross the road near Rabbit I. to a field of dry grass and stumps. The Redpoll is certainly a South Island bird, whereas the Goldfinch seems more of a North Island substitute.

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An article in the 25 July HAWKES BAY HERALD-TRIBUNE sent by JIM WATT draws attention to the disaster inflicted on the Blue Penguins which breed in the rocks near the main Napier wharf by oil spillages in the port. 22 birds were treated for oil at Napier's Marineland and many more have been treated privately. No suggestion is made on how to stop the problem.

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## Unusual band recoveries

A NZ Dotterel banded as a chick by Ross McKenzie was seen recently on the South Manukau, over 26 years old.

A North Island Kiwi in the Auckland Zoo which died recently was over 14 years.

A Black-backed Gull banded this season on Somes I., Wellington Harbour, was run over by a tractor on a farm at Otane, Hawkes Bay.

A Black Swan retrapped on Ellesmere was over 20 years.

A Grey Petrel picked up by Chris Paulin at Karori Stream mouth, west of Wellington city, was one of 5 banded on Antipodes Is in 1969 by Brian Bell.

A Fairy Prion from Stephens Is., Cook Strait, was found dead near Whangarei, aged over 9.

A Mallard hand-reared at Orepuki by Southland Acclimatisation Society, was found dead at Orepuki, 12½ years old.

A Blackbird, banded in Orongorongo Valley, east of Hutt Valley, was killed by a cat in Levin 7 months later.

A Hutton's Shearwater, banded at Kaikoura as a juvenile, was picked up 8 days later on the north coast of New South Wales.

A White-flipped Penguin from Motunau I., Canterbury, was dead at Gisborne 6 months later.

A Mallard, banded at Thompson's Crossing, Southland, was recovered at Ruawai, south of Dargaville, 2 years later.

Supplied by courtesy of JEAN LLEWELLYN of Wildlife Banding Office.

## Donations to OSNZ Library

The Society is grateful to the following for donations: Dr M. Taylor, Dr D. Hanna, Mr T.C. O'Callaghan, Mrs A. Prickett, Mr E.G. Turbott.

Some recent donations are: *Annotated Checklist of the birds of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)*, W.W.A. Phillips, 1975; *Birds of South Vietnam*, P. Wildash, 1968 (236 birds illustrated, 215 in colour); *Birds of Eastern and North-eastern Africa*, C.W. Mackworth-Praed & C.H.B. Grant, 1955. Each sp. has own map; keys. Some col. ill.; *Parrots of Australia*, W.R. Eastman & A.C. Hunt, 1966. Splendid col.ill. Whole page per species + maps and cross-references to species likely to be confused. (ANTHEA GOODWIN).

## Bill noises

A request for information comes from GEOFF TUNNICLIFFE who has for several years been investigating bird species which produce sounds by vigorously closing their bill. These sounds are well known in albatrosses, ('bill-clapping') and owls when they 'bill-snap'. If members have information of such sounds made by caged or wild birds, Geoff would like to know the species of bird, the social context in which the sounds were made and the dates. Send to G.A. Tunncliffe, Canterbury Museum, Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch 1.