



OSNZ news

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

No.5 December, 1977

Deadline for the March issue will be 28 February.

Sandy Edgar retires

Sandy is not retiring from his numerous farming and ornithological responsibilities but from his administration of the Recording Scheme. After 14 years with the fearsome task of sorting out and typing up the voluminous and often barely decipherable notes of all our members, keeping it all classified in manageable order and preparing the annual Classified Summarised Notes, Sandy has asked that the job pass to someone else. Despite his suggestion that there was no longer a need for CSN, Council strongly disagreed, as most members will also probably strongly disagree. For many of us the appearance annually of CSN is the published event of the year and the years when CSN were abandoned seemed barren years. Their value to members visiting new districts, wanting to compare their sightings with those of previous years or wanting to write up a species as part of a study is enormous and cannot be replaced by the babblings and inaccuracies of OSNZ NEWS or any other newsletter. CSN are a special tradition of OSNZ and their abandonment could lead to a march on Kerikeri.

It is rumoured that the Recording Scheme may be taken on by one who has done it before, one who has a certain interest in waders, the Queen's English and the language of the ancients. We should know by the March issue.

Egret Census 1978

Council has requested that a similar census weekend be held in 1978, aimed specifically at Cattle Egret. This may be greeted with mixed feelings, but this year's frenzy should not be necessary as we have done the main job already and know where to look profitably. The CE seems in most areas to return to the same farms each year and by August has grouped into fewer, larger groups (Southland and West Coast were exceptions to this). Much less expensive motoring should be needed, and newspaper publicity, this time with some good photos, should be the easiest means of finding new flocks.

In the meantime, it could be a good move to offer the newspapers, that have been helpful the results contained in this and last newsletters.

Black Stilts colour banded

Anyone who sees a Black Stilt, fully black or smudgy, in future should look carefully for colour combinations (another race of Chris Belcher's *Taggus scientificus*?). RAY PIERCE, with his current study in the Mackenzie Basin, has been colour-banding his subjects and of course some of them disappear after breeding or fledging. He has also colour-banded the local Pied Stilts but it is unlikely that they will be seen outside the Mackenzie Basin; these have been marked mainly to permit recognition of the local individuals during the study. The position of the metal band is irrelevant in this instance. Address: R.J. Pierce, Zoology Dept., University of Otago, Box 56, Dunedin.

Royal Spoonbill

Michael Dennison and Hugh Robertson are analysing Royal Spoonbill records from the last couple of years (including results of the 1977 August egret census). There is a suggestion that Royal Spoonbill has not bred in New Zealand for several years so that the population may be endangered unless there is recruitment from Australia. Could members please search through their notes, 1974, up to now, and send ALL records, those not already lodged with Classified Summ. Notes, to H.A. Robertson, Aokautere Drive, No. 1 R.D., Palmerston North. Any records for the present summer and autumn will also be appreciated.

PROVISIONAL ATLAS OF BIRD DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ZEALAND

The Society's provisional atlas of bird distribution should be published about May 1978. Members of the Society will be entitled to buy one copy each at \$6.00. Additional copies to members, and copies to non-members will cost \$10.00 each.

The Atlas will contain some 240 pages of maps, tables and text. The maps based on 7 years of field work by contributors to the Society's mapping scheme, show the detailed distribution of all but the rarest of New Zealand's land and freshwater birds. Several shore birds have also been included, especially those that come up rivers or breed inland. The atlas is thus not only an important source of information on the current distribution of New Zealand birds, but it also shows where to go if you want to collect new and useful information on bird distribution. The atlas will therefore appeal to both amateur and professional ornithologists, especially those interested in collecting the additional information needed for a definitive atlas in the early 1980's.

Financial considerations dictate economy in the number of copies printed. Members are therefore urged to order and pay for their copies now. A prepaid order will not only ensure that you get a copy, but will greatly assist the council in deciding how many copies to print and in overcoming a short term liquidity problem.

This early notice ahead of wider advertising, gives OSNZ members the opportunity to "beat the rush" which they will need to do if Council has underestimated the public demand for copies. THERE WILL BE NO REPRINTING.

Please post mecopy/copies of the PROVISIONAL ATLAS OF BIRD DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ZEALAND.

OSNZ Members one copy at \$6.00. Extra copies and Non-members \$10.00

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All orders should be addressed to OSNZ BIRD ATLAS, c/- P.O.Box 12397, WELLINGTON NORTH. [All Cheques to be made payable to OSNZ].

Nuptial Display In Manawatu

Our spies report that a strong contingent of Manawatu Branch members and friends watched closely a rare courtship ritual of pair bonding recently. The congratulations of OSNZ NEWS are extended to Sybil (nee Quin) and Bob Cresswell, two long-serving members of OSNZ who were married in Palmerston North on 9 September. We wish them a long, happy and ornithologically profitable marriage.

Another Australian Pelican

Centre front page news in the *SOUTHLAND TIMES* of 1 December is ROGER SUTTON, a veteran film-star, this time exhibiting an Australian Pelican which had been found dead on a farm pond on 29 November, having been seen alive by the farmer the day before. This is the third NZ record and one wonders whether it is the same bird as was near Dargaville in 1976 (see OSNZ NEWS Nos. 1 & 2). Roger suspects the cause of death to be very cold weather combined with no fish in the pond. The irony was that it died within a half-mile of the famous Maitua brown trout hatchery.

Wellington Region has completed its famous harbour survey which has occurred once a month from August 1975 to August 1977 and several members are now sweating over the problems of converting the results into a meaningful, palatable form. In July, Otago began its harbour survey, working over a high tide once a month. Already there are interesting totals and trends, very different from Wellington ones, as would be expected. The present stage is largely one of finding which species use which parts of the harbour and of recording population shifts through the seasons. It is intended to sort out the reasons for the distribution of each species and in 1978 counts may be extended to include regular mid-tide and low-tide work which, though more difficult, could produce better understanding of distribution.

We hope, too, to hear soon of the Heathcote-Avon Estuary counts that Christchurch members have been carrying out for some time.

A rather pleasing first impression of Turnstones by Miss M. Milne of Manurewa, passed on by Miss Stella Anderson of Durban, discovered during a June visit to Miraflores. She had edged past a flock of SIPO on the beach and came across about 50 Turnstones. Like a little partridge, she thought, with beautiful tortoiseshell markings. Very compact birds busily digging away and turning over stones. She noticed that they seemed to like to wade into the tide a few steps before flying off from there. They moved on to a further bank at the approach of an immature Black-back; the beach where they had been seen found to have been effectively "Rotary-hoed".

The Godwit population of Nelson Haven rose gradually from a winter flock of 120, in small frequent increases of 10 to 30 to 350 on 27 September; by 15 October to over 900. JENNY HAWKINS, FRANK BOYCE and COLIN O'DONNELL have also been seeing a variety of waders less often met on the Haven, including the odd Curlew Sandpiper, Golden Plover, Turnstone and a few mysteries, including one of those ever-present waders, the Meaningless Dotterel (*Charadrius varius*, var. *inexpectatus*). Although the SIPO of Nelson Haven had long gone presumably to breed, Jenny and Keith Owen found 400-500 still at Motueka in mid-October, as well as about 40 Turnstones.

In September GRAHAM TURBOTT and MICHAEL TAYLOR led some 200 Forest and Birders to see the Spotted Shag colony at Erangi Point on Auckland west coast. Up to 60 birds were present, with a few nests, to observe the 200 roosting on an adjacent headland.

The Black-fronted Dotterel has turned up now in Nelson; one would suppose from small population in Marlborough, except that the first seen by JENNY HAWKINS on 6-8 October bore a metal band. This means it must have come from the Ruamahanga River in Wairarapa, probably part of a family banded without colour in November 1975. Another, without band, was seen on 10 November. Both were at north end of Nelson Haven where sewage oxidation ponds are being built.

Fans of the Black-fronted will be interested in an old record pointed out by DON BRATHWAITE from Mathews & Iredale of a real vagrant bird collected in June 1840 by Dr T.C. Jerdon near Madras, India. It was named a new species by Jerdon, *Charadrius russatus*, and remains on the Indian list from the one specimen.

A cry of despair from Auckland where yet another Fernbird habitat is apparently threatened. The Auckland Regional Authority's park at Awhitu is well planned and planting of native trees for birds is continuing — one Tui has been seen there! However, a good population of Fernbird seems to have been considered dispensable as, although their area is to be left as it is, a path runs through it, picnic and barbecue parties will use the place and one late-summer match could burn them out.

Mallards can get involved in unpredictable events. "Survival of the fittest?" wonders MARION WALLIS of Mungaturoto Northland after two events. While watching a female Mallard with a brood of three on a pond adjacent to their garden, they were taken aback to see a Pukeko rush in and pick up a duckling in its beak, and fly off with it, pursued in vain by the mother. They have also seen Mallard drakes push small ducklings under water until they drowned.

Spurwings seem now to be on the move in the North Island. Now accepted in many parts of west Wellington, Manawatu, and Wairarapa where the population is still small but increasing near Pirinoa (Dave Sim) and Masterton (Colin Scadden); Seen also near Pahiatua (R.E. Cresswell, H.A. Robertson). Established near Waipukurau, and three pairs seen in November at Westshore, Napier and a report of 12 on the upper Tutaekuri River after having arrived there 2 years ago (Norman Mackenzie). Two on Highway 5 near Mamaku, Rotorua in August (M.D. Wilcox, Tony Palliser); one in Firth of Thames in October (Beth Brown). It will in due course be of much interest to discover to what extent, if any, North Island birds vary in their breeding and flocking habits from the original population in Southland. Will, for example, the double-brood custom of the Paekakariki pair, an exceptional habit in Southland, persist in the north or apply only to early colonists?

TV addicts may remember the extensive flooding that affected Southland in late October. We have this report from ROGER SUTTON:

Over the period 29-31 October very heavy rain in Southland caused very high flows and flooding in all the main rivers. This came at a critical time for many ground-nesting birds in the main floodways and the effect was fairly devastating. Most dramatically affected were Black-billed Gulls.

A province-wide census of the Black-billed Gull had just been completed by local OSNZ members the day the flooding began. A total of 37 colonies on the four main river systems had been located and checked. Using a technique which now gives high reliability, it was calculated that there were a minimum of 75,159 nests in the colonies visited. Three additional colonies on the Eglinton River were awash before a count could be taken. Some running chicks were present in a few well-advanced colonies.

From knowledge of the sites and from those re-visited, it is thought that little more than 1000 chicks will have survived, the rest being probably a total loss. Observation since shows that re-nesting has been rapid. One colony of 3300 nests was found in a paddock of young wheat a mile from the Oreti River just 14 days after the original nest loss.

Black-fronted Terns will have suffered a similar fate, as will late nesting Banded Dotterel. Waterfowl nesting, which has been late this year, will also have been affected. Of particular concern is the Shoveler as latest indications are that they may have a rather lower rate of breeding success than had been thought. Pukeko and crakes will also have suffered fairly heavily as their breeding habitat in these river valleys is mainly confined to marginal lagoons, almost all of which were under water during the peak flooding.

Patrols on a land-locked beach

Petone Beach, at the Northern End of Wellington Harbour, has the Hutt Valley at its back, the hills of Wellington on either side and Somes Island almost blocking off the harbour entrance, and is in effect almost land-locked. It is, however, exposed to the frequent southerlies and has proved an interesting beach to patrol. The following material has been supplied by SHANE COTTER who lives close to the beach and has by his persistence brought the tally of this unlikely-looking beach to 55 species.

Although patrols started in 1951, the first recorded patrols on this beach were seven by P.C. Bull in 1959 when a Buller's Shearwater and two Red-billed Gulls were the first species recorded and others later included an Allied Shearwater. P.C. Bull patrolled during 1959-61, M. McGrath also in 1960-61, making 28 patrols. There were only seven patrols in the next seven years, results including in 1968 a Black-bellied Storm Petrel found alive.

The next regular patroller was GAVIN WOODWARD from 1969-71, with 20 patrols. Among rarer species in this period were a Grey-headed Mollymawk with a USFWS band, a Shy Mollymawk, a Bounty I. Mollymawk and a Wandering Albatross. In June 1972 two Yellow-eyed Penguins were found.

Shane and his father Reg were the next regular patrollers and Shane is still patrolling regularly this year, having made 48 patrols alone since 1975. Highlights of 1973 were a White-backed Magpie and a domestic bantam! 1974 was the best year, adding 16 new species, including a Black-bird, a Pukeko a Reef Heron, a Hutton's Shearwater, a White-headed Petrel, a Black-browed Mollymawk, a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, 2 live Fulmars, a Long-billed Curlew and a banded Fairy Prion.

In 1975 Shane found the legs and tail of a Morepork; also a bird which had been run over by a tractor and so confused everyone that it was only while trying to skin it that it was found to be a Kerguelen Petrel. A duckling one and a half weeks old was another highlight. On one occasion, on looking at a storm-wrecked kontiki (a type of fishing aid), he noticed the wing of a Westland Black Petrel on it. On another occasion, while cycling along the beach he noticed a tuft of feathers protruding from the sand which turned out to be a Grey-backed Storm Petrel.

1977 was the only other year to have Yellow-eyed Penguins — another two. The first Spotted Shag was picked up, carrying a band from Somes Island. On 10 June a live Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was picked up in the water and, after lengthy care by the Cotter family, was released on 25 June with band no. M-32740. On 19 September, Shane went down to the beach before school and found a live White-headed Petrel. Greater things were

to come that day, for at noon he picked up a Blue Petrel and after school a Fulmar Prion, a very rare find for the NZ mainland.

CHRIS LALAS, who has recently completed university work on the Black-fronted Tern, has begun work for his Ph.D. on shags in Otago Harbour. He has found Stewart Island Shags nesting on light beacons again, 4 nests with chicks in mid-November. 150 Little Shags were nesting on St Martin's Island and Spotted Shags on Pudding Island, both inside the harbour.

Coromandel

For the second Labour Weekend in succession the Coromandel Forest Park bird survey was continued under Beth Brown's direction. The weather was rather cold and very windy for those at high levels but nearly 40 members took part and some new areas were covered. The Pied Tit was in good numbers again, Grey Warbler and Silvereve abundant, Tui, Bellbird and Pigeon unchanged. Fantails were oddly scarce in places; Long-tailed Cuckoo, Kaka, Rosella and Yellow-crowned Parakeet were recorded, kiwi at Whangapoua and an unconfirmed Robin southwest of Whitianga. Kokako were seen courtship feeding at Mt Maunapaki, where the song was considered very like that of Tui. Kokako were also seen and recorded by Michael Taylor at Maratoto, where the song was utterly different, slow and melancholy. Again there was a good wind-up meeting in Thames, attended also by Ernie and Bob St Paul from Waikino. Thames members Wyn Gillespie, Mervyn Daniel and Dave Panckhurst, also Alan Jones of Whitianga and Bill Taylor of Karangahake were especially helpful. Members asked that the Coromandel survey become an annual event.

Sandy Bartle has passed on the news that in May an Oriental Pratincole was seen on Raoul Island, Kermadecs by meteorological staff.

Results of the Firth of Thames census of 30 October included 4873 Godwit, 3006 Knot, 255 Pied Stilt, 16 NZ Dotterel, 1998 SIPO, 236 Turnstone, 96 Golden Plover, 289 Wrybill, 8 stint, 34 Curlew Sandpiper, 2 Terek Sandpiper, 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 19 Whimbrel, 10 Curlew, 1 Spur-winged Plover (the first for the district), 23 Caspians, 1110 White-fronted Tern, 6 Little Tern, 81 Black-billed Gull, 1 Masked Booby (the first for the district).

The Manukau Harbour census of 13 November included c. 20 000 Godwit, c. 5600 Knot, c. 27 NZ Dotterel, 2 Asiatic Whimbrel, 5 Curlew, 560 Turnstone, 8 stint, 3 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 13 Little Tern, c. 290 White-faced Heron. A Common Sandpiper at Onehunga and a probable Mongolian Dotterel at Karaka. (From results supplied by Beth Brown).

A Northern Shoveler has been reported by DAVID LAWRIE at Ryburn's Lagoon, Pokeno (South Auckland) on 24 September; also 3 Black-backed Magpies at Awhitu.

Two unusual items from DAVF SIM in the Wairarapa. On 31 October, while driving along the Te Hopai road, he saw a Black-fronted Dotterel which he thought at first had been hit by a car. On his approach, however, it flew off. He then found a nest with one egg, sited only one foot from the tar-seal in the metal chips from the new seal. Next day, still one egg. Next day, two eggs. Next three days no change and no bird seen, and on fourth day one egg was found broken. No bird having been seen. The final egg was collected for the National Museum.

A Nankeen Night Heron, identified by Sir Robert Falla, was reported from a farm about ¼ mile from the south end of Lake Wairarapa. It was in a pohutukawa on the front lawn of the Papatahi homestead from 30 September to 6 November. It was never seen to leave the tree (presumably did at night), even with children playing under the tree.

Muriwai Lagoon, some 22 km south of Gisborne city, is an area of about 23 ha. of tidal mudflat, formed by an earlier river mouth of the Waipaoa River. The severe flood of June 1977 made some changes and in particular considerably enlarged and deepened a satellite lagoon, non-tidal, of about 9 ha. This has now provided permanent habitat for Black Swan, in October numbering 48, with evidence of autumn breeding in two well-grown cygnets. On a visit to the lagoon on 11 October with JIM HENLEY, ARCHIE BLACKBURN found very early breeding to be indicated by a clutch of 9 cygnets about a month old. Black-billed Gulls had increased in numbers from the earlier 30-40, to 164, to the complete exclusion of the Red-billed. A record of particular interest was of 17 Black-fronted Terns, the first recorded appearance of the species on the East Coast. Other records included 3 SIPO, 2 Variable Oystercatcher, 18 Golden Plover, 5 Wrybill, 112 Godwit, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

During a 19-20 November weekend at Porangahau estuary, southern Hawkes Bay, Mike Dennison, Hugh Robertson and Barrie Heather found the wader population to be very similar to that of a previous visit in 1973. 150 + Godwit, 30 Knot, 8 Wrybill, 5 Golden Plover, 4 stints. Several pairs of Variable Oystercatchers and Caspian Terns on eggs. Black backs mostly building. A few Banded Dotterel breeding but the rest apparently not; much time was spent pursuing a dotterel that was doing its best to pretend it was Mongolian and not the Banded it turned out to be; as a result of this, much time was also spent lying exhausted on a warm sandhill. Those Meaningless Dotterels!

THE YEAR OF THE GREBE 1978

A winter tally of birds at the Sulphur Point beach roost on Tauranga Harbour by KATHLEEN FLETCHER shows that there is much to be found in the harbour as a whole, and much to be expected from the January purge of the whole place. Shags: 85 Little Black, 2 Pied, 12 Little; 200 Godwit, 80 Wrybill, 150+ Pied Stilt, 6 NZ Dotterel, 4 Variable Oystercatcher, 2 Reef Heron, 1 White-faced, 25 Caspians, 1 Fairy Tern, surdry gulls. This is apparently about the usual for June-August. By end of July, the stilt mob has gone; by 29 August, the Banded Dotterel were back to nest. The Fairy and Little Terns (whatever they are) had been around all winter.

A dead White-fronted Tern was found by Tony Palliser on 30 August on the shore of Lake Rotorua.

Nine Wellington and three Wairarapa members spent Labour Weekend at Boggy Pond near Pirinoa, on the east side of Lake Wairarapa. Apart from eating, they did find some birds, an impressively long list including Cattle Egret, Wrybill, stint, Golden Plover, Godwit, Knot, Spotless Crane, White Heron and a Greenshank.

A Greenshank has been reported also by Paddy Latham and Bruce Goffin during a reconnoitre of part of Tauranga Harbour on 27 November. A hint of riches to come from the Papamoa field study week in January.

University of Canterbury

The following information on studies currently being done has been kindly supplied by John Warham.

For a Ph.D. BRIAN GILL is studying breeding of the Grey Warbler and the Shining Cuckoo at Kowhai Bush near Kaikoura (see OSNZ News 4).

Also at Kowhai Bush, RALPH POWLESLAND is for Ph.D. studying behaviour, foraging, comfort movements, vocalisations, etc. of the South Island Robin to determine whether a diurnal rhythm exists, and to construct an annual time budget.

At Cape Bird, Antarctica, LLOYD DAVIS is studying creching behaviour in the Adelie Penguin for an M.Sc., and on Banks Peninsula PAUL KEARTON is undertaking a preliminary examination of a Yellow-breasted Tit population with a view of embarking on an examination of the general biology of the species.

Theses on the behaviour of the South Island Fantail by MAXINE UDE SHANKAR (nee Donovan) (M.Sc.) and on the biology of the NZ Falcon by NICK FOX (Ph.D.) are in the hands of the examiners.

Honours projects recently completed include a study of aspects of the biology of the Black Stilt by LYNDA BUDGEON and a parallel examination of feeding habitats of Black Stilt by JENNIE MERTON. Both worked in the Upper Waitaki River Basin.

Council at its November meeting approved the proposal to undertake a national survey of the New Zealand Dabchick and other small grebes and has extended it to include the Crested Grebe in the South Island.

It is not intended to plan a census since grebes are a very different subject from egrets. A few regions, however, may well have the manpower and local knowledge already to include a coordinated count within their region, which would be an invaluable exercise. The purpose is to establish much more clearly the distribution, approximate abundance and flocking patterns of all grebes, especially the New Zealand Dabchick, in case the future picture becomes confused by a spread of new species from Australia.

The smaller grebes are to be coordinated by Barrie Heather but a coordinator for the Crested Grebe has yet to be settled.

It would be a hopeless task in most districts to try to find each breeding pair but whenever this is possible it should be attempted. Attention in recent years has focussed on the flocking habit of the Dabchick which can occur in places where Dabchick are not known to breed and is usually away from the small dune lakes and farm ponds where so much of the breeding occurs. More open bodies of water, not necessarily with much marginal vegetation, seem to be favoured. The larger lakes are commonly used, and the sewage oxidation ponds that most towns and boroughs have built in recent years. Flocking has been found to occur in some cases as early as early February, but may begin or end at any time between February and September. The reasons why some birds flock and some don't are not known; in some cases it has been found that, while a sizeable flock has built up on one part of a lake or on a sewage pond, nearby there may be pairs still occupying smaller lakes and ponds, or other parts of the same large lake. Movement in and out of a flock may be frequent, occurring apparently at night. There is evidence to suggest that pairing and courtship can occur within these flocks. Also they provide a chance to examine any plumage changes into and out of non-breeding plumage, changes of eye-colour, proportion of time spent underwater in places of known depth such as sewage ponds, function of displays (such as exposing of the whitish backside pattern, as described in Storer 1971).

Also, a check on the main flocks occurring in each region should give a rough picture of the abundance of the Dabchick in that district. Any member living in isolation from others can adopt a local lake or lakes or sewage pond to check regularly and thus add to the total coverage. It is hoped that regions have by now, especially in the North Island, found someone who will coordinate the work for 1978.

Already there is a strong body of knowledge on Dabchick distribution in Far North/Northland, Auckland, Rotorua, Manawatu, Wellington and Wairarapa. Sufficient work has been done for these regions to plan with some certainty a reasonably complete coverage of main flocking places. In the important Dabchick centre of the Rotorua lakes, however, problems of access and number of members may mean only sample populations being monitored and the rest checked infrequently. Lake Taupo will be difficult and any member travelling through is asked to make spot checks of likely places such as Motuoapa, Tokaanu and Lake Rotoaira.

The whereabouts of sewage ponds and other likely areas of open water will need to be found in other districts first. It is often more efficient if each site is "adopted" by an individual member or a group for regular checking.

Nest Record Scheme

David Crockett has posted out many blank record cards and is looking forward to getting them back as soon as completed. Some recent contributions include cards from Paul Sagar from Snares 1. (48 Red-billed Gulls, 9 Antarctic Terns, 35 Snares Cape Pigeons); 14 cards on Pukeko and Pied Stilt from Tony Cracker; 75 cards on

species nesting in the DSIR Orongorongo study area east of Wellington, mainly from Peter Gaze and Tony Whittaker

The latest report to hand from the Chathams (December) on the Black Robins is that there were three pairs breeding on Mangere in November. Two chicks were seen and two pairs still nesting early in December.

Suggestions

The Year Of The Grebe

1. Monthly checks on each site; more often if birds found to be present. As fluctuations of numbers can be abrupt and frequent, the more often a used site is checked the better.
2. Take notes not merely of number present but also of plumage; habits; eye colour; any displays, flying, antagonism; suggested reasons for any changes in numbers and for why they favour particular parts of the site.
3. If numbers change, correlate with local conditions, e.g. drying up or flooding of ponds, dams and lakelets.
4. If summer surveys of breeding habitat have been made, similar winter surveys could be revealing.

By September, each region could have ready a report on the numbers found, the sites, what the sites have in common, fluctuations in numbers at each site, comments on plumage changes, observations on apparent pair-formation and time of final disap-

The year of the Grebe

pearance of flocks, perhaps linked with observed start of breeding on local ponds. By then, some members may wish to carry on into the summer with breeding pairs.

This may sound rather ambitious but all that is needed is to get out and look for grebes, make notes on what is there and keep as close a watch as possible on birds found.

In the South Island, recent events at Lake Elterwater show that patterns of distribution may have changed since the last survey (Westerskov 1971). The main aim at this stage is to confirm the lakes where grebes are present, the numbers whenever possible (very hard on some lakes), and watch out for small grebes and examine them very closely.

Small Grebes In The Field

The following is the best I can do for the moment. If members can add to or improve this, please do and we can issue a revised version.

Very young grebes have boldly striped heads but this is lost early after independence, and we are hampered in that there seems no clear distinction in the field between immature and adult grebes in winter. Nor is there a clear account of differences between breeding and non-breeding plumages of adult NZ Dabchick. These points may perhaps be clarified during our study.

There is further confusion about eye colour and notes should be kept of colour or lack of colour of all birds seen.

In Australia, the Hoary-headed seems to flock more readily than the Little and thus may be more likely to be found among flocks of NZ Dabchick, while the Little could be more likely to be found alone.

1. All three are of very similar size, the Little being slightly smaller, of more squat, plump shape, with shorter neck and more active, restless manner in a flock (Tony Palliser).
2. All three show white wing-patches in flight and white or silvery undersurface below the waterline, visible when a bird rolls over while preening.
3. The NZ Dabchick always looks *overall dark*, with much *reddish tone* in the plumage; particularly important the dark throat and chest.
4. The Hoary-headed shows *no reddish*; looks distinctly grey in a flock of NZ Dabchick. Throat and chest look *white* which, at close range, may be seen as light buff. Also white-looking sides of head and neck. (In breeding plumage, note heavily streaked head — head and nape black, streaked with long thin white plumes. The streaks far heavier and more conspicuous than in NZ Dabchick).
5. Little Grebe also looks distinctly paler than NZ Dabchick, dark brown above, whitish on sides and breast in winter. Must be seen well enough to distinguish diagnostic *white bare patch between bill and eye*. (In breeding plumage, patch is yellowish, head and neck black with reddish-chestnut stripe down side of neck; throat blackish; breast mottled with brown).

Eye colour

NZ Dabchick: yellow in breeding plumage. Observation needed to show if brown-eyed birds are immatures, non-breeding adults, or both. Note changes during the year in flocks being watched.

Hoary-headed: male golden-yellow, female ivory, finely speckled with black (one authority); brownish-yellow (another); brown, yellow or white (another). Again, may be brown in immatures and non-breeding adults, coloured in breeding adults. The first Southland birds apparently had brown eyes, though, while breeding (Barlow 1976).

Little Grebe: yellow (2 authorities); red, orange or white (a third). Arrowtown bird noted as orange in November (Chance 1969); Okareka bird in January as white or pale yellow (Lyle 1973).

Useful Notornis references

A new bird for New Zealand — Australian Little Grebe at Arrowtown, by G.R. Chance. 16(1):3-4. Includes photos of Little and NZ Dabchick. March 1969.

Australian Little Grebe on Lake Okareka, by G.W. Lyle. 20(3): 279-280. Sept. 1973.

Second record of the Australian Little Grebe in New Zealand, by P. Miller 20(3): 272-275. Sept. 1973. Two photos.

First sightings of the Hoary-headed Grebe in New Zealand, by H.A. Best; and **Breeding of Hoary-headed Grebe in Southland**, by Maida L. Barlow. 23(2): 182-187. June 1976.

Distribution and numbers of the Crested Grebe in Canterbury, by K.E. Westerskov 18(1): 3-29. March 1971.

History of distribution of the Crested Grebe in the North Island and Nelson-Marlborough, by K.E. Westerskov 19(1): 74-82. March 1972.

The behaviour of the New Zealand Dabchick, by R.W. Storer 18(3): 175-186. Sept. 1971.

Some notes on the breeding habits of the Dabchick, by G.A. Buddle. *Emu* 39(2): 77-84. 1939.

ALAN WRIGHT reports that at the Royal Albatross colony on Taiaroa Head the first egg of the 1977-78 season was laid on 2 November and that, up to 22 November, 27 birds had visited the colony and 7 eggs had

been laid. Public viewing of these birds opened on 26 November, until 21 January, on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. Bookings are made at the Govt Tourist Bureau, charge \$3.

Northland lakes survey

A further survey of the Dargaville and Pouto dune lakes on 10-11 September gives a comparison with the February survey (OSNZ News No.4). With a probable dispersal of young after February and some dispersal for breeding, some numbers were down; a big drop in Mallard, Grey and Paradise Duck and Grey Teal, in shags and swallows. Bittern were more in evidence but no Coots were seen this time; a fair increase in Shoveler numbers from 15 to 91, more swans and a healthy Dabchick total of 97.

On 27 August, while counting Dabchick and Coot on Lake Tarawera near Rotorua, TONY PALLISER had his attention immediately drawn to a strange dabchick. Out whipped the telescope, and there was an Australian Little Grebe in breeding dress. The notable differences were its yellow stripe between the eye and the lower mandible, the greater extent of white on the sides and front, and its squat, plump shape. The sighting has been confirmed by Ray Jackson and W. Brown.

Norman Mackenzie was surprised to see 21 Canada Geese flying over Westshore Lagoon on 8 November, and disappearing to sea over Westshore beach. A product of Ducks Unlimited, or strays from the south?

Courtesy at Taramaire

While the Taramaire roost near Miranda is less important than it used to be, it is still a popular ornithological spot. Because of damage to fences by (non-ornithological) visitors, permission to enter at will has been withdrawn by the owner, Mrs Batger. Members wishing to inspect this roost should call at the caravan behind the house at the southern end of the paddock which must be crossed to reach the roost, or at the house when this is re-occupied. Access is to be only by the gate opposite the house and not over the fence at the northern end as formerly. The major roost at present is along the nearby Access Road, but smaller waders tend still to occur at Taramaire. A very large curved shell spit accessible from Access Road gives high water space to huge numbers of birds on some tides and in some weathers, but the Limeworks is best on smaller tides and is more sheltered in strong winds. This problem is mentioned to save visitors from other regions embarrassment, and perhaps causing the exclusion of all members

We hope of course that no member would be so thoughtless in any part of the country as to prejudice the goodwill of local members by crossing private land without permission when they are visiting an area on holiday. We know that some members have been reluctant to report the presence of birds to OSNZ NEWS for the understandable reason that a casual visitor might disturb breeding birds or offend a farmer. It is only too easy to let one's enthusiasm in a new district override one's usual good judgment.

CATTLE EGRET

New Zealand totals

290 Cattle Egret, 81 White Heron, 22 Little Egret, 49 Royal Spoonbill, 7 Glossy Ibis, 4 White Ibis.

Note that extra Spoonbills were probably at Okarito. Note that there were at least 5 CE in West Wellington and at least 5 near Waverley, South Taranaki that were not located, so that one can safely say that over 300 were in New Zealand.

The last report was prepared in great haste, being done well after the deadline while awaiting reports from some regions. We hope that this time there will be greater accuracy. Let me know if there are errors so that they will not get into the Notornis report.

Regional summary

FAR NORTH/NORTHLAND: Rangaunu Bay (Kaimaumu), 6 White Heron - more were about, according to local fisherman J. Perry. Awanui, 25 Cattle Egret, 2 Royal Spoonbill, 1 Yellow-billed Spoonbill, 1 White Ibis. Russell, two reports of 1 WH near oyster farm. Rawene, 1 WH, 2 Little Egret. Waima, 1 White Ibis. Ngunguru, 1 WH. Kaipara, 4 WH on Onarere Rd; 1 WH at Ranganui Bridge.
Totals: 25 Cattle Egret, 14 White Heron, 2 Royal Spoonbill, 1 Yellow-billed Spoonbill, 2 White Ibis, 2 Little Egret.

AUCKLAND: Kaipara, 6 WH along Jordan's Rd. Waitemata, 1 WH at Traherne I. Parau, North Manukau, 1 LE. Whangateau estuary, Leigh, 2 LE. Parakai, Helensville, 4 CE.
Totals: 4 Cattle Egret, 7 White Heron, 3 Little Egret.

SOUTH AUCKLAND/WAIKATO: Wai-mahia estuary, Manurewa, 1 WH. Pahure-hure Inlet, Papakura, 1 WH seen before and after weekend. Waiuku, Sandspit, 1 WH, 1 LE (A. Palliser). Muir's Rd, Aka Aka (south of Waiuku, 23 CE. Te Onetea Rd, Rangiriri 23 CE. Churchill East Rd, (off Plantation Rd, Rangiriri 43 CE. Lake Wahi (near Huntly) 1 WH. Waingaro Landing, Raglan, 1 WH. Waitetuna estuary, Raglan, 1 CE. Lake Ngārotu, near Te Awamutu, 7 CE. Wharekawa, Firth of Thames, 1 WH. Kerēpehi, Hauraki Plains, 1 WH. Ngātea, Hauraki Plains, 1 WH.
Totals: 97 Cattle Egret, 8 White Heron, 1 Little Egret.

BAY OF PLENTY/ROTORUA: Maketu, 1 White Ibis. Matata, 7 CE. Tarawera estuary 1 WH. Ōwā Harbour, 1 WH. In addition, 1 Glossy Ibis which had been about Waikato-Bay of Plenty, and was on Little Waihi shortly after the count weekend.
Totals: 7 Cattle Egret, 2 White Heron, 1 White Ibis, 1 Glossy Ibis.

TARANAKI: Awakino, 1 Royal Spoonbill, 3 miles upstream. Mokau, 1 LE. Tikorangi, near Waitara, 5 CE. Waiwhakaiho mouth, 1 LE. Kakaramea, near Patea, 7 CE. Nukumaru, near Waitotara, 14 CE.
Totals: 26 Cattle Egret, 2 Little Egret, 1 Royal Spoonbill.

WANGANUI: Lake Whiritoa, 9 CE.
Total: 9 Cattle Egret.

MANAWATU: Opiki, near Palmerston North, 6 CE. Lake Koputara, 3 CE seen before and after but not during the weekend. Turnbull's Lagoon, near Levin, 6 CE, 1 Glossy Ibis. Lake NE of Foxton Beach, 2 WH. Manawatu estuary, 15 Royal Spoonbill but 18 before and after weekend.
Totals: 15 Cattle Egret, 2 White Heron, 1 Glossy Ibis, 18 Royal Spoonbill.

WELLINGTON: 1 Little Egret reported between Waikanae and Foxton in weeks before census weekend was at Ohau estuary the weekend after. 5-8 CE reported by farmers in Levin-Otaki area but not found.
Total: 1 Little Egret.

GISBORNE/WAIROA: Tolaga Bay, 2 WH. Gisborne district, 2 CE + 2 CE. Near Wairoa; Whakaki Lagoon, 2 WH. Ngamotu Lagoon, 2 Royal Spoonbill. Near Mangawhio Lagoon, 1 WH. Awamate, 1 CE. There were also 2 possible LE and one possible Glossy Ibis but these could not be verified.
Totals: 5 Cattle Egret, 5 White Heron, 2 Royal Spoonbill.

HAWKES BAY: Westshore estuary, Napier, 2 LE, 2 Royal Spoonbill. Hurimoana Swamp, Fernhill, 1 CE, 1 LE. Greenmeadows, 1 WH. Haumoana, 1 WH.
Totals: 1 Cattle Egret, 2 White Heron, 3 Little Egret, 2 Royal Spoonbill.

WAIRARAPA: Near Featherston end of Lake Wairarapa, 5 CE. Pirinoa area, 2 CE missed at weekend, back following week. Boggy Pond area, east of Lake Wairarapa, 1 WH, 1 Glossy Ibis (latter missed on weekend, back the following day).
Totals: 7 Cattle Egret, 1 White Heron, 1 Glossy Ibis.

North Island Totals

196 Cattle Egret, 41 White Heron, 12 Little Egret, 25 Royal Spoonbill, 3 Glossy Ibis, 3 White Ibis, 1 Yellow-billed Spoonbill.

NELSON: Farewell Spit, 2 Royal Spoonbill. Westhaven Inlet, 1 WH. Near Takaka, 15 CE. Riwaka, 1 WH. Motueka, 11 Royal Spoonbill. Mapua, Mariri, Tasman, 4 WH. Monaco, 2 WH. Waimea estuary, 2 WH.

Rough 1., 2 WH, 1 LE, 9 Royal Spoonbill. Nelson Haven to Delaware Bay, 1 WH, 1 LE. Pea Vine Corner, near Waimea, 5 CE present June to August, absent on count weekend, back but 8 on 3 September. Counted as 5.
Totals: 20 Cattle Egret, 13 White Heron, 2 Little Egret, 22 Royal Spoonbill

MARLBOROUGH: Rai Valley, 1 WH. Havelock, 1 LE. Lower Wairau, 12 CE. Kairakourā, 6 CE + 4 CE on different farms.
Totals: 22 Cattle Egret, 1 White Heron, 1 Little Egret.

WEST COAST: Cape Foulwind, Westport, 2 CE reported on 7 Sept. (not included in count). Matai, NE of Greymouth, 2 CE. Rotomanu, east of Lake Brunner, 7 CE, Inchbonnie (Arthur's Pass road), 2 CE, Cobden Lagoon, Greymouth, 1 WH, 1 LE. Whataroa, 3 CE. Harihari, 3 CE. Okarito, 1 CE, 1 WH. Mahitahi Valley, near Bruce Bay, 2 CE, 2 WH. Lake Moeraki, N of Haast, 2 WH. Lake McKerrow, Martins Bay, 1 WH. Note that no count could be made at the Okarito heronry nor of the whole of Okarito Lagoon; there were 21 Royal Spoonbills on Okarito Lagoon on 13 August.
Totals: 20 Cattle Egret, 7 White Heron, 1 Little Egret.

CANTERBURY: Ashley mouth, 1 LE. Waikuku Lagoon, 1 WH. Christchurch City, 2 WH. Lake Forsyth, 4 WH. Lake Ellesmere, near Lakeside, 9 CE; near Taumutu, 4 Glossy Ibis. Timaru gardens, 1 WH. Hinds River, 1 WH. Lake Wainono, 2 CE. 3 WH. Ahuriri river mouth (Benmore), 1 WH, 1 LE. Peebles, 10 miles up Waitaki River, 1 White Ibis.
Totals: 11 Cattle Egret, 13 White Heron, 2 Little Egret, 4 Glossy Ibis, 1 White Ibis.

OTAGO: Karitane, 2 WH, 1 LE. Lindsay's Creek, Dunedin, 1 WH. Port Chalmers, 1 WH. Tomahawk, 1 WH. Taieri mouth, 1 LE. Titri, Lake Waihola, 1 WH.
Totals: 6 White Heron, 2 Little Egret.

SOUTHLAND: Te Anau, 4 CE. Wallaceston, 2 CE. Makarewa, 1 CE. Bay Rd; Invercargill, 2 CE. Otatara, 1 CE. Menzies Ferry, 3 CE. Seaward Downs, S of Wyndham, 1 CE. Gorge Road, 7 CE. Riverton estuary, 2 LE. Waituna Lagoon, 2 royal Spoonbill.
Totals: 21 Cattle Egret, 2 Little Egret, 2 Royal Spoonbill.

STEWART ISLAND: nil

South Island Totals

94 Cattle Egret, 40 White Heron, 10 Little Egret, 24 Royal Spoonbill, 4 Glossy Ibis, 1 White Ibis.

Contributors

Apologies first to members whose names were omitted from last report: Wellington members R. Cotter, G. Brown, B. Ellis, Miss A. Hutson who struggled through the floodwaters south of Lake Wairarapa; Canterbury members Barry Armstrong, Ray Genet, Martin Round, Bill Rogers, Richard Odgers, and Brent and Brenda Robinson who, because of a missing line, took on Richard's name. Added to the Canterbury list is Mrs M. Lane of Ashburton who covered the Hinds and Ashburton lagoons and finally found 1 WH on the homestead

pond of Longbeach estate, near the Hinds River.

Hawkes Bay members who took part were Norman Mackenzie, Cara Saxby, Joan Smith, Shane Cotter (who gets around), Bill and Betty Craig, Jim Watt, John Hastie, Mary Craven, Janet Lloyd, Nancy Tanner, Kathleen Todd, Lucy Hodgson.

Gisborne/Wairoa members were Jim Henley, Mavis Williams, Geoff. Foreman, Wayne Glentworth.

Manawatu members were David Baker-Gabb, Sybil and Bob Cresswell, Lindsay Davies, Michael Dennison, Helen Elder, Andy Garrick, John Innes, John and Madeleine LeLievre, Garth Mills, Marie Mitchell, Hugh Robertson, Michael Tarburton, Roger Wasley.

Nelson members were Mr & Mrs Chris Alberts, Frank Boyce, Mrs J. Crawford, Eric Gillespie, Jenny Hawkins, Mrs J. King, Mrs Delia Mumford, Mrs D. Moss, Vincent O'Donnell, Keith Owen, Mrs S. Parker, Geoff Rennison, Gavin Radley, Frank Soper, Mrs E. Tomlinson, Miss L. Taylor.

In West Coast, 21 people took part from OSNZ, Wildlife Service, Forest and Bird Society and others. All areas were considered to have been adequately covered except north of Karamea, and Okarito Lagoon where water level was too low for boat use. In the absence of Jo Douglas, Dave Murray collated the results. From Haast, D.P. Munro covered from Jacobs River to Cascade River. Ian Linton, of Ministry Agriculture & Fisheries, was at Lake McKerrow.

On Stewart Island, Colin O'Donnell covered Paterson Inlet and the catchments of Freshwater and Mason Bay — though seeing no egrets, he did pass 12 Kiwis on a 3 km track one night, and found a nesting hole with an egg. R.G. Marquand reported from the Queenstown district, and B. Vincent reported the 4 CE at Te Anau, in paddocks close to Bradey's Wildlife Museum (sounds a risky locality).

Perhaps one of the better anecdotes comes from Jill Hamel. A radio appeal produced an unexpected report of a White Heron at the Port Chalmers tip, at the head of a little valley running down to the Harbour. It was apparently there all day all winter, eating Silvereyes, according to the bulldozer driver, who added that last year two were there, one large, one small.

All notes wanted

So that I can get on with the tiresome job of preparing a report for *Notornis*, could I please have a full summary on *Cattle Egret* only for 1977. All other heron records should go to the Recording Scheme. Notes on Royal Spoonbill which have not already gone to Sandy Edgar could be sent direct to Hugh Robertson who is writing up that species.

Several regions have already sent me their material up to end of August, as asked, but I need everything on Cattle Egret

up to end of year. Omit census weekend, which I have. Whenever possible, include all details, such as notes on changes of flock numbers and gradual change of plumage, state of plumage of those that disappeared, description of final plumage, incl. bill and leg colour, notes on habits such as their daily routine, animals they associated with, where roosted, voice, food if seen, droppings collected and examined.

I propose to write up the year region by region, so your region can only be as full as you make it. A copy of draft will be sent RR's before final version.

Finally, do others think as I do that a Cattle Egret in full breeding plumage is indeed a splendid sight? There is still no word of nesting at time of writing. Birds seem to be melting away in small groups.

Raptor Association of New Zealand

The Raptor Association was formed by a group of interested people at the Benhopai Station in Waihopai Valley, Marlborough during Easter week-end, 1976.

Does this sound like a neo-fascist political organisation, meeting in secret to plan the overthrow of something? It is not. It is a group of people whose common interest is in birds of prey and the venue was chosen because field work was in progress there and it was a good place for members to see falcons. The association was initiated by Nick Fox, who has just completed a Ph.D. study of the NZ Falcon and by Colin Wynn who was assisting Nick with his field work at the time. The group includes names known to readers of NOTORNIS and OSNZ NEWS: working locally on the Harrier, Lex Hedley, Mervyn Jukes, David Baker-Gabb; on the Little Owl, Michael Rule, on the NZ Falcon, Nick Fox. Others have assisted also with the film on the Harrier and Falcon currently being produced by the National Film Unit as part of its Land of Birds series.

The main aim of the Raptor Association is to further the conservation, study and management of birds of prey in New Zealand. Other aims include the breeding in captivity of endangered species, mainly NZ Falcon, assisting whenever needed with field work on birds of prey, working on individual projects to further knowledge available by publishing in journals or magazines, promoting talks by competent members to schools or other organizations, keeping members in touch with the work and ideas of one another and of overseas workers and groups.

The Association, with at present about 40 members, produces a regular bulletin and has three main categories of membership: senior members, annual fee \$10; student members, fee \$5; associate members, fee \$2. The first two may take part in all activities of the association, the third receives the bulletins only. For further information and membership inquiries, write to Mr L. Hedley, C/o Te Kuiti Primary School Te Kuiti.

* * * * *

The latest visit of Far North/Northland members to the Cavalli Islands at Labour Weekend failed to find any sign of the Bell-birds, despite a careful search. Although it is only 15 months since the cattle were removed, there is good regeneration of vegetation over many parts of Motukawanui and Morepork, Silvereye, Grey Warbler and Fantail were judged to have increased since last year. (DAVID CROCKETT)

Recoveries of Black Swan

A series of maps summarising both the number of swans with coloured neck-bands reported and the number with metal bands that were shot have been produced by MURRAY WILLIAMS of Wildlife Service. The numbers are taken up to October 1977 and do not take account of the same birds being reported repeatedly in some localities. I have grouped the figures into districts, the colour-banded birds first, and shot birds in brackets.

1. *Marked RED at Rotorua*. Waikato 1 (4). Rotorua/Bay of Plenty 78 (9). Taupo 0 (1). South Hawkes Bay 2 (0). Manawatu 6 (0). Wellington 1 (0). Wairarapa 5 (0).
2. *Marked WHITE at Hawkes Bay*. Rotorua 0 (2). Hawkes Bay (Wairoa lagoons to Waipukurau) 46 (18). Manawatu 6 (0). Wellington 1 (0). Wairarapa 15 (2). Farewell Spit 2 (0). Marlborough 7 (4). West Coast 3 (0). Ellesmere, Wainono, Waiholo 7 (0): these last probably old Ellesmere collars.
3. *Marked YELLOW at Lake Wairarapa*. Taranaki 2 (0). Hawkes Bay 4 (7). Manawatu 7 (2). Wellington 22 (0). Wairarapa 436 (100). Golden Bay/Farewell Spit 24 (0). Marlborough 19 (2). West Coast 1 (0). Nth Cant. 0 (1). Sth Cant. 1 (0). Otago 2 (0).
4. *Marked GREEN at Farewell Spit*. Waikato 1 (10). Rotorua/Bay of Plenty 2 (1). Taranaki 2 (0). Wanganui 8 (0). Hawkes Bay 29 (1). Manawatu 24 (1). Wellington 28 (0). Wairarapa 100 (19). Golden Bay/Farewell Spit 85 (10). Marlborough 19 (3). West Coast 4 (1). Ellesmere 1 (0).

The maps are easier to compare but, as expected, many more are reported from sightings than shooting in most districts. Where shooting has given higher returns, our members and Wildlife staff are presumably thin on the ground (or else don't read OSNZ NEWS). Recoveries are surprisingly few from Waikato and the whole South Island south of Nelson/Marlborough, and yet marked birds are reaching there. I suspect that many members have not got round to sending in their sightings to Dr Murray Williams, Wildlife Service, Private Bag, Wellington. Remember that nil returns are of great value, showing that someone has looked at a swan locality, seen, say, 200 swans but none with plastic collars.

A long list of members patrolled 352 km of Dargaville west coast beaches from January to June 1977, for a total of 846 corpses, half of which were from a Sooty Shearwater wreck in May. Mottled Petrels in January-February, an Arctic Skua and a Black-winged Petrel in February, Cook's Petrels in March-April, an Antarctic Prion in April, a Kerguelen Petrel, 11 Short-tailed Shearwaters and 13 Mottled Petrels in May. Red-billed Gulls, largely immature, mainly in March-April.

The Curlew Sandpiper seems to have arrived in better numbers than ever this year. After a record wintering flock of at least 23 in Firth of Thames (Russell Thomas, Dick Sibson, Beth Brown), there were up to 50 there in late September (Ross McKenzie, John & Betty Seddon and others), and in Manukau an unusual 25 at Karaka (Beth Brown, Barbara Burch). We have not heard from other favoured localities, such as Foxton, Farewell Spit, Ellesmere or Southland lagoons. January counts should be revealing.

Waikato weekend

Groups from Auckland and South Auckland joined Waikato members for a very successful weekend (20-21 August) based at Te Kuiti Lodge, Oparau near Kawhia Harbour. In perfect weather Kawhia and Aotea Harbours and surrounding bush and swamp were studied. Ocean beaches were patrolled. The whole party was able to see Spotless Crake and Fernbird, with the help of recordings. No Kokako were seen, although some were heard in the Oparau bush. Useful work for the Mapping Scheme was also completed.

During Waikato's winter census of Kawhia Harbour on 3 July, 10 Black Stilts were seen (7 all-black). This proved to be a relief to Ron Nilsson who had just completed a winter census of Black Stilts in the Mackenzie Basin and found some of his adult birds to be missing.

On the August weekend, 4 Black Stilts still remained on Kawhia, as did 2 Asiatic Whimbrel which had been there in July. A Spotted Shag was an unusual sighting here. (BETTY SEDDON)

A Black Stilt has been in the Manawatu (or is it Wellington?) by Manawatu members. LINDSAY DAVIES shows that one of their Cattle Egret places, Turnbull's Lagoon (on the road to Waiterere, north of Levin) was quite a local show-piece in August, with 6 Cattle Egret, 3 White-faced Heron, 57 Pukeko, 40 Grey Teal, 37 Black Swan, 15 Grey Duck, 40 Mallard, 5 Paradise Duck, 2 Dabchick, 5 Little Shag, numerous swallows. etc. The Glossy Ibis was missing for a while but there were 31 Pied and 1 Black Stilts. The "Black" was mainly black but with white patches on face, breast and flanks under the tail. The list was compiled by HUGH ROBERTSON, MIKE TARBURTON, ROGER WASLEY and Lindsay.

An account from ROY WESTON of several visits to Port Ohope Spit and Ohiwa Harbour in Bay of Plenty includes a Terek Sandpiper on 16 October, gone by 22nd; 20 Golden Plover on 16/10, up to 26 on 6/11 and 12/11; 5 Asiatic Whimbrel with 2000 Godwit on 16/10, up to 6 on 22/10, 8 on 12/11; also 2 Turnstones and 4 Little Terns present. This is another area due for a thorough workout in January.

News from Mt Cook

MOREPORKS. MARTIN HEINE notes that moreporks have not been recorded in Mount Cook National Park during the summer months for a number of years. However they are present during the winter when their hunting screech is heard from March to August. During last winter two moreporks were found dead beneath windows. Martin wonders whether this cause of death is known to other members, and also whether anyone has experience or ideas about such a disappearance of moreporks in summer.

ROCK WRENS. MAL CLARBROUGH makes these interesting observations. Until recently, our observations of Rock Wrens have all been between January and April, giving us the knowledge that during these months they are distributed throughout the Park from about 4800' in the upper alpine vegetation and boulder-field zones to 8550' in the nival zone where a pair were observed on the summit of Aylmer, a peak at the head of the Tasman Glacier.

Since Peter Child raised the question in OSNZ NEWS No.1 of what the Rock Wren does in winter, we have made a point of making surveys in areas where they had been seen in summer and were not too difficult to get to in winter.

During August 1977 two observations were made, the first on the ridge which rises from behind the village up to Kitchener on the Sealy Range at about 4000' where a pair were seen above a small bluff which was topped by a number of large boulders and light vegetation. The second was made the next day among large rocks and snow totara at about 4500' en route to Sefton bivouac. The weather had been unseasonably mild, with the previous 4 days having recorded 7 hours of sunshine in the village area. Both observations were made on north-facing slopes, with the snowline at about 5000'.

In September, a pair was sighted on the rock bluffs on the Liebig side of the swing bridge which crosses the Murchison River, altitude c. 3000', aspect N.W.

A more recent sighting was in early November at 4700' on the north side of the Hoophorn Spur where a pair was watched for an hour flitting through talus boulders and feeding on insects and making moves toward and occasionally chasing quite large grasshoppers.

For comments and correspondence, write to Park HQ, Box 5, Mt. Cook.

During a visit to Kaikoura at the end of October, ROB GUEST saw 93 Turnstones, 2 Siberian Tattlers and a Whimbrel among the usual birds breeding on the peninsula.

JENNY MOORE of Gladbrook Station, Middlemarch, Otago has reported a pair of Cirl Buntings in the area.

Following his note in No.4 ALAN JONES of Whitianga has seen further examples of foot-trembling by NZ Dotterel on Buffalo Beach. On 8 October he noticed a lone bird foot-trembling for about a half-minute before it was disturbed, but on 15 October he watched a different bird foot-trembling for at least a quarter-hour while it fed on dry sand above the high-tide mark. It would tremble for about 5 secs, stand still a few secs, then lunge ahead or to one side, generally picking up three insects (probably sand hoppers) from the sand. Both feet were trembled alternately, so vigorously that the half of the body would tremble as well as leg and foot. Are there other instances from other districts?

Help wanted with Harriers

We hope to have soon a report on the response to the appeal in No.3 to watch out for colour-marked Harriers. I for one have never before looked so closely and so futilely at so many Harriers. Do not relax, for there is more we can do to help, as this request from HUGH ROBERTSON sets out.

As part of my studies at Massey University, I am planning to continue the Harrier trapping and colour-marking programme begun by David Baker-Gabb at Pukepuke Lagoon (OSNZ NEWS No.3). Already recoveries have come from Patea, Wanganui, Turakina, Levin, Masterton and Marlborough districts. If you see a marked bird (coloured plastic wing-tag), please send as many details of the tag as possible, your name and address, the date, the locality (preferably with map reference) and an estimate of whether the plumage was light or dark in colour (juvenile = dark; adult = light).

One aspect I am interested in is the importance of road-killed animals in a Harrier's diet. As part of this study, I should be grateful if members could watch out for road-killed Harriers and send me in a sealed plastic bag one foot (including tarsus and toes) and a few breast and/or back feathers, together with your name and address, date found, approximate time since killed, type of food it had been attracted to, locality (with map reference or approx. distance from the nearest town). Alternatively, if you could store the whole specimen in a freezer and write to me, some method of transportation can be arranged. With this information, I shall try to determine sex and age of the birds involved. H.A. Robertson, Aokautere Drive, R.D.1, Palmerston North.