

OSNZ news

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Deadline for the June Issue will be 30 May.

FAREWELL SPIT

During the 5 days only they were allowed on Farewell Spit, BILL CASH, MIKE DENNISON, TONY PALLISER and HUGH ROBERTSON could barely begin their planned study of habitat use, feeding behaviour, roosting and flight routes of selected species. Enough was begun, however, particularly with Banded Dotterel, Turnstone, Knot, Godwit and Whimbrel, to reveal basic patterns and to show what may be achieved if their work can be continued.

A census was neither planned nor made but the following were counted or estimated during their work: SIPO 3,000+, Godwit 12,000+, Knot 15,000+, Turnstone 1,000+, Grey Plover 4, Golden Plover 27, Banded & Meaningless Dotterel 800+, Large Sand Dotterel 2, NZ Dotterel 1 in breeding plumage, Curlew 15, Asiatic Whimbrel 18, Black-tailed Godwit 1, Wrybill 2, Spurwing 3 (at woolshed), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 4, Curlew Sandpiper 3, Stint 13, Siberian Tattler 2, Pied Stilt 4. 5 Royal Spoonbill turned up on 12th and a Reef Heron flying down Ocean Beach was a first for the Spit. 3 Pomarine Skuas were also seen.

The only Little Terns seen were 3 at Motueka spit where there were also 650-700 Godwit, 227 Turnstone and 300+ SIPO. One of the terns had dark wing-tips.

Earlier, Mike, Tony and Hugh, during a visit to Jack Taylor at Ward, visited Lake Grassmere where Max Falconer and others from Wellington had seen a Lesser Yellowlegs in late January. The Yellowlegs had gone but there was a small group of stints, godwit, sandpipers and spurwings and a smudgy Black Stilt. Nearby a colour-marked Harrier was seen. On Lake Elterwater the drought had brought together a vast assembly of over 3000 Mallard, 400 Paradise, 600 Grey Teal, 600 Shoveler, Black Swans and Canada Geese, among which the coots and grebes were swamped and hard to find.

TAIKO DISCOVERED

Members will have seen press statements about the discovery of the Chatham Island Taiko; some will have been privileged to have seen photos and have talked to some of the rugged heroes of the latest Chathams expedition. Readers of *Wildlife Review* No.7 (1976) will know that the Taiko, a Maori name for a petrel of the *pterodroma* type used in Taranaki and transported with Taranaki Maoris to the Chathams in 1835, has been long a legend. Sub-fossil bones in plenty at Chathams show that a fairly large petrel of the Grey-faced Petrel type had been common on the Chathams. Was it an all-black type like the Black Petrel and White-chinned Petrel, or was it the mysterious Magenta Petrel, named after the Italian research ship *magenta* which, in 1867, collected the only

known specimen while in the central South Pacific? This specimen still languishes in Turin Museum, Italy and is dark above, white below, from breeding grounds unknown.

The January 1978 expedition was the fourth organised and led by DAVID CROCKETT to find and identify the Taiko. Interest again centred on the Tuku River Valley in the south-west of the main Chatham Island, a region where tantalising but inconclusive sightings had been made on 6 January 1972. Members were well spread, a battery of powerful lights were ready, and on the evening of 1 January, when the cloud ceiling was low, three birds were attracted to one of the lights. Two, landing on a bracken-covered slope, were captured and, after, one imagines, a night of riotous orgy, were thoroughly photographed in colour, and monochrome, measured, studied, and released.

Subsequently the photos and measurements have been compared with the original description and painting of the Magenta Petrel [*Pterodroma magentae*] and found to agree with the Turin specimen described by Giglioli and Salavadori. The Taiko exists and is the Magenta Petrel! To commemorate the occasion, it is rumoured Tennick Dennison grew a beard, regrettably not magenta-coloured.

Throughout January, searches of the bush inland from the point of capture of the two birds failed to reveal burrows. This area is extremely rugged and a colony could still lie within it somewhere.

The capture of the Taiko on New Year's Day was the culmination of a 25 year interest in the species. As a schoolboy, David first became

acquainted with the Taiko while sorting sub-fossil bones for R.J.Scarlett at Canterbury Museum. We congratulate David for his persistence and final success. There is still a big job ahead to find the apparently small remnant colony in the very difficult country of the southern Chatham Island.

Surveys of the Chatham I. Pigeon in the south-west of the main island and of the Chatham I. Oystercatcher around the coast showed that both were present in greater numbers than were previously recorded.

On 16 January a wader survey of Te Whanga Lagoon was carried out, incomplete because of vehicle trouble. Two new species for the islands were a Greenshank recorded by Russell Thomas and Nan Rothwell, and a Pied Stilt seen at Awapatiki by Reg Cotter. A light-phase Arctic Skua was found on this lagoon in late December.

Beach patrols produced some interesting species, including the Antarctic Fulmar (Long Beach) and 2 Mottled Petrels from the western coast between Tuku River and Port Hutt. Visits were made also to colonies of two endemic species — Pitt I. and Chatham I. Shags.

The following OSNZ members were in the party: David and Ruth Crockett, Audrey and Alistair Gordon, Whangarei; Ray and Brenda Hatwell, Reg Cotter, Tim O'Brien, Wellington; Tennick and Michael Dennison, Masterton; Hugh Robertson, Palmerston North; Vic Hensley, Ngataki; Ken Olsen, Ngunguru; Gavin Stilwell, Omaramari; Russell Thomas, Gillian Eller, Gwenda Watson and Nan Rothwell, Auckland.

photograph Russell Thomas



ADVENTURES IN PAPUA-NEW GUINEA
CONTD.

Continuing from OSNZ News No. 4 the experiences of DON HADDEN.

For the Christmas period of 1975-76 we spent 6 weeks touring remote parts of PNG. Most of these places were tiny mission outposts accessible only by small mission planes.

Mt BOSAVI. Here we stayed a week with the only Europeans for hundreds of square miles. I netted what I could, the most interesting being Olive-yellow Flycatcher [*Poecilodryas placens*], which Rand & Gilliard describe as "a rare and little-known species." Among other species I saw there were Brown Xanthotis, Brown Shrike-flycatcher, Peltops Flycatcher, Mid-mountain Eupetes and Grey-bellied Longbill.

We then went for a week to MOUGULU, to stay with the only white people — missionaries — living there. The Biامي tribe live there and they have only recently been contacted. They were cannibals until recently — the last one caught for cannibalism was in 1972. I set up my mist nets as usual. My main catches were bats unfortunately but the Biامي tribesmen were very pleased to get them and became adept at extricating them from my nets. The birds I caught were mostly meliphagas and honeyeaters. The highlight, though, was when the Biامي, knowing of my interest in birds, built me a hide in the jungle beneath a Raggiana Bird of Paradise display tree. Up to 7 males displayed in this and adjoining trees. It was fantastic to watch their wing-clapping, plume-shaking, bowing, etc. — one of the all-time highlights of my bird-watching career.

From Mougulu we went by tiny plane to PANGO, a very small island in the middle of Lake Murray. Here the folk we stayed with were also keen on birds and had kindly built me a hide out in the edge of the lake looking over a dead stump. Nothing came to sit on it unfortunately but I did photograph Green Pygmy Geese and Rufous-breasted Honeyeater, and observed Little Pied Cormorant, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Darter and Jacana. A Crimson Finch nested low down in a handy tree so I managed some photos of that. The Coucal was quite common and its distinctive call could be heard often. Herons and egrets abounded of course. While there, we visited the crocodile farm on the edge of the lake across from our island. There are virtually no crocodiles left in the lake proper and they are trying to breed them in this farm, but with little success.

From Lake Murray we flew to BALIMO in the middle of low-lying swampy river country. Here I was able one day to go with a local man in his dugout canoe for a day's birdwatching amongst the lagoons, swamps and marshes. It was incredibly hot and the canoe was desperately uncomfortable, but what a fascinating day's work. Reed Warblers abounded, and I watched Greater, Lesser and Little Egrets, Pied Heron, Masked Plover, White Ibis, Torres Strait Pigeon, White-crowned Mannikin, etc., etc. Bush birds seen included Blue-winged Kookaburra and Orange-fronted Fruit Dove.

We completed our trip by going to Port Moresby and then to Brisbane for a few days.

We returned to PNG to a new teaching position here on BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND. Although part of PNG politically, Bougainville is geographically part of the Solomon Islands. Its claim to fame is that copper was discovered here in the middle 1960s and now a huge open-cast copper mine is helping the PNG economy get on its feet. This mine is situated at Panguna, some 20 road miles in from the coast and over the Crown Prince Range. Panguna is at about 700m altitude. A few facts about the mine first. They have huge trucks capable of carrying 170 tonnes in one load. Each costs over half a million dollars; their wheels are ten feet high and each tyre costs \$6000. It was thought at one time it would not be possible to put a road in over the steep range. However, it has been done, but at a cost of a million dollars a mile. Now to get to the coast we drive down a steep but sealed road.

Panguna is strictly a mining town. Everyone living here belongs to the mine, with about three exceptions — myself, the headmaster and the government representative. We have one shop, a bank and a post office but the mining authorities (Bougainville Copper Ltd) have built a beautiful Olympic pool for employees (free), plus gymnasium, squash courts, tennis courts, etc. All the houses are tucked in up a narrow valley, down which a creek runs and which is bordered by virgin jungle. Our house is hard against the bush and I can watch such birds as *Zosterops metcalfei*, *Coracina papuensis*, *Accipiter albobularis* (one pulled a large stick insect to pieces and ate it) and *Nectarinia jugularis* from my porch. A few snakes live around the house which we have tried to photograph. We have some reasonable movie footage of them, but missed the best part when one chased, caught and ate a frog on our lawn.

Bougainville has some 100 species of land and freshwater birds (no Birds of Paradise). There are still new species to be discovered here and in the last ten years I suppose a dozen new sightings have been made. Some of these, such as the Blue-faced Parrot Finch, have always been here, just not seen. There is an unknown bird, called locally *kopipi* and heard by Dr Jared Diamond but its identity is still a mystery. I have heard stories coming from the mountains of Tinuputz of a bird with duck feet that sings in its burrow; can only be a petrel but which one is unknown. My contribution to new sightings include the Little Black Shag (*sulcirostris*) and the Indian Myna. Also, when mist-netting on a small coral island about ten miles off the coast, I caught an Islet Monarch (not often seen) and four Golden Whistlers since identified in USA as the subspecies *whitneyi*, not seen here before and collected only in 1931 on Whitney Island in the Shortland Group during the Whitney South Sea Expedition.

Once again there are species we know in NZ up here too. I have seen a Shining Cuckoo in the bush by my driveway but have yet to see the Long-tailed *Halcyon*

sancta arrives in good numbers in March/April and departs in September or thereabouts. The Pukeko is here too but much shyer than in NZ. Out on the coral reefs are both phases of the Reef Heron. The most unfamiliar thing is the lack of gulls — the beaches are deserted — and lack of house birds such as sparrows, thrushes and blackbirds. The closest to "garden" birds we have are Pacific Swallows and Willy Wagtails. Waders we know from NZ pass through here on their way south and north. By far the most common is Common Sandpiper, but Golden Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew, Whimbrel and Turnstone are here too.

My main interest has always been bird photography but here, as on the PNG mainland, it is extremely difficult to find nests in the jungle. Local people shoot and eat birds and chicks anyway. I have photographed some of the mist-netted birds but it is a poor substitute for the excitement of watching at the nest from a hide. PNG is a great place for birds but disappointing for bird photographers. NZ seems incredibly easy for a bird watcher to identify species — PNG Ornithologists who have visited NZ all testify to this. Here we have at least eight Gerygone species, some of which can be confused with sericornises; and both of these can be confused with other warbler groups. There are a large numbers of pigeons and doves, flycatchers, parrots and lorries, honeyeaters, etc. If you want a challenge, come bird watching in PNG.

We have an endless summer, too. Down on the coast are beautiful white sand beaches, overhung by coconut palms. The water is extremely warm. The coral reefs can be explored by any ordinary snorkeller and abound with fish of all colours, shapes and sizes. It is a beautiful place to live. There are, of course, drawbacks. The deadly stonefish lives on the reef too, as does the sea wasp jellyfish and some sea snakes. Mosquitoes can give you malaria or dengue fever (which I've had and had to be flown out to hospital in Australia) or you can get hepatitis (which I've also had). Nevertheless, these are nothing to the road toll in NZ.

So if you want to visit somewhere different, come to PNG and if Bougainville is on your itinerary we'll be pleased to show you around and give you a bed (or two) for the night. When the wind is howling and the snow is falling in the NZ summer or winter, you can remember me up here water-skiing in the warm tropical water, skin-diving out on the reef and watching exotic birds in the coconuts fringing the shore. I'm off now to cut myself a fresh slice of pineapple.

Don Hadden, Box 268, Panguna N.S.P., Papua-New Guinea.

Les McPherson can offer members a range of cassettes aimed at those interested in a particular species or a group such as waders. Not all species are available so anyone interested should contact Les first.

Les asks for help from anyone to obtain a recording of the Three Kings Bellbird and the Rock Wren.

MT ASPIRING NATIONAL PARK

This third account from PETER CHILD deals with *Birds above the treeline*. The altitudes here are from c.3400' (1040m) upwards. Typically above the beech forests there is a zone (varying in width from a few to several hundred metres) of subalpine scrub, giving way to the tall snow-tussock and then the short tussock, herffield, fellfield and "tundra", until the "permanent" snowfields are reached at c.6500' (1980m). Meltwater streams, tarns, swampy depressions, boulder slopes, moraine lakes, glacier snouts and debris and bluffy cirques are typical of the valley headwaters.

The only true alpine species, never descending to low altitudes such as valley floors, and never (in my experience) found inside the forest, is the Rock Wren. Its home is damp, bluffy, bouldery habitat with suitable stunted shrubs and mixed herffield from c.3500' (1070m) upwards. In mid-summer pairs have been recorded even on the summit blocks of peaks up to 7706' (2349m). Distribution is erratic but in a few areas it might be described as "reasonably common". Singletons, pairs or small family parties are the usual sighting.

In the summer practically every sizeable headwater basin moraine lake, high altitude tarn or cirque provides breeding habitat for the Black-backed Gull. Unlike their low-country relatives, however, they seldom nest in colonies, an isolated pair being the usual rule. Long distances are often travelled for food; in some areas alpine grasshoppers and wetas are important items in the diet.

The Falcon is a bird one associates with alpine zones although, as someone recently remarked, they seem to be more common outside National Parks than in them and there are not many areas where one could almost guarantee to show off a Falcon or two to a visitor. Thus their sightings, as well as their antics, are always a delight. Falcons in winter may descend to valley floor levels but in summer are more often above the timberline even to the permanent snowfields. Pipits form an important part of their diet, but I have also seen them take Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, N.Z. Pigeon, Tui and Blackbird. I have never known them to feed on deer carcasses or other carrion. Nest sites are typically in pretty inaccessible places on bluffs. Casual observations over the years suggest that Falcon numbers are declining — several well-known former territories now seem to be deserted.

Keas have a similar altitudinal range and are usually more common in valley headwaters, where they favour scrubby bluffs, scrub-covered moraines and fellfields. Numbers are not nearly as great as most people imagine, the average for 54 catchments in this survey being only 9.4. Unlike the Falcon, Keas will now feed on carcasses of anything lying around the mountains, so that in some areas helicopter hunting must be providing them with a considerable source of protein. However, berries, buds, roots and invertebrates still form the bulk of its diet. With the dramatic regeneration in sub-alpine zones resulting from venison recovery Kea populations could be expected to improve.

The Harrier is not really typical of these western altitudes, only two sightings having been made above treeline.

On short-tussock areas Pipits are usually encountered, although their distribution is rather puzzling, with only one or two in some regions and good numbers in others which seem to offer similar resources. Pipits favour dampish habitat with some exposed mineral matter —

rocky outcrops, erosion pavement or fellfield, and hence a few are usually recorded along ridge-tops. They are not found in the mixed tall tussock/scrub zone. Alpine pipits are of a much greyer and paler general coloration than their more tawny lowland relatives.

In general the subalpine scrub is dominated by aliens. In most valleys the Redpoll, Chaffinch and Hedge Sparrow are reasonably common here, with an occasional Blackbird also being recorded. Song Thrush is so far rare at this altitude, having been sighted only once. Near the upper limit where there is scattered scrub among tall snow-tussock the odd Yellowhammer is invariably heard or seen. The only widely distributed native of this zone is the Grey Warbler, although in very robust stands of scrub (usually not far above bushline) the occasional Rifleman, Tomtit, Fantail, Silvereye, Brown Creeper and Bellbird may be present.

WHITE-HEADED YELLOWHAMMER

Not a useless child's plastic toy but a bird seen by DAVID PERRY at Karioitahi Beach, near Waiuku on 19 November. Description: white head, with black eye-stripe; lime yellow chin, breast and belly; brown back and wings; longish, draker brown flicking tail; dark finch-beak; light fawn or white underwing; brown of back continuing up hind-neck and dividing into two thin stripes, not passing over head to base of bill. Dark eye-stripe not bending back to form a 'sideburn' as on usual Yellowhammer.

Partial albinism is frequent with species such as Blackbird and Sparrow. Have others seen similar Yellowhammers?

BLACK-BACKED FISHERMAN

An interesting tale from ALAN JONES of Whitianga whose friend Doug Watt lives at Ohuka Beach, north end of Buffalo Beach. A Black-back born nearby about 5 years ago was often fed on fish scraps and heads by Doug when young. Below the house are two rock groynes forming a truncated V with the narrow end finishing well up the beach. From time to time the gull, Charlie (why are odd animals called Charlie?), shepherds a John Dory or a flounder into the area between the groynes and then drives them toward the beach by swimming behind and jumping up and down. When they are in about a foot of water, it starts pecking them until they are on the beach. Doug then brings a plate and knife and fillets the fish, while Charlie stands by, without protest, knowing he will soon get the carcass.

Phalacrocorax carbo, known in the UK as Cormorant, in Australia as Black Cormorant and in NZ as Black Shag. Yet in the 'Observers book of British Birds' it is stated that shags and cormorants differ in that the shag has 12 tail feathers and the cormorant 14. Is there a story here? (MAL CLARBROUGH)

Red-billed Gulls will be well dispersed from their breeding colonies by now. Don't forget to watch out for the colour-banded Kaikoura birds, note their combinations carefully and report them promptly. It can be important to know how long marked birds remain in the one wintering locality.

WANTED

Refocus on NZ birds by G.J.H.Moon, wanted by Mrs J.F.Skinner, Box 60083, Titirangi, Auckland 7.

NEST RECORD CARDS

Have you sent yours in to David Crockett? April 15 is definitely the final date for him to receive cards, to be included in the 1977-78 Report.

BEACH PATROLS

1977 seems to have been a rather ordinary year for the patroller. Dick Veitch has been waiting for many cards to arrive, including, he hopes, a lot of forgotten nil returns which are important to the record. Conveners of schemes must be allowed time to prepare their reports before the May AGM. It is unfair to put them under last-minute pressure.

Further to the note in *osnz News* No.3. PETER CHILD now reports an extension of the range of the Alexandra colony of Australian Coot; on 26.1.78 there were two adults and a well-grown immature on Butcher's Dam (beside the main Alexandra-Roxburgh highway) about 5 km from the original colony at Lane's Dam. Since there is very good shoreline cover and vegetation of willow, raupo, rushes and aquatic plants it seems likely that another small colony will become established there.

While searching for a White Heron (which was present a fortnight before) at a small new irrigation dam near the Alexandra airport we sighted on 25.5.77 two Banded Dotterel busily feeding in the muddy bottom — the first recorded overwintering for Alexandra. (Elsewhere Dotterel have been reported overwintering inland at West Wanaka, Makarora, and Hawea Flat — see *Notornis* 14: 139).

(PETER & MARGARET CHILD)

A female Paradise Duck, seen with a male at Western Springs, Auckland, recently by DAVID PERRY bore a home-made orange band of what looked like plastic-coated wire. Anyone interested?

YELLOW-CROWNED PARAKEET

Has anyone recorded details of the foods of this species? (The literature seems rather vague on the subject). In recent years I have recorded them feeding on (1) leaf buds & flower buds of Red Beech (in spring);

- (2) leaf buds of Totara inside the forest (spring);
- (3) Rowan berries in a township (autumn);
- (4) leaf buds of Lombardy Poplar (late winter);
- (5) on the ground, feeding on the tiny sees of Browntop (late winter);
- (6) fruits of Matagouri (late summer).

(PETER CHILD)

BLACK-WINGED PETRELS

This species, which breeds on the Kermadecs and the Three Kings, north of Spirits Bay, and has been found ashore on Lord Howe I., is seldom seen around New Zealand. There is apparently some confusion about the same or similar birds breeding on Chatham Is. On 2 February 1978, GILL AN ELLER saw 8 of this distinctive species flying round Hooper Point, at the eastern end of Spirits Bay. They were in pairs, with occasionally a third trying to break in, apparently in courtship flight, flying vigorously around the headland with continuous high-pitched calling. Up to 13 were seen at one time on that day, with good views later in the day of their black-and-white underwing, black under-eye stripe, short black bill and grey wash on sides of neck, as they flew over the camping ground. An occasional pair was seen on other days from the headland and some were heard between 9 and 10 pm on the 7th. David Crockett has also heard them at night in the same area in December 1972 and 1976.

Several Black-winged Petrels were found in early January on Aorangi, the southern of the two main Poor Knights Islands (PAUL SAGAR). This was too early for breeding to be expected but an interesting first record for these islands.

During 2½ weeks on the Poor Knights Is, while Sanry Bartle continued his study of Pycroft's Petrel, Paul Sagar set up 2 mist nets at the central freshwater pool on Aorangi and trapped, weighed and colour-banded 228 Bellbirds. Each day he would search different parts of the island, seeing only two or three marked birds out of 200-300 sightings. There must be a very heavy Bellbird population. Feeding station studies were carried out at the same time.

An Oriental Cuckoo, found by MICHAEL DENNISON on 28 December on a willow lined flat beside the Ruamahanga River near Carterton (Wairarapa), had been there for several weeks, and was seen in the next few days by several members, including Bob Stidolph from Masterton, Geoff Foreman from Wairoa and Max Falconer, Michael Turner and Barrie Heather from Wellington. Gone a week later. Feeding apparently on the caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth, heavily infesting the ragwort on the flat. A rufous-phase bird with smooth brown upper parts and broadly striped under parts but how does one tell the Oriental from the European-type species, both of which are migratory and breed right across to eastern Siberia?

One of the several Glossy Ibis that seem to have become resident near Lake Wairarapa was seen at the north end on 26 December in fine colourful plumage, showing off its distinctive zig-zag style of swift flight. Also there were 6 Sharp-tailed and 1 Pectoral Sandpipers, still present on 4 February together with a Greenshank going into breeding plumage, perhaps the one seen near Boggy Pond in October.

BLACK STILTS

During his study of the feeding of these stilts, RAY PIERCE has come up with some intriguing observations and trials that may just lead to a revival of this fading species. Several aspects of the breeding biology of the Black Stilt seem to make it more vulnerable to predation than the Pied; certainly, out of 7 nests not protected against predation, only one hatched and these chicks did not last a week. Whether nests were visited by humans or not made no difference, whereas Pied Stilt success was generally normal.

Trapping, however, reversed the situation. When the stilts re-nested, their territories were protected by a battery of traps in which ferrets, cats and rats were caught (6 ferrets on two occasions at one nest); the result was that chicks have fledged successfully from 3 of the 4 nests so protected.

There is some evidence for the hypothesis that interbreeding of Black and Pied may not be as inevitable as is commonly believed but that younger Blacks may be forced to select Pied mates for lack of spare fellow-Blacks. A clear case of racism.

Ray plans to trap intensively in Black Stilt territories next season, to see how different a 'predator-free' area will be from an unprotected one.

DABCHICKS

North Island regions will by now have planned their most effective coverage of likely waters during this autumn and winter; some, I know, have records beginning from last December. If you are willing to help watch a local lake or sewage pond and are not already involved, please tell your RR promptly. A region is far too large to be covered regularly by a willing few and every little will help.

South Island regions also should try to keep a watch on lakes, lagoons and oxidation ponds as both Hoary-headed and Australian Little Grebes seem to be roaming the country and, in any case, we do not know whether Dabchicks wander south from the North Island in winter, to turn up in Marlborough and Nelson, or even further a field.

The Dabchick is a quiet bird and may be easily counted in brief visits to their favoured places, **once these are known**. A little patience is often needed, however, since as many birds may be underwater or in reeds as are at first visible.

2 Hoary-headed Grebes found on a lake near Ngataki, north of Houhora in Far North in late January (Far North lake survey); one in full breeding plumage, Lake Purimu, southern Hawkes Bay on 17 December (BDH); one on Lake Elterwater, Marlborough with Little Grebe on 4 February (Jack Taylor, Mike Dennison, Tony Palliser, Hugh Robertson. Little Grebe, one on St Anne's Lagoon, Cheviot, North Canterbury on 11 December (Peter Wilson). These birds certainly move about but may be more numerous than we realise.

PELICANS

After only one record in the past (1 at Wanganui River in 1890), we now have an influx of stray Australian Pelicans. 1 at Dargaville Aug/Sept 1976, 1 dead in Southland, late Nov. 1977, and now another near Timaru and at least two elsewhere in Canterbury. One reported at Opihi River mouth on 18-20 December 1977 by Mr P.W. Welch; reported to Paul Sagar by local fisherman as being present throughout January/February. On 22 December, one seen by Mr D.Warren on north side of Rangitata River near the Arundel bridge and, at same time, 2 large birds apparently pelicans were seen flying further upstream near Peel Forest. 1 reported Rangitata mouth in early January by S.Robertson. 1 seen at Washdyke Lagoon on 3 January by Mr F.B.Ross, chairman of Timaru Forest & Bird. 1 at Birdling's Flat, east of Lake Ellesmere on 17 February 1978 (GEORGE GUY). Two flying over Washdyke Lagoon on 18 February (TONY PALLISER). From information supplied by PAUL SAGAR.

It may be a coincidence that Newsletter 135 of New Guinea Bird Society (in OSNZ Library) records an apparent influx of Australian Pelicans on mainland New Guinea and its outer islands

during July/August 1977. It is suggested that this may be related to the drying out of the central Australian 'desert' which has held pelicans for some years.

BAY OF PLENTY STUDY WEEK, JANUARY

Interim results compiled by SANDY EDGAR make interesting reading. Bay of Plenty is certainly a 'Godwit place', with about 12000 birds: 7500 on Tauranga Harbour (almost half roosting at Bowentown and half at Sulphur Point), 3500 on Ohiwa Harbour (between Whakatane and Opotiki), and flocks of between 500 and 1000 on Maketu and Little Waihi lagoons. Incredibly, not a 'Knot place', only 7 being recorded on Maketu.

Coastal counts gave 270 Turnstone, 45 Wrybill, 1700 Pied Stilt, over 60 Golden Plover and NZ Dotterel, 14 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 6 Curlew, 11 Whimbrel (9 at Ohiwa), a few Stint and a Siberian Tattler at Kaituna. The Greenshank seen at Matahui Point, Tauranga on 27 November by Bruce Goffin and Paddy Latham was still there. The infamous Fairy Tern was again at Sulphur Point, with 7 Little Tern. 13 Little Tern altogether. Full results will appear in *Notornis*.

The week was planned jointly by Roy Weston, Paddy Latham, Beth Brown and Betty Seddon. About 50 people took part, most visitors staying in Papamoa Beach camping ground; visitors came from Northland, Auckland regions, Waikato, Wairarapa and Wellington, together with two ladies from UK visiting Tauranga. The local knowledge of Tony Palliser (Rotorua) and John Cockrem (Waikato) was much appreciated, as was the help of Wildlife officers Dick Veitch and Peter Fisher. Evening meetings were held at Papamoa play centre, with time for discussion, talks, slides and an excellent meal. The final gathering was at Paddy and Rosemary Latham's home where members and friends enjoyed a barbecue prepared by Bryony Veitch and Hazel Harty, with Dick Veitch in best form as chef.

A bush day in Otanewainuku Reserve, south of Te Puke, gave sightings of both cuckoos, Rifleman, Whitehead, Pied Tit, Robin, Tui, Bellbird and a glimpse of Kokako. Rooks were noted near Tauranga and Little Waihi. A sheaf of mapping cards was completed, and beach patrols from Matakana Island to Whakatane produced 99 specimens, including a Hutton's and 46 Short-tailed Shearwaters. The **Whakatane Beacon** of 17 January gave an accurate write-up (White-faced Terns?) and a noble portrait of Roy Weston with telescope and tripod on shoulder and finger pointing skywards, presumably showing members where to find birds.

BLACK SWANS

Keep up the good work with reporting banded swans. MURRAY WILLIAMS reports that another large number of swans was marked with collars over the summer: 1000 with green collars at Farewell Spit, 500 with yellow collars at Lake Wairarapa, 180 with white collars on Hawkes Bay lakes and about 200 with red collars at Rotorua.

At Lake Ellesmere, Wildlife is trying to catch moulting adults and put numbered pink collars on those which are already metal banded. This is the start of a long-term study of Ellesmere swans. These collared birds will be a sample of known-age birds, since cygnets have been metal banded at Ellesmere every year since 1956.

This summer, for the first time, Otago and Southland birds have been marked, with pale blue collars. This should give southern members something to look for! Be careful to distinguish pale blue from green, and pink from red, as swans may wander great distances.

FAR NORTH LAKES

18 Far North members carried out the annual survey of coastal lakes in the extreme north on 28-30 January, based on Parengarenga Harbour. Many of the lakes, supporting birds last year, were dried up with the hot dry conditions and these results, supplied by MIKE KEARNS, reflect this. Black Swan 164, Paradise Duck 837, Grey Duck 50, Mallard 494, Shoveler 13, Scaup 10, Dabchick 7; Shags: Black 57, Pied 25, Little 64, Little Black 17; Coot 2, Bittern 2, White-faced Heron 4, Pied Stilt 156, Royal Spoonbill 2, Hoary-headed Grebe 2. Beach patrols were made on Ninety-mile Beach and Great Exhibition Bay and many visits made to Parengarenga Harbour.

The Sulphur-crested Cockatoo has been about a bit this year. Mrs HAZEL NEWTON reports from her home north of Wanganui a flock of at least 20 feeding with raucous screeching on walnut trees on neighbouring properties. The apparently appear each November, presumably from the population in upper Turakina Valley. This time they did not stay long but several days later, hearing a strident call, she finally located a cockatoo flying very high, estimated by a friend as 2,000ft. This lends weight to the view that some, at least, can get caught by winds and may get blown to NZ.

On 13 November, 12 or more were seen on the fringes of the Waiterere pine forest, north of Levin by Max Falconer and other Wellington members on their way back from Manawatu estuary. Farmer gossip along the Turakina to Hawera coast mentioned sundry strange parrots in September 1977; for example, on Roger Honeyfield's coastal farm at Kakarama near Patea, were recorded a Galah on 12 Sept, 3 Galahs and 20 Cockatoos on 19 September. They did not stay.

MT COOK BEACH PATROLS

Reading in each issue of *OSNZ News* the various discoveries of beach patrollers, Mt Cook rangers sometimes wish they could share the joys of warm sun, soft sand and sea birds wheeling overhead. Although far from beaches, MAL CLARBROUGH and his colleagues have some interesting sightings made during glacier travel to some of the Park huts on ski patrol of Tasman Glacier.

Tasman Glacier

- Feb. 1978 Remains of Goldfinch found in the snow close to Tasman saddle hut 7,500 ft a.s.l.
- Feb. 1978 Undamaged, leached out body of juvenile Black Backed Gull found floating in melt-pool on glacier at about 4,800 ft a.s.l.
- Jne 1975 Silveryeye flying around on glacier neve at 7,000 ft looked very weak and gave plaintive cheep.
- Jne 1975 White faced Heron stood observing ski-planes landing at Darwin corner strip 5,500 ft a.s.l.
- Jne 1975 Two Silveryeyes found dead on Lendenfeld saddle at 7,900 ft, and about 6 metres apart. Died in Love?

Hooker Glacier

- Nov. 1970 Remains of Shining Cuckoo at about 4,500 ft a.s.l.
- Nov. 1976 Pipits heard calling close to Empress hut 8,500 ft.
- Nov. 1977 Chaffinch, female, visited site of Empress hut, then flew off towards Harper saddle, on the main divide.

NEW TERN SPECIES

Lake Horowhenua, Levin, has been in the news in 1977, not only for its large Dabchick flock and a Hoary-headed Grebe watched by Eric Jones, but for three terns which, subject to approval by Rare Birds Committee, will be first positive records in NZ of the Australian Whiskered Tern and the Eastern Common Tern.

From early August to 5 October, 2 Whiskered Terns in winter plumage were present, one remaining until 19 October. Studied with much debate by ERIC JONES and BARRIE HEATHER, seen also by Bill Cash and Alan Gollop, the characteristic even light-grey upper surface from hind-neck to tail, the black bill and legs with crimson tinge, C shaped eye-to-eye black line and white underwing gave an appearance very unlike the Black-fronted Tern. In the last days, each bird began to show blackish belly feathers and a complete black cap.

On 11 December, a single bird was 'found' and identified independently by Barrie Heather, Eric Jones, and a party including BOB STIDOLPH, BILL CASH, MICHAEL TURNER, MICHAEL DENNISON, HUGH ROBERTSON, a mighty battery of 'experts'. In heavy moult, the bird had brown legs, black bill, deeply forked tail (much less so than White-fronted), much darker grey upper surface than in White-fronted with distinctly contrasting white rump and tail. Almost complete black cap reaching base of bill. Last seen on the 14th, this bird must be lurking somewhere in the country, perhaps with others? Flocks of up to 1,600 have been recorded in recent years in SE Australia.

Horowhenua is likely to receive many more ornithological visitors than usual this year, for it seems to be a favoured stop-over place for stray terns.

A Spine-tailed Swift was seen by BEN BELL feeding low over fields near Cape Turakirae east of Wellington on 16 February. A wet, southerly day probably brought the bird low, for it was not seen again. Up to 10 Spurwings were also in the area. Ben mentions 2, possibly 4 Spine-tailed Swifts seen in Canterbury high country in January by Ron Ballin and Chris Christie. An unusual sighting on the Turakirae coast was of a Leopard Seal among the usual Fur Seals on the shore.

TARAMAIRE

A footnote on the item in *OSNZ News* No. 5 from Dick Veitch points out that the land adjacent to the wader roosts at Taramaire, Firth of Thames, is Wildlife Management Reserve and permission is not needed to enter it. Although Mrs Batger's stock grazes this land which has therefore been fenced between reserve and road, her own land is slightly to the south. It would still seem tactful, however, to avoid confrontation.

HEATHCOTE-AVON SURVEYS

Since October 1976, Christchurch members have been making monthly counts on this estuary which, although strangely lacking over the years in the rarities that stimulate many of us to go out and look, should be a rewarding site to show the seasonal trends of waders and waterfowl that we know surprisingly little about.

Already there are interesting trends. Godwits, as expected, built up their numbers to a high in January 1977, with a decrease then to March. The number remained constant until

early September when they began to build up again. The SIPO trend differs: numbers are low in October-December while they are breeding, build up in January to a February peak of about 3,700. There is a drop of about 1,000 in March and numbers fluctuate between 2,400 and 2,800 until July, drop to about 700 in early September, a sharp increase followed by decrease back to 700 in late September (North Island birds returning?), and no further change for rest of breeding season. A further year at least of counts is planned.

Early problems with consistent counts of waterfowl have been solved by having permission to drive round the sewage oxidation ponds which border the north-west edge of the estuary. We look forward to the trends which will be revealed by another year's counting. Information supplied by BARRY ARMSTRONG.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERNS

Information wanted. Few are in NZ at present but anyone who sees one is asked to make very careful notes of birds not in full breeding plumage, as there is some confusion as to the head and mantle patterns of birds that appear in Australia. Apart from date and weather, descriptions are needed of the pattern of markings on head, nape, hind-neck and mantle; type of habitat and as far as possible the type of prey being taken.

The moult sequence of birds in Australia during the 1956-57 irruption was described as (a) October, black patch round eye, gone by December, leaving all-white head (b) late December to March, smudgy round eye, broad black band from ear coverts across hind-crown to ear coverts, plus narrow band from centre of hind-crown down mid-line of nape. This sequence differs from birds described for Europe and Africa.

Please send information while fresh to R.-J. Pierce, Zoology Dept, University of Otago, Box 56, Dunedin.

NEW SPECIES FOR CENTRAL OTAGO

On 22.12.77 I picked up a White-headed Petrel (which apparently had been dead for several weeks) beneath the television translator tower at the top of the Old Man Range, Central Otago. (alt. 5500'). As is often the habit with other petrels it had probably been attracted by the light on the tower. (PETER CHILD)

2 small examples already from this season show the unpredictable movements of Dabchick: (a) During 4 days in December at Lake Waikato, near Waitotara, South Taranaki, there were 2 (newly arrived) on 10th, 4 on 11th, 16 on 12th, 2 on 13th (BDH); (b) On Waingawa oxidation ponds near Masterton were 2 adults already on 16 Dec., 1 adult, 1 juvenile on 29 Dec., 3 adults, 1 juvenile on 7 January (BDH, Bob Stidolph et al.); 9 on 23 Feb., 16 on 28 Feb. plus an immature or moulting-adult Little Grebe which kept well apart and was behaving differently (Bob Stidolph).

If you see a strange grebe, tell someone, to get a second opinion before it moves on.

A Little Whimbrel near Blenheim was discovered by RICHARD HOLDAWAY who kept it under observation from 24-31 December, as it fed in short grass and on a small pond near but not with godwits.

BROWN TEAL RELEASES

Since 1974 the Wildlife Service has been releasing captive-reared Brown Teal on some of the dune lakes near Himitungi, north of Foxton in Manawatu. About 150 have been released, reared at Mount Bruce Native Bird Reserve, at Hilldale Zoo near Hamilton and by Trevor Voss at Hawera and Neil Hayes at Wellington. Although not proven, their breeding in the wild is strongly suspected; certainly they are surviving well.

After a search for other suitable release areas, Wildlife has decided on the Collingwood-Farewell Spit region. By now, Doug Zumbach at Nelson will have released about 20 birds on one of the Kaihoka lakes on the northern headland of Westhaven Inlet. These were bred by Murray Powell at Hilldale Zoo. It is hoped to release birds from other breeders later this year into several creeks and rivers flowing into Collingwood estuary. Birds will continue to be released near Himitungi at intervals, to maintain and boost the population there.

Field study of natural populations has barely begun, with Dick Anderson at Whangarei studying the size of the Helena Bay population and testing techniques of marking and capture. At Great Barrier, the species' last major stronghold, emphasis has been on habitat use so that reserves can be assured. A major capture and marking programme will then start, aiming to decide whether and how many birds can be removed each year to add to other releases. (MURRAY WILLIAMS)

A dead Fairy Prion picked up by Pat Crombie on 9 October on Muriwai Beach north of Auckland had been banded on Stephens I. on 7/10/63, therefore at least 15 years old.

OSNZ Library

These books have been recently acquired, 3 being on exchange from the Library of Congress. The last two are reprints.

An Introduction to ornithology, by G.J. Wallace & H.D. Mahan. 3rd ed. 1975. MacMillan, New York. 546pp.

Pictorial guide to the birds of North America, New York. 1970. 368pp. 80 species, each with field notes, map, drawings, photos. 18pp appendix on US Wildlife Refuges.

The migration of birds, by Jean Dorst. 1962. 476pp.

Birds of the ocean, by W.B. Alexander. 1928. 428pp.

Birds of Nova Scotia, by R.W. Tufts, N.S. Museum. 2nd ed. 1973. 532pp.

Birds of the Caribbean, by R.P. Allen. 1961. 253pp. 98 col.pl. Text deals with behaviour, food sources & conservation, plus records of early expeditions.

Australian birds in colour, by K. Hindwood. Reed, 1966. 112pp. 52 col.pl. with full text.

Birds of Australia, by Breadon & Slater. 1968. 144pp. 200 photos.

A first guide to South African birds, by L. Gill. 4th ed. 1950. 239pp.

Birds of Malaysia, by Jean Delacour. 1947. 382pp.

The birds, by R.T. Peterson et al. Time Life. 192pp.

Seminar on science in national parks. 1976 proceedings. Nat.Pks Authority, Wellington. 573pp.

A survey of the native bird fauna of forests in the proposed beech project area of North Westland, by I.G. Crook, H.A. Best & M. Harrison. Proc. NZ Ecol. Soc. 1977.

Arctic waders wintering in NZ, by C.R. Veitch. Proc. NZ Ecol. Soc. 1977.

(ANTHEA GOODWIN)

CATTLE EGRET

As soon as birds first appear, I hope members who can get to them will try to make a close examination of their plumage for traces of breeding colour, particularly on the crown, and any variations from the standard yellow bill and facial skin and greenish-slate legs. Do they have yellowish soles, as the books say, and yellowish on the upper part of the legs?

Do not despair if they did not breed; at least we know they did not, and the fact of a large-scale migration across over 1000 miles of ocean is more startling than if they had bred. Many birds lingered tantalisingly late into December; one was near Blenheim as late as Christmas Eve, and another appeared briefly at Manawatu estuary on 7 January — both in breeding plumage. There seems to be a small resident population near Lake Ellesmere whose cycle may be separate from the rest of the birds we have had, but breeding has yet to be confirmed. Departure from NZ seems to have been piecemeal, without preliminary flocking or any movement northward.

Little seems to have been published about the Asian subspecies we get here. Detailed studies have been made in South Africa and USA of the African subspecies but our birds seem to differ in many details of plumage phases and general behaviour. Whatever we can learn here is likely to be new knowledge.

This year, please make sure that any birds found dead are preserved, preferably deep-frozen while arrangements are made for delivery to nearest major museum. We need specimens from which to correlate plumage with age. Also carefully note colours of soft parts of freshly dead birds before they fade, comparing perhaps with a paint chart for accuracy.

A national count will be arranged again this year, probably again in August when most birds have settled into fewer, stable flocks (assuming they come back).

WADERS ON CHATHAM IS

Results received from HUGH ROBERTSON for the first full story of Te Whanga Lagoon, which covers an area of 20,000 ha. and is 20km from north to south by up to 15km wide. 17 people took part, using two very full landrovers. There is good wader habitat around the northern end, and on the east side at the opening, which has been closed for 3 years. Black Swan could not be counted as their black dots covered the lagoon, extending to the horizon. Black Shag 161, Chatham I. Shag 4, White-faced Heron 69, Grey Duck 151, Mallard 42, Harrier 7, Weka 11, Pukeko 3, Golden Plover 9, Banded Dotterel 29, Godwit 555, Turnstone 18†, Knot c.728, Greenshank 1, Pied Stilt 1, Black-backed Gull 165, Red-billed Gull 929, White-fronted Tern 236. The stilt was a second record, the other being in 1961.

A very pleasing aspect was the abundance of the Pipit in coastal areas — Tennick and Hugh counted 16 on one small beach (75m long) near Port Hutt. Swallows were seen but no sign of nesting found.

A White-fronted Tern found by DAVE SIM while on holiday in Kaikoura, had been banded by JACK COWIE in November 1961 and was thus nearly 16. The same bird had already been sight-recorded at Clarence by John Hilton in Dec. 1965 and at Kaikoura by Jim Mills in Dec. 1971.

PUBLICATIONS

Bird count. A practical guide to bird surveys, by Humphrey M. Dobinson. Penguin Books, 1976. Useful paperback designed for Britain but applicable in NZ. Covers census work, counting techniques, nest boxes, next recording, recording of migration, sea-watching, roosting, banding.

The Birds of paradise and bower birds, by W.T. Cooper & J.M. Forshaw. Collins 1977. \$125. 304pp. 60 col. paintings. Availability notified by Gordon Dryden's Book Corner, Box 6825, Wellesley St., Auckland.

Birds of the Southwest Pacific, by E. Mayr. (1945). Professor Mayr has written to say that, if members visiting Fiji, etc have difficulty obtaining his book, it is available (1968 reprint) from Wheldon & Wesley Ltd, Lytton Lodge, Codicote, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 8TE, England. 8.50 + extra for air-mail.

Sound library catalogue, Wildlife Service, Dept of Internal Affairs. 4th edition, Oct. 1977. Taped calls of 282 species of NZ birds, + many extra as subspecies; 5 mammals, tuatara, 3 frogs, 3 insects. Details on obtaining copies are in the introduction.

The care of sick, injured and orphaned native birds and animals, by Jack Wheeler. 21 page booklet published by Geelong Naturalists' Club, Victoria. Most RRs have a copy; I have several spares and will order more if members wish them. 40c. each to cover postage and a donation to send to Australia to help with their production.

An addition to the list of Hawkes Bay sites for the Coot, apart from Tutira and Horseshoe Lakes, is the Hurimoana swamp, Fernhill, near Taradale (KATH TODD). There are several lakes and swamps in this area, so that the Coot may be more numerous than is at present known there.

The 7 Black-fronted Dotterels which spent the winter in Bay of Plenty at the Kaituna Cut have disappeared, perhaps to breed locally. Still 7 on 27 August, there were only 2 on 11 September and none on 9 October and all visits since. (PADDY LATHAM). We hear from PETER SCHWEIGMAN that the two immortal Otago birds of the Taieri had returned recently.

During a recent trip to Fiji, Rarotonga and Aitutaki, CONNIE and ALAN WRIGHT managed a little bird watching. On Rarotonga they saw Wandering Tattler, Golden Plover, Reef Heron, White Tern, White-tailed Tropicbird (7 in one group), Rarotongan Starling and Fruit Dove. On Aitutaki, where tattlers and Golden Plover were on all beaches and open spaces, even the grass in front of the motel, they saw the same coastal species and the local lorikeets in banana and coconut plantations, where they are known as "nun birds". We'll ignore the mynas.

BACK NUMBERS

Laurie Howell is preparing a series of mini-indexes on several topics which may help members in selection of back numbers that might interest them. Abbreviations: 3/2:122 = volume 3, part 2, page 122.

Parengarenga Harbour & Farewell Spit articles

Parengarenga & Farthest North (Watt). 2/5:115

Parengarenga Harbour (Turbott). 4/6:122

Farewell Spit (Stidolph) 3/2:64. (Bell, McKenzie, Sibson, Edgar) 21/3:250.

Beach Patrol results

1939-59: 9/6. 1960: 9/7. 1961: 10/6. 1962: 10/8. 1963: 12/3. 1964: 16/1. 1965: 22/2. 1966: 22/2. 1967: not published. 1968: 17/3. 1969: 18/4. 1970-72: not published. 1973: 22/3. 1974: 23/2. 1975: 24/1.

Articles on offshore islands

Bare I., Hawkes Bay (Merton) 9/5:168. Brothers I. (Sutherland) 4/6:136; 5/1:26.

Campbell I. (Kinsky) 16/4:225.

Cavalli Is. (Sibson) 5/6:197.

Codfish I., Stewart I. (Dell) 3/9:231. (Blackburn) 15/2:51.

Cook Strait Is (Dawson) 8/2:39.

Chatham Is (Bell) 6/3:65. (Dawson) 6/3:78. (Lindsay et al.) 8/4:99.

Coppermine I. (Hen & Chickens) (Merton & Atkinson) 15/2:100.

Cuvier I. (Blackburn) 14/1:3. (Reed) 23/3:259.

Gisborne coast is. (Bell & Blackburn) 8/8:244.

Great Barrier Is (Bell & Brathwaite) 10/8:363. (Reed) 19/3:274. (Bell) 23/4:310; 24/1:60.

Green I. (& Stanley I.) (Thoresen) 14/4:182.

Great I. (Three Kings) (Ramsay & Watt) 18/4:287.

Hen & Chickens (Sibson) 3/7:183. (Chambers et al.) 6/5:152. (Heather) 7/6:171. (Skegg) 11/3:159.

Kapiti I. (Stidolph) 3/1:13.

Kermadec Is (Sorenson) 11/2:69. (Merton) 15/1:3.

Korapuki I. (Mercuries) Hicks et al. 22/3:195.

Little Barrier (Turbott) 2/5:195. (Sibson) 2/6:134. (McKenzie) 3/1:4. (Sibson) 3/6:151. (McKenzie) 3/9:229. (Dawson) 4/2:27.

Little Ohena (Mercuries) (Blackburn) 17/4:297.

Macquarie I. (Warham) 16/3:190. (Merlees) 18/1:55.

Mana I. (Sedgwick) 6/4:120.

Mayor I. (Edwards) 6.4:118.

Mercury I. (Edgar) 10/1:1. (Skegg) 10/4:153.

Mokohinau I. (Buddle) 2/4:69. (Roberts) 5/6:197.

Motunau I. (Crockett) 6/2:49.

Moturoa Is. (Cape Karikari) (Adams) 18/1:43.

Muttonbird Is. (Stewart Is) (Blackburn) 12/4:191.

Open Bay Is (Stirling & Johns) 16/2:121.

Poor Knights Is (Kinsky & Sibson) 8/5:132.

Simmonds I. (Houhora Harbour)

(Wagener) 13/3:150.

Snares Is (Expedition) 2/8:181. (Stead) 3/3:70. (Warham) 14/3:122. (Warham & Kealey) 16/4:221. (Fleming & Baker) 20/1:37. (Horning) 21/1:13.

Solander I. (Falla) 3/2:52. (Wilson) 20/4:318.

Stanley & Green Is (Mercuries) (Thoresen) 14/4:182.

Stephensons I. (Whangaroa) (Bell) 8/8:255.

Stewart I (islands) (Stead) Reports & Bulletins:68. (Martin) 3/9:230. (Dawson) 4/6:146.

Sugarloaf Is (New Plymouth) (Sedgwick) 3/2:42. (Merton) 9/5:162.

Three Kings (Buddle) 3/6:147.

West King (Johnson) 4/2:21.

(Note: Vol.7 Part 6 not available)

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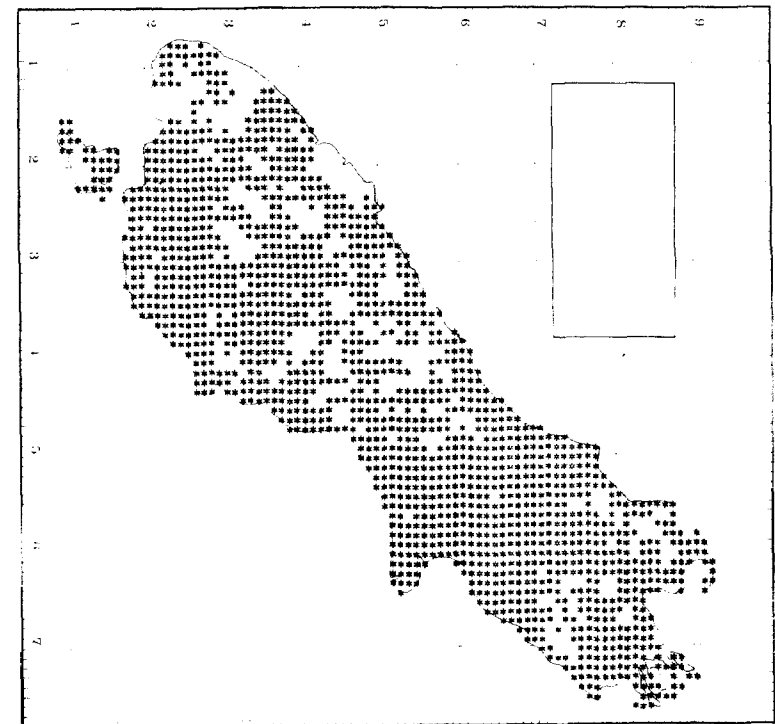
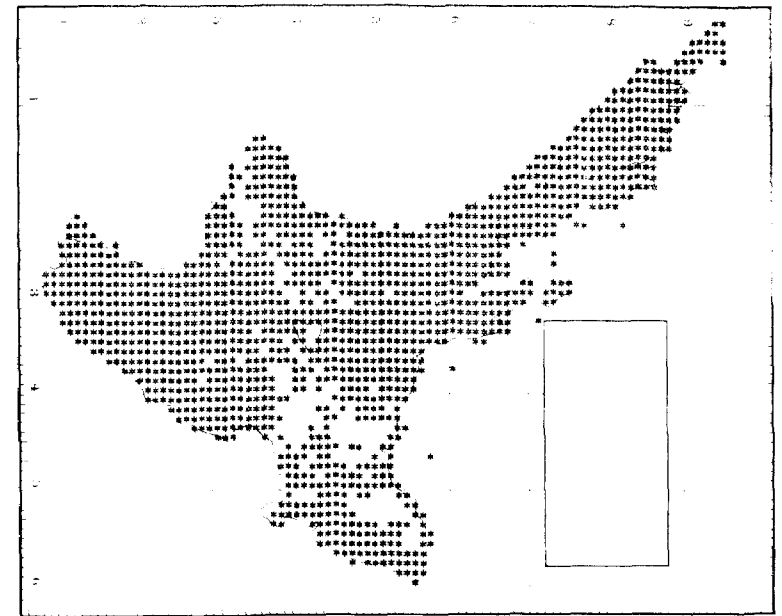
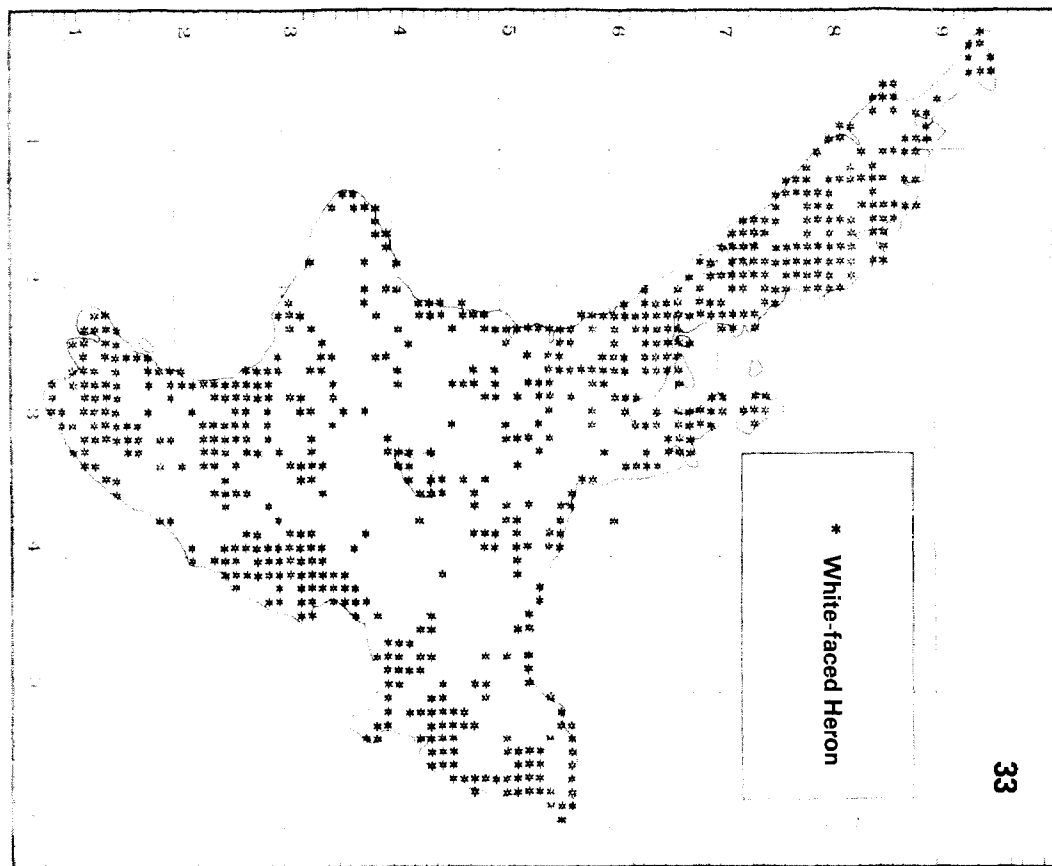
increase in numbers came in a series of small jumps initially, starting about mid-September. Paul Sagar spotted a Curlew which stayed for about a fortnight. The December counts were four to six times those of winter.

The waders returning to the Ashley included an Asiatic Whimbrel, several stints, small flocks of Turnstone and 20 Knot. Breeding Wrybills, banded by Rod Hay, had returned to the Rakaia riverbed some weeks before the first of these birds appeared on the coast. At about the same time, the few Variable Osytercatchers which had wintered with the Pies, disappeared presumably to breed. The Mongolian Dotterel, first seen in October 1976 was still present and occasionally a second bird, believed to be a female, recognisable by a broken dangling leg. A particularly interesting vagrant was a smallish tern, so far unidentified, light grey on top, off-white beneath, with sooty patches above the eyes and a white front and crown like a Caspian in eclipse. It had blood-scarlet feet and a two-tone bill, brick-red on the base two-thirds and dark brown or black on the tip. It seemed slightly smaller than a pursuing Black-fronted Tern and had a medium-length but clearly forked tail. Any suggestions?

The Scaup count is increasing on the waterways and coastal lagoons, with quite successful breeding in some previously unreported localities. A few years ago the Scaup was to be found only on inland lakes and tarns. A hybrid goose, part Canada, part domestic, appeared for one day on the waterways at Waikuku.

Heavy winter rain filled the lagoon whose northern section is on Na Mara farm near Amberley Beach, giving locals a splendid chance to watch the mating and breeding of several waders and waterfowl. At the least, several hundred Mallard and Grey Duck have successfully fledged and in early December there were still broods of all ages feeding on both halves of the lake. Several Shoveler broods were seen. A pair of Spurwings with 3 eggs seemed to raise only one chick. Over a dozen Pied Stilt were observed sitting but only the earlier nesters seemed to have raised young. Some broods began with 3 chicks which fell to 2 after two or three days. When fledged, the chicks were taken north several miles to the Waipara River lagoon. As all these birds were within a few hundred feet of the road they could be observed and photographed from the car to the heart's content.

A note in No.4 Mrs Pen Smith about a squeak bottle and barrier has reminded Archie Blackburn of two occasions when he has called up a stoat to within three or four yards. On the first occasion he was calling up Brown Creeper in the Dunedin green belt when a stoat suddenly appeared a few feet away; on the second he was trying to attract Yellowhead in an alleged habitat of tall scrub at Makarora when he saw a stoat at some distance. It made it devious way to within a few feet. This may not be unusual, since the squeak bottle can suggest an injured bird, but it is seldom mentioned.



ABOVE .. Total Coverage of Squares in Atlas.

BELOW .. Actual Size of map from the Atlas.

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