



# OSNZ news

No. 10 March, 1979

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 2/362 Hereford Street, Christchurch, for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

NOTE: Deadline for June 1979 issue will be 31 May.

## High Altitude Birds

An altitude record for the White-backed Magpie? On 25 February near Mt. Dotterel on the south end of the Pisa Range, Central Otago, five adults were seen flying about and calling. They then settled to feed among the alpine tussock and tundra-type vegetation at about 1700 m. The main food item here was probably the common alpine grasshopper *Sigauss australis*.

Later the same day a Broad-billed Sandpiper was seen among a flock of Banded Dotterel on the summit of the Pisa Range, at an altitude of 1860 m. We had been watching two or three flocks of post-breeding dotterels scattered along the broad summit ridge, and had sat down to lunch in a seepage hollow below a late-summer snowbank. A flock of about 10 dotterels wheeled about and landed 50 m away and began feeding alongside a small meltwater stream and among wet mossy and shingly depressions below the snowbank. As they approached our attention was drawn to the leader, which was obviously different and much less timid than the Banded Dotterels. It had a different stance, more squat and slightly smaller in height than an immature Banded Dotterel, with a shorter neck, noticeably bold patterning on the upper plumage, whiter below than the Banded Dotterels with faint grey spotting on the upper breast, and no sign of a breast band. On its closest approach, to about 4 m, the crown was seen to be streaked with distinct grey and whitish longitudinal striations; the legs were conspicuously light olive-green, not the greyish-green of the Banded Dotterels.

It was somewhat of a 'loner' — after the dotterels flew off it remained a while longer feeding up the slope. No calls were heard although the dotterels were often 'chipping.' Presumably this bird had got caught up in the Banded Dotterel migration and had spent its summer on the Pisa Range summits, 150 km inland and nearly 2000 m above its normal sea-level habitat.

PETER CHILD

WORD BOTCHERS may be interested in recent happenings around SOUTHERN AUKLAND. Spring arrivals included a nice flock of SAND-  
EW CURLPAPERS and a trendy GARBLED MODWIT. A rumour that several STANDARD BILTS had been blown here from across the Tasman is without foundation. Hood's Landing, on the Waikato River, has no criminal connection that we know of but has shown us a glimpse of a ONCE BIT-  
TERN (or TWICE-SHY HERON). The WHISKY (or STONED) TERN flew in such drunken circles that every second batch of eager list-tickers were able to see it before it veered off. Those who feel that they are part of inner terning circles are confident that they will readily identify any COMIC TERN that may appear by its propensity for cracking bad yolks. Our neighbouring REED BUNTING is busy after her trans-equatorial migration. In her absence her large brood was carefully tended and nurtured by a well-liked modest TAYLORBIRD.

Yours umberly BROWNBIRD.

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## 1978-79 Chatham Island Expedition

In the December issue of *OSNZ news* the objectives of the continued search for the Taiko were outlined. The expedition has now been in the field for three months and is making steady progress. The capture of three further specimens of the Chatham Island Taiko (*Pterodroma magentae*) early in December was a great start to the expedition. These birds were weighed, measured, banded and photographed before being released.

Following comparison of the measurements of the January and December 1978 specimens of Taiko I am now convinced that five different birds have been handled. During December other sightings of Taiko were made at the observation station on a ridge overlooking the Tuku Gully, but no further birds were captured. Strange calls heard on three occasions could turn out to be flight calls of the Taiko.

The main Tuku Gully has been

searched without any burrows being located. However, during January expedition members gained access to a large new catchment containing many ridges and bluffs that could provide suitable sites for breeding Taiko. Areas in the new catchment will be investigated in March and April, when a technique involving a spotter in radio contact with the burrow searching party will be used.

Over the past three months expedition members have patrolled 137 km of the more accessible beaches on the Chathams with the possibility of picking up a storm-killed Taiko. Unfortunately a derelict Taiko seems to be as elusive as the burrows.

Also during the past three months a well-equipped and self-sufficient Base Camp has been established on the bush edge near the Tuku. This means that valuable time is no longer used in continually supplying the basic needs of food, water and fuel. The development of tracks and fly camps has enabled expedition personnel to work in what would otherwise be almost inaccessible terrain. With three months to go until the conclusion of the expedition hopes are still high that breeding burrows will be located.

Since the last issue of *OSNZ news* a generous grant from the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. and numerous donations of equipment from several companies have enabled a sustained effort in the field to be maintained.

DAVID E. CROCKETT (Expedition Leader)

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Magpies appear to be increasing in Nelson and Westland. From Nelson PETER GAZE reports that White-backed Magpies seem to be slowly infiltrating the region from both north and south. Several groups of 3-4 birds are resident in the Wakefield area and the occasional bird is seen between Nelson and the Rai Valley. STEWART LAUDER reports that White-backed Magpies are spreading quite rapidly and breeding in Westland. Recently he saw a Black-backed Magpie at Lake Haupiri Station.

## Subantarctic Islands Expedition

The Wildlife Service expedition (see OSNZ news 9) loaded stores and a new hut for the Antipodes Islands at Auckland and sailed to Christchurch aboard HMNZS *Waikato* on 2 November 1978. The main party sailed from Christchurch on 6 November, arriving at the Bounty Islands at first light the next day. CHRIS ROBERTSON (leader), Dr GERRY VAN TETS and Dr DON HORNING were landed at Proclamation Island by rubber boat, in heavy seas and winds up to 50 knots. A good camp was established, specially designed tents anchored to the bare and slippery rocks. Almost two tonnes of supplies, equipment and enough fresh water for a month were manhandled up the sides of the island.

For the next 13 days the party carried out studies of the Salvin's Mollymawk and Bounty Island Shag and made general observations on the Fulmar Prion, Erect-crested Penguin, Cape Pigeon and seals. Don Horning sampled the invertebrate fauna and undertook a number of dives round the islands in water temperatures of 7°C to collect marine material for the National Museum. The party was uplifted by the *Waikato* on 20 November after the longest occupancy at the Bounties for 170 years.

Meanwhile the main party had landed at Antipodes Island on 8 November, using the *Waikato's* Wasp helicopter to land some 18 tonnes of stores including the new hut. The first two weeks were somewhat uncomfortable with only the old castaway depot roofed with a tarpaulin and tents to live and work in until the new hut was erected.

HMNZS *Waikato* visited again on 21 November after picking up the Bounty Islands party. Votes for the General Election were collected with about a third of the votes counting in marginal electorates. Previously *Waikato* had had a busy week rescuing an injured Russian seaman in the same general area. The ship then departed for Campbell and then the Auckland Islands where the TV1 Wildlife Unit collected material to go with that obtained already at the Bounties and Antipodes. Sir ROBERT FALLA was able to visit his old haunts and even at his age was able to wear out the ship's company, the oldest of whom was more than 35 years his junior.

The Antipodes party was picked up on 6 December and landed back at Auckland on 8 December. Throughout the period HMNZS *Waikato* steamed some 19 000 km while doing fisheries protection, search and rescue and trans-

porting the expedition. This wide coverage enabled JOHN JENKINS to do more than 100 hours of detailed observations of birds at sea. Sightings ranged from small passerines far from land to the expected albatrosses and petrels. These records sampled a sea area of some 625 000 square kilometres. For Atlas mappers this represents more than twice the number of mapping squares on the N.Z. land mass.

The Antipodes party recorded a number of firsts. Circumnavigation of the main island in small boats became commonplace and a number of landings were made on Bollons Island and all other accessible offshore stacks and islets. Bollons Island was occupied mainly by Little Shearwaters, showing the main N.Z. population to be breeding at the Antipodes and its outlying islands.

The identification of the mollymawks breeding at Bollons Island as the nominate and not the local (Campbell Island) race of the Black-browed Mollymawk was a new addition to the albatrosses of the New Zealand subantarctic. Other items of note apart from the banding of more than 1 000 Wandering Albatross chicks were sightings of a flock of 15 Turnstones, one Gentoo and one Chinstrap Penguin, a House Sparrow and a Grey Duck, as well as an Amsterdam Island Seal.

Studies of the ecology of petrels, para-keets, mice and seaweeds (more diving in very cold water) all contributed daily to a varied diet round the meal table; while JOHN KENDRICK added another 14 species to the Wildlife Service national collection of bird calls. Perhaps one day the National Programme will give us Erect-crested Penguins with the breakfast programme.

For those interested three full pages of photographic coverage have appeared in the Evening Post of 5, 13 and 20 January.

CHRIS ROBERTSON

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## Avian Combat

Geoff Tunnicliffe of the Canterbury Museum, Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch 1, is studying avian combat and is interested in first hand observations on avian fighting in any species. References to published descriptions or photographs of fighting behaviour (both inter and intraspecific) would be appreciated. A survey of the literature so far has revealed that a good source of photographs of birds fighting is the more popular type of book and magazine. It is hoped to publish about this aspect of bird behaviour and any personal observations will be fully acknowledged.

## OSNZ Tie

Definitely the latest thing for the trendy birdwatcher. Available from B. D. Bell, 9 Ferry Road, Seatoun, Wellington. Send \$6.00, crossed cheque or postal order made out to Ornithological Society of N.Z. The ties are a medium grey weave, with repeated pattern of Notornis in red, blue and green.

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STU MOORE organised a combined Wildlife Service/OSNZ survey of the upper Rakaia River during early November. 219 Wrybills, 619 Banded Dotterels, 1238 Black-backed Gulls, 224 Black-billed Gulls, 403 Black-fronted Terns, 28 Spur-winged Plovers, 4 White-faced Herons, 170 SIPO, 29 Black Shags, 1 Little Shag, 73 Mallard, 20 Grey Ducks, 782 Paradise Ducks, 305 Canada Geese, 2 Pied Stilts and 3 Welcome Swallows were seen from the gorge to Lake Stream.

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GEORGE GRANT went to Balclutha on 12 September, following a report of Rooks in that area, and found 5 birds and 2 nests in a tall eucalypt. Flocks of up to 13 Rooks were seen in the Te Houka area (16 km. west of Balclutha) at the end of August/beginning of September.

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BRUCE KEELEY reports that while visiting the Ngaruroro River, near Mangatahi, recently he saw a pair of adult SIPO'S feeding and resting in company of several Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels. These sightings were made about 30 km from the sea and in his experience this is unusual for the North Island, being more typical of Canterbury. Has anyone any records of similar sightings?

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KATHLEEN HARRISON reports that 13 January proved to be a day of the skuas for her and PHIL HOWELL when they were making a periodic check of the coastal lagoons near Leithfield. From a vantage point on top of sand-hills they saw several White-fronted Terns being harried by a light phase Pomarine Skua. A few minutes later three more Pomarines appeared, all dark, and flying leisurely northwards. A trio of Arctic Skuas came on the scene, appreciably smaller than the Pomarines and showing pointed extended tail feathers. As well as stealing from the terns they fished independently and were buzzed repeatedly, the terns trying to chase them away — a most entertaining spectacle. Two of the skuas came to rest among the waves while the other continued northwards.

## Knots

Every year we may expect that about 50 000 Eastern Knots will pass the summer in New Zealand. Many, if not most of these will stop to rest and feed on the rich ooze of the great inlets of the Auckland isthmus; so at the right seasons we see flocks of shore-birds which may contain thousands of Knots.

In New Zealand the distribution of Knots is curiously narrow and limited. The haunts they favour, except in the Far North, are mostly on the cooler western side. Along most of the east coast they can only be labelled as rather scarce passage migrants. In the Bay of Plenty the harbours of Tauranga and Ohiwa have long been known to attract great flocks of Godwits, while Knots have been listed traditionally as few. This assumption was confirmed by the comprehensive survey made in January 1978. This covered all estuaries and known roosts from Bowentown to Opotiki. Godwits totalled 12 087; Knots as a mere 7 (Edgar, *Notornis* 25: 286).

In the South Island the ideal rallying ground is Farewell Spit, where in summer Knots number between 20 000 and 30 000. But few go farther south. Surely it is significant that when Edgar Stead wanted specimens he went, not to Lake Ellesmere but to Farewell Spit. Summer surveys made over the Southland lagoons in 1963 and 1969 yielded counts of 101 and 188 respectively. Subsequently Roger Sutton and Maida Barlow have shown that these figures are typical. Perhaps the largest gathering of Knots south of Farewell Spit is on the main Chatham Island, a puzzling case of isolation and worthy of a special study.

A hardened Knot-watcher cannot help wondering at the variation in numbers which over winter. In 1936 R. A. Falla noted that more than 2 000 Knots, many assuming breeding plumage, were spending the winter in Manukau Harbour. Then in 1941 when waders at the Firth of Thames first came under critical scrutiny, Ross McKenzie and I were surprised to find numerous parties of Knots, 'certainly many hundreds, if not a thousand or two,' moving out to feed on a falling tide. Such numbers have now been equalled or surpassed frequently, especially in the last decade.

Since Knots do not mature in their first year, and some, perhaps many, may not breed effectively in their second year, it is reasonable to suppose that the overwintering flocks are composed of first year birds with possibly some ageing adults and a few second year birds in reddened plumage. Clearly there is much to learn about our Knots. The

size of the overwintering flocks may be a pointer to the success or failure of a breeding season, 11 000 km away along the Siberian sector of the Arctic Ocean. Apparently Eastern Knots have a limited breeding range which extends from the Taimyr Peninsula across the new Siberian Archipelago to Wrangel Island. On the available evidence, much of it negative, the vast majority migrate directly to New Zealand by long hops on a narrow front. Few seem to stray far east or west from this flight-path as few are reported outside this corridor. An Australian ornithologist seeing a flock of 100 would count it as a red-letter day.

Although the puzzle of the Eastern Knot is slowly being solved piece by piece, many questions remain to be answered. Do Knots regularly overwinter at Farewell Spit; and if so, how many? Are Auckland numbers boosted in winter if the weather is unusually cold and windy farther south? Do more stay in the South Island during a mild winter?

R. B. SIBSON

(A more comprehensive account of this knotty problem will be appearing in a future issue of *Tara*).

## Anting

ERIC JONES reports that on 30 January 1979 two Starlings were anting on the side lawn quite close to a window. A male Blackbird followed and before Eric had a chance to investigate the spot a female Blackbird arrived and started pecking vigorously at the ground. When he did look Eric found a shallow hole with small ants running around.

On 2 February two male Blackbirds were seen anting. One of these was literally sitting on its tail, which was doubled under the body and projecting forwards. These were followed by three Starlings and a Song Thrush. As before, all activities centred on the shallow hole with the ants.

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Sir Peter and Lady Phillipa Scott passed through Auckland on 23 February after circling Antarctica in the Lindblad Explorer. On a visit to Miranda they met the Council and some members of the Trust and saw their first Wrybills. These they photographed and sketched with evident enjoyment. The large group later had an informal meal with Doug Heath and his family at their Kaiaua cottage nearby, where a collection of Philip Heath's delicate bird paintings was much admired. The opening page of the Trust's visitors book is now adorned by a Peter Scott drawing of resting Wrybills.

## Ornithological Symposium

The First Ibero-American Meeting on Ornithology and World Meeting on Ecology and Bird Behaviour will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the last week of November 1979 under the sponsorship of the Asociacion Ornitológica del Plata and the collaboration of various local and international institutes, schools and research centres.

Work sessions and lectures will be held, concerning: (1) anatomy, physiology and genetics; (2) ecology and migrations; (3) palaeontology, phylogeny, taxonomy and zoogeography; (4) ethology; (5) protection and conservation; (6) applied ornithology; (7) methods for ornithological investigation, management and education; and (8) history, bibliography and miscellaneous.

The official languages of the meeting will be Spanish, Portuguese and English. Requests for more detailed information should be sent to: Prof. Juan Daciuk, President Organising Committee, Ier. Encuentro Iberoamericano de Ornitología, Casilla de Correo 3368, 1000 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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A ringbolt in seafarer's language is a crew-assisted stowaway. LEN PARKES has recorded the following avian qualifiers for the term which have snatched free passage on a local coastal ship: two Fantails which flew aboard at Red Mercury Island off the Coromandel Peninsula and made themselves at home until the vessel sailed from Mount Manganui a few days later; a Wrybill which joined the vessel mid-way down the North Island coast and stayed until Lyttelton Harbour; and a Welcome Swallow lifting a ride from north of Dunedin to Bluff.

Previously a Pukeko had been so keen to get to Wellington that it flew 30 km out to the ship at night in the Bay of Plenty. Other short term visitors have been: a Cook's Petrel, several White-faced Storm Petrels, some Northern Diving Petrels and Sooty Shearwaters, one Starling and a couple of racing pigeons.

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Broad-billed Prions have been seen in some unusual places this summer. While showing an American zoologist some Wrybills on the Cass Delta on 14 December RAY PIERCE saw a Broad-billed Prion swimming down the river. Not the most suitable habitat for a plankton feeder! Even the mayflies had been scarce in the river this summer, due to flooding. The following day Mount Cook National Park rangers picked up a live bird on the Tasman Glacier.

Several papers of ornithological interest were presented at the recent ANZAAS meeting held in Auckland. These included: *The effective analysis of trials to assess the impact of 1080 poisoning on bird populations* by E. B. Spurr; *Fear of flying: the evolution of species differences in dispersal ability* by J. M. Diamond; *Breeding and survival of the Wrybill Plover (*Anarhynchus frontalis*)* by J. R. Hay; *Differences of susceptibility to predation between Pied and Black Stilts (*Himantopus spp.*)* by R. Pierce; *A predator-prey relationship between Black-fronted Terns *Chilonias hybrida albostratus* (Gray 1845) and emerging Mayflies *Deleatidium sp.** by Chris Lalas; *Interspecific mimicry in the song of the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)* by P. F. Jenkins; *The Mallard Duck in New Zealand — beauty or the beast* by T. A. Caithness; *Multiple breeding in the Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae** by R. D. Wooller and J. N. Dunlop; *Evolution in the introduced New Zealand populations of the Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*)* by Allan J. Baker and Abdul Moeed; and *A colony of the cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos brevirostris* showing wide variations in plumage* by Michael J. Taylor.

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#### A RIFLEMAN IN THE HAND

On 5 August 1978 while walking through Kowhai Bush, near Kaikoura, RALPH POWLESLAND saw a movement in the undergrowth. After a few minutes he moved closer cautiously and found a male Rifleman crouched on the ground. The cracking of the undergrowth as he moved did not flush it and as it remained still Ralph was able to pick it up. Assuming that it was injured he moved back to the path and set it down to see if its wing was broken. It flew immediately up onto a kanuka trunk and gave a high-pitched alarm call. A female responded with a call and soon appeared whereupon the two birds flew off together. Although the bird did not appear to be stunned and its sudden 'revival' indicated it was not injured, this was not good behaviour for any bird in Kowhai Bush where mustelids are quite common and have been seen occasionally during the day.

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Members visiting Rarotonga should look up DAVE PANCKHURST, who has taken up a teaching appointment at Tereora College, Avarua, for two years. Dave's home base is Thames, where he is a stalwart of the South Auckland region regularly carrying out wader census work. The burden will now fall on Win Gillespie and her husband Peter, both keen birders.

#### Miranda Naturalists' Trust

The progress of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust (Inc.) should interest all members and not just those who happen to live near Miranda and are bearing the brunt of planning and fund raising.

Formed in 1975, the main aim of the trust is to establish an observatory in the Firth of Thames. However, a variety of plans have been frustrated by bureaucratic intervention and also uncertainty about funds tied up with Securitibank. The trust has been successful both on a provincial and a national scale in drawing attention to the need for protecting and preserving the Firth of Thames as an area of great ecological significance.

The trust welcomes naturalists of all disciplines, the annual report for 1977 shows a highly perceptive 'cicadologist' to be in their midst. It seems logical that many of us too far away to help with all the work that has been going on or with the labour to come should at least support by our subscriptions.

Addresses: Hon. Secretary, Mrs J. Piesse, 32 Rutherford Terrace, Meadowbank, Auckland 5; Hon. Treasurer, Mr R. Thomas, 25 Ravenwood Drive, Forrest Hill, Auckland 10.

We hope that this initiative will lead to other observatories in other parts of the country.

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TERRY HATCH startled two Falcons at Otautu, near Colville on the Coromandel Peninsula. They left their prey, a juvenile Black-backed Gull taken from a nearby seaside colony, on the slope of a hill. Records of Falcons are few for both the Peninsula and the northern part of the country. The pair was seen in the second week of January.

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A new record for Karaka was a pair of N.Z. Pipits on the mud with waders on 10 February; a Siberian Tattler was there on 20 January and the Grey Plover (which Beth Brown has finally seen) was still there on 14 February.

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OSNZ'ers are not the only ones who sometimes go out in vile weather. BETH BROWN took a party of South Auckland Forest and Birders to Karaka on 17 February, when 130 mm of rain fell and a plane was heard to crash at Mangere across the water. After two hefty showers the party had thinned twice, but a gallant few saw 4 whimbrels with thousands of other birds as they took refuge in flooded fields. The throng appeared to ripple constantly in the stinging rain, making an extraordinary sight, which F & B vice-president Graham Falla and others would have hated to miss.

A horse's back is an excellent vantage point from which to watch birds. PAUL SAGAR and JOY WOODS completed a five-day horse trek in the Four Peaks Range, South Canterbury, during December and found this a good way to approach birds closely. The trek was planned to take them through the maximum number of mapping squares and good numbers of bush birds were recorded, in addition to single sightings of Blue Duck and Falcon.

#### Spine-tailed Swifts

An unusually large number of Spine-tailed Swifts have been reported from the South Island this summer. In December a dazed bird was found beside a power pole at Karamea. The bird died during the night and has since been sent to the National Museum. HUGH WILSON and GILL ELLER reported seeing at least 12 birds over Bob's Point, near Lee Bay, Stewart Island, on 5 January. The birds were observed at close range for an hour. No swifts were seen on subsequent visits to the area. The latest sightings come from PAT MILLER and others at the Forest and Bird Lodge at Tautuku, South Otago. During a 45-minute period on 16 February they watched at least 60 birds flying high over the bush.

In the latter two cases the birds were identified by their long, pointed swept-back wings, square tail and bat-like flapping flight interspersed with brief glides. The birds appeared to be dark with a pale undertail.

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ALAN JONES was interested to read that Martyn Warne has seen Black-backed Gulls carrying mussels up to 10 m before dropping them onto a sealed road to break the shell (OSNZ news 7). Alan reports that at Buffalo Beach, despite a nearby sealed road he has never seen mussels dropped onto the road by Black-backed Gulls.

Most of the mussels washed ashore on Buffalo Beach are the green mussel, varying in length from 50 to 110 mm. The gulls drop the mussels onto the beach three to four times, with the height and location from which the mussel is dropped being dependent upon the proximity of other Black-backed Gulls.

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The Little Grebes have returned to the pond at Bell Hill (*Notornis* 25: 251). STEWART LAUDER reports that two chicks have been hatched, one hatching on 14 February and the other a day or so later. Hopefully Stewart will be able to report these to have been successfully reared by the time the next issue goes to press.

## OSNZ Library

A supplementary list of additions to the library up to May 1978 is available. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope to the librarian if you want a copy.

Some recent additions to the library have been made. These include: *Wildlife in New Guinea*, Wildlife Division New Guinea; *The Challenge for Survival: Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds*, W. S. Peckover; *The Swallow*, Hosking and Newberry, 1946; *Vanishing Birds, their Natural History and Conservation*, T. Halliday, 1978.

The Society is grateful to the following for donations: Mrs B. A. Binning, Mrs A. Prickett, Mrs S. M. Reed, Mr E. G. Turbott and Dr M. J. Taylor.

ANTHEA GOODWIN

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The wreck of southern seabirds reported in the last issue apparently was not confined to New Zealand. A report in *Australasian Seabird Group Newsletter* 11 details finds of Antarctic Fulmars and Antarctic Petrels wrecked on Australian beaches. The Antarctic Petrels were the first records of this species for Australia.

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DAVID MEDWAY and family collected a fresh specimen of an immature White-tailed Tropic Bird on 17 February during a beach patrol of the coast about 20 km south of New Plymouth. As far as can be ascertained this is only the second record of this species for New Zealand, a skull being found near Whakatane in 1973. Therefore David's find would be the first complete specimen. The specimen will be forwarded to the National Museum via the Taranaki Museum.

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The notes and comments on Redpolls appearing in *OSNZ News* Nos 7 & 8 by the Jukes and David Stenhouse prompt us to mention that we have made an extensive series of observations of these birds in the field over some five years in connection with our efforts to establish the presence in Canterbury of the Linnet (*A. cannabina*). Bright red birds, such as those described by Jukes, are not uncommon and may comprise from 10 to 20 per cent of those found in large flocks in winter and spring; except that we would describe their colour as carmine/crimson rather than scarlet. (This is accepting scarlet as the bright, neutral red, free from a bias to either the blue (crimson) or yellow (vermilion) ends of the spectrum).

We were also pleased to read that Stenhouse proposes the presence of the

Iceland Redpoll since we had concluded independently from our own observations and photographs showing differences in colour, size and shape that some Arctic Redpolls were present. It may be also of interest to mention that some of the largest flocks containing several thousand birds on occasion have consisted of individuals quite light brownish grey on top, suggesting that Mealy Redpolls outnumber the Lesser Redpolls in this area.

PHIL HOWELL and KATHLEEN HARRISON

## Publications

*Bibliography of the Snares Islands, New Zealand*, by Donald S. Horning, Miscellaneous Publication New Zealand Oceanographic Institute 84, 1978. Designed as a working tool for ongoing research. It is not comprehensive but it does contain the principal papers relating to the biology, geology and oceanography of the Snares, up to the end of 1976.

*Kowhai Bush: a valuable remnant of lowland forest*, Diane M. Hunt, *Forest and Bird* 210: 18-21, 1978. A review of the biological and land use status of this well-known Robin habitat.

*The Little Spotted Kiwi — a hunted and destroyed species*, Brian Reid, *Forest and Bird* 210: 29-32, 1978. Reviews the past and present distribution of this species and the Wildlife Service proposals to study this rare species.

*The plasma proteins of some albatrosses and petrels as an index of relationship in the Procellariiformes*, Peter C. Harper, *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 5: 509-550, 1978. A detailed biochemical analysis of the taxonomy of seabirds.

*Waikanae river estuary: changes to habitat and bird fauna evident from surveys thirty years apart*, Kazimierz Wodzicki, Paul Kennedy and Max Falconer, *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 5: 551-580, 1978. A total of 79 species of birds were recorded at the estuary and its immediate vicinity compared with 60 species recorded during the first survey. The distribution of birds is described in relation to habitat.

*The influence of the Tuatara on Fairy Prions breeding on Stephens Island, Cook Strait*, G. Y. Walls, *N.Z. Journal of Ecology* 1: 91-98, 1978. Despite being responsible for the loss of more than a quarter of the eggs and chicks the Tuatara is not considered to be a major factor in the regulation of the Fairy Prion population.

*The food of the New Zealand Pigeon (Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae)*, W. M. McEwan, *N.Z. Journal of Ecology* 1: 99-108, 1978. Pigeons

were found to eat a wide range of plant material and are considered to be main dispersers of large-seeded fruit in indigenous forest.

*Organochlorine residues in New Zealand birds of prey*, N. C. Fox and J. W. Lock, *N.Z. Journal of Ecology* 1: 118-125, 1978. Organochloride pesticide levels were determined in several species. Changes in N.Z. Falcon eggshell thickness since 1948 were measured and it is concluded that shell-thinning probably had little effect on breeding success.

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ROSS McKENZIE, demonstrating that he has recovered from ill health, is powering through South Auckland mapping scheme lists helped by a team of drivers which includes Barbara Burch, Joan Trollope, Patricia Fooks, Anthea Goodwin and Maxine McKenzie. It is obvious that four score plus years cannot keep a good man down or an old soldier from square bashing!

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Notable visitors to South Auckland recently have been Dr Clive Minton, former chairman of the Wash Wader Ringing Group, now in Australia for two to three years and Chris Knights, who is well known for his work on the *Survival* film series. Chris hopes to come back and would like to spend a year filming in N.Z.

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In early January, while on holiday at Motukiekie, ANTHEA GOODWIN had the unusual experience of swimming with a Sooty Shearwater. The bird, obviously exhausted, showed no fear as it swam gently towards them. Later six more Sooty Shearwaters were found dead on beaches seaward of Ote Bay towards Cape Brett.

## Dabchicks

1979 is a second Year of the Grebe but whether it will be as successful as 1978 depends largely on the petrol situation. Already, a scheme to survey the lake districts of Rotorua and Taupo once or twice this winter will almost certainly be cancelled. It would be appropriate if ornithologists, as a prerequisite of OSNZ membership, were trained in hang-gliding.

However, please continue to follow your local grebe events as far as possible; the trends of number changes, times of flocking and pairing, of plumage changes, and breeding information being more important really than census work of whole regions. (BARRIE HEATHER)

CHRIS MAYHEW, a junior member from Te Puke, writes that he has found 19 Grey Warbler nests within a 10-12 m radius. All the nests were low down in gorse. The gorse covered a large mound and the nest openings faced away from the mound. All the nests contained young. Chris has filled out nest record cards for the nests and hopes to visit the area as often as possible.

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Australian Coots seem to be ready to expand their range in Waikato. BETTY SEDDON reports that in late November there were 19 pairs with at least 35 young on Hamilton Lake and the adults were just beginning to lay second clutches. Already there are quite high densities of birds in some parts of the lake so that by the end of the summer the limit may be reached. There have been no reports of coots spreading to other small lakes in the area although this would seem only a matter of time.

### Submissions wanted - rare and endangered species and their habitats

There is growing concern internationally and within New Zealand about the long-term conservation of native flora and fauna. This concern, which has been brought to the attention of the Nature Conservation Council over the past few years, was highlighted in a symposium on "A vanishing heritage: the problems of endangered species and their habitats" at the 49th Congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) in January 1979.

In response to this concern, the Nature Conservation Council is asking for written submissions from individuals and organisations, on endangered species and their habitats. Comments and information relating to the following aspects will be considered: identification of vulnerable species (plants and animals, vertebrates and invertebrates) and their habitats at risk, research, management, legislation, and education.

Submissions should be sent to the Nature Conservation Council, P.O. Box 12 200, Wellington North, by 31 May, 1979.

The proceedings of the symposium, *A vanishing heritage: the problems of endangered species and their habitats*, delivered at ANZAAS, are being published by the Council and will be sent on request. Expected publication date 30 April 1979.

(Note: Since OSNZ is not a body that makes submissions on matters of conservation, members are urged to make their own submission if they have information and comments on this subject.)

KATHLEEN HARRISON and PHIL HOWELL have filed the following report.

The wader watch on the estuaries of the Blythe, Waipara, Kowai, Ashley and Waimakariri rivers of North Canterbury has continued to turn up a number of rare migrants, although fewer than last season. The Mongolian Dotterel, which was first seen on the Ashley in spring 1976, has been seen regularly on a small area of shingle and sand. The small plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (over which there is some question of identity as to race) which appeared on the Ashley as an immature in December 1977 and wintered over during 1978 is still present. Some changes in plumage have been noted, such as darkening of the centres of the lapel markings and brightening of the ochre neck band.

The first bird to appear this season was a Turnstone, followed by a plover, possibly Grey, then a scattering of Godwit and Knot. These birds were some six weeks earlier than anticipated and it is interesting to note that the returning godwits remained in a separate group from those wintering over for some weeks. Peter Wilson saw a Black-tailed bird amongst them which did not stay. No Sharp-tailed Sandpipers returned to the Waipara this season but a Pectoral Sandpiper was found and photographed at Saltwater Creek. A Siberian Tattler appeared on the Blythe River, and later another, this one an immature bird, came onto the Waipara. On 4 August the first two Whimbrels arrived at Saltwater Creek, they were very scary at first and kept apart from the godwit flock. Early in September the first Golden Plover came onto the Ashley, and by the end of the month there were five Whimbrels, two with pale and three with dark rumps. By this time the godwit flock in the Heathcote-Avon Estuary had reached 550 birds and this increased to about 830 by the middle of October. By the middle of November Turnstone numbers were 5 at Saltwater Creek, 10 in the Kowai and 3 in the Waipara. Some of these birds were in sooty-black and white plumage and had no trace of the usual tortoiseshell colouring shown by others, also they had black legs. There were seven Whimbrels on the Ashley by the end of December. A Red-necked Stint was seen on the Ashley in early spring but this moved on after a few days. Then towards the end of December a slightly larger and more slenderly proportioned 'boat-backed' calidrid appeared. It had a longer bill and different feeding behaviour, which identified it as a Baird's Sandpiper. This bird stayed for a few days. A Little Stint was photographed and

identified on the Ashley during mid January.

Some of the resident waders appear to have bred most successfully this season, judging from the flock sizes of immature Banded Dotterels and mixed adult and immature Pied Stilts on the estuaries. However, the Wrybills on the Rakaia River had a late start, believed to be related to the late winter flooding and cold early spring; the Black-fronted Dotterels on the Opihi River were affected adversely by flooding also. Finally, the sighting of greatest interest was that of three immature Black Stilts, photographed at Saltwater Creek on 18 August.

\* \* \* \*

White-winged Black Tern sightings continue to be made in South Canterbury. During September and December 1978 PAUL SAGAR saw a bird in non-breeding plumage at Spider Lagoon, a few kilometres north of the Opihi River mouth. Then on 1 February 1979 JOHN SEDDON saw a bird in full breeding plumage at the Opihi River mouth. This is the area where Ray Pierce observed breeding in 1973-74 summer when there were four White-winged Black Terns present.

\* \* \* \*

In the early morning of 27 November JENNY MOORE watched two Yellow-eyed Penguins swimming in the surf off Boulder Beach, Otago Peninsula. After a few displays of diving and porpoising the birds came ashore and rolled in the sand, with flippers flicking sand over their backs. One bird ended up on its back with both feet in the air. After this display both birds ran back into the sea. Perhaps this is the penguins' way of removing ticks.

\* \* \* \*

Cattle Egrets found in January at Pipiroa, on the Piako River at the head of the Firth of Thames, remain with all seven still there on 27 & 28 January (Tony Habraken) and six on 5 February (Stuart Chambers). Stuart also reported one at Miranda on 20 January. It seems to have stayed, for Beth Brown saw it there on 23 February. Another interesting visitor was the first Australian Tree Martin for the Firth seen at close range by Beth Brown and Ronald Lockley on 18 February. This bird may have been blown off its migration route by the severe storm which brought high winds and flooding just prior to the storm.

\* \* \* \*

The first nesting record for the Spur-winged Plover in Waikato comes from HANS ROOK who reports a pair with two chicks at Whakamaru.

A letter to the Editor in the September issue of *Notornis* from ARCHIE BLACKBURN objecting to the misuse of the word "strategy" brought him comments from many quarters, and one from Dr Kenneth C. Parkes, Chief Curator, Life Sciences, and Curator of Birds of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pennsylvania, is of particular interest, and highly amusing. The following is a short note which was published in the 1975 number of *The Auklet*, a parody version of *The Auk* that is distributed to those attending the banquet at the Annual Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union:

#### The Okay Word of the Year

As a service to graduate students who may have secret doubts about the data incorporated in their theses, and who thus need all the help they can get in preparing manuscripts acceptable to their advisors, *The Auklet* intends to publish each year the results of a survey undertaken to ascertain the Okay Word of the Year. Prominent and repeated use of this Word is not a *certain* passport to mod respectability for your thesis, but it will do fine unless you hang around too long and are forced to re-write your manuscript to feature next year's Word. Recently-minted Ph.D.s will recall fondly some of the Okay Words of the past few years, such as *Parameter*, *Introggression*, and *Diversity*. This year's Okay Word won the poll by a landslide. For the academic year 1975-1976, no thesis is complete without abundant use of the word:

#### STRATEGY

This is a rather revealing source of some of the jargon which at times raises the ire of many readers, both scientific and amateur. Dr Parkes adds that in subsequent years, many people have suggested Okay Words to succeed "strategy," but none has received the unanimous acclaim accorded to that particular choice.

In a later letter to Archie, he refers to a contribution of his to *The Auklet* which he called "The Second Book of Genesis." Written in Old Testament cadences, the gist of it was that God was rather bored and was looking for some place to get away from it all. He picked out "Peru the green and good," and while residing in the Peruvian jungles, decided to create some more bird species just to see if he had the old knack. Dr Parke's final comment is of special interest: "As you probably know, new species of birds *are* being described from Peru at an incredible rate, with at least four of them belonging to distinctive new genera as well."

## To all wader enthusiasts

An informal organisation of ornithologists whose common interest is the study of waders was formed in 1970 in Britain, under the auspices of the British Trust for Ornithology. It is the *Wader Study Group*, which now has members in many countries but none in New Zealand (although my sub. is now in the mail).

Membership is open to anyone or any organisation interested in waders; sub. £5.00 for bulletins sent airmail, £2.50 for surface mail. (British postal orders from any post office is the easiest way.)

The aims of the WSG are to maintain contact between both amateur and professional individuals and groups studying waders; to help organise co-operative studies (this has included expeditions to remote areas to fill gaps in the information on waders); to produce a Bulletin as a means of exchanging information.

The Bulletin appears three times a year and is a forum for news, notices, recent recoveries and publications, new methods of catching and study, articles, and interim results from all parts of the world. News on wader work being done in New Zealand would be very welcome. The editors, M. W. Pienkowski and G. H. Green, try to keep a balance of material ranging from newsletter, informal descriptions of ringing-group activities and of expeditions, to formal presentation of interim results or preliminary analyses, and lists of ringing recoveries.

Nora Finn and Sylvia Reed's account of their experience trapping and banding waders on the Wash in December OSNZ news gave some idea of the kind of activity discussed and reported in the WSG Bulletin.

The copy I have includes ringing totals and recoveries in Britain and Ireland, an account of the BTO's new publication, costing 60 p., called *Cannon-netting code of practice*, articles on the migration of Dunlins, the activities of the Danish Wader Study Group, ring-wear in Turnstones, Palaearctic waders in Sri Lanka (= Ceylon), banding studies and methods in Massachusetts, USA and James Bay, Canada, a thorough list of recent publications on waders and a full list of WSG members.

Subscriptions should be sent to G. F. Appleton, 18 Old Barn Road, Bournville, Birmingham B30 1PY, England. I am sure the WSG will interest many OSNZ members, and that it too will benefit from a regular exchange of news with New Zealand. (BARRIE HEATHER)

There are plans to start a wader banding group in the Firth of Thames under the auspices of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust. DICK VEITCH has taken it upon himself to organise the group. The first trial run with mist nets was made on 27-28 January and it is hoped to report on the group's activities in future issues. As in the past, there is a major shortage of trained assistance as few people have handled live birds let alone measured and weighed them. However, a training programme is planned for interested OSNZ members and this should rectify the situation.

## Cattle Egrets

I have received details of records and other information for the period since August from several regions only. It seems that almost all birds disappeared as usual, for example the 20 at Appleby, Nelson, were last seen on 15 November (Jenny Hawkins), the 25+ in Waikato were last seen together on 5 November, down to 6 on 18 November (John Cockrem, John & Betty Seddon), the 17 near Gisborne left on 2 November (Archie Blackburn). I have heard of only a few late records, e.g. 2 seen near Haldane estuary, eastern Southland on 25 November by Tony Crocker, Pat Miller & Philip Bradfield; 2 seen at Lake Wainono in late December by Ray Pierce. Even the Lake Ellesmere birds went this year. However, some must have stayed over as several small groups were reported early in 1979, e.g. 3 at Manawatu estuary on 4 February (Jim Moore), and 7 in mid-January found by Stuart Chambers while visiting the Piako tip, Firth of Thames. There is no suggestion of breeding since all birds seen showed traces of fading breeding colour and no all-white new young were seen anywhere.

\* \* \* \*

In a very detailed letter, Miss Ella Pratt of Murwillumbah, north-eastern New South Wales, has told me the history of the local colony, which has grown from small numbers, not known to breed, in 1971-1973, through 250-300 breeding birds in 1975/76, 700-800 nests in 1976/77 and 1977/78, to 800-900 nests in 1978/79. Although there were no Cattle Egrets in the nesting trees (Melalucas) on 28 October 1978, on 1 November there were over 500 birds building feverishly and some were incubating by 8 November. On 20 January 1979, about 300 young were out of the nest and on 2 February, about 800 young. Some of these young birds were colour-dyed, so keep watching. If the New Zealand birds are from this colony, they must have been late starters and swift fliers. (BARRIE HEATHER)