



OSNZ news

No. 14

March, 1980

NOTE: Deadline for June 1980 issue will be 31 May.

Far North Survey

Very good weather, accommodation facilities, and 23 participants all contributed towards a successful and enjoyable annual Far North survey, 22-25 January 1980. Once again Whangarei and Auckland members combined for this project.

A good number of enthusiasts enabled almost all of the far-north lakes to be surveyed. The previous wet weather ensured that few lakes were dry this summer. However, bird numbers were not high and it is thought that many usual lake inhabitants were using the many small ponds and flooded areas not easily located. Interesting sightings were 10 Australian Coot, 7 Dabchick and 9 Spur-winged Plover, also one Long-tailed Cuckoo.

Nine northern beaches and four sections of 90 Mile Beach were patrolled for a total of 68.5 km covered. These efforts retrieved 102 birds, including one Black-winged Petrel and two Shy Mollymawk.

Large numbers of waders were on Parengarenga Harbour but these were very (gun?) shy. We saw 4 Far Eastern Curlew, 10 Asiatic Whimbrel, 2 Red-necked Stint and 13 Curlew Sandpiper. Most nearby paddocks had lush growth and waders gathered on one grazed area near the road. Here we saw 5 more Curlew Sandpiper and (after much deliberation) two Knot among the Turnstone and Banded Dotterel. An unidentified tern was seen here, it was smaller and faster flying than a Caspian Tern; tail not forked; black cap, bill and legs; wings brown or grey above, white below.

Vic Hensley, our man on the spot, was invaluable with information on lake locations, beach access, water transport and local history. We were joined also by Dick Hoare, visiting ornithologist

from Tasmania. Dick really enjoyed the north and its birds but was mystified at enraptured New Zealanders looking at Spur-winged Plovers!

MIKE KEARNS

Migrant Waders in Canterbury

About 200 Bar-tailed Godwits spent the winter at the Heathcote-Avon Estuary, with perhaps some 50-100 more divided between the Ashley Estuary, Brooklands Lagoon and the head of Lyttelton Harbour. The first returning godwits were over a month late this year and were accompanied by two whimbrels, one a Hudsonian, seen by JENNY HAWKINS at the Ashley Estuary. A Christmas count showed 1100 godwits and 2 Knots at the Heathcote-Avon Estuary and 120 godwits, 12 Turnstones, 17 Knots and 3 Golden Plovers at the Ashley Estuary. This summer one Red-necked Stint and a stint sp. have been seen at the Ashley Estuary. The single Mongolian Dotterel which wintered over disappeared with the spring flooding of the Ashley River. The four Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits reported in the last issue of OSNZ news stayed for over a month and provided opportunities for study and photography.

PHIL HOWELL & KATHLEEN HARRISON

Brown Teal Released

Ducks Unlimited's major project — Operation Pateke — which aims to save the endemic N.Z. Brown Teal from extinction, by breeding birds in captivity and releasing them into suitable areas, has made excellent progress during the current breeding season and it is expected that close to 40 birds will be reared.

A small release of 10 birds was made at Puke Puke Lagoon near Foxton in early January. This was the first release of Brown Teal reared by Ducks Un-

limited members and followed the release two weeks earlier of 14 Brown Teal reared at the Mt. Bruce Native Bird Reserve at Masterton.

Puke Puke Lagoon is a Wildlife Management Reserve administered by the N.Z. Wildlife Service. A resident technician is in full time attendance and he will be observing the birds' adaptability to the wild.

Wanted

The following copies of *Notornis*, now out of print, are required by a member: VOLUME 3 No. 1; VOLUME 7 Nos. 6, 7, 8 and Index.

Any member who has surplus copies of these issues should advise availability and price to: *Notornis*, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington North.

Caring for a Swamp

Swamps have been slow to receive due recognition. A barrier to movement, untidy, unproductive and the haunt of slimy creatures, they have been seen largely as only for draining.

Now there is a better understanding of their place in the environment. From the ooze come insects, fishes and tadpoles as food for bigger, and often unseen, inhabitants. If the swamp goes, so too may larger forms of life — to extinction.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society has done the environment a favour in buying land in the Waitakere Valley and turning swamp and hillside into reserve.

It is a mild irony that the swamp being protected is the result of a degradation of the clear water in the valley following the felling of kauris, making it easy for the soil to slide downhill and turn lake into marsh. Even so, a particularly praiseworthy aspect of the work to preserve the swamp is that so many people have acted on their own initiative and at their own expense.

Obituary

It is with regret that the death of Mrs Maxine E. McKenzie of Clevedon, Rolls Secretary to the Society and long-term South Auckland member, is recorded. For many years, unseen and unsung, Max worked cheerfully to keep track of members' addresses and their regions, in co-operation with various Treasurers and RRs. She typed Ross McKenzie's book *In Search of Birds in New Zealand, How and Where to Find Them*, to his lasting gratitude. The fortunes of N.Z. Dotterels, which have their nests on the shores of the McKenzie farm, were a constant interest to her and she was a stalwart of Firth of Thames and Manukau shorebird censuses for most of the span of these counts. Many will miss her gentle ways. Members extend sincere sympathy to Gordon McKenzie and the family.

BETH BROWN

Diary of a Blackbird

During late winter a female Blackbird fed regularly about the sheds and woodpile near our farmhouse. She was easily identified by a light grey 'collar' which extended almost half way round her neck. She never seemed perturbed by human activity nearby and one windy night even followed me into the house.

On 15 September I noticed her hopping along and pecking at every rafter in a shed, calling as she went. Several times I saw her fighting with another female while the cock bird watched.

She began building a nest in a small, open thuya tree on 6 October. As the tree was only 1.5 m. high I was able to watch at very close range. By 9 October two eggs had been laid, a third was added on the 10th, however, a severe gale that night blew the tree over far enough to tip the eggs out. The next day I drove in two stakes and tied the tree securely. The broken eggs were replaced with two filched from another Blackbird's nest and these were readily accepted. Another egg was laid that night and incubation begun.

One of the eggs hatched on 14 October and, being at eye-level, the nest was easy to observe. At this time the female would leave the nest, land on a post nearby and then dive-bomb me, parting my hair as she went by. The cock bird always gave an alarm call as I approached.

Unfortunately the nest was blown completely out of the tree in another gale and the nestling disappeared. However, the female soon began another nest, building it on a narrow shelf in a nearby shed.

Four eggs had been laid by 5 November and incubation began on the 6th. Whenever I entered the shed the female would part my hair as she had done previously. I saw the cock helping with incubation only once and immediately he gave the alarm, my hair was parted by the returning female.

All four eggs hatched on 19 November and as the ground was very dry I helped her feeding problems with scraps of bread, which she plucked from my hand. By 2 December the young had fledged; however, the female still came when I called but soon left, no doubt to feed her recently fledged brood.

MERVYN JUKES

* * * *

In a postcard from Norfolk Island TONY HABRAKEN says that he and DOUG WHITE are seeing White Terns everywhere 'thicker than Black-backed Gulls at home.' Also seen are species such as Green and Bronze Doves, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, White-capped Noddies and plenty of waders. They saw boobies from the aircraft as it came in to land and they hope to go to Philip Island, before their short visit ends.

* * * *

Search for Kakapo

A Wildlife Service expedition searching for Kakapo on Stewart Island returned in early January after little success. It plans to use tracking dogs in another expedition in March and April. Hugh Best, leader of the four-man expedition, said attempts to capture Kakapo using passive methods had not been very successful. Last June a Kakapo was captured in a food cage and weighed, measured and banded before being released. In the recent expedition there were signs that Kakapo had eaten the kumara bait, but only possums were caught. As these passive methods were not working dogs would be tried next. These would be properly trained retrievers and pointers and would be muzzled. The dogs would be used only to find the birds not to capture them.

The Kakapo did not have a booming season on Stewart Island this year. There was some grubbing and clearing of booming sites but the birds had not made very concerted efforts.

Kakapo were rediscovered on Stewart Island in 1977 and the population there is the strongest known remaining colony in New Zealand. There are about 40 active males covering some 100 hectares and although females have not been sighted it is assumed that they are associated with the colony.

ERIC JONES reports that he was mowing the lawn and when he pushed the machine under a small tree by the bird table a White-eye somersaulted out in front of the machine and landed about a metre away. He picked it up, expecting to find a mangled corpse, but apart from the claws missing from the left foot there did not seem to be anything wrong with the bird. There was no bleeding or other obvious sign of injury though the foot was 'clenched' and the bird rather dazed.

The bird was put into a safe place and when it had recovered it was fed, banded and released. The bird flew into a small tree nearby and preened before moving to the bird bath for a drink and a bathe.

The bird was seen in the same area the following day and appeared to have recovered completely from its ordeal.

* * * *

Australian Little Grebes are back at Bell Hill on the West Coast; however when STEWART LAUDER visited the pond on 10 November 1979 there was no indication of a nest. RICHARD and MAUREEN HOLDAWAY had better luck when they visited St. Annes Lagoon in North Canterbury on 2 February 1980 when they saw a pair of A. Little Grebes with three well-grown but downy chicks.

Miranda Banders

It will be of interest to those who have helped with the wader netting at Miranda to know that an eager group have spent much time on their knees, helping to make the first of the Banders' cannon nets. Dick Veitch's lawn has been more than covered with netting. This has been joined to the requisite size and ropes painstakingly clove-hitched to its perimeter. Work on the cannons themselves has been done over many months. Welcome financial aid from the OSNZ Projects Assistance Fund and from the South Auckland Branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society means that at last runs for training purposes can be planned shortly. No attempt to actually catch birds will be made until it is felt that sufficient competence has been gained by the team.

BETH BROWN

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Spur-winged Plovers now seem to be quite well established at Pauatahanui Inlet, near Wellington. Birds have been reported there over the last few years and on 11 January 1980 ALAN GOLLOP saw 13 plovers with a large roost of Black-backed Gulls. More recently BARRIE HEATHER reported a family group with fairly obvious juveniles.

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF N.Z. (Inc.)
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31ST DECEMBER, 1979

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF N.Z. (Inc.)
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 1979

<u>1978</u>	<u>INCOME WAS EARNED FROM:</u>		
7726	Subscriptions	7,922	
237	Transfer from Life Members	320 (Note i)	
216	Donations	476	
992	Profit from Christmas Cards	4,820	
760	Sale: Back Numbers	753	
24	: Car Stickers	26	
102	: Society Ties	150	
33	Surplus Summer Study Course	-	
-	Surplus Annual General Meeting	119	
24	Biology of Birds	26	
<u>10114</u>	<u>TOTAL ORDINARY INCOME</u>	<u>\$ 14,612</u>	
	<u>PLUS INVESTMENT INCOME:</u>		
1434	Interest	1,759 (Note ii)	
1434	<u>TOTAL INVESTMENT INCOME</u>	<u>1,759</u>	
<u>11548</u>	<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	<u>\$ 16,371</u>	
	<u>LESS EXPENSES:</u>		
12725	'Notornis' & 'O.S.N.Z. News'	15,213	
	Printing & Distribution		
78	Annual General Meeting	--	
140	Audit Fee	170	
--	Donations	60	
65	Beach Patrol Scheme	--	
210	General Expenses	230	
70	Library Expenses	68	
78	Nest Record Scheme	--	
330	Postages	479	
170	Printing & Stationery	163	
40	Royal Society Affiliation	40	
530	Travelling Expenses	623	
<u>14436</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENSES</u>	<u>17,046</u>	
<u>2888</u>	<u>DEFICIENCY FOR YEAR TRANSFERRED TO</u>	<u>\$ 675</u>	
	<u>ACCUMULATED FUND</u>		

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF N.Z. (Inc.)
NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

NOTE i Life members transfer: 10% of Balance at 31.12.79.

NOTE ii The interest earned in the Projects Assistance Reserve Fund investments has been credited directly to the Fund.

NOTE iii Stocks of 'Notornis' and Valuation of Library are at Standard Values. No attempt has been made to accurately value these assets.

NOTE iv Projects Assistance Reserve.
 Movements in this Reserve Fund during the year are:-

Balance as at 1.1.79	\$ 6,060
<u>PLUS</u> Royalty on Revised Field Guide	819
Royalty on New Field Guide	540
Interest earned by Fund	575
	<u>\$ 7,994</u>
<u>LESS</u> Cash Payments:-	
Miranda Wader Research Scheme	500
Grants for Bird Mapping Expeditions	255
	<u>\$ 7,239</u>

BALANCE AS AT 31.12.79: \$ 7,239

Note v Bird Distribution in N.Z. Atlas Reserve:-
 Movements in this Reserve Fund during the year are:-

Debit Balance as at 1.1.79	\$ 587
Atlas sales during the year	884
	<u>\$ 297</u>

CREDIT BALANCE AS AT 31.12.79: \$ 297

<u>1978</u>	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
1966	Cash at Bank of New Zealand	3,201	
146	Amounts owing to Society	121	
42	Bank of New Zealand Savings Account	90	
3600	Term Deposits Bank of New Zealand	7,300	
100	Stock of 'Notornis'	100 (Note iii)	
2506	Stock of 1979 Christmas Cards	-	
<u>8360</u>	<u>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</u>	<u>\$ 10,812</u>	
	<u>INVESTMENTS:</u>		
5000	N.Z. Government Savings Stock	5,000	
3000	Local Body Stocks	3,000	
70	The Perpetual Trustees Co. Ltd	70	
	Group Trustee Investment No. 2		
6728	B.N.Z. Finance Co. Ltd	7,212	
	First Ranking Debenture Stock		
5000	Development Finance Coop of N.Z.	5,000	
	Secured Debenture Stock		
<u>19798</u>	<u>TOTAL INVESTMENTS</u>	<u>20,282</u>	
587	Bird Distribution in N.Z. Atlas	--	
1000	Library at Valuation	1,000	
<u>29745</u>	<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	<u>\$ 32,094</u>	
	<u>LESS LIABILITIES:</u>		
3466	Amounts owed by Society	4,030	
1314	Subscriptions in Advance	1,550	
	Reserve Funds		
6060	Projects Assistance Reserve	7,239 (Note iv)	
2142	Life Subscriptions	2,890	
--	Bird Distribution in N.Z. Atlas	297 (Note v)	
1000	Publications	1,000	
<u>13982</u>	<u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u>	<u>17,006</u>	
<u>15763</u>	<u>VALUE OF ACCUMULATED FUNDS AS BELOW</u>	<u>\$ 15,088</u>	
	<u>ACCUMULATED FUNDS:</u>		
18651	Balance at 31.12.78	15,763	
2888	Deficiency for Year	675	
<u>15763</u>		<u>\$ 15,088</u>	

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

- All financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historical cost.
 - No subscriptions in arrears have been brought to account. Subscriptions in advance have been taken out of income.
 - Stocks of Christmas Cards have been valued at cost.
- We report, that in our opinion, the foregoing accounts and notes attached of THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF N.Z. (Inc.) for the year ended 31st December 1979 are in agreement with the books and reports of the Society and give a true and fair view of the Society's position at that date and the results of its transactions for the year. The Society has kept proper books and supplied all the information required.
- DUNEDIN: 21st January, 1980 THOMPSON, LANG, ELLIS & GARDNER
Chartered Accountants
Auditors

Erratum

In *OSNZ news* 13 the price of *Birds of a Feather*, papers in honour of Ron Scarlett, was given as \$2.00. This should have been \$20.00. The editor apologises for any inconvenience that this may have caused readers.

Southland Summer Wader Census

Dinner is a lordly dish; a progressive meal. And a dish of a day it is; warm sun, wool clouds, clear light and just enough wind to keep the birds down.

The menu ?

Appetiser: Choose between White-faced Herons, precisely distributed along the shoreline; or Pied Stilts in querulous pairs, their anxiety drawing attention to their pale and patchy offspring, poking around the edge of the spartina; or something non-ornithological, a fine pair of floats, red and yellow, and about 30 m of good rope, flotsam from recent gales; or loafing SIPOs, bills tucked, immaculate, all brushed the same way.

Entree out at Horseshoe Spit. Terns must be the choice; 40 Caspians reneating after a disastrous year of big tides and washouts; and a little huddle of White-fronteds alongside. No sign of any of the 30 or so young Caspians banded on 18/11/79, nor the solitary Little Tern that flicked on the edge of the White-fronteds that day. Today the Caspians are really outdoing themselves in the housing business. Usually content with the simple scrape in the shell-sand, this time most of the nests are hedged around with dried stalks piled four or five cm high.

No godwits today, only shags, gulls and herons with the terns, so I head east, pushing through the fast-making tide.

Main Course: Godwit and Knot? Sorry, they are off today. Probably all over at Jock's Roost. I saw 60-70 heading down that way earlier.

No, the main dish is all the small stuff. I find them tucked away among *Scmolus* and *Salicornia* on the eastern flats, drowsy in the sun and wind. With a little judicious nudging (here a raised telescope; there a squirming into position for the light and wind, and a bold forward thrust at the right moment) the disruptive Pied Stilts are flagged away. What a splendid class of bird we have here this year. For all the rest fly 20-30 m and pitch on the mud. Clean, clear mud, a perfect backdrop. Some shuffles and some shakes, jockeying for position, and the Banded Dotterels and stints

separate off to feed. There are far more dotterels here than the local breeding population. This must be a congregation of passage migrants.

The Golden Plovers sulkily resume their snoozing. Three Terek Sandpipers run madly around, yellow legs and needle-fine uptilted bills flashing in the sun. Other sandpipers and a few Turnstones now start to move, the stirrers. If this goes on they will all be up and away before I am ready for their rumps and wing-bars.

Here come the dotterels now, in all shades and grades of plumage, the stints with them. This disturbs the plovers and all the birds are suddenly mixing and mingling. In the foreground the crabs move, clattering, claws held up to heaven.

What a feast! I devour it, species by species, working through the moving mass. But a Harrier puts them all up long before I have reached satiation point.

I stalk my *dessert*. The sandpipers flew out over the flats. I follow, eyes riveted, telescope on shoulder, a bumbling human, bristling impedimenta.

Piquancy comes in the form of a sudden waist-deep plunge into an unseen hole, accompanied by a firm crack on the head from the telescope. But all is well. The notebook is dry in a top pocket. 'I've earned these sandpipers,' I say to myself. They stay within range, Sharp-tailed all, and the Golden Plovers oblige with a sweeping upward flight which lets me see their underwings, and exclude the possibility of a visiting cousin in their midst.

So that's it then? Not quite. I return along the shore and above the coastal swamp are two Harriers, an adult chuckling high, and a dark young bird swooping down expertly, to fall ignominiously sideways as he reaches out for his marsh ribbonwood base.

And the wine of good company? Not a chosen vintage of good friends, for I am alone; but a good dry white nevertheless. I am replete, content in my own company. But I stretch out on the white shell-sand to dry out, and share the birds with you. And in case you are a lister, here is my list: 52 White-faced Heron, 35 Spur-winged Plover, 101 Pied Stilt, 338 SIPO, 196 Banded Dotterel, 85+ Bar-tailed Godwit, 25 Red-necked Stint, 12 Turnstone, 51 Golden Plover, 5 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 3 Terek Sandpiper, 41 Caspian Tern, 21 White-fronted Tern, 690+ Black Swan, 5 Black Shag, 2 Little Shag, 1 Stewart Island Shag.

MAIDA BARLOW

MAX and NGAIRE FALCONER were able to add one more species to the list of 79 already recorded for the Waikanae Estuary over 30-31 December 1979. They watched a Red-necked Stint which was keeping company with a group of 9 Banded Dotterel. At the same time there was the rather unusual sight of an Arctic Skua flying in over the sand flats of the estuary and stirring up a flock of roosting White-fronted Terns. Later, ALLAN GOLLOP searched for the stint but missed it. However, he did report 3 Turnstones.

Cattle Egrets

Several birds from last year's influx have remained behind over the summer. BETH BROWN reports that the situation at Piako remains obscure; Tony Habraken saw 9 egrets there on 21 January and was told that there had been 12 on 3 January. Of these 9, four were in excellent breeding plumage, three part way and the rest pale. Tony and Beth were there on 31 January when they had close views of a bird in bright breeding plumage. The plumes were a strong tan, bill intense pink, but no colour change of the legs which were the usual dull grey.

WILF and JULIE MAWSON report that they failed to find Cattle Egrets at Lake Ellesmere after mid-November. However, on 1 January they saw 13 at their usual farm near Taumutu. Later in the month these were joined by another bird. Most of these birds were very pale showing colour only on the crown.

From Otago MALCOLM FOORD says that Cattle Egrets are back — or did they ever go? In January, Mr Ensor of Stirling, who had C.E.s on his farm until August 1979, rang to say that the birds were back. There were 9 birds and some, if not all, were in breeding colours. After this report GEORGE GRANT searched in the Berwick area and found one C.E.

These sightings indicate that members should check local C.E. haunts as soon as possible in case there are more birds spending the summer in N.Z.

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RAY BENFELL reports that he has been banding the young reared at the Spotted Shag colony on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour. Last year 26 were banded in July-August and 15 in November. One of the July-August birds was collected in Auckland during December. Ray also reports that recent visitors to the island have included a Giant Petrel, which had been banded at Macquarie Island in January 1976, and on 9 January 1980 a Dabchick was seen on the sea near the landing wharf.

KATHLEEN HARRISON and PHIL HOWELL report that the first Wrybills appeared at the Ashley Estuary in August and a scattering have been present since, peaking at about 40 birds in December. Since then numbers have dropped and the few remaining have been this season's juveniles. Immature Banded Dotterels number some 60+ in the Waipara Estuary, 40+ in the Kowai, several hundreds in the Ashley and about 20 each in the Waimakariri and Heathcote-Avon Estuaries. A single Black-fronted Dotterel was reported in the Kowai Riverbed by REG and NORA FAHEY; this bird stayed in the vicinity when the river dried up, moving to a small muddy lagoon about 2 km north.

* * * *

JOHN SMITH of Tawa reported a Fiordland Crested Penguin at Karehana Bay on 10 January 1980. Apparently it had been there some days and had taken up abode in a large stormwater drain which opened out onto the beach through a sea wall. Alan Gollop, Shane Cotter and Max Falconer visited the area to look for the bird and the locals must have thought the trio certifiable — peering up stormwater drains with torches and binoculars, and even crawling up the larger drains. Colin Claridge, who lives nearby, kept an eye on the penguin for the next few days. Luckily it was seen swimming out to sea about a day before a strong southerly smashed parts of the sea wall and washed over the road and up the stormwater drains.

Crested Grebe Survey

The Crested Grebe is one of New Zealand's rarer breeding birds and during recent years it has been exposed to a changing environment, especially with regard to available habitat. Man-made lakes resulting from hydro-electricity development have become potential habitats for grebes in some parts of its range. However, in other areas the possibility of hydro-electricity development may have detrimental effects by increasing lake level fluctuations and making access by power boats easier.

A census of the Crested Grebe in Canterbury was carried out by K. E. Westerskov in 1970 (*Notornis* 18: 3-29) and his results indicated that there had been a decline in numbers during the previous 20-30 years. It is important to continue this monitoring to maintain our knowledge and understanding both of the species and its habitat. Preliminary counts during the past two years have indicated that the population is much higher than that reported during the

1970 census, especially in the Lakes Alexandrina / McGregor and Lake Heron/Ashburton Lakes areas. Therefore a new census is being planned for November/December 1980 and an attempt is being made to cover as much of the South Island as possible.

The primary objective is a census of adult Crested Grebes. Overseas literature shows that non-breeding birds move from one water to another, so ideally every water should be visited on the same day. In New Zealand this is obviously not possible; therefore it is proposed to make the census from the last weekend in November to the second weekend in December. The information required for the census is: date, locality, total number of adult grebes actually counted and an estimated total allowing for birds thought to be out of sight (sitting on a nest etc.).

More details will be given in the next issue of *OSNZ news*. If you have information about grebes in your area or will be able to help with the census please contact me. I am also interested in knowing about waters where there are *no* grebes as this will eliminate much needless searching.

P. M. SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4.

Crested Grebe Breeding Study

My study is based in the Ashburton Lakes district of the Canterbury high country. Of eleven lakes in the area five have resident breeding populations of Crested Grebes. These lakes range from 12 to 729 hectares in size and support a variety of nesting habitats including raupo, niggerhead, *Juncus*, *Schoenus* and much open stony shore.

This summer the resident population is a minimum of 57 birds, distributed as follows: L. Heron 37 (18 pairs), L. Clearwater 8 (4 pairs), L. Emma 8 (4 pairs), Maori Lakes 2 (1 pair), L. Emily 2 (1 pair). This is a slight increase on last breeding season and about double K. E. Westerskov's estimates of 1970.

My primary interests are in monitoring breeding and determining preferences in breeding habitats.

During October and November birds have formed pair bonds and by the end of November most pairs are established in some form of territory or feeding range. During the winter and while establishing territories it appears that birds are very mobile around all the lakes in the area. The first breeding of this season began with a pair building a nest about 10 October. Although two young were hatched they disappeared shortly after hatching on 15 November.

By 3 January 1980 only 10 pairs were breeding and no more young had been hatched at any of the lakes. There has been a high mortality of eggs and loss of nests. This has been caused mainly by adverse weather conditions, and only one mortality has been attributed to a predator (ferret). A high level of human activity seems to be tolerated by the birds and the absence of yachts and power boats on the breeding lakes seems to account for this.

From observations made both this season and last it appears that grebes prefer dense willow margins for breeding, although raupo, sedge and open habitats are also used.

Also, I am surveying underwater feeding habitats by skin diving to examine favoured areas and to sample for available foods. It appears that a zone between the lake shelf and deeper weed beds is best for feeding (generally in about 4 m); however, it is impossible to determine feeding success accurately as much food is eaten while the bird is still underwater. A wide variety of foods have been recorded, including bird eggs.

COLIN O'DONNELL

Information Wanted — Norfolk Island Birds

A recent paper by Jenkins on the Wedge-tailed Shearwater in the S.W. Pacific (*Notornis* 1979 p. 331) has drawn attention to the lack of published information regarding quite basic aspects of some of Norfolk Island's birds.

As for some years Norfolk Island has been a popular holiday place, it occurs to me that several New Zealand bird watchers will have spent short periods there and made at least some observations on the island's birds. Although in isolation these observations may appear to be of no significance, a collation of all these small items of information would help to fill the gaps in the present knowledge and, assuming that sufficient data are in fact available, I propose to prepare such a paper for publication in *Notornis*.

Would anyone having records of observations made on Norfolk Island (including Philip and Nepean Islands) who is willing to make them available for this purpose please send whatever information they have to the address below. Since it is planned to complete the paper by the end of 1980, would anyone wishing to contribute data please contact me by 30 June 1980 at the latest?

J. L. MOORE, 32 Brook Street, Lower Hutt.

Summer School at Ward

About 30 members attended the summer school at Ward from 14-20 January. Fine weather, lots of enthusiasm, plenty of birds and the excellent facilities and help provided by JACK TAYLOR all contributed to a successful week.

A series of instructive talks and practical field trips formed the basis of the school; however, there was also plenty of time to follow your own interests and to talk birds. The highlight of the week for most people was seeing Royal Spoonbills breeding among a Pied Shag colony at the Vernon Lagoons. A recently-fledged chick was also present. Beach patrols may have been lacking in bird wrecks but they provided sightings of such birds as a Glossy Ibis and a Wandering Tattler. Taped calls of Marsh and Spotless Crakes were played at a nearby raupo swamp and both were successful in obtaining replies. With Beth Brown, Sylvia Reed, Dick Sibson and Brian Bell present there had to be some wader watching and this was rewarded with the sighting of a flock of 19 stints at Lake Grassmere.

P. M. SAGAR

Kookaburra near Hastings

A commotion amongst the birds drew JANET LLOYD to the kitchen window on 13 January. The noise was being made by a Goldfinch, which was hopping along the clothesline and turning from side to side. About 2 m away, perched on the tip of the clothes prop, was a Kookaburra staring at the Goldfinch. The Kookaburra's short tail flicked persistently up and down. Another Goldfinch was watching from a parallel clothesline and suddenly the Goldfinches flew off and the Kookaburra went too. The Kookaburra was not seen again that day; however, the next morning it was on the tip of the clothes prop again with an agitated Goldfinch on the clothesline again. The birds disappeared again and the Kookaburra has not been seen since.

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Bird Mapping Scheme

The Bird Mapping Scheme has closed now and it is hoped that all persons with outstanding cards will send them in as soon as possible. The production of the Definitive Atlas may be some years away because of staff reductions in the Wildlife Service and there will be a delay in getting all the data coded. The final form of the atlas still has to be decided and this may cause further delays. Anyone wanting an atlas in the near future is advised to obtain a Provisional Atlas in the meantime.

In an endeavour to complete squares which had not been visited, the Society offered assistance to members who were prepared to tackle such a task. An approach for financial assistance was made to both the Mobil Environmental and Environmental Council Grants. However, both were unsuccessful. Therefore money was made available from the Projects Assistance Fund.

Nest Record Scheme

WANTED — Nest Record Cards.

The Annual Report for the Nest Record Scheme will be compiled during April. I would be grateful if all cards could be sent to me no later than 15 April.

Also, check your field notes for observations from previous years as these also make a useful addition to the scheme.

DAVID CROCKETT — Nest Record Convener, 21 McMillan Avenue, Whangarei.

Beach Patrol Scheme

Now that I have caught up with the backlog of Beach Patrol work I am looking forward to a good start in 1980.

By now you will have seen the 1977 data in *Notornis*; 1970-71-72 data are lumped together and will appear in *Notornis* shortly. The major hold-up in getting these data published is the time it takes for cards to get to me. In past years I have managed to get tables drawn up before the AGM in May but then have received so many cards during May and June that the tables have to

be redone. Therefore could members please try to get all cards to me as soon after 31 December as possible.

However, if anyone has cards from past years please do not hesitate to send them in. They could all be useful in the future. Recently I have received cards from Beach Patrols completed during 1954.

RICHARD VEITCH—Wildlife Service, Dept. Internal Affairs, P.O. Box 2220, Auckland.

Publications

The distribution and abundance of sea-birds at sea and on islands near the mid- and north-western coasts of Australia, Ian Abbott, *Corella* 3: 93-102. An annotated list of birds encountered during a 47-day voyage. Distribution and relative abundance of four most frequently met species are mapped. Explanations of occurrence are considered in terms of distance from land, state of the sea and surface temperatures.

The declining status of the Little Tern in New South Wales, Alan K. Morris, *Corella* 3: 105-108. Average breeding population has declined from 340 pairs in the mid-fifties to 32 in 1978-79.

Bird sound recording in New Zealand, John Kendrick, *Recorded Sound* 74-75 (1979): 62-64. The author's association with sound recording and the development of the Wildlife Sound Library are described.

A catalogue of New Zealand wildlife sound recordings, Les McPherson, *Recorded Sound* 74-75 (1979): 64-69. A summary of wildlife sound recording in New Zealand is followed by both a list of commercial discs featuring New Zealand recordings and a list of privately-held recordings known to the author. The index to New Zealand wildlife sound recordings follows taxonomic order with the location of each recording for each species being listed. This paper will be of interest for members wanting to study bird vocalisations.

The Bird Observer No. 517 states that Slater's Field Guides to the Birds of Australia are again available, at A\$11.00 per volume.