



OSNZ news

No. 18 March, 1981

NOTE: Deadline for the June issue will be 22nd May.

1980-81 Chatham Island Taiko Expedition

As reported in *OSNZ news 15* a work party prepared Taiko Camp for the six month expedition to continue the search for the breeding grounds of one of the world's rarest petrels — the Chatham Island Taiko or Magenta Petrel.

DAVID CROCKETT returned to the Chatham Islands on 25 August with a team of four to commission the camp for the six month occupation by expedition members. REG COTTER'S team arrived on 2 September and the extra personnel enabled the expedition to become fully operational. The net observation station was fully established and manned during the hours of darkness. Fly camps were set up at Taiko Hill and Timihonga to act as listening posts. These camps were also used as bases for burrow searching. An observation station was established on Murphy's Hill to overview activities associated with burrow searching in the bush and to pin-point search areas. Expedition members spent several nights at the fly camps on nocturnal vigils, hoping for some contact with the elusive Taiko so that an area for further intensive searching could be localised.

Although no Taiko were captured at the net during the first two months of the expedition, numbers of Grey-backed Storm Petrels and Broad-billed Prions were captured at the net and banded before release. A few Diving Petrels and White-faced Storm Petrels were also caught and banded during this period.

Reg Cotter handed over to COLIN SCADDEN on 23 September. For Reg this completed an extremely busy period which included handling plane bookings and the collection and dispatch of many items of food, materials and equipment. Expedition members are indebted to Reg and Anne for this great effort.

Colin Scadden and his team continued the field programme established earlier

until the arrival of the next team on 15 October. LAWRENCE and FRANCES McCORMACK and their team had a very fruitful period in the field.

On 1 November the first Chatham Island Taiko in twenty-three months was captured, measured, weighed and banded before release. This capture brought forward by one month the known presence of the Taiko in the Tuku Gully. For the team, consisting of Lawrence and Frances McCormack, Bill and Mim Ringer and Murray Quinn, this was a tremendous experience, and they join a small group of ornithologists who have seen the Taiko. A second bird was captured on 5 November and banded before release. A third Taiko, captured on 7 November, provided great excitement as this was already banded (E-127201) by David Crockett on 1 December 1978.

This latest series of Taiko captures indicates that the birds are using the Tuku Gully regularly and their yet undiscovered burrows are probably not too far away.

As if it was not enough to capture three Taiko this team also landed the first Chatham Island record of the Soft-plumaged Petrel. This species, which is expanding its range in the New Zealand region, was no doubt prospecting nesting sites in the southwest of the main Chatham Island.

David Crockett returned on 1 December with a new team which was engaged for three weeks in nocturnal vigils, burrow searching and the development of a co-ordinated track system in the search area. Access is now possible to all high ground in the area. The net observation station was manned on every suitable evening but no further contact was made with the Taiko although several storm-petrels and prions were captured during the December-January period. A great surprise was the capture on 3 December of a Chatham Island Petrel, another 'first' for the net. This bird was banded before being released.

After a further period of nocturnal vigils and burrow searching around the

fly camps during the first two weeks of January the rest of the month was spent on maintenance, preparation of the camp for future expeditions and packing up.

Any expedition has its unseen workers. I would like to mention the efforts of ALASTAIR and AUDREY GORDON in maintaining and developing equipment and dispatching many items required for the successful conduct of the expedition. RUSSELL THOMAS, our Treasurer, has attended to the numerous financial transactions associated with a six month expedition and its thirty-three members. To these people I give my sincere thanks.

DAVID E. CROCKETT, *Expedition Leader*

Kawhia Harbour Summer Census - 21/2/81

It was a perfect day and with the help of local Junior Naturalists, the harbour count was accomplished. This was a relief as the summer counts for the past two years have been abandoned due to poor weather!

Twenty-one people either took to boats and dinghies or walked the harbour shore. Birds of special interest were — 8 Black Stilt (including a possible juvenile), 1 Long-billed Curlew and 1 Asiatic Whimbrel with the usual large flocks of Bar-tailed Godwits and SIPO, 217 Banded Dotterel and 16 N.Z. Dotterel (including two juveniles).

BETTY SEDDON

Nest Record Cards

The Annual Report of the Nest Record Scheme will be completed during April. Please forward all completed cards to me by 10 April 1981.

Check your field notes as records from previous years will also make a useful contribution to the scheme.

Blank cards are available from your Regional Representative or from me (21 McMillan Avenue, Kamo, Whangarei).

DAVID CROCKETT, *Convenor, Nest Record Scheme*

Obituary - Mr A. H. Watt

It is with great regret that I record the death on 20 November 1980 of Mr A. H. Watt, a foundation member of the Society. He had spent most of his 93 years in the Te Kao district, where he was Headteacher at the local school between 1915 and 1937. He had a keen interest in natural history and recorded many changes in the birds and vegetation of the Aupouri Peninsula. His observations have been recorded in early issues of *New Zealand Bird Notes* and *Notornis*, particularly Birds of Parengarenga Harbour and the Farthest North (Vol. 2 (5): 115-120). He was a keen ornithologist and enjoyed field-work until recently when illness prevented his wanderings. He participated in several trips during the 1971 Far North Field Study, observing waders on the pastures of Paua Peninsula from a mobile hide (our station wagon).

Each time I visited Te Kao District High School, he would come down for a talk and we would share recent ornithological experiences. Our region has lost a naturalist of long standing.

DAVID E. CROCKETT, RR Northland/
Far North

Fairy Terns

On 6 January 1981 with friends I visited the Waipu River Wildlife Refuge to see waders and while there saw a pair of Fairy Terns engaged in a courtship display.

One bird was roosting on exposed mudflat and we approached to about 50 m to get a clearer view through binoculars. We watched for about five minutes when another tern flew in carrying a small fish in its bill. This arrival started a terrific amount of twittering, the fish-bearing bird spread its wings horizontally first, then held them extended upwards with head held high and neck outstretched, a truly magnificent sight in the bright sunlight. Although the fish was offered to the first bird it did not accept immediately but did so after 2-3 minutes and held it in its bill. The other bird then flew away over the river followed some moments later by the first bird, which had swallowed the fish.

In view of the fact that another pair of Fairy Terns had successfully hatched their eggs by 1 January 1981, the performance which we saw seemed rather late in the season. Should this pair nest successfully they would probably escape the disturbance of holiday visitors and trail-bike riders.

ALASTAIR GORDON

Meandarra Ornithological Field Study Unit

In December 1980 the Meandarra Ornithological Field Study Unit (MOFSU) was formally established as a research group of the University of Queensland, Australia.

MOFSU is active in field research mainly near Meandarra, 300 km west of Brisbane, with major interest in aspects of the behaviour and ecology of communally breeding species.

MOFSU welcomes visitors and volunteer field assistants in its programmes. From time to time students are accepted to work on field projects towards an M.Sc. or Ph.D. However, MOFSU is not in a position to support such students financially and they must obtain funding elsewhere.

For further information write to Dr. Douglas Dow, Director, MOFSU, Department of Zoology, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia 4067.

Open Day at Miranda

The Miranda Naturalists' Trust held its second Open Day in clear sunny weather on 22 February 1981. Following an introductory talk by the Chairman, Brian Ellis, groups were taken to the Limeworks and Access Bay to discuss and view waders with Sylvia Reed, Dick Sibson and Beth Brown. Dick Veitch and helpers showed how to catch godwits with a cannon net. The firing was precise, produced a splendid bang, and not a bird flew! This was not surprising for decoys were used. A relaxed crowd of about 650 enjoyed their picnic lunch and later joined Prof. John Morton in and around the local play-centre's sand-pit to learn about small shoaling fish. Terry Hatch and an interested group explored shore plants around the Observation Shelter. The new hide which offers shelter, seats and a clear view, was tried by many and pronounced excellent.

A panel discussion 'Why is the Firth of Thames especially valuable?' was chaired by Brian Ellis. Graeme Campbell (Auckland Regional Authority Planning Officer), John Morton, Dick Sibson and Dick Veitch were kept busy answering a wide range of pertinent questions on this topic. Varied displays in the Miranda Hall proved popular. These included shells, both real and photographed, by Norman Douglas; plants of the Firth of Thames from Patricia Fooks; land snails, Jim Goulstone; insects of the Firth, Derek Russell; birds and Hauraki Gulf fish, from the Auckland Museum; a collection of Wildlife Service photographs and models of the Firth

prepared for the Trust by Roger Day and helpers.

BETH BROWN

Muriwai shorebirds

We frequently walk along the seaward side of Muriwai Lagoon, Gisborne, to its mouth near Young Nick's Head and return along the beach. Besides the lagoon there is a chain of small ponds which drain into the Waipaoa River-mouth. The pond farthest inland attracts a marvellous array of roosting waders at high tide, and these are easily approached and studied.

At full tide on 15 February 1981 we made a count of birds in this area. We counted one Little Tern, a bird which has been here for three months and is easily attracted by my husband's imitation of its call. I watched it take food from the water, which it dropped twice and caught again in mid-air before swallowing. Also counted were 20+ Bar-tailed Godwit, 47 Wrybill, 6 Golden Plover, 10+ Banded Dotterel, 50 Pied Stilt, 50+ Black-billed Gulls, 5 Caspian Tern, 5 Black Swan and 6+ Brown Teal.

Beyond this small lagoon we saw 20+ White-faced Herons and another 50+ Pied Stilt in the shallow water of the main lagoon. Some disturbance at sea, perhaps tuna, gave us a view of Gannets circling and diving.

Near the lagoon mouth Black-backed Gulls were guarding nests and farther along the beach were three Black Oystercatchers.

Any birdwatcher will gain satisfaction from a quiet walk here, in spite of campers, motor-cyclists and pipi hunters! There seems to be room for us all.

SUE JOHNSON

Valiant VOCs

At Opoutere in early January we watched a pair of Variable Oystercatchers daily, by telescope, as they took turn about in the blazing sun on their single egg. The nest, on a small sandy point across the harbour, was well defended against gulls and humans. At last the small chick emerged and the pair tended it carefully. One day, three ample ladies rowed across for a picnic and all unsuspecting, trespassed on the birds' territory. Repeated dives at their heads routed them. They rallied, tried again, but were driven off by the valiant male, one of them with skirts over her head. One wonders what terrible tales will be told by this trio who perhaps had no idea of the circumstances which brought avian wrath on their heads.

BETH BROWN

Colour-banded Cattle Egrets

As part of a study aimed at understanding more about the life-history of Cattle Egrets, several hundred are now being colour-banded each year by researchers in Australia. There is a good chance that some of these Cattle Egrets may fly to New Zealand and it would be appreciated if OSNZ members would check to see if any of the Cattle Egrets which they observe are wearing coloured bands. The Cattle Egrets concerned are each wearing three bands which comprise one numbered metal band and two coloured plastic bands.

The information required is the date and place of sighting, the colour and exact position of each of the three bands (i.e. whether it was on the left or right tarsus or on the left or right tibia) and the observer's name and address (so that the observer can be thanked and told where and when the Cattle Egret was banded).

Please send sightings of colour-banded Cattle Egrets to: Mr David Purchase, Australian Bird-Banding Scheme, Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, P.O. Box 84, Lyneham A.C.T. 2602, Australia.

Brown Teal released

The largest single release of captive Brown Teal occurred in December 1980, when 32 birds were released on to the main lagoon on Matakana Island, off Tauranga.

These birds were reared during the breeding season by Ducks Unlimited members as part of Operation Pateke. Close to 80 birds are expected to be reared by Ducks Unlimited members during the season and further releases on Matakana will be made.

New Zealand Forest Products Ltd. have kindly given permission to use Matakana Island. Matakana has two distinct advantages over mainland release sites, these being that no waterfowl hunting is permitted and predator numbers are low.

The Wildlife Service is also very active in rearing Brown Teal at the Mount Bruce Native Bird Reserve, near Masterton. Total numbers of Brown Teal reared in captivity this season are expected to exceed 130 birds — which is over 10% of the world population.

Ducks Unlimited members currently hold 34 pairs of Brown Teal and 10 pairs are held by the Wildlife Service. The two Brown Teal females sent to the Wildfowl Trust in the U.K. in 1979 also had a good first season, and after successful pairings with the Trust's three surviving males the two females successfully reared 14 young between them. The

Trust has now transferred one pair of teal to another Trust centre at Peakirk.
F. N. HAYES

Close Encounters of the Bird Kind

The Cuvier Island expedition in January to catch 50 Saddlebacks for Kapiti Island gave me memorable moments with this delightful bird. During a lull between playing tapes to lure birds to a mist net I had one fly directly at my face as I sat quietly on a convenient kawakawa branch. A split-second flight path correction saved a collision. The bird shot past my ear and I all but toppled from my perch.

I had stripped off and was sloshing gratefully in a basin of water in a dim little room at the old radar barracks at dusk when a slight movement drew my attention. There, swaying gently on my elastic clothesline, was a Saddleback waiting to get to bed in one of the several holes in the old building. In spite of my apology for delaying him he flipped out of the window and grumped about outside, presumably about women clattering up the place when a fellow wants to get some sleep. I left soon after and let him get to bed. After all he was our alarm clock and it wouldn't do to have him oversleep.

Then there was Junior, a misinformed youngster, who spent the night in the barracks several times in a row. I woke to hear his voice very close to me and resolutely tried to shut it out and stay asleep. His cries increased and he started crashing about until he was let out by lowering the top of an old double hung window. It was then that I found that he had indeed been close, for there on the pillow of my lilo was the proof.

BETH BROWN

Far North Dune Lake Survey

The 1981 Far North Dune Lake Survey was held from 22-26 January in fine weather by an enthusiastic band of 23 members from the Far North/Northland and Auckland regions.

Almost all the lakes were surveyed and good numbers of Black Swan, ducks of many species and more interestingly Australian Little Grebe, Dabchick and Spur-winged Plover were seen. For many the sighting of a Greenshank at Te Werahi Lagoon and a Marsh Sandpiper on Parengarenga Harbour were the highlights.

Several shag breeding sites were noted, with Pied and Little Shags feeding young on the nests.

A group of hardier types patrolled practically all the coastline from Te Pahi

Stream around the Far North and southward to Rangaunu Harbour, no mean feat.

Good weather and accommodation and convivial company made it an enjoyable occasion for all concerned.

ALASTAIR GORDON

Whangarei Harbour Surveys

Whangarei members completed three high tide roost surveys of the Whangarei Harbour during 1980 to continue the triennial surveys that have been completed during March, July and November in recent years. High tide roost locations are well known now and parties of observers travel to roost sites at pre-arranged times. However, many factors can affect survey results, the extent of the high tide and weather being major influences. Even under optimum conditions it is sometimes uncanny how the more interesting visitors such as Long-billed Curlew, Whimbrel, Curlew Sandpiper, Golden Plover and Little and Fairy Terns are absent from the roosts on survey days.

However, in spite of these adversities a great amount of valuable information has been gathered and this will be an on-going project. Should projected developments proceed it will be interesting to note future effects, if any, of railway construction, barging and timber port installations and a pulp mill.

MIKE KEARNS

Recording Review

British wildlife habitats. Recordings by Richard Margoschis on cassette at £2.25 each, P. & P. 75p. for up to 3, from: 80 Mancetter Road, Mancetter, Atherstone, Warwickshire, England CV9 1NH. These are three interesting tapes from the U.K.: No. 1 Eight Habitats: Mountain top to sea shore; No. 2 Woodlands by day and night; No. 3 Fox calls. All are in stereo (and playable on mono), approx. 40 minutes. Bird song is predominant on Nos. 1 and 2, but the voices of several mammals and the sound of insects are included to give a picture of the sounds of nature. Richard Margoschis is a leading member of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society in Britain.

Membership of W.S.R.S. is open to people living in New Zealand who can receive the Society's circulating tapes, enter recording competitions (this year the subject is Starling mimicry), use discount purchasing etc. Details of the Society are available from Michael Taylor, 28 Awarua Crescent, Orakei, Auckland 5.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Lake Wairarapa Survey, 14-16/11/80

Twenty Wairarapa, Wellington and Manawatu members joined forces to survey Lake Wairarapa in an effort to establish a data base for future observations.

On 15 November the 20 members were spread out along the lake shore from Tauherenikau Delta in the north to the Narrows in the south, covering some 20 km of shoreline. Fortunately for the observers the strong westerly winds eased an hour after the start.

The birds were well spread out along the shore, with some beats producing very few birds and one beat the greatest number and variety. Results were: 43 Black Shag, 14 Little Black Shag, 3 Little Shag, 14 White-faced Heron, 1 Bittern, 1000+ Black Swan, 139 Paradise Duck, 4000+ Mallard, 4 Grey Duck, 2 Grey Teal, 310 N.Z. Shoveler, 4 Harrier, 2 Pukeko, 7 SIPO, 10 Spur-winged Plover, 22 Golden Plover, 4 Banded Dotterel, 19 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Greenshank, 4 Knot, 4 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 751 Pied Stilt, 40 Black-backed Gull, 29 Black-billed Gull, 17 Caspian Tern, 1 Turnstone, 6 Welcome Swallow, 1 Kingfisher and 6 Variable Oystercatcher.

When all the observers had returned to the shearers' quarters and were supping tea, a Cattle Egret paraded outside the window for all to see. In the evening everyone went 'craking' at nearby Boggy Pond, but unfortunately the crakes must have been well settled for the night as none were seen. However, a pair of Dabchick gave all an interesting display when feeding two chicks. An island tour by courtesy of Mike Imber rounded off a very full day.

Next day half the party went back to the lake to see the Greenshank and Golden Plover while the rest rowed around nearby lagoons looking at shag colonies and looking for crakes, successfully this time. Heavy rain at lunch-time signalled the end of a very interesting and worthwhile weekend, which we hope will be repeated in the not too distant future.

COLIN SCADDEN

Egmont birds

During November 1980 we started counting birds on north Egmont, with three transects from the visitors' centre road to the Waiwhakaiko River being counted using the walking/counting method. The number of species and the number of birds decreased as altitude increased. Fourteen species were counted within the park boundary, at the rate of 4.66 birds/5 minute walk, while the

Ngatoro walk near the visitors' centre yielded five species at a rate of 2.2/5 minute walk. The three most commonly recorded birds were all native, small and insectivorous and almost equally abundant at all altitudes. These three species (Rifleman, Grey Warbler and Pied Tit) together made up almost 80% of the birds counted.

We will continue counting to see whether this pattern holds for other seasons.

JOHN M. & DIANA S. CLARK

Black-fronted Terns on the Waiau River

On 12 November 1980 I found a colony of Black-fronted Terns adjacent, as usual, to a Black-billed Gull colony. They were well established on an island formed by a shallow channel and some distance from the main West Coast road so disturbance would be unlikely. I located 15 nests that day, three with two small chicks each and the rest with one or two eggs.

From then until 29 December I was able to visit the colony at intervals of three to six days, making 12 visits in all. By 26 November there were 20 nests, 11 of which were occupied, two with chicks. The remaining nine included the three found with chicks originally, four which had hatched since the previous visit and two which had probably hatched as three roaming chicks were caught and banded. On 29 November heavy rain in the Main Divide caused the river to flood and six of the nine nests containing eggs were washed out. However, two of the three surviving nests produced chicks.

After the flood the picture was not so clear for it seemed likely that the six pairs which had lost their nests and possibly others, re-nested. However, the flood marked a change in the fortunes of the colony for hatching success of eggs was much less. During the period 18 November to 12 December, 18 eggs were laid but only 1 chick hatched. It is usual for late nests to be less successful and this confirmed observations of previous years. The reason for each failure is very difficult to ascertain; two of the nests may have been preyed upon as the eggshells had holes. However, frequently there is nothing to give a clue to the fate of the nest at all, except perhaps shell fragments. Closer study could provide more information but terns are sensitive and visits too frequently could easily become more than they could tolerate.

The colony had a good season overall. From 30 nests found I banded 23 chicks and did not find any that had died away

from the nest. The total number of eggs laid was 55 and very few nests would have been missed so hatching success was about 42%. A colony half this size on the Conway River had a hatching success of 46%.

It was interesting during visits to watch the adults drive away any other bird approaching their nest, to see them find and feed their chicks and to watch the chicks grow until they made their early floppy flight.

JACK COWIE

Aberrant plumage in waders

A number of aberrantly plumaged waders have been reported this summer. These include: a stilt seen at Lake Horowhenua which was pure white except for its normal coloured secondaries; another albino stilt seen at Foxton No. 1; a godwit seen feeding on mudflats at the Kaiapoi Rivermouth, which was white except for a small greyish patch on the wing coverts; and a Banded Dotterel at Lake Ellesmere which had light chocolate upper-parts and only partial dark feathering on the upper wings, the rest of the body being pure white.

These birds caused some confusion and much discussion initially before close observation revealed their true identities.

PAUL SAGAR

North Canterbury waders

We have had an exciting and interesting spring and summer with waders in Canterbury which started when Barry Armstrong found a Hudsonian Godwit among the 135 Bar-tailed Godwits wintering in the Heathcote-Avon Estuary.

From early spring it was apparent that there were many more godwits than usual at local estuaries, while larger than usual parties of Knots accompanied them, a few of these staying on at the Ashley Estuary. Eventually 17 Turnstones arrived though few stayed with the 3 Red-necked Stints and one Whimbrel already in residence. In early December a Large Sand Dotterel took up and continues to defend a feeding territory in the Ashley Estuary. This bird appears to feed primarily on small crabs, which it catches by running them down before they can seek refuge in their burrows.

Finally, to round off the summer, a Long-billed Curlew and a Terek Sandpiper were seen at Brooklands Lagoon, near the Waimakariri Rivermouth.

KATHLEEN HARRISON, GEORGE GLOVER & PHIL HOWELL

Miranda Banders

Following the initial success of wader banding in the Auckland region, aimed primarily at the more abundant migratory species of Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot, etc., attempts have been made to learn more about our rarer visitors, the sandpipers, etc. To do this it was necessary to modify our trapping strategy because a cannon net requires a lot of organisation and manpower and, roosting sites favoured by sandpipers in the Firth of Thames are often too small to comfortably operate a cannon net. Therefore we chose to use a clapnet with Wrybill decoys. We chose to use Wrybill decoys to improve the odds of birds settling in our small catching area and any Wrybill caught would supplement the data from several large catches already made with the cannon net.

Our first serious attempt resulted in a catch of 4 Curlew Sandpiper and 7 Wrybill, all birds being measured, weighed and banded before release. In addition to a numbered metal band each Curlew Sandpiper was fitted with a red flag on the tibia (above the knee). Several sightings of these birds have been reported from Miranda subsequently.

The red flag is easily observed, at times even in flight. With these birds possibly migrating soon we ask members to pay extra attention to sandpiper haunts and inform us of any colour-marked birds.

Tony Habraken has assumed responsibility for organising and collating data from the study of these rarer asiatic migrants and therefore all information should be directed to him at: A. Habraken, Harrisville Road, R.D. 2, Pukekohe. The following information is required: SPECIES: As we intend to band other rare migrants every attempt should be made to identify the species observed. LOCALITY: Accurate location, using names on any good maps. DATE: Also time of day. OBSERVE: How many birds are banded and any other birds sharing the roost, any plumage variations, colour of flag and leg banded (remember right and left refers to the birds' right and left).

Requests for information regarding techniques or studies are welcomed and should be made to: C. R. Veitch, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, P.O. Box 2220, Auckland 1.

MAURICE FIELD

Beach Patrol Scheme

Another year has passed and, from the cards received to date, it has been another good year for the birds.

I have been pleased to see the 1978 Beach Patrol data in the June 1980 issue of *Notornis* and the long awaited 1970, 71, and 72 data in the December issue.

The 1979 manuscript is with the Editor. The results of the 1979 Beach Patrol Scheme appear in this issue of *Notornis*.

By writing to you at this time last year I thought I had all the cards in before I did the major add up in April (a good 40 hours work). Certainly I received some encouraging reports. Alas, during May one person sent in cards with 400 important birds recorded in them. It took a further 20 hours work to correct the data.

Some people seem to think that their regions are no good for Beach Patrolling. Please do not hesitate to send in all cards. A nil return is every bit as important as a large total. See if you can prove that your region does not have no patrollers — just clean beaches!

This year I will have to try and collate the data during March (work planned for April is not suitable for evening office work) so could you please try to get all 1980 Beach Patrol cards and Specimen Record cards to me by the end of February.

C. R. VEITCH

[This notice was received by all RRs in early January and is repeated here for the timely encouragement it gives to all members. — Ed.]

Publications

Feeding ecology of rooks (Corvus frugilegus) on the Heretaunga Plains, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. T. P. G. Purchas. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* 7 (4): 557-578. 1980. The food resources of rooks were measured and related to changes in the birds' feeding behaviour during 1968-70. Rooks preferred to eat invertebrates and walnuts, but also took seed of cereals, pulses, and stock feeds. They spent at least 40% of their feeding time (75-80% in spring) eating invertebrates, 30-60% finding or hiding walnuts and sometimes acorns in autumn and winter and 45% eating seed in hot, dry weather during summer.

The numbers of each food item required to sustain a rook for a daylight hour were estimated. Summer is the most difficult season for rooks to find food.

Selection of carrion by the Australasian Harrier (Circus approximans) in New Zealand. H. A. Robertson. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* 7 (4): 579-583. 1980. Australasian Harriers were offered a choice of baits in the field. These trials tested preferences for carrion species, amount of flesh exposed, body posture and colour of carrion. Domestic hen pullets and Norway rats were chosen significantly more often than rabbits, opossums or eels. Skinned rabbits were preferred to unskinned ones. White and

blue baits were preferred to red, brown or green baits. The most important factors involved in the selection of carrion by harriers appear to be ease of handling of the carrion and colour of the bait.

Food-storing behaviour of the South Island Robin. R. G. Powlesland. *Mauri Ora* 8: 11-20. 1980. Robins stored whole or portions of invertebrate prey and nearly 70% of cached items were earthworms. Most items were stored in sites close to where they were found, often branch-trunk axils.

Storing of food occurred throughout the year, but most frequently in autumn and winter. The birds tended to store food most often in the morning and retrieve it mainly after mid-afternoon. Most items were retrieved within three days.

PAUL SAGAR

Lake Ellesmere waders

On 31 December 1980 we were surprised to find 40+ Red-necked Stints feeding with hundreds of Banded Dotterels on *Salicornia* flats at the north west side of Lake Ellesmere. A long series of trips to the lake during the next two months enabled all adjacent areas to be searched and an impressive number and variety of waders to be recorded. The following is a review of our sightings; numbers recorded are the maximum seen on any one day.

48 Golden Plovers, accompanied at times by one or two Little Whimbrel; counts in excess of 1000 Banded Dotterels (2000+ estimated) in every conceivable plumage; a solitary Red-capped Dotterel resplendent in burnt orange crown and nape with black lores and lapels; 40+ Wrybills; 10+ Turnstones; 11 Knots; 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper; 70+ Curlew Sandpipers, one discovered by Don Brathwaite being in full breeding plumage; 6 White-rumped Sandpipers (also seen by Ray Pierce and Bob Smith); ca. 220 Red-necked Stints; hundreds of Pied Stilts; 2 Little Terns and several Black-fronted Terns.

All these while at least 300 Grey Teal cruised close inshore!

We also found a single stint, smaller than the Red-necked Stints, and were able to follow it through a moult from bright chestnut-red on the back, crown and secondaries down to the usual mouse grey. The bird retained large oval dark feather centres at all times and showed a bill that was thick at the base and about the same length as that of a typical Red-necked Stint but tapering rapidly to a finer point. The bill and legs were black. We identified it as a Little Stint.

KATHLEEN HARRISON, GEORGE GLOVER & PHIL HOWELL

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY of N.Z. (Inc.)

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31ST DECEMBER 1980

1979	<u>INCOME WAS EARNED FROM:</u>		
7922	Subscriptions	16,372	
320	Transfer from Life Members	319 (Note i)	
476	Donations	340	
4820	Profit from Christmas Cards	2,757	
753	Sale of Back Numbers	455	
26	Sale of Car Stickers	22	
150	Sale of Society Ties	78	
-	Surplus Summer Study Course	2	
119	Surplus Annual General Meeting	94	
26	Biology of Birds	52	
14612		<u>TOTAL ORDINARY INCOME</u>	20,491
	<u>PLUS INVESTMENT AND OTHER INCOME</u>		
1759	Interest	2,504 (Note ii)	
	Subsidy from Dept. of Internal Affairs		
	1979 Notornis Paradise Shelduck articles	1,500	
1759		<u>TOTAL INVESTMENT AND OTHER INCOME</u>	4,004
16371		<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	24,495
	<u>LESS EXPENSES</u>		
15213	"Notornis" and "O.S.N.Z.News" Printing and Distribution	18,491	
	Amendments to 1970 Checklist	1,524	
	Less Sales	106	1,418
170	Audit Fee	175	
-	Beach Patrol Scheme	171	
60	Donations	20	
230	General Expenses	207	
68	Library Expenses	54	
-	Neat Record Scheme	127	
479	Postages	562	
163	Printing & Stationery	798	
40	Royal Society Affiliation	70	
623	Travelling Expenses	995	
17046		<u>TOTAL EXPENSES</u>	23,088
675	<u>SURPLUS FOR YEAR TRANSFERRED TO ACCUMULATED FUND</u>		\$ 1,407
Deficiency			*****

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY of N.Z. (Inc.)

NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

NOTE i. Life members transfer: 10% of Balance at 31.12.80

NOTE ii. The interest earned in the Projects Assistance Reserve Fund investments has been credited direct 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 31.12.79	7,239
Plus Royalty on New Field Guide	4,983
Interest earned by Fund	760
	<u>12,982</u>
Less Cash Payments:	
Grants for Bird Mapping Expeditions	239
Balance as at 31.12.80	<u>\$ 12,743</u>

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

Balance as at 31.12.79	297
Atlas Sales during the year	114
Balance as at 31.12.80	<u>\$ 411</u>

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY of N.Z. (Inc.)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1980

1979	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
3201	Cash at Bank of New Zealand	2,868	
121	Amounts owing to the Society	-	
90	Bank of New Zealand Savings Account	76	
7300	Term Deposits Bank of New Zealand	14,300	
100	Stock of "Notornis"	100 (Note iii)	
10812		<u>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</u>	17,364
	<u>INVESTMENTS</u>		
5000	N.Z. Government Savings Stock	5,000	
3000	Local Body Stocks	3,000	
	The Perpetual Trustees Co. Ltd		
70	Group Trustee Investment No.2	-	
	B.N.Z. Finance Co. Ltd		
7212	First Ranking Debenture Stock	7,954	
	Development Finance Corp. of N.Z.		
5000	Secured Debenture Stock	5,000	
20282		<u>TOTAL INVESTMENTS</u>	20,954
1000	Library at Valuation		1,000
32094		<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	39,318
	<u>LESS LIABILITIES</u>		
4030	Amounts owed by the Society	3,464	
1550	Subscriptions in Advance	2,229	
	Reserve Funds		
7239	Projects Assistance Reserve	12,743 (Note iv)	
2890	Life Subscriptions	2,876	
297	Bird Distribution in N.Z. Atlas	411 (Note v)	
-	Robert Falla Memorial Appeal	100	
1000	Publications	1,000	
17006		<u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u>	22,823
15088	<u>VALUE OF ACCUMULATED FUNDS AS BELOW:</u>		\$ 16,495
*****			*****
	<u>ACCUMULATED FUNDS</u>		
15763	Balance at 31 December 1979	15,088	
675 (Def.)	Surplus for the year	1,407	
15088		<u>BALANCE AT 31 DECEMBER 1980</u>	\$ 16,495
*****			*****

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.
- 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 1980 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: 16 JANUARY 1980

THOMPSON LANG ELLIS & GARDNER
Chartered Accountants
Auditors

Crested Grebe Survey

The first ever co-ordinated survey of Crested Grebes in the South Island was completed during the period 29 November-14 December 1980. Response to the survey was good and its success is due entirely to the efforts of OSNZ members and Wildlife Service and National Park Board staff who spent their time tramping, boating and canoeing around a large proportion of South Island lakes during the survey period. Fortunately, fine weather prevailed during most of the survey period, which assisted observations greatly.

Observers were asked to record the number of grebes counted on a particular lake, the estimated number of grebes on the lake (accounting for grebes suspected of being on nests, etc.) and any details of breeding activity.

Regional results (counts only)

Nelson: 0. Marlborough: 1. West Coast: 22. Canterbury: 128. Otago: 0. Southland: 0. Fiordland: 19. TOTAL: 170.

The efficiency of the survey may be gauged from the fact that all potential grebe lakes were searched in Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury, plus all West Coast lakes south to and including Lake Ianthe. In Fiordland, Lakes Hau-roko, Monowai, Thomas, Island, Green and Te Anau were surveyed. While the survey lapsed somewhat in South Westland the results do indicate that the Crested Grebe population is not as strong in the south as previously supposed. Also, the Canterbury population, while up substantially on Westerskov's estimate for 1970, is still very vulnerable with the majority of the birds being found on just five lakes. These results are cause for some concern about the future of this species in New Zealand.

A detailed report giving counts, estimates, locations and other relevant information about the New Zealand Crested Grebe population is in preparation and a full acknowledgement of the assistance of observers will be made there.

Meanwhile there is still a lot to be learned about our Crested Grebes and more information is still to be obtained about numbers, distribution and movements. Already Canterbury members are planning for a winter survey of Crested Grebes in their area.

PAUL SAGAR

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

In accordance with the Constitution, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Forty-Second Annual General Meeting will be held on SATURDAY, 23 MAY, 1981, in the Schoolroom of the Auckland War Memorial Museum at 8.00 p.m.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Council resolved at its November 1980 meeting to move "That subscription rates be increased from 1 January 1982 to \$16.00 for an Ordinary Member, with pro rata increases for other classes of membership."

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of minutes
3. Council reports and financial statement
4. Election of officers
5. Appointment of auditor
6. Consideration of motion
7. General business.

R. S. SLACK, Hon. Secretary, 31 Wyndham Road, Silverstream

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PROGRAMME OF WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

All meetings will be held in the Schoolroom of the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

- Friday 22 May: 10.00 a.m. Council meeting in Museum Council Room. Entry via Administration door. Please wait at reception for Mrs Reed.
- Saturday 23 May: 9.00 a.m. Regional Representatives meeting. Entry via west door. Members' trip to Tahuna Torea (HW 10.28). Meet 10.00 a.m. at Tamaki Estuary end of West Tamaki Road. For transport contact Dr M. J. Taylor, 28 Awarua Crescent, Orakei, Auckland 8. Telephone 549234.
- 2.00 p.m. Papers contributed by Peter Jenkins and Graham Turbott on the theme of garden birds, and Phil Millener on subfossil bones.
- 5.00 - 6.30 p.m. Social time in Supper Room approx. \$8.00
6.30 p.m. Buffet Dinner in Supper Room
- 8.00 p.m. AGM, followed by film *City Birds*, presented by Gordon Ell.
- Sunday 24 May: Choice of excursions to —
Tahuna Torea
Karaka (waders)—HW 1300 hours
Waitakere Ranges—Forest & Bird Reserve.

Poster displays are invited, to be shown on screen in the foyer adjacent to the Supper Room. Set up preferably on Saturday morning, at least before 2 p.m. Contributors contact Mrs Reed beforehand, stating amount of space required.

CUT OUT AND SEND TO —

Mrs S. Reed, 4 Mamaku Street, Meadowbank, Auckland 5 (Tel 547784)

Delete what does not apply:

- I/we shall attend the AGM
- I/we shall arrange own accommodation
- I/we need billet/hostel/motel accommodation
- I/we shall attend buffet dinner
- I/we shall join excursion to Transport needed

NAME

ADDRESS

Classified Summarised Notes Band on the run

Members are requested to forward their notes to the convenor or their Regional Representative more frequently than once or twice a year as this will ease the burden of the convenor.

Notes should follow the form as set out in the Classified Summarised Notes published in this issue of *Notornis*. Please be concise, accurate and make sure that the locality can be pin-pointed on any good map — watch for local names which mean little outside your area.

Send your Classified Summarised Notes now, to Doug. Booth, 12 Amorino Drive, Red Beach, Orewa.

DOUG. BOOTH

A few months ago I received a Recovery Report of a Red-billed Gull that I had banded on the Nelson Boulder Bank in December 1968. The bird was recorded as having been 'found dead' at a Blenheim address. It is possible though not usual to find a dead Red-billed Gull in one's garden so when in Blenheim recently I visited the address and found the owner attending to the pigeons in his aviary.

He remembered the band and sending it away but it was not on a Red-billed Gull — he had carefully removed it from a live pigeon! This bird was a 'fancy' pigeon which he had found at his work place in Blenheim. Later he

had given the pigeon to a friend who had tried to home it from Nelson but the bird had not returned to Blenheim.

I am sure that his story is correct but there is wide scope for speculation about how the band was transferred from a Red-billed Gull to a Domestic Pigeon!

JACK COWIE

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Notice was given in December 1980 that four Council positions would become vacant in May 1981 and nominations were called for. Four nominations were received, as follows:

- Mr B. D. Heather, Upper Hutt (Editor)
- Mr G. M. H. Peterson, Auckland (Treasurer)
- Mr R. S. Slack, Upper Hutt (Secretary)
- Mr P. D. Gaze, Nelson (Council Member)

The nominees are therefore elected unopposed.

R. S. SLACK,
Hon. Secretary, OSNZ

31 Wyndam Road,
Silverstream
