



OSNZ news

No. 20 September, 1981

NOTE: Deadline for the December issue will be 21 November.

Robert Falla Memorial Appeal

Many tributes have been paid to Sir Robert Falla, K.B.E., and there is no need to dwell at length on his long and distinguished contribution to the study and protection of birds. Although he had other interests and wide knowledge in many fields, birds were his first and his lasting love.

It is fitting that his devotion to ornithology should be commemorated and it is surely appropriate that the Ornithological Society should undertake the task of establishing an annual award to perpetuate his memory.

Accordingly the Council of OSNZ has launched an appeal to raise a sum which will be invested to bring in an income sufficient to endow a substantial annual award in the form of a BOOK TOKEN and a suitably designed BOOK PLATE.

The right to name the annual winner of the award shall rest with the Council of the OSNZ.

In naming the recipient of the Robert Falla Memorial Award, the Council will be guided by the winner's contribution to the study of birds in New Zealand and the Southern Oceans, together with his or her service to the OSNZ and a lively concern for the welfare of New Zealand's native birds.

The Council is confident that in view of Sir Robert's long and notable service to bird-study, members both of the OSNZ and of the public will respond generously to ensure the success of this Appeal.

Donations marked 'Robert Falla Memorial Appeal' may be sent to Mr G. M. H. Peterson, Hon. Treasurer OSNZ, P.O. Box 22-230, Auckland 6, New Zealand.

R. B. SIBSON, *President OSNZ*

Record number of rare birds reared

A record number of the rare and endangered Brown Teal have been reared in captivity by members of Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Inc.

101 Brown Teal were reared by Ducks Unlimited members during the 1980-81 breeding season, which officially closed on 30 April. This figure represents about 10% of the estimated world population. Of the 101 birds reared 64 have been released on Matakana Island, off Tauranga, and the remainder have been retained as captive breeding stock.

The Ducks Unlimited project call for 50 pairs of Brown Teal to be held in captivity, and this number should ensure that several hundred birds are reared each season.

Ducks Unlimited Directors are delighted with the progress of this project and say it clearly shows what can be achieved in the field of conservation by perseverance and dedication.

NEIL HAYES & PAUL PIRANI

Hunting behaviour of a Harrier

In November 1980 I had a clear, uninterrupted view from a hide, through 8 x 40 binoculars, of a female Harrier hunting over open farmland bordering a tidal estuary.

When first seen, the Harrier was flying close to the ground while following a farm drain. A repeated flight pattern began with a quick succession of five or six wingbeats which carried the bird to a height of about four metres, followed by a long glide down which ended only a metre or so above the ground. Using the momentum gained, the Harrier then flew back to near the original height and repeated the sequence. Suddenly, in the middle of a glide, she spread her tail and pirouetted in a semicircle down onto the grass. She was up again in an instant and continued her search along the drain.

This was followed by a few minutes spent quartering over a nearby marsh. During this time the bird dropped to the ground again several times, in what I assumed to be attempts to flush quarry from the protective vegetation.

Returning to the farm drain, the Harrier continued searching, without appearing to take any interest in a family of Mallards swimming further along the drain. This group comprised the two adults plus six small downy ducklings. A row of chinese poplars had been planted beside the drain as a windbreak, and at the level of the tops of these trees the Harrier made her way steadily towards the ducks, the leaves affording concealment from them. The Harrier then side-slipped through between the tree-tops and appeared over the ducks so suddenly that the parents flew off in alarm. The Harrier descended in one smooth motion, snatched one of the ducklings with both feet and carried it off to an adjoining paddock before landing and beginning to feed. I then approached the bird, and as I did so she flew off with the remainder of the duckling.

ROB WHEELDON

Colour-banded dotterels

Clive Minton has written from Melbourne with a special plea for members to keep a look-out for colour-dyed and colour-banded Banded Dotterels. During May 133 Banded Dotterels were caught near Melbourne and colour-banded, in addition 56 of these birds were colour-dyed yellow (which fades to orange) on all their underparts. Some of these feathers will be moulted before the breeding season but underwing coverts should stay coloured until January-March 1982.

Anyone seeing any of these birds should send details to: Clive Minton, c/- IMI Australia Ltd, Heine House, 11 Queens Road, Melbourne 3004, Australia.

RICHARD VEITCH

XVth Pacific Science Congress, 1983

The XVth Pacific Science Congress will be held in Dunedin, 1-11 February 1983. Its theme is to be 'Conservation, development and utilization of the resources of the Pacific.'

A session is planned on the diversity, distribution, abundance and management of vertebrate populations in the Pacific region. Joint sessions will be arranged with related disciplines. Speakers are now invited to offer papers (with title and short summary) on such topics as:— Biogeography, Species diversity, Habitat requirements, Migration and movements, Population ecology, Ecosystem studies, Man-induced changes, Endangered species, Conservation and management.

For further information, please write to Dr C. W. Burns, Section Convener (Ecology and Environmental Protection), Department of Zoology, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin.

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A 'Goodie' in a fog at Karaka

It may have seemed to some that Bill Oddie came to New Zealand just for Telethon, but his eagerness to get to Karaka on a morning of thick fog told another story. He is a Council member of the RSPB, a birdwatching fanatic and great company. He decided that he didn't want to see our Pied Shag colony but would like to get straight to the waders, so we went to Karaka and couldn't even see the shellbank! After an anxious hour or so of trying not to notice that the fog was not lifting, it suddenly did. At this stage it was high water and we could not wade out to the banks. Finally fate relented and the long-sought quarry was revealed at last. There on the mud were 6 Red-necked Stints to be imprinted on Bill's mind, sketched, mentally compared with the Little Stints he sees at home and written up thoroughly. There was even one with traces of breeding colour. His satisfaction was a pleasure to see. Such was his enjoyment that he came back for another slog through the mud to help us with the Manukau census, found our resident Grey-tailed Tattler in the rain and after a session of bird slides and pictures of 'difficult' waders was loath to board his plane. I think that he will be back.

P.S. Bill Oddie is the only overseas visitor I have taken out who brought a complete set of gear with him, even telescope and Wellies — sorry gumboots!

BETH BROWN

The great Whitehead hunt

Following the Auckland AGM, Coldfoot and Twitch indulged in a safari to the wilds of the King Country, notably Pureora. They had engaged a local guide — one Noggin the Nog — to lead them to the spots where good birding was to be had. Both were keen to savour the local speciality — Kokako — but another species was also sought — Whitehead — a species not commonly found in the arid zones of Canterbury. This desire was further kindled by the previous acquaintance with the species by Coldfoot, while Twitch was attending an ornithological meeting in the concrete jungle of Wellington.

A pre-dawn start saw the intrepid trio shivering in the silent bush of Pikiariki awaiting the sun and the birds. Dawn came and went unheralded by all except the screech of Kakas, and a brisk walk failed to produce much unusual except that Coldfoot's feet still were. A couple of clucks offstage was all that was heard of Kokako. By the time the sun had lit the trees and exposed the frost of the morning, the Fantails, Pied Tits, Riflemen, Tuis and Grey Warblers were all about, and the Kakas had gone to eye us warily from lofty perches. We decided to move location, to where a wind which felt as if it was coming straight off the snows of Ruapehu chilled Coldfoot's appendages even more.

Listening conditions were poor and so we resorted to using a tape lure, which immediately put us onto a party of three Kokako. These were followed for about an hour. At one stage they were joined by two others, whilst two more distant birds could be heard. All birds remained high in the canopy and treated us to their full repertoire of song and cricked necks for the rest of the week. With a loud crack Noggin's neck gave an audible warning that it was time to view life horizontally for a while and they retreated for coffee.

Having fulfilled the minor aim of the safari it was now resolved to concentrate on the major task, and locate the Whitehead. 'Larch' said Noggin, and off they went plodding through deep needle litter, finding Pied Tits, Bellbirds and Grey Warblers but no Whiteheads. Strange! 'Douglas Fir' said Noggin, and the dense stands revealed a vocal but shy Robin, yet no Whiteheads. 'Virgin bush, Eucalypts, more Larch' said Noggin, as they drove like fiends around virtually every road at Pureora, leaping out to squeak polystyrene, make ridiculous noises, and locate virtually everything else possible, except Whiteheads. The squeaker not only attracted Chaffinches, parakeets, Pied Tits, Fan-

tails, Redpolls and Bellbirds, but also huge flocks of Grey Warblers, a magnificent sight.

'It will have to be Waipapa' said Noggin with a knowing look. Lunch was spent with newly cricked necks, observing the magnificent bush but the fact that it was now avian siesta time became apparent. A trudge here, there and everywhere turned up more Kakas, parakeets, Bellbirds and Grey Warblers but still no Whiteheads.

Time was passing. Twitch's face was getting longer and Noggin's redder. Needless to say, Coldfoot's were getting more so. A decision was made to try the selection logging area, despite the deviation to get there. A female Paradise Duck noted on the way felt not to qualify.

More confusing roads later the trio sauntered down a skid track whilst Noggin avoided the real issue by waxing lyrical about the planting and tending of young podocarps. Suddenly he twitched, cricked his neck again, and yelled. There for their edification were three of the devious beasties, one of which was good enough to be lured even closer by the squeaker and obliging enough to sit on a sunlit branch.

The trio skipped back hotfoot to the car, having savoured fully the ornithological delights of Pureora. The Twinkle in Twitch's eyes became even more pronounced later that evening as the success of the safari was toasted in the traditional apple concoction consumed thereabouts.

ROB GUEST

Band and Tag

Recently all the applications for renewal of banding permits have been processed and permits sent out. Everybody should be happy now.

We would like to stress the fact that the permits are restricted to the methods, species and localities stated. Please do not abuse your privileges by indulging in activities not covered by the permit.

The first part of the Banding Manual, a revised list of species codes and recommended band sizes, was issued with the permits. Operators are requested to check the band sizes and see whether they fit snugly and if not, to notify the Banding Office with reasons for the change. Other parts of the manual will be forwarded when they become available. Please do not send any money before a request is received from the Banding Office.

Banding Materials — The Banding Office currently stocks a *limited* supply

of both small and large banding pliers as well as mistnets and pesola spring balances. They are for sale at current prices. Please enquire.

Operators are informed that when these materials are out of stock, a period of about three months is required for ordering new supplies.

Species Permits — Permits have been issued for the following species and localities in the Auckland area:

All wader species, passerines, Pukeko, Caspian Tern, New Zealand Dotterel, North Island Brown Kiwi, North Island Weka (all in the Auckland Provincial District). Black-backed Gull (Northland), White-faced Storm Petrel (Hauraki Gulf Islands) and Grey-faced Petrel (all islands in Auckland Provincial District).

Summaries of species and localities for other parts of New Zealand will be published in forthcoming issues of *OSNZ news*.

People interested in 'Who's doing What' may obtain names and addresses of permitholders via the Banding Office.

Banding Report — A lot of complaints in recent years about there being no banding report available, resulted in a report summarising the banding data for the years 1974-81. However, we are amazed that the response has been so minimal. Almost nil . . . !

Banding Mail Bag

Some Mallards get around these days. 27-03405 banded as a juvenile female on 12/2/80 at Lake Wairarapa, was shot on 3/5/81 at Lake Te Anau.

27-10327 banded as an adult male on 9/2/81 at Lake Whangape, was shot just over two months later at Kaihiku, South Otago. This bird had travelled over 1000 km in a short time.

J-00709 Northern Giant Petrel, banded as an adult at Wolf Bay, S.W. Africa (26°49'S, 15°08'E), was found dead in Easy Cove, Stewart Island, nine months after banding.

R-20695 Wandering Albatross, banded as a chick on 3/9/70 at Campbell Island. The bird was found breeding on Campbell Island at the age of 11 years, the first known-age breeding bird of this species in the New Zealand area.

140-39265 Wandering Albatross banded on 1/8/71, age and sex unknown, off Austinmer, N.S.W., Australia (34°18'S, 150°58'E). It was found breeding on Adams Island, Auckland Islands, on 11/5/81.

M-31434 Buller's Mollymawk, banded as a chick on 9/8/72 at the Snares Islands.

It was recovered alive and well on 11/6/81 at the place of banding.

FL-13456 Lesser Broad-billed Prion, banded as a chick on Pig Island, Crozet Group, by the French. The bird was found dead just over three months later three miles south of Chases Gorge, near Dargaville.

635-26006 Bar-tailed Godwit, banded on 31/5/66, as an adult of unknown sex, at St. George Island, Pribilof, Alaska. The skeleton of the bird, with band still attached, was found on 28/10/67 (one year and five months after banding) four miles east of Katikati, Tauranga Harbour. We dug this never published recovery out of the file because of the current interest in waders.

C-10045 Snares Fernbird, banded as an adult male on 30/11/74 on the main island of the Snares Islands. It was sighted by its colour bands near the Snares Islands huts on 9/6/81 at an age of seven plus.

R. O. COSSEE

Aerial antics

In our garden in Te Kuiti the Song Thrush starts its territorial song in late April, some six weeks before the Blackbird. By late October 1980 both species were singing simultaneously, and I presumed the Song Thrushes were commencing their third brood and the Blackbirds their second. However, once I was fortunate enough to observe a male thrush and a male Blackbird sharing the same song post, a television aerial, and both were giving their territorial calls prior to dusk, while standing within 0.5 m or so from each other.

The thrush was the dominant singer; it indulged in a burst of song whilst the Blackbird remained quiet, or sang a sub-song. As soon as the thrush paused the Blackbird began its full song. Usually the thrush waited for a pause in the Blackbird's song before continuing with its own, but on a few occasions the Thrush started singing in the midst of the Blackbird's song, whereupon the Blackbird ceased and waited for its next opportunity to continue.

Whilst I have seen birds of differing species frequently using the same song post, this is the first time I have observed such noticeable overlap in their use.

ROB GUEST

Society Ties

B. D. Bell reports that he has sold out of Society ties and these are no longer available.

Subantarctic Island visits

During the period February-June 1981 three visits to New Zealand subantarctic islands were made by C. J. R. Robertson, Allan Munn, John Jenkins and A. Penniket. A summary of bird observations is as follows.

Campbell Island was visited twice, from 16-28/2/81 and 3-7/5/81. During the first visit birds seen included: Yellow-eyed Penguin, six adults and two large chicks seen at NW Bay, birds were also seen at Smoothwater Bay, Perseverance Harbour and SE Harbour. Rockhopper Penguin chicks were losing down and only about 50 birds were present in the colony at Smoothwater Bay, a substantial reduction on the numbers seen earlier in the season during 1975. A few Erect-crested Penguins were seen scattered about the coast in groups of two and three. Wandering Albatross adults were incubating eggs and Meteorological Station staff confirmed the hatching times of five eggs as early April. The distribution and numbers of Southern Royal Albatross were similar to previous visits. Birds were on eggs and some of these hatched during the stay. Two days were spent at the Bull Rock Black-browed and Grey-headed Mollymawk colonies. All chicks were at the large downy stage with Black-browed chicks being more advanced. A small colony of Giant Petrels was found near Complex Point and about 100 Antarctic Terns, a large percentage of which were immatures, were in the same area.

The purpose of the second visit was to complete surveys to accurately establish the position of Campbell Island for determination of the median line between the extended economic zones of Australia and New Zealand. On 6/5/81 Lt. R. Davies and a survey party were on a ridge to the northwest of Mount Dumas. They saw a bird below them that had all black upper wing surfaces, except for a solid white band along the trailing edge. The sighting was discussed separately with two members of the party and from their description there seemed little doubt as to what they had seen. When they were shown photographs they confirmed that the bird was probably an Antarctic Petrel. They saw the bird flying in toward the cliff face at the end of the ridge and as it was not seen again it was assumed to have landed, though they did not see it land.

The Auckland Islands were visited on 1/3/81 and from 8-13/5/81. During the latter visit some 50-60 Wandering Albatross chicks were seen in the basin behind Astrolabe Point, Adams Island. They were in light grey down and their

size was consistent with hatching in late March or early April. A visit was made to the SW Cape (main Auckland Island) White-capped Mollymawk colony on 10/5/81. The accessible colony was much smaller than when last visited during the 1972/73 expedition. Chicks were large and wing feathers were starting to show through the down. A few non-breeding adults were occupying empty nests. There was sign of extensive pig activity in the area; no occupied nests and no succulent vegetation were found in areas accessible to pigs. Two groups of six Auckland Island Banded Dotterels were seen close to the top of the ridge between Astrolabe Point and Magnetic Bay, and survey parties working at SW Adams Trig also reported small flocks of up to five birds during our stay.

Several interesting observations were made by shore and boat parties during the second visit. During the time the ship was anchored in the north arm of Carnley Harbour we saw many birds and sea lions apparently feeding about Round Point and into the bay to the east. Most of the activity was taking place on the seaward side of the kelp. We were able to take a boat and stop in the centre of the area, where we found about 60 sea lions moving back and forth over about 2 km of the kelp edge. There were many shoals of small fish in this area but whether the sea lions were feeding on these or on larger fish attracted by the shoals could not be ascertained. There were 80+ Red-billed Gulls, 6 White-fronted Terns, 6 Auckland Island Shags and 3 Buller's Mollymawks directly over the feeding sea lions and obviously feeding on scraps from their table. A raft of about 200 Sooty Shearwaters was out in the middle of the bay but they were not seen feeding.

A White Heron was seen in this area. Three times it tried to land among Red-billed Gulls on the beach but each time it was mobbed by the gulls until it flew well clear. The White Heron has been reported as a straggler to the Auckland Islands. Parties of up to six Welcome Swallows were seen in this area also. This species was first recorded at the Auckland Islands in 1943. New Zealand Falcons were seen by various shore parties on a number of occasions.

John Jenkins flew to the north end of the Auckland Islands group and reported about 100 Yellow-eyed Penguins moving between the inland areas and the beach on Enderby Island. A maximum of 20 Royal Albatross chicks were seen, only one of which had an adult in attendance. A flock of five Auckland Island Banded Dotterels was seen near the top of the island and a flock of six near Derry

Castle Reef. Three Red-crowned Parakeets were in the bush at the back of Sandy Bay.

Lt D. Washer RN, pilot of the Wasp helicopter, commented that over the southern cliffs of Adams Island Wandering Albatrosses flew alongside the helicopter. Birds accompanied the helicopter easily until a speed of 60 knots (110 kph) was reached and then they broke off contact by diving ahead and below the aircraft. At the Snares Islands he found that the Buller's Mollymawks were not as inquisitive as the Wanderers, staying farther away and with a maximum speed of some 40 knots.

C. J. R. Robertson and A. Penniket were on the Snares Islands from 9-12/6/81. Buller's Mollymawk chicks were sitting unguarded on nests and a number of empty nests were occupied by non-breeding adults. No penguins were seen on the main islands but small groups were seen on the Western Chain. Cape Pigeons were very common at sea around the islands and birds were landing on ledges and conducting courtship displays with much vocalisation. Broad-billed Prions were found in a small rockpile NW of the 'Sinkhole' and there was extensive vocalisation during daylight hours. No Diving Petrels were seen ashore but they were plentiful up to 3 km offshore. Two Welcome Swallows were seen flying around the top of cliffs. Southern Skuas, Pied Shags (2), Mallards (18), Red-billed Gulls, Black Tit, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Fernbird, Redpoll, Starling, Snipe, Silvereye and Pied Fantail were other bird species seen.

A large fishing fleet of up to 20 vessels was seen fishing north and east of the Auckland Islands in March and May and a single trawler was seen SE of the Snares Islands in March. Because the numbers of birds in attendance was too great for recording on standard 10 minute count observation cards we estimated the relative proportions of one species to another while within the fleet.

The greatest number and variety of birds was seen in May when Shy Mollymawk (3000), White-chinned Petrel (140), Black-bellied Storm Petrel (100), Cape Pigeon (100), Southern Royal Albatross (70), Sooty Shearwater (500), Giant Petrel (10), Buller's Mollymawk (310), Little Shearwater (20), Grey-headed Mollymawk (20), Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (10), Wandering Albatross (10), Northern Royal Albatross (10) and Grey Petrel (10) were recorded.

Some species of birds are obviously benefitting from scavenging, but the long-term effects on bird populations are

obviously not known. It is necessary that we improve our knowledge of their food, feeding ranges and populations so that indicator species can be established.

C. J. R. ROBERTSON

South West Pacific Recording Scheme

A proposal that OSNZ set up a recording scheme for the islands of the S.W. Pacific was approved by Council at its last meeting.

The scheme, which will parallel the existing New Zealand scheme, is intended to provide a facility for the deposition and collation of records for those islands which do not have an organisation already fulfilling such a function. The scheme's introduction recognises that significant additions to the ornithological knowledge of Pacific Islands can result from the accumulation of isolated observations made during casual visits of quite brief duration such as are becoming a regular part of the New Zealand holiday scene.

Although it is expected that initially the majority of contributions will come from OSNZ members it is hoped that as the value of the scheme becomes more widely recognised contributions will also be forthcoming from other sources.

Would anyone having unpublished records which they wish to contribute please forward them, complete with date of visit, to: Mr J. L. Moore, 32 Brook Street, Lower Hutt.

J. L. MOORE

The birds of Hawaii: a study tour

During the two week period 4-26 May 1982 we hope to organise a party of 18 persons to visit the Hawaiian Islands. The purpose of the visit is to study the Hawaiian Honeycreepers and the albatrosses and petrels breeding at the archipelago. Visits to the more remote islands are planned as well as tramping trips into the mountains. Persons who are fit, keen, and with a genuine interest in island avifaunas are invited to write to Dr Peter Harper, Department of Extension Studies, University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch, for full details.

PETER HARPER

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ANTHEA GOODWIN reports that at Whangaparapara, Great Barrier Island, recently she watched a Banded Rail feeding on crumbs put out by a neighbour for her hens. The rails range well up the hill and into the scrub but only one bird has become 'domesticated.'

Regional roundup

This is intended to be a new regular feature designed to provide a summary of the latest reports and activities from as many regions as possible, especially those snippets of information which do not warrant an item on their own. Most of the information will be gleaned from regional newsletters. If no news from your region appears YOU may rectify the situation in the following issue.

Far North/Northland: The Shag Colony and Grebe surveys will be concluded in October; a concentrated effort to obtain an accurate record of these species in these regions will be made during the period August-October.

Following on from the national Bird Mapping Scheme members intend to continue mapping the distribution of several rare species — Fernbird, rails, tits, and kiwis. In addition a survey of the distribution and numbers of the New Zealand Dotterel is underway and members are asked also to keep records of Reef Heron and Variable Oystercatcher when visiting beaches as it is envisaged that the Dotterel Survey will be enlarged to include these species.

South Auckland: Winter censuses of the Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour were completed again this year. Numbers of Mallards in the Firth of Thames were away up, with 6114 being counted. The 1000 mark has been topped only twice before so this figure was exceptional. Other species counted included Spotted Shag (1760), White-faced Heron (127), Grey Teal (25), Shoveler Duck (3), SIPO (9807), N.Z. Dotterel (13), Banded Dotterel (120), Wrybill (3728), Eastern Curlew (4), Asiatic Whimbrel (6), Bar-tailed Godwit (561), Turnstone (14), Knot (505), Pied Stilt (2078) and Caspian Tern (92). As expected SIPOs topped the count in Manukau Harbour with 22299 counted. Other totals included Little Black Shag (264), White-faced Heron (276), Mallard (1806), Grey Teal (4), Shoveler Duck (32), N.Z. Dotterel (36), Banded Dotterel (481), Wrybill (597), Eastern Curlew (1), Bar-tailed Godwit (1493), Turnstone (139), Knot (3575), Curlew Sandpiper (1), Red-necked Stint (7), Pied Stilt (4079) and Caspian Tern (172).

Bay of Plenty: A New Zealand Falcon was seen chasing a Blackbird across the road near Te Teko on 20/5/81. A Blue Duck was handed in to Roy Weston by a fisherman on 6/6/81; it had been found shot on Lake Aniwhenua.

Volcanic Plateau: After many years of excellent service to OSNZ Ray Jackson has retired from organising ornithology in the Volcanic Plateau and John Innes

is his enthusiastic successor. Sightings reported in the latest newsletter include three Eastern Rosellas seen by Hamish Lyall on Te Kawaha Point, Rotorua, and a Blue Duck on the pond adjacent to the Whakamaru Hydro Dam and Spotless Crake have been re-found in the swamp at the northern edge of Lake Okareka.

Taranaki: David Medway has recently succeeded Ron Lambert as RR in Taranaki. Bell Block Oxidation Ponds again have been the place for Taranaki waders, sightings during the summer of 1980-81 included Greenshank (1), Bar-tailed Godwit (6), Asiatic Whimbrel (1) and Knot (21). A White-winged Black Tern in winter plumage was also reported from the ponds.

Persistent records of parakeets from the boundary of Egmont National Park are being reported to local members but as yet no official confirmation of species or numbers has been made.

Manawatu: Members completed a survey of sand country lakes during the weekend of 22-23/8/81. Foxton No. 1, Turnbull's Lagoon and Pukepuke Lagoon had the greatest variety of birds. Shovelers were the commonest ducks seen, with Mallard numbers relatively low as this species appeared to have dispersed for breeding. Most lakes had several pairs of Dabchicks present and Lake Kaitokopu continued its good reputation as a Dabchick lake with a flock of 18 plus two pairs. Grey Teal and Grey Duck numbers were very low and two Brown Teal were seen at Pukepuke Lagoon.

On 15/8/81 Michael Tarburton saw 400-500 Black-billed Gulls at Opiki. The birds were spread over two paddocks, feeding in pasture where there were patches of surface water. In recent years there have been other reports of large flocks of gulls in winter and these suggest that they are South Island birds on winter migration to the North Island.

Wellington: Permission has been obtained for a resumption of the seasonal bird counts on Kapiti Island, where counts were carried out between 1976 and 1979.

Nelson: Bar-tailed Godwit movements in Nelson Haven have been puzzling local members lately. During the winter there were 40-50, except for one day in July when 67 were counted. On 14/8/81 the number went up to 90, then 110, before dropping back to 51 by 24/8/81. This increase has been recorded in one other year and is probably the result of movements within the country, rather than indicating that birds have arrived from the breeding grounds.

Spotted Shags were still in the area

in late August, and Jenny Hawkins says that it would be nice to know which direction they go when they leave during the spring.

Marlborough: During spring and summer 1980 Royal Spoonbills again nested at the Vernon Lagoons. This time they nested on the ground near a Black-backed Gull colony so care was taken not to disturb the spoonbills from their nests. Eventually at least five young were hatched.

Canterbury: A winter survey of Crested Grebes was completed during July and early August. Unfortunately bad weather and a lack of observers meant that not all lakes were covered but the results were still interesting. On most lakes numbers were slightly down on those recorded during the summer survey. However, numbers on Lakes Clearwater (23) and Alexandrina (73) were well up, indicating that birds had moved to preferred lakes.

Lake Ellesmere has been kept under close observation during the winter. Reports include six Red-necked Stints and two Curlew Sandpipers in the area. During late August there were some new sightings with numbers of stints increasing to 15 and Curlew Sandpipers to six. In addition, Phil Howell and Kathleen Harrison reported up to four Black Stilts and one was still present as late as 5/9/81.

Otago: John Darby is organising a survey of Yellow-eyed Penguins. During October and November Otago members hope to cover Otago Peninsula and the scattered colonies either side of this area. It is hoped to establish the number of nesting pairs in some areas and correlate this with the estimated total number of birds in the mainland population. Canterbury members have been asked to complete a comparable survey of Banks Peninsula.

PAUL SAGAR

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Falla Memorial Award Fund

On behalf of the Society the Hon. Treasurer acknowledges receipt of donations to the Falla Memorial Fund from the following: Mr J. & Mrs B. Brown, Mr & Mrs T. Hartley-Smith, Mr P. & Mrs J. Sagar, R. R. Sutton, E. G. Turbott, Miss J. Key-Jones, J. P. C. Watt, H. R. McKenzie, Dr J. A. R. Miles, Dr P. C. Bull, Mrs M. Divers, M. J. Taylor, A. J. Goodwin, J. Murray, Dr J. Warham, A. Rogers and Northland Region OSNZ.

GRAEME PETERSON

Summer Field Course — Ruapehu

A Summer Field Course will be held in the Ruapehu area from 10-16 January 1982.

The course will be based at the Erua Ski Lodge and members will be able to assemble at the lodge on Sunday evening 10 January and finish after lunch on Saturday 16 January. This gives us five full days in the field.

Erua Ski Lodge is situated 6 km south of the National Park township on Highway 4. It is on the border of Tongariro National Park and to the west of Ruapehu. The lodge itself is a series of buildings which make up most of the Erua settlement.

Virgin native forest comes down to within 50 m of the lodge from the flanks of Mt. Hauhungatahi, an outlier of Mt. Ruapehu. There are extensive Fernbird swamps across the road from the lodge.

The course will study the birds and their habitats on the 'roof' of the North Island with its volcanoes, mountain streams, lakes and varied forests. Among many possibilities are: a survey of Blue Duck on mountain streams; a survey of waterbirds on the new lakes of the Tongariro Power Scheme (e.g. Dabchick, Black Teal, Grey Duck), plus Fernbird in adjacent swamps; bush bird surveys in podocarp, beech and exotic forests; birds in the region include Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Kaka, Rifleman, Robin and N.Z. Falcon, a night survey of Brown Kiwi has been suggested. Films and illustrated talks are planned for two evenings. John Innes, Regional Representative for the Volcanic Plateau, is field trip organiser.

The cost is \$13.50 a day, which covers accommodation and three meals, adding up to a total of \$81 for the whole course. *Note* — a deposit of \$40 must be sent with the booking notice so food can be purchased by the caterers. All you have to bring is sleeping bag, plus personal and birdwatching gear.

Family groups can be accommodated in bunk rooms which give a certain amount of privacy (children are costed at adult rate). Camping in caravans and tents is possible in a paddock beside the lodge but camping fees are the same as staying at the lodge (\$13.50/night). For people wanting to camp independently there is a free camping ground 8 km away at Mahuia (no facilities though).

NZR buses stop at Erua. Trains can be met on request at the National Park. Contact organiser if any travel problems.

Send booking notice and \$40 to the organiser: Lindsay Davies, 390A Botan-

ical Road, Palmerston North (Phone 87680). Please note that booking notice and deposit must be with the organiser by 31 October, otherwise the accommodation booking cannot be guaranteed.

LINDSAY DAVIES

Mustelids responding to taped bird calls

On four occasions I have had mustelids respond to Spotless Crake tape calls.

The first was at Pataua Estuary, north of Whangarei, on 29/7/80. I was playing the tape in an area of saltmarsh and mangroves. About three minutes after playing the tape I saw a stoat swimming a small creek and then climbing a mangrove tree. On seeing me it dived into a hole in the tree.

The next two occurrences were at Whangamarino Swamp, east of Meremere power station. I played the tape while sitting on a railway embankment and within two minutes some movement was heard in the swamp. Two ferrets appeared at the base of the embankment and they ran at the tape recorder. Neither of the animals saw me until I made a grab for them, but they were too quick and escaped. Then while playing the tape on the eastern edge of the swamp, in an area of *Gleiceria* two stoats were seen running toward the tape recorder.

The final occasion was in a kahikatea/raupo swamp south of Kawhia. A small, animal, which I think was a weasel, came out of the area about five minutes after I played the tape.

Recently I saw a ferret in a swamp north of Waikanae and played the tape to attract it but it did not respond. I think that it must have seen me before the tape was played.

On each occasion the mustelids made no attempt at concealment, came at high speed and were noisy.

RICHARD PARRISH

Blackbird behaviour

The behaviour of the two Blackbirds in the following account may not be unusual but I would like to know if others have had the same experience.

Some three years ago I lived in Auckland and a pair nested in a hedge only a few metres from the house. When the young appeared the male bird two or three times a day settled on the ground beneath a nearby lemon tree and would sing very softly for about 20 minutes. Perhaps he was teaching the young in some manner?

I now live in Rotorua and have made

something of a friend of a male Blackbird, I have only to appear in the garden and he will call quietly. Recently he has perched only about a metre from the ground and sung a very muted song, I often have to strain to hear it, his beak is closed and only the movement of the throat is evidence of his song. Now the bird glides from his perch to the ground, making a muted alarm call. He then begins singing and will maintain it until I move away.

REG SWIFT

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Publications

Birds of Fanal Island, Mokohinau Islands, New Zealand. P. J. Bellingham. *Tane* 26: 63-67. 1981. 24 bird species are recorded from the island. Five pelagic and 19 land bird species were noted. The species found are discussed with respect to the geography and vegetation of the island.

The birds of the northern Mokohinau group. J. McCallum. *Tane* 26: 69-77. 1981. Seven islands and stacks were visited. During the past century, 50 bird species have been identified from these islands. 27 were located during this visit, including four species not previously recorded. The distribution and breeding ranges of several birds were islands where they have not been formerly recorded.

The mammals, birds, reptiles and freshwater fish of the eastern island group of the Bay of Islands. R. A. Hitchmough and J. McCallum. *Tane* 26: 127-134. Two freshwater fish, one lizard, three mammals and 40 bird species (16 breeding) were noted on 25 islands visited in the eastern Bay of Islands group.

The birds of the Cavalli Islands, New Zealand. P. R. Millener. *Tane* 26: 169-182. 1981. The distribution and abundance of birds seen on the Cavalli Islands in December 1978 and January 1979 are recorded and comparisons made with previous surveys. 55 bird species have now been recorded from this group and four of these were added during this trip. Two species have not been reported since 1951 and numbers of two others have declined.

Notes on a visit to Jacquemart Island in the Campbell Island group. M. N. Foggo and C. D. Meurk. *N.Z. Journal of Ecology* 4: 29-32. 1981. The first visit to the island is described. Grazing mammals, rats and feral cats are absent, in contrast to the main island. A survey of the main vegetation communities was made and bird species recorded.

Population dynamics and age structure of Starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) in New Zealand. J. E. C. Flux and M. M. Flux. N.Z. Journal of Ecology 4: 65-72. 1981. A population of Starlings which nested in 500 nest boxes at Lower Hutt were studied from 1970-79. Breeding birds and chicks which fledged were banded. Seasonal and age-related variations in clutch size are discussed. Productivity was low but annual mortality rate of birds banded as young was only 33% in N.Z. as a whole, compared with 50-70% overseas.

Comparison of time-budgets for mainland and Outer Chetwode Island populations of adult male South Island Robins. R. G. Powlesland. N.Z. Journal of Ecology 4: 98-105. 1981. Mainland robins forage less and spend less time in interspecific interactions than do Outer Chetwode Island birds, but devote more time than the latter to vocalising, body maintenance and partner-interactions. Food requirements are the dominant factor affecting the proportion of time available for other activities.

Diets of Pipits and Skylarks at Huiarua Station, Tokomaru Bay, North Island, New Zealand. A. S. Garrick. N.Z. Journal of Ecology 4: 106-114. 1981. The gizzard contents of birds collected at the station are described. Pipits fed mostly on invertebrates and Skylarks ate mostly seeds. It is concluded that the level of interspecific competition is not high.

Observations of breeding success in White-faced Storm Petrels at a newly established colony. N. P. Brothers. Corella 5. 1981.

Notes on the nest and eggs of the Australasian Grebe in north-western Victoria. P. Dann. Corella 5. 1981.

A colour-banding study of Welcome Swallows breeding in southern Tasmania. P. Park. Corella 5. 1981.

PAUL SAGAR & SYLVIA REED

Black-fronted Tern survey

At its May meeting Council decided to undertake a national survey of the Black-fronted Tern during 1981-82. The survey in the North Island will be co-ordinated by Barrie Heather and in the South Island by Paul Sagar.

The Black-fronted Tern is an endemic species which breeds on the inland shingle riverbeds of the South Island. During autumn and winter months it

moves downriver to coastal estuaries and lagoons and a few birds winter in the North Island. As early as 1932 Stead reported that it was not as numerous as it had been previously and this decline probably continues today.

The main aims of the survey are to assess numbers and distribution during 1981-82, with a concentrated effort during winter 1982, and to obtain information about plumages, age-composition of flocks and roosting and feeding behaviour. We consider that it would be a hopeless task to attempt a breeding season count because of the large area involved. However, members are encouraged to report the size and location of any breeding colonies observed during 1981-82.

Two survey forms have been designed. A Coastal Survey form, for those who make regular surveys of estuaries and lagoons, and is ideal for those who want something to look for on those wintry days in the field. The Casual Observations form is for reporting numbers, locations and activities of birds away from the coast.

Survey forms are available from RRs and the organisers.

Suggestions:

(1) Regular checks of coastal lagoons and estuaries. As numbers of birds can fluctuate abruptly during the course of the day careful observations are required.

(2) Take notes not only of numbers but also of plumage, feeding and roosting behaviour and displays.

(3) Note favoured feeding areas. Do these change with the seasons?

(4) If numbers change, correlate with local conditions, e.g. strong winds, flooding of rivers.

(5) If breeding colonies are located note numbers and details of stage of breeding (do not forget to fill in a nest record card as well), and if possible make regular checks of progress.

(6) South Island members — note when numbers at coastal areas increase, what age-groups arrive first, and when the birds return upriver.

(7) North Island members — note numbers, arrival and departure times and age-composition of flocks. How widespread are Black-fronted Terns in the North Island during the winter? Do any stay over the summer?

The success of the survey depends upon YOU. Ideally we would like as

many members as possible in as many areas as possible to make regular checks of likely sites.

Plumages of Black-fronted Terns

(1) Adult breeding: Complete black crown; rump, upper and under tail coverts white; rest of body and wings grey. Bill and feet bright orange.

(2) Adult non-breeding: Like the breeding plumage, except that the head is pale grey with black feathers forming a rough U round the eyes and nape. Bill and feet remain orange, but the bill tip may darken.

(3) Immature: Crown grey, mottled black. Body surface as in adults. Bill colour varies, usually very dark brown, reddish at base. Feet bright orange.

(4) Juvenile: Crown and nape greyish brown mottled with black, upper body and wings mottled with dark brown; underparts grey. Bill very dark brown, reddish at base. Feet bright orange.

Members wishing to contribute observations should contact the survey organisers: North Island, Barrie Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream. South Island, Paul Sagar, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4.

PAUL SAGAR & BARRIE HEATHER

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Large Sand Dotterel in breeding plumage

Graeme Peterson spotted a Large Sand Dotterel in breeding plumage at Karaka on 21 June. Tony Habraken and I nearly froze next day getting a good description of it. In July it was more brightly coloured but on 16 August this was a little faded. As far as I know no one has been able to get a good photograph of it but we will keep trying.

BETH BROWN

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Bird books

Hedley Bookshop Ltd, 150 Queen Street, Masterton, advise that they are agents for Lansdowne Editions of Australia, who specialise in limited editions of both original and facsimile editions. Two of their latest publications may be of interest to members: Robins and Wrens of Australia by Frank T. Morris and Australian Parrots by J. M. Forshaw and W. T. Cooper.