



OSNZ news

No. 21 December, 1981

NOTE: Deadline for the March issue will be 20th February.

Marsh Crake at Auckland Central Railway Station

The cosmopolitan Marsh Crake is a strong flier with a reputation for a fatal attraction to bright lights.

Whether the adult bird I found dead in the gutter of the parking area outside Auckland Central Railway Station on 9 August 1981 succumbed to the lure of the big city from a nearby breeding site or came from further afield, perhaps on the radiator grill of a long distance truck, is not known, though the state of the body (bruised but not mangled) makes the latter unlikely.

Marsh Crake have not been seen in the Auckland area for years, though it is unlikely to be as uncommon as the Provisional Atlas suggests, with only three sightings in the North Island. If the bird could be found in the nearby Orakei basin mangroves it would be a magnificent addition to the city fauna. I shall attempt to survey this area this summer, with the help of a tape of Marsh Crake calls.

DEREK RUSSELL

Shining Cuckoo singing at night

The first Shining Cuckoo heard and seen in our orchard this year was on 21 September, about 10 days later than usual. Since then one or two have been frequent visitors and on 18 October one stayed in the vicinity of the house all day and was heard calling from the top of a tall fig tree at 2115 hours. The night was cloudy, dark and moonless. Two nights later a cuckoo called from the same area at about 2300 hours and for the rest of October cuckoo song could be heard frequently at any hour of the night, and on some nights at least once every hour.

GERRY CLARK

Commentary on a commentary

Members may be interested in a Commentary published in a recent issue of *The Auk* 98: 400-425 (1981) called 'Ornithology and Sociobiology: a forum.' This forum consists of a series of short essays by eminent members of the A.O.U. commenting on their feelings and attitudes towards the so-called 'new synthesis' which E. O. Wilson has argued that his sociobiology represents. The range of essays includes people who are both pro and anti, so there is something for everyone.

To add my own comment. Although Wilson gave very little attention to birds in his massive tome, there has been considerable ornithological attention given to the various theories of interest to sociobiologists, primarily because bird study provides a testing ground for these theories. Birds are conspicuous, diurnal, easily caught (relatively!) and marked, their various family relationships can often be determined fairly precisely, and they tend to put all their young in a holding basket for the convenience of researchers. They also offer an incredible range of social behaviour, often being quite variable within a species (e.g. Pukeko can live in either pairs or groups).

Sociobiologists are interested in the effect of genetic relationships on behaviour between individuals, the possibility that either parents or offspring manipulate offspring or parents, the effects of ecological constraints (such as the distribution of food or predators) on social behaviour, why animals live in groups, and so on. To some extent we all make observations on various of these aspects in our daily observations of birds but very often we do not follow up on them. For example, the odd report is available of two nests of a species which we normally consider to be territorial, such as a Blackbird, being found very close together. Is this because of limited availability of nest sites, polygynous (one male with two females) mating, a family group breeding in close proximity,

a response to an unusually high density of predators, chance, etc? Additional observations beyond the findings of the nests may at least allow rejection of some of these questions. The Commentary in *The Auk* provides a good roundup of many of the questions that can be asked.

IAN McLEAN

Colour-marked Red-billed Gulls

A large number of breeding pairs of Red-billed Gulls were individually colour-marked in the 1981-82 breeding season. Dr Jim Mills of the Wildlife Service is relying largely on the help of OSNZ members to follow the winter movements of these birds.

One of the aims is to find out how many gulls remain with their partners in winter (some certainly do). An observer in Auckland reported two colour-marked gulls which were a pair and both subsequently returned to breed together at Kaikoura.

It is important to know how long individuals stay in the same area and whether they wander about. Therefore repeat sightings of the same bird must be reported.

It is an easy project to undertake as the gulls can be attracted with bread. Three or more bands are used to individually mark each bird. The colours used have been black, blue, green, red, yellow and white. It is important to note where the metal band is in the sequence. Read the combination from the top to the bottom of each leg and read the sequence as it is in the bird's left or right leg.

Marked birds have been recorded from Auckland to Invercargill, with concentrations between Wellington and Dunedin.

All reports will be answered and if members are willing to look for birds over an extended period stamped envelopes will be forwarded.

Please send observations to Dr Jim Mills, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.

JIM MILLS

Beach Patrol Scheme

The Beach Patrol year ends on 31 December and all cards should be completed and sent to me as soon as possible after this date. This allows time for an interim report to be prepared for presentation to the AGM in May.

Of interest to patrollers was the wreck of Blue and Kerguelen Petrels on the west coast beaches of the North Island during late September-early October.

RALPH POWLESLAND, *Convener*
Beach Patrol Scheme

Wildlife Service report

In March 1980 the first female Kakapo seen since the turn of the century was found at Stewart Island. Three other females were found later that year, and a further six have been found in 1981. Three of these have been transferred to Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds to join three males already there, in an effort to propagate the species in semi-captivity.

The prime object of the 1980/81 summer programme — provided booming occurred — was to locate a nest (booming and presumably breeding do not occur every year). Booming did occur and two teams, each with two trained and muzzled dogs, started to search for nests in early March.

On 18 March a nest was found on a relatively exposed hill top, under two tussocks amongst stunted scrub. The nest contained three small downy white chicks considered to be about a week old. Next morning one chick was dead. This was probably a natural loss for early records report that the normal clutch is two and often only one chick is reared.

A hide was set up about 15m away and microphones placed near the nest, with leads running back to the hide. Although it was not possible to see into the nest from the hide, a discreet watch via headphones and tape recorder was maintained periodically during the next three months. Apparently only the female tended the nest. By late May the chicks were heavier than their mother, incredibly docile and affectionate, and fully feathered except for some down on their backs. They were living about 20m from the nest.

A second nest was found on 5 April in dense wet stunted forest about 1 km from the first nest. This nest was a shallow natural cavity under tree roots. It contained one chick estimated to be about two weeks old. A hide was put up near this nest and from here a light-intensifying scope was used to observe

the comings and goings of the female. Some very interesting observations were made, especially in early June when the female started feeding the chick in full view.

When the nests were first found Wildlife Service staff realised the hazards the chicks faced; the probability of cat predation was high. But with human scent trails leading to the nests this probability was increased, and so poisoned baits were repeatedly laid within a radius of more than a km of the nests. Even so the cat-eaten remains of nine adult Kakapo have been found by the end of August 1981, this includes at least five of the 19 marked birds.

The Chatham Island Black Robin cross-fostering programme is to be continued in the 1981/82 season when hopefully three pairs of robins will be present.

Only five birds, two pairs and an unattached female, existed when the cross-fostering programme started in September 1980. This involves placing robin first clutch eggs in nests of Chatham Island Warblers, so inducing the robins to reneat and produce twice as many eggs than would otherwise be laid. The warblers proved unusually tolerant and excellent foster parents, readily accepting the two robin clutches (each of two eggs). The robins reneated immediately. After hatching, the first robin chicks appeared to progress normally in the care of their foster parents. However, when two chicks died after 10 days in warbler nests it was considered prudent to amend the programme and foster further robin chicks back to robins for rearing.

The robins, too, proved exceptionally tolerant and would readily accept week-old chicks, even only days after starting incubation.

Although capable of raising two chicks per clutch the robins seldom do, due to infertility of eggs and losses during incubation. Our object then, in fostering chicks back to robins was to ensure that each pair was given two chicks to raise, after producing two clutches of eggs (which were incubated by warblers). Apparently this is the first time cross-fostering has been used in the management of an endangered passerine in the wild.

To summarise, 10 eggs were produced (five clutches); six eggs hatched; two nestlings were lost in perfecting the technique; four chicks fledged but one was subsequently lost. The robin population now stands at eight individuals. Had we not intervened it is likely that, as in previous years, only one chick would have reached independence.

DON MERTON, *Wildlife Service*

White-fronted Terns inland

On 12/8/81 while in the Puketi State Forest near Kerikeri, I saw two White-fronted Terns flying in a westerly direction a few metres above the forest canopy. It was about sunrise and thick fog covered the forest. The terns were about equidistant from the Bay of Islands and Hokianga Harbour. Were they travelling from coast to coast or were they lost in the fog? Does this species commonly fly between the east and west coasts in Northland?

RALPH POWLESLAND

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Moult recording scheme is launched

In the June 1981 issue of *OSNZ news* members were advised of the decision by OSNZ Council to launch a moult recording scheme in New Zealand.

Interim moult cards have now been produced and are available with instructions for use from me at the following address: Ben Bell, Zoology Department, Victoria University, Private Bag, Wellington.

Two types of card will be used: one for passerines and one for non-passerines. Both are based on earlier British Trust for Ornithology designs (as illustrated in *A Guide to Mould in British Birds* by D. W. Snow, B.T.O. Field Guide No. 11, 1967).

In co-operation with the B.T.O. and Dr Derek Thomas of the University of Swansea, we are intending to adopt a revised and improved design of moult card in the near future. However, since this may not be ready for 1-2 years the interim cards will allow New Zealand observers to systematically record moult data in the meantime.

Remember opportunities exist for contributions by all observers — including banders, beach patrollers, museum workers and those who find road-kills.

Once you are familiar with (a) the distribution of feathers on a bird (especially on the wing and tail); and (b) the method of scoring moult; then completing a moult card is relatively simple, although requiring accuracy and detailed observation.

Since little moult-recording has been done in New Zealand *every record is of value* and please note data on birds *not in moult* are also required.

I look forward to your contributing to the Moult Recording Scheme — hopefully without too many feathers flying?

BEN BELL

Band and Tag

Now that the exercise of permit renewals is over, work in the Banding Office leaves some room again for things other than the normal day to day business. A new part of the Banding Manual has been written, and work on the OSNZ Bird Atlas has commenced. At the moment data are being punched for computer processing, a laborious job that will take several months.

Chris Robertson spent most of November overseas. His somewhat overlaid itinerary included: A visit to 3M Computer Systems in Sydney to solve innovative problems for the Bird Atlas; a visit to our Pesola scales and mistnet suppliers in Melbourne; a lengthy meeting with Dave Purchase, the Australian Banding Officer, about joint problems on the wader banding scene; an inspection of Victorian Gannetries; a three week visit to Albatross Island to study the nominate race of *Diomedea cauta cauta*.

Please note that the Banding Office will be closed for the first three weeks of January. Mrs Billington and Chris Robertson will be on holiday and I will be taking part in the annual Canada Goose banding operations on Lakes Ellesmere and Forsyth. If everything goes to plan I will be back around 10 January, but there is no guarantee, so please make sure that supplies needed during the holiday period are ordered before 21 December.

Species Permits — In the last issue of OSNZ news we listed species and localities for which permits have been issued in the Auckland area. Here we continue with a summary for the rest of the North Island.

Bellbird, Kingfisher, Red-crowned Parakeet, Fantail and introduced passerines (Poor Knights Islands). Black-backed Gull and Red-billed Gull (Kawhia and Raglan Harbours). All passerines (Te Kuiti). Australasian Gannet, Red-billed Gull, Grey-faced Petrel (Islands in Bay of Plenty). Rock Pigeon, Greenfinch and House Sparrow (Gisborne area). Australasian Harrier (South Auckland, Waikato, King Country, Ahuriri Estuary, Manawatu, Horowhenua and Wairarapa). New Zealand Falcon (Esk State Forest, King Country, Waikato and South Auckland). Passerines, Spur-winged Plover, Rook, Magpie, Pukeko, White-fronted Tern, Little Shag (Manawatu, Horowhenua, Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa). Pukeko (Pukepuke Lagoon). N.I. Weka (Kapiti Island). Silvereye, Greenfinch and Starling (Lower Hutt). Black Shag and Little Black Shag (Wairarapa coastal area). Black-backed Gull, Cook Strait Blue

Penguin, Spotted Shag, Variable Oystercatcher, Reef Heron (Somes Island, Wellington Harbour).

Banding Materials — For the convenience of operators we usually stock the following items: Large banding pliers (\$12 each) and small banding pliers (\$15 each); Pesola scales in the following size range: 5, 10, 30, 50, 100, 300, 500, 600, 1000, 2000, 2500 gram (\$36 each) and 5 kg (\$50 each).

Mist nets 1½" mesh — 30' x 9' (\$13 each) and 42' x 9' (\$19 each). Mist nets 1½" mesh — 30' x 9' (\$13 each) and 42' x 9' (\$16 each). Wader nets 2" mesh 42' x 7' (ordered, not yet available).

Yacht voyage to the South-west Pacific

I am planning a voyage of about three months duration into Tongan, Samoan and Fijian waters next year, leaving Whangarei at the end of the first week in May.

The main objective will be a bird survey, especially of seabird colonies in Tonga, with our activities concentrating mainly on the high volcanic islands e.g. Tofua, Kao, Late and Fonualei, which lie on the western side of the Tongan Group. While working these northern Tongan Islands the boat will be based at Vava'u.

A few weeks will also be spent in Samoa, where the boat will be based at Asau, where we hope to search the hinterland of Savai'i for the Tooth-billed Pigeon, survey the numbers of other forest birds and search for petrel colonies.

We will return to New Zealand in August, probably via Fiji and New Caledonia.

I already have a number of Auckland members interested in joining the trip. However, while it would be best to have a group of 3-4 people who are prepared to stay with the boat for the entire cruise, many of the islands are accessible by air and others would be welcome to join the crew for shorter periods.

The vessel is the 12m sloop 'Derwent' which is fitted out with all equipment for category 1 offshore sailing. The boat was raced to New Caledonia in 1978.

A crew of 6-7 would be ideal to have aboard at any one time and some sailing and/or navigating experience would be helpful. Crew members are expected to pay their share of provisioning, etc. Any interested OSNZ members should contact me at: R.D. 2, Waiotira, Northland, for more details.

TIM LOVEGROVE

Banding Mail Bag

Three overseas recoveries this time and all concern Royal Albatrosses. R-14029 Southern Royal Albatross, banded as an adult on 16/1/68 on the plateau between Bull Rock and Mt Faye, Campbell Island. The bird was recovered and released alive at sea by a fisherman 35 km N.E. of Bicheno, Tasmania, on 22/6/81.

R-38920 Southern Royal Albatross, banded as a chick at Campbell Island on 1/10/80. It was recovered at sea by a fisherman off the coast of Punta Lavapie, Arauco Province, Chile, in February 1981.

R-31529 Northern Royal Albatross, banded as a chick Middle Sisters Island, The Chathams, on 11/9/76. The bird was recovered in 1980 by a fisherman at sea, also off Punta Lavapie, Chile.

L-19821 Australasian Harrier, banded as an adult male on 22/6/79 at Springhills (north of Invercargill). It was found dead on a road near Hokitika on 21/6/81. Although not the longest distance ever travelled by a Harrier, 450 km is still a respectable hike.

B-29795 South Island Robin, banded as an adult male in Kowhai Bush, Kaitioura on 19/12/71. It was sighted alive and well near the place of banding on 31/7/81, more than nine year and seven months later.

R. O. COSSEE

Rare Birds Committee

If you are an active observant OSNZ member, read this carefully; you are as likely as anyone else to see a rare, unusual, or difficult species.

After a lot of deliberation the Rare Birds Committee has been renewed, together with clearly set-out functions, which Council has approved at its November 1981 meeting. Please address all correspondence for the committee to its Secretary, John Squire (see inside front cover of *Notornis*).

As before, the Rare Birds Committee (RBC) is the sole final judge of the identity of unusual birds in the New Zealand region. As before, this mainly means species new to the New Zealand list, species newly breeding in New Zealand (including cage escapees), species at present on the Suspense List of the Checklist, species presumed extinct, and species that have been recorded only a few times.

However, the Committee has wider functions. It hopes to be seen by members as a useful service within the Society, accessible to all, and helpful to members rather than a somewhat remote austere group that just says yes or no

to your carefully documented records. It wants to involve local knowledge and expertise more than in the past. In particular, it wants to accumulate full details of every unusual and difficult species seen or found dead (e.g. on a beach patrol). Only thus can we reconsider disallowed records in the future or build up a reference collection of descriptions of species well known to be difficult to identify. At present, too many records from past years cannot be verified or reassessed because full details were not kept.

So, what do you do if you see a bird you don't know, or which you think is rare or new to New Zealand?

1. *Get immediate help.* A second opinion may be vital. Too often people see something strange and tell nobody until weeks later.

2. Your local RR or RBC Recorder has special reporting forms. Get one and fill it in. He also has a copy of the list of species that we want recorded at local level only and those that must be recorded and assessed by the RBC.

3. Fill in the form, give it to the RR or whoever is the Recorder for your region. Their comments will be added, if any, and the report sent on to the RBC Secretary. If your region has no recorder, get a form from any RR or the RBC Secretary; fill it in, and send it direct to the RBC Secretary.

4. We are an informal Society. Ask anyone — any RR or Council member, for example — if you are not sure what to do. We want to know about every new, rare, or awkward bird seen and put your description on record, even if it cannot be accepted straight away.

Two categories: The processing and recording of sightings are to work in two levels:

1. National level: Species new, newly breeding, seldom recorded, or presumed extinct in the New Zealand region. These must be decided by the Rare Birds Committee, which will consult whatever sources of information as seem appropriate both within New Zealand and, if necessary, overseas. Included in this category are birds seen 'out of usual range,' as defined in the Checklist and its amendments. Obviously, a Black Robin or Chatham Island Petrel seen in the Chathams does not need to be verified through RBC; but one seen elsewhere certainly does.

2. Local level: Species already quite well established on the New Zealand list but about which we need to know more or for which we need to accumulate details of every sighting so that the records can be reassessed in future by anyone work-

ing on the species or preparing a book, paper or report on New Zealand birds, for example. Too many past records are now suspect because supporting detail has not been kept. Examples of these 'difficult' species are the two tattlers, Grey Plover, Mongolian and Large Sand Dotterel, Common Sandpiper, Red-capped Dotterel, Pelican, and, away from their known range, Fiordland and other crested penguins, Hoary-headed and Little Grebes, Southern and Antarctic Skuas and Grey Ternlet.

We shall allow a couple of years to see how well the various parts of the procedure work, during which we shall welcome the comments of members who have had to use them.

BARRIE HEATHER, *Interim Convener*

Travel to overseas ornithological meetings

The next meeting of the International Council for Bird Preservation will be held at Cambridge, Great Britain, during 6-12 August 1982 and the International Ornithological Congress will hold its meeting in Moscow, USSR, during 16-25 August 1982.

Air New Zealand have offered to make a quote for travel arrangements as some discounts may be possible if group travel can be arranged. Therefore would any member planning to attend either meeting advise the Secretary by 31 January 1982, so that travel quotes can be obtained.

R. S. SLACK, *Hon. Secretary*

Readers Digest Book of N.Z. Birds

Last year a request was made for members to submit colour slides of birds for inclusion in the Readers Digest Book of N.Z. Birds.

Hundreds of slides were received and following rigorous selection, the best of these were sent to the publishers in Sydney. However, there are still a number of species for which slides are required and others for which a wider selection is desirable. Species for which slides are required are: Chinstrap Penguin, Snowy Albatross, Black-capped Petrel, Phoenix Petrel, Kerguelen Petrel, Chatham Island Taiko, Stejnegers Petrel, Juan Fernandez Petrel, Blue Petrel, South Georgian Petrel, Auckland Island Prion, Lesser Fulmar Prion, Chatham Fulmar Prion, Christmas Island Shearwater, Kermadec Storm Petrel, Little Black Shag, Stewart Island Shag, White Heron, Reef Heron, Glossy Ibis, Northern Shoveler, Grey Partridge, Bob-white (Virginian)

Quail, Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Ringed Plover, American Whimbrel, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Little Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Upland Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Marsh Sandpiper, Wandering Tattler, Siberian (Grey-tailed) Tattler, Antipodes Island Snipe, Auckland Islands Snipe, Dunlin, Baird's Sandpiper, Grey Phalarope, Antarctic Skua, Arctic Skua, Long-tailed Skua, Barbary Dove, South Island Kaka, Reischek's Parakeet, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Fork-tailed Swift, North Island Bush Wren, South Island Bush Wren, South Island Fantail, Chatham Islands Tit, Auckland Islands Tit, Black Robin, male Stitchbird, Chatham Island Tui, Red-Wattle Bird, House Sparrow, Black-backed Magpie and Masked Wood Swallow.

Slides sent in for consideration must have the *name of photographer, species name and locality* recorded on each slide. Each set of slides should also be accompanied by a list stating the same details.

Slides should be mailed (preferably registered) to: The Managing Editor, New Zealand Birds, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington North.

Please do not send any material before February 1982.

C. J. R. ROBERTSON

Pirate Kingfisher

In the late morning of 29 September 1981 I watched a Kingfisher in the grounds of the D.S.I.R. Mt. Albert Research Centre, Auckland.

The bird was perched in a young peach tree some 10m away from a foraging male Blackbird. On three occasions within about 10 minutes the Blackbird found some food item only to be swooped upon by the Kingfisher, which seemed to have appropriated the item the first two times before returning to its perch. On the last occasion the Blackbird flew off when dived on and the Kingfisher returned to its perch for a few moments before departing.

DEREK RUSSELL

New book

The Duckshooter's Bag by Dr Murray Williams will be available in December 1981. This book is written for those who enjoy hunting waterfowl and explains all that is known about our wetland gamebirds (Black Swan, Canada Goose, Paradise Shelduck, Grey Duck, Mallard, Shoveler Duck and Pukeko).

Orders to: The Wetland Press, P.O. Box 1718, Wellington. Price \$7.95 plus 45c postage.

Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1982 AGM must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1982. These must be in writing and signed by the mover and seconder, who must be financial members of the Society.

R. S. SLACK, *Hon. Secretary*

AGM-1982

The 43rd AGM of the OSNZ will be held in Wellington on Saturday, 22 May 1982. It is intended to apply for Air New Zealand discount vouchers and these will be distributed to RRs in March 1982 for members intending to travel by air.

R. S. SLACK, *Hon. Secretary*

Nominations for Council

Under the provisions of the constitution the following four Council members retire in May 1982, and nominations are hereby called for to fill the vacancies created:

Mrs B. Brown (Vice-President)

Mrs S. M. Reed

Dr Ben D. Bell

Mr Brian D. Bell (Co-opted to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of M. L. Falconer).

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1982 and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the nominee who must also be a financial member of the Society. As one of the vacancies is for the position of Vice-President, please specify if the nomination is for the position of Vice-President or Councillor. Retiring members are eligible for re-election. Please submit two or three lines about the work and interests of the nominee.

R. S. SLACK, *Hon. Secretary*

Colour-banded Spotted Shag

Since 1979 about 100 Spotted Shag chicks have been colour-banded, using a single colour for year classes, on Somes Island, Wellington Harbour.

Only a few of these birds have been sighted since, mostly those that were banded first. Therefore it seems likely that the birds disperse for a time before returning to the colony to breed. We would be extremely interested to hear of any sightings of these colour-banded birds.

Please report any such sightings to: Banding Office, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.

R. W. BENFELL & R. O. COSSEE

Regional Roundup

Far North/Northland: A number of valuable records have been produced during 1981. These include the recording of considerable numbers of Yellow-nosed Mollymawks in Northland waters, supplemented by two beach wrecks, one in April and another in June. The second New Zealand record of the White-necked Heron was recorded recently at Onepu, near Houhora on the Aupouri Peninsula.

Spur-winged Plovers have been confirmed breeding at Lake Ohia; unfortunately the two chicks were killed by a rotary slasher in a grass cutting operation.

Bay of Plenty: Attempts to catch Kokako continued at Oropi, with at least another two birds being transferred to Little Barrier Island.

Volcanic Plateau: The first Long-tailed Cuckoo of the summer was heard on 16 October, about a month behind the first Shining Cuckoo. Ray Jackson reports 6 Caspian Terns behind Travelodge on Lake Rotorua on 8 November. On the same day there were 31 Black-billed Gulls on nests and 8 large Red-billed Gull chicks in the main colony at Rotorua.

Whiteheads appear to be turning up in a lot of areas — Pureora, Whirinaki, Whakarewarewa Forest, Lake Tarawera, Makatiti Dome and Lake Okataina.

Taranaki: David Medway reports that between August and October 22 Kerguelen Petrels were recovered in Taranaki. 17 of these were found on beach patrols, the remaining 5 being found at various distances inland as far as Taurarunui. In September/October 11 Blue Petrels were recovered, 10 on beach patrols and 1 in St. Mary's churchyard in New Plymouth!

The Bell Block oxidation ponds near New Plymouth are again an attraction to waders. Bar-tailed Godwits, Knots, Turnstones and a Pectoral Sandpiper have been recorded so far this summer.

Ten Spur-winged Plovers were seen at Cape Egmont in September. These and other records from near New Plymouth and Urenui tend to confirm that this species is extending its range into Taranaki.

Manawatu: Twelve beach patrollers covered 30.5km of desolate winter beach on 20 September. However, their enthusiasm was rewarded by finding 1 Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, 2 Grey-headed Mollymawks, 1 White-capped Mollymawk plus Kerguelen, Blue and

White-headed Petrels; the total bag was 59 birds of 14 species.

Mike Tarburton reports the presence of an elusive possible Common Sandpiper on shingle banks of the Manawatu River at Longburn. The bird was seen on 1, 4 and 6 September but despite regular searches was not seen again until 19 October.

Janet Drake reports that a flock of up to 150 Black-billed Gulls have been on the same stretch of the eastern Manawatu River for three weeks during October but had not begun to nest by 1 November.

Wellington: The renewed Kapiti survey got underway in marginal conditions on the weekend of 15/16 August. Two members of the party landing at Te Mimi suffered an attack of 'instant' high tide and were off to a damp start! Initially work was carried out to relocate and re-mark counting stations. Highlights of the weekend were pairs of Saddlebacks seen on Trig and McKenzie Tracks.

Nelson: Once again the Pied Shags are nesting in the Norfolk Pines along Rock Road, despite the local Council cutting down their original tree, which had died. Last winter, in an effort to discourage the roosting Pied and Little Shags, the Council strung lights up the tree trunk. However, the shags went to roost before the lights came on and enjoyed the central heating they provided.

Mal Clarborough has noted a Black Stilt with a flock of Pied Stilts at Lake Rotoiti on 8 August.

West Coast: Derek Onley reports that 2 or 3 Little Egrets have been at Orowaiti recently, growing longer and longer plumes. Suspiciously or disappointingly there has only been one bird visible during November.

Canterbury: Most attention has been on Ellesmere (see elsewhere in this issue) but George Glover and Kathleen Harrison report 2 Royal Spoonbills, 1 Large Sand Dotterel, 1 Turnstone and 1 Eastern Long-billed Curlew at Brooklands Lagoon.

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

Colour-banded dotterels

Remember the Banded Dotterels colour-dyed and colour-banded in Australia reported in the last *OSNZ news*? Well at least two have been seen in New Zealand so far this summer. Colin O'Donnell saw one at Lake Ellesmere on 5 November and Ray Pierce saw one at Glenmore Station in the MacKenzie Country on 19 November.

Seed sowing Silvereyes

In May 1980 when we first moved into our present house in Te Kuiti, we immediately began putting out fat and honeywater for the Silvereyes, and soon had a good number of birds about. The food was placed in a small evergreen shrub and in rose bushes in a border some 3m from the house.

In the summer of 1980/81 circumstances dictated that not much be done in the way of gardening, and this border, unweeded, had a profusion of forget-me-nots and a creeping buttercup. In the spring of 1981 I eventually got around to weeding the border and discovered at least two dozen seedlings, up to 10cm tall. Most were *Pittosporum tenuifolium* with at least three other species. The seed was presumably contained in the droppings of the Silvereyes, and grew with the buttercups as a most effective nursery crop. The prevalence of *Pittosporum* may well reflect the ease of propagation of this species rather than any dietary preference of the birds.

We have transplanted most of the seedlings, and they are growing very well in other parts of the garden becoming, we hope, further attractions for the birds.

We again put out food last winter, and a quick search of the border now reveals the next crop of seedlings, while the buttercups seem determined to perform as a nursery crop again!

GILLIAN GUEST

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Labour weekend camp - Hurunui

Thirteen members from Christchurch, Kaikoura and Wellington gathered at the shearers' quarters on Mr Duncan Giller's property near the Hurunui Rivermouth on Friday evening 23 October. Despite a strong southerly wind and heavy rain the following day the party visited St. Anne's Lagoon, where canoe and ground parties completed a survey. Besides one Australian Little Grebe, in full breeding plumage, and several Australian Coots, the lake supported its usual good variety of waterfowl including Scaup, Grey Teal, Shoveler Duck and Mute Swan. Nests of Mallard, Grey Teal, Mute Swan and Little Shag were found.

The driving rain finally proved too much and in mid-afternoon we returned to the comfort of the shearers' quarters, after a brief beach patrol at Gore Bay yielded a Red-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern.

Sunday was bright and clear as the party headed for the Blythe Rivermouth and then on to the Nape Nape Reserve. Bellbirds, tits and Grey Warblers were in the bush near the Blythe and Black-fronted Terns, Pied Stilts, Paradise Ducks and Banded Dotterels were seen feeding on the river flat and shingle bar. A Pied Stilt nest contained unusual eggs — one was about normal size, one the size of a Starling egg and one the size of a pea.

The Nape Nape Reserve supported good numbers of Grey Warblers, Bellbirds and Fantails, and Fluttering/Hutton's Shearwaters, Cape Pigeons and gannets were seen offshore.

The late afternoon was spent at St. Anne's Lagoon, where two Australian Little Grebes proved most frustrating as they were watched long and intently for any signs of breeding activity but none was seen.

The party returned to Christchurch on Monday afternoon, after stopping at Motunau Beach and the Ashley Rivermouth. The Pied Shag colony at Motunau Beach contained 62 well-grown chicks and about 70 adults, some of which appeared to be incubating. At the Ashley Rivermouth fishermen almost outnumbered birds but we managed to find 100+ Bar-tailed Godwits, 1 Turnstone, 1 Large Sand Dotterel and 10-15 Wrybills among the commoner species.

One of the most pleasing features of the weekend was the enthusiasm and knowledge of the four junior members — Dominic Graham, Peter Langlands, Steven Leitch and Jeffrey Richards — strong winds, driving rain and river crossings did not dampen their interest. PAUL SAGAR

Niue Island birds

The bird fauna of Niue Island, South-West Pacific Ocean, with special notes on the White-tailed Tropic Bird and Golden Plover by F. C. Kinsky and J. C. Yaldwyn 1981, a National Museum of New Zealand Miscellaneous Series Publication No. 2 is available from the National Museum, Private Bag, Wellington. Price \$2.80.

Lake Ellesmere birds

At the recent I.U.C.N. Conference in Christchurch, Lake Ellesmere was declared a Wetland of International Importance. Records show Lake Ellesmere to be one of the most important wetlands in New Zealand for both indigenous and migrant waders, waterfowl and swamp birds. There are now 149 bird species on the Lake Ellesmere checklist compared with 109 for Farewell Spit.

107 of these species use the lake or its marginal vegetation while the remainder are mainly oceanic stragglers recorded beach wrecked on the Ellesmere shoreline and coast.

Recently the Wildlife Service began to collate information on habitat and birds using the lake, in response to local pressure to drain the lake and modify lake levels. Field work associated with this includes monitoring changes in bird numbers, especially migrant waders, and examining the use of habitat by all birds.

During the period early October to early December 1981 numbers of migrant waders have increased steadily, with the largest concentrations being found on the Greenpark saltmarshes. Six Red-necked Stints wintered over in this area and increases recorded so far are 16 early in October, 66 by late October, 97 on 5 November, 120 on 13 November and 174 on 2 December. Numbers of Curlew Sandpipers have increased more slowly. One was present on 3 October, 6 on 5 November, 12 on 28 November and 26 on 2 December. A further 26-38 have been present at the tip of Kaitarete Spit since late October. Among other waders recorded so far this summer are 2 Marsh Sandpipers, 1 Sanderling, 6 Pectoral Sandpipers, 20+ Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 40+ Golden Plovers, 10 Turnstones, 37 Knots, 21 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 Black-fronted Dotterels, and the ever-confusing partial albino Banded Dotterel.

The Marsh Sandpipers were first seen on 19 November on a lakeside pond surrounded by pasture. On later visits the birds have been seen in ponds on the Greenpark saltmarshes. The Sanderling was with 30+ Wrybills in saltmarsh ponds. The flock of 37 Knot, first seen on 2 December, is by far the largest ever reported on the lake.

Many of the waders, especially Red-necked Stints, Golden Plovers and Curlew Sandpipers, arrived in full or partial breeding plumage and provided excellent examples of all plumage stages while assuming winter plumage.

Banded Dotterel, Pied Stilt and Wrybill numbers increased steadily from the beginning of November and waterfowl numbers from the beginning of December, as adults with juveniles return to the lake after breeding. By 2 December flocks of up to 750 Pied Stilts, 200 Banded Dotterels and 50 Wrybills were being recorded. One of the Banded Dotterels was of special interest; it had been colour-dyed and colour-banded in Melbourne, Australia, last May.

Other interesting observations include the numbers of Marsh Crake found all around the lake, a Caspian Tern colony

of 10 pairs, a Little Shag colony of 100+ pairs, a flock of 600+ Grey Teal (and the first breeding record for the lake) and post-breeding flocks of 60+ White-faced Herons and 90+ Spur-winged Plovers.

If anyone has any unpublished records from Lake Ellesmere please could they send them to C. O'Donnell, c/- 198 Blenheim Road, Christchurch 4.

COLIN O'DONNELL

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Petrels in Nelson City

During recent appearances of Kerguelen Petrels, mainly along west coast beaches, Nelson members have found street patrolling more rewarding than beach patrolling. At the beginning of September two Kerguelen Petrels were found on the city streets, one was dead on arrival and has been converted to a specimen by Peter Gaze while the other was sufficiently alive to be resuscitated by Hank Heinekamp and later released off the Boulder Beach.

JENNY HAWKINS

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Falla Memorial Award - 1981

Nominations for the above award should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12-249, Wellington, by 30 April 1982. Nominations must be signed by at least two financial members of OSNZ and should state clearly the claims of the nominee on a national scale, together with a brief ornithological vitae.

The basic requirements of the award are detailed in *OSNZ news* 19.

R. S. SLACK, *Hon. Secretary*

Farewell Spit, November

On 12-21 November, a combined Wildlife Service/OSNZ team were at Farewell Spit and Westhaven Inlet to continue the Spartina eradication programme and to give the Wildlife trainees experience with the waders of the Spit and the value of the Spit as a wader habitat. OSNZ members were Brian Bell (leader), Gerry Carlin, Anthea Davis, Jenny Hawkins, Barrie Heather, Frank Hollay, Wilf Mawson, Colin Miskelly and Andrew Roberts.

While tides were favourably high (but the weather was not), several days were spent on the Spit. Judging by the many thousands seen, the Knot, Godwit and Turnstone were back in force, but a full census could not be attempted. Despite the NZ breeding season, well over 1000 SIPO were on the Spit, but compared with later months, notable absentees were Welcome Swallow (very few), Kingfisher, shags, White-faced Heron, Harrier, Wrybill, Spurwing Plover, Paradise Shelduck (one or two only), Royal Spoonbill, Black-fronted Tern, and dotterels. Banded Dotterels, many hundreds of which are at the Spit later, were represented by an estimated 20 pairs, well scattered along the Ocean Beach and at several points inside the Spit, but apparently not yet breeding, and by only 3-4 in "meaningless" plumage. As usual, Golden Plover and Pied Stilt were few.

Beyond the lighthouse, breeding colonies were in full swing of Caspian Tern (132 nests counted), White-fronted Tern (450 nests), Red-billed Gull (98 nests), and even several nests of Black-billed Gull. Near Mullet Creek were the usual curlews and whimbrels — 7 Far-eastern Curlews showing very ragged primaries, and 12 whimbrels, at least 7 of which were Asiatic and 2 American, led the party some frustrating chases as they slid warily away across the dunes, re-

fusing to stand and be counted and identified as to race. At least 4 Grey Plover were on the Spit, two in fading breeding plumage, and some fine leisurely views were had of some of them and all diagnostic features well seen. Apart from this, few of the usual rare species were seen, confirming a general impression that these species often arrive late from places further north — only 9 stints (all at Ellesmere?), 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 1 Sanderling.

The only Royal Spoonbills were 2 at Collingwood on the 11th, an adult and a juvenile, presumably from the Blenheim colony. On the 19th, 42 White-faced Herons appeared on the first few miles of the inner beach; still well below the hundreds that inhabit the Spit in autumn.

After a lot of heavy rain, large ponds formed on the Ocean Beach where the access track emerges. Here, a bird first recognised as unusual by trainee Geordie Murman caused everyone a lot of trouble until it was sorted out as a Great Knot; presumably just blown in and at first very approachable and barely able to fly, it was at first so slim that it was rather like a short-legged Marsh Sandpiper, especially as its legs were yellowish; but as the days went by, it became more active and more knot-like in shape and mannerisms, and everyone could be convinced.

Birds were not easy to find in Westhaven Inlet, the notable exception being the single Common Sandpiper still frequenting the same mudflat stream in Wairoa Inlet as it was when first seen in March 1981; it was well seen as it fed quietly along the stream edge, taking small fish and crabs, stood on or under fallen trees or on boulders, or flew with its loping flight reminiscent of Black-fronted Dotterel.

BARRIE HEATHER