



OSNZ news

No. 28 September, 1983

NOTE: Deadline for the December issue will be 19th November.

OSNZ Greeting Cards

The Card Committee apologises for any inconvenience caused with the incomplete order form for cards which was sent out in the last issue, through an oversight at the printers. The concession rate for OSNZ members is \$2.00 per pack. The packs available are Tui, Shining Cuckoo, Parakeets, Welcome Swallow, Fantail and Mixed.

C. J. R. ROBERTSON

Band and Tag

Except for a steady stream of waterfowl recoveries it has been reasonably quiet in the Banding Office since I last wrote. Work on updating the computer files is progressing well. All records of recoveries up to May 1983 are on file now, except for a sizeable list of errors that cannot be corrected until we can get the whole banding computer file 'on line.' These corrections will be a major task and it is not envisaged that they will be done in the near future.

A start was made in checking the Banding Schedules against a computer printout to make sure all recoveries are on the computer. This exercise will be tied in with the corrections at a later stage.

The 1982/83 bird banding report is underway. It is hoped that this report will be available by early November, but preparation is time-consuming and we want to provide more detailed information and also a summary of recoveries during the year. We will keep you informed about progress with this report.

Some operators are stepping out of line by not following the conditions of their permit and one permit has been revoked. The use of colour bands without a permit especially cannot be tolerated as it jeopardises the work of other

banders. Therefore, please stick to the rules.

Since the last newsletter one new permit, for Chatham Island Snipe in the Chatham Islands, was issued, and a new project for Californian Quail in the Nelson area was initiated as an extension of a permit already in use.

RODERICK O. COSSEE

Banding Mail Bag

During the period 20 May to 31 August a total of 924 recoveries of banded birds was reported by the public. As to be expected, most of them were game birds.

In July a juvenile Giant Petrel with an East German band (No. 219287) was found exhausted near Paraparaumu. The bird was cared for by the Nga Manu Trust and was released upon recovery, with an additional New Zealand band. To date we have not been informed of the banding details.

Some other interesting recoveries include three reported to us recently by the British Trust of Ornithology.

Two Southern Giant Petrels, banded on 12 March 1980 as chicks on Signy Island, South Orkneys, by British Antarctic Survey were recovered dead in New Zealand. One on 14 January 1981 near Oamaru, the other on 15 October 1980 near Sand Hill Point, Southland.

A Northern Giant Petrel also banded as a chick by British Antarctic Survey, this time on 10 February 1980 on Bird Island, South Georgia, was found dead on 23/3/81 near Pareora, South Canterbury.

L-14402 Australasian Harrier, banded as an adult female near Pukepuke Lagoon (Foxton) on 9/9/76, was found dead on 29/5/83 between Warkworth and Leigh.

A Mallard banded on Norfolk Island on 28/8/82 was shot 5 km west of Waipu on the opening day of the shooting season. A long way to meet your end.

The following Cattle Egret recoveries

were reported to us by the Australian Banding Scheme:

a Cattle Egret banded in December 1982 near Gatlon, Queensland, was found dead on 9/6/83 at Stewart Island; a Cattle Egret, banded as a chick at Bald Hills, near Brisbane, was found dead near Oamaru on 18/7/83.

RODERICK O. COSSEE

* * * *

Southern waders

On 26/2/83 we spent the day along the head of Awarua Bay. Waders present included 360 Bar-tailed Godwits, 500-600 Knots (including a group of 447), 227 Turnstones, 29 Golden Plovers, 37 Curlew Sandpipers, 6 Red-necked Stints, 1 Greenshank and 2 Siberian Tattlers. We returned on 25/4/83 but the rain and high tide stopped us at the inlet and the only waders seen were 8 Bar-tailed Godwits, 6 Turnstones and 1 Curlew Sandpiper. A greyish bird (smaller than a godwit) with long thin bill was possibly the Greenshank seen earlier.

At the Riverton Estuary on 19/3/83 221 Bar-tailed Godwits (mostly well-coloured) and 35 Turnstones were present at high water. On the same day 10 Turnstones were feeding at Waimatuku Estuary.

Birds counted at Lake Ellesmere (west of Embankment Road) on 31/8/83 included 20 Curlew Sandpipers, 14 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 79 Red-necked Stints, 45 Wrybills, 39 Knots, 1 Turnstone and 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. On 1/4/83 counts east of Embankment Road included 34 Curlew Sandpipers, 13 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 57 Red-necked Stints, 139 Wrybills (one group of 87 by a pool), 32 Knots and 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. Several hundred Banded Dotterels were feeding on the flats during both days.

Finally, on 29/3/83 7 Black-fronted Dotterels were seen at the Opihi Rivermouth and 12 (10 adults and 2 juveniles) at the Orari Rivermouth.

KIM & JENNY MORRISON

Morepork intimidates angler

The Mavora Lakes in northern Southland are renowned for their beauty, birdlife and brown trout and these, combined with beech forest, tussock and tranquility are a great attraction to many people.

Two such people were Gordon and Dorothy Harding of Invercargill. While camping at Mavora last Christmas holiday period they went fishing for trout one evening at dusk, using the popular artificial mouse for a lure. About 11.00 p.m. fishing fell off due to bright moonlight, causing the Hardings to make their way back to camp along the beech-clad shore. Mrs Harding was carrying a short spinning rod over her shoulder, with an artificial mouse dangling on the end of her line.

Without sound or other warning a Morepork attacked the dangling mouse from behind. Repeated and concerted attacks were made. On each occasion the mouse was taken firmly in the Morepork's talons but fortunately it was not hooked. The thought of a Morepork trying to make a meal out of a rubber mouse, with or without hooks, leaves a good deal to the ornithological imagination.

R. R. SUTTON

Bromley Wildlife Refuge

On 20/5/83 Paddy Latham, Michael Taylor and I visited the Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Bromley Wildlife Refuge. During our walk along the foreshore and into the Bromley sewage pond area we saw many hundreds of birds feeding voraciously in the adjacent paddocks. Most fed on worms taken from surface water that had collected in great ponds after heavy rain. Among the flock of SIPOs and gulls, we counted 100 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 being in bright breeding plumage — rather surprising so late in the season. Our attention was drawn to a predominantly white oystercatcher, which was speckled with black and looked more like an odddy marked Rock Pigeon.

At the ponds we met Bom Lees, the Drainage Board engineer and curator of the wildlife refuge. He told us that he had never seen so many Shoveler Ducks on the ponds and indeed we found the concentration so great that it was impossible to estimate their number. The ducks were nervous at our approach and flew off to a distant pond. Bob had counted 50 Scaup a few days previously and also reported the presence of 2 Royal Spoonbills.

As we walked back we observed 5 Cattle Egrets moving along in a tight

group as they fed, but as we hurried to obtain a closer look they flew. Among the flock of about 1000 Canada Geese foraging on sea lettuce in the estuary we noticed 4 with neck bands — 3 green and 1 red.

KATHLEEN HARRISON

Australian scrub-birds

This week I heard that Don Merton of the Wildlife Service was going to Western Australia to assist with safeguarding the Noisy Scrub-bird. This species was first recorded in 1842 but was not recorded again after 1889. However, it was rediscovered at Two Peoples Bay by Mr Harley Webster, a retired school principal of Albany. Marcelle and I were fortunate to meet Mr Webster and viewed his slides of the bird.

Later we motored to Two Peoples Bay and met Alan Danks, the Field Officer in charge of the area, which is now a sanctuary. The Noisy Scrub-bird is very territorial and we were directed to two territories but were unsuccessful in our search. We were directed next to a spot where low scrub covered a rocky slope. Here we were fortunate to hear a bird calling persistently and stridently but although we were able to approach to within 1 m of the calling bird we were not able to see it. In fact we were looking right down upon the spot from which the calls were coming but frustratingly enough the bird did not reveal itself.

Despite this we consider ourselves fortunate to have visited the sanctuary and heard the bird. We look forward to hearing of Don Merton's work.

AMYAS RINGER

Blue Ducks

Knowledge of the national distribution of our mountain duck is at best patchy, and in the North Island very sketchy indeed. Some work has been done already in the South Island by R. E. Fordyce, who published his findings in 1976.

I would like to prevail upon OSNZ members for the next 3-4 years to send me records of all Blue Duck sightings from all parts of NZ. Include any you hear, e.g. in gorges. Remember also that Blue Ducks leave droppings full of caddis cases and mud on boulders at river edges. As far as I am concerned these count as sightings.

I need basic information, written on any scrap of paper:

(1) Number of ducks — numbers of adults and young (first year birds have grey chests and grey bills).

(2) Locality. A map reference, including map number is good but not essential. The name of the river or stream is needed.

(4) Any comments on interesting behaviour.

So a report might look like this: 5 Blue Ducks on Raukorere River at forks N71/353409. 2 adults and 3 fluffy young. 2/12/82, mid-morning. Male calling loudly — very agitated.

Just a final comment about calls. Only the male gives the well known 'Whio.' The female call is best described as a low croak.

Please send any information to: Duncan Cunningham, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.

At the end of the year I will put together a progress report for OSNZ news to let you know how the survey is going, and to remind you to keep the information coming in.

DUNCAN CUNNINGHAM

Northern Offshore Islands Symposium

This meeting was held at Auckland University from 10-13 May (11 May being devoted to a trip to Tiritiri Island and to evening lectures on facets of our offshore island heritage by Sir Charles Fleming, Ian Atkinson, Dick Veitch and Roger Grace). A wide-ranging programme on the other three days included geology, archaeology, entomology, ornithology and marine studies, with other sessions devoted to the Three Kings and Great Barrier. Three further sessions were concerned with management aspects of the smaller islands, which are so important for wildlife conservation, and one dealt with rodents.

The ornithology session comprised five papers. Paul Sagar reported on the Bellbirds of the Poor Knights Islands, which he has studied on five visits, 1978-83. Bellbirds occur without Tuis and have a population density about 10X higher than occurs elsewhere in NZ. Plumage and behaviour differences may warrant separate subspecific status for the Poor Knights Bellbird. George Angehr discussed the ecology of honeyeaters on Little Barrier. Some differences in food sources are being revealed, and of the three species Stitch-birds appear to feed most in the understorey and least in the forest canopy. Peter Jenkins presented aspects of his work on Saddlebacks on Cuvier Island, made possible by the extensive banding programme. Free of predators, the birds are remarkably long-lived and most attain 10 years with 2 of the original

birds released on the island in 1968 still alive at 15+.

Mike Imber has followed the fortunes of the Black Petrel population of Little Barrier Island since 1971. In his study burrows the numbers of birds fell from 37 in 1971/72 to 14 in 1976-77 due principally to cat predation of chicks and some adults. This year has seen the first return of a chick reared since the eradication of the cats and the population should now begin to increase. Peter Harper's paper dealt with Buller's Shearwater, which breeds on the Poor Knights Islands where there are an estimated 200,000 pairs. Indeed the species is doing so well that some other petrel species, e.g. Allied Shearwaters and Grey-faced Petrels are being squeezed out.

The meeting was exceptionally well organised and the papers were received enthusiastically by a large audience which included professional scientists, students and serious amateurs. In the latter category it was good to see 10 or so local OSNZ members.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

More martins on the Taieri

Following on from the report in *OSNZ news* 23 about 2 Australian Tree Martins at Berwick, the number increased to 3 this summer. One looked smart and shiny but the feathers on the other 2 looked worn and almost moth-eaten. However, on 21/2/83 a new martin settled beside the Tree Martin perched on a power line. The new bird was smaller and more vivid white. To our disbelief, binoculars revealed a completely reddish head — a Fairy Martin. We had several good chances to study it and a second Fairy Martin which appeared the following weekend. Both came and settled on the clothesline, which is only 10 m from our observation window.

Peter Schweigman was able to compare a Fairy Martin with Tree Martins and Welcome Swallows on the woolshed roof on 5/3/83 and then we saw them only once more, on 21/3/83.

Our farm cannot be the only area where martins occur, so look out for white rumps among the swallows next summer.

ALISON NEVILL

Snares Island Expedition 1982/83

A four person party from the Zoology Department, University of Canterbury, was present on the main island of the Snares from 2 December 1982 to 20

February 1983. This expedition was a result of the storm of controversy following the granting of mooring rights to fishing boats, and was financed by the Department of Lands and Survey.

Research completed by expedition personnel included a general entomological collection and survey by Peter Johns, a study of the two endemic species of weta by Chrissie Butts, a study of the biology of the Snares Island Snipe by Colin Miskelly and a critical reappraisal of the pre-egg-laying and incubation behaviour of Buller's Mollymawk by Cathy Pettigrew. A variety of on-going research projects was continued and an assessment of the status of all bird species was made.

Transport to the island was provided by Murray Schofield and expedition members were very grateful for his assistance, friendship and crayfish, plus the knowledge and interest in the area's wildlife shown by him. Unusual bird sightings recorded by Murray included a White-eyed Duck, and 2 Tree Martins in Ho Ho Bay and sightings of Antarctic Fulmar, Antarctic Petrels and a Wilson's Storm Petrel near the Western Chain.

We took several opportunities to join the fishermen during their work in order to observe and photograph seabirds, especially in the vicinity of the Western Chain. Eight varieties of albatrosses were seen from the boats, including a Chatham Island Mollymawk among the Salvin's Mollymawks on Toru Islet of the Western Chain. The large, all dark petrels reported by the fishermen were identified as White-chinned Petrels. Other species seen included Fairy Prion, Fulmar Prion, Diving Petrel, Black-bellied Storm Petrel, Mottled Petrel and a single White-headed Petrel.

Back on land (dry is not an appropriate adjective for the Snares) a census of the Snares Crested Penguin colonies was completed. This was a time-consuming task but the results suggest that the population of this endemic penguin has increased markedly over the past decade. Regular checks were made at the major penguin landing sites to find out what other penguin species were coming ashore, and for the latter part of our stay it was possible to see 4 species of crested penguins ashore. These were moulting Fiordland Crested, Erect-crested and Rockhopper Penguins, in addition to the Snares Crested Penguins. In addition the party was graced by the presence of a moulting King Penguin, which came ashore for three weeks.

An unusual duck, first seen in flight a week after our arrival, was confirmed as a male Australian Wood Duck. Re-

peated sightings indicate that it stayed until at least late February. Other stragglers to reach the Snares during our stay included a Welcome Swallow, 2 Arctic Terns and several Spine-tailed Swifts.

The only major change in the Snares avifauna since the last University of Canterbury expedition (1976/77) was that the South Island Fantail, previously known only from a single bird, now has a resident breeding population. Only pied phase birds were seen.

The voyage back to Bluff was rather different from our passage to the Snares as we enjoyed 36 hours of luxury aboard the cruise ship Lindblad Explorer.

COLIN MISKELLY

Barn Owl at Papatoetoe

On 27 March 1983 a 7th former (Sharon Richardson) found a Barn Owl in a weak condition at Flat Bush, 20 km SE of Auckland. It died within 18 hours and is now in the Auckland Museum.

Our examination indicates that it is *alba* (and not *novaehollandiae* or *longimembris*) but with a lack of comparative material at hand we have yet to confirm that it belongs to the Australian race. There are three previous records of Barn Owl in NZ — all from Westland between 1947 and 1960. The current specimen, if it reached NZ of its own accord, is therefore the fourth recorded and the first for the North Island. We will be writing a full report for *Notornis*.

B. J. GILL & E. G. TURBOTT

Appeal for nests

A few years ago I made an appeal for recently abandoned nests to the late Mrs Sylvia Reed, and this was repeated in an article in the first issue of *Tara*. Thanks largely to Sylvia's enthusiasm, many nests were received from ornithologists in the Auckland area. The nest faunas were extracted using Tulgren funnels. Nearly all this material has now been processed, the Arthropods identified to order, and the data recorded. My interest in this project relates particularly to beetles, plus a 'hobby' interest in fleas (which are now being studied by Prof. R. L. C. Pilgrim).

The results of this study will be written up for *Notornis*. In the meantime, OSNZ members may be interested in a brief summary of the most significant findings.

Perhaps the most outstanding result

has been the discovery of a further species of birds nest beetles (Family Cavognathidae) from nests of passerines at Kowhai Bush (Canterbury) and on Hen Island (Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park). Superficially, these seem to be an additional species of *Zeonidicola*, known previously from Spotted Shag nests on Banks Peninsula (*Z. dumbletoni*), and from burrows and ground nests on the Chathams (*Z. chathamensis*). For further information see Watt, 1980: *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 10: 331-339. Cavognathids, and especially *Zeonidicola*, seem to be almost exclusively found in nests.

Several other poorly known native beetles have turned up occasionally in nests in reasonable numbers, suggesting that this may be their normal home. Large numbers of larvae of a native hide beetle occurred in the nest of a N.Z. Pigeon.

Nests in urban areas support quite a variety of insects and mites which also infest stored products. These species may be quite numerous, especially in nests of Starlings and House Sparrows.

Nidicolous insects and mites are not present in every nest. The best for extraction are those collected immediately after the chicks have fledged and left the nest, but those abandoned earlier for some other reason (e.g. predation) are also often well-inhabited. Long abandoned nests usually do not contain much of interest.

I should be very grateful for more nests for extraction, especially if collected immediately after occupation by the birds has ended. Nests of any native birds from bush or other native vegetation would be welcome. Nests of introduced birds e.g. Blackbirds from remote forested areas may also be of interest. 'Nests' include scrapings from tree-holes and burrows. Nests from any of the offshore islands are likely to be exceptionally interesting.

We do not have the staff or facilities to cope with large numbers of nests of introduced passerines from urban or agricultural areas. Such nests were thoroughly surveyed earlier, at least for the Auckland area.

Nests should be placed individually in cloth or strong paper bags and tied tightly or sealed. Polythene bags are not satisfactory, because exposure to sunlight for even a brief period 'cooks' the nest fauna. Each bag should be labelled with the name of the bird species, the locality, the date collected, the date vacated (if known), the collector's name, and any useful ecological information (e.g. if a tree nest, the

height above the ground and the species of tree). They should be sent by air-mail or air freight to: Systematics Section, Entomology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Auckland (phone 893-660), and marked: "Birds' nests — urgent." It is essential to keep nests of different species in separate bags, but they can, of course, be included in the same parcel. Postage or freight will be refunded on request (please retain dockets).

If you want the nests back after extraction, please enclose a note saying so. The extraction process does not damage the nest in any way, merely drying it out and thus making it more suitable for storage. Nests of some of the less common species from the earlier survey are now housed in the Auckland Museum.

CHARLES WATT

Sulphur Bay gulls, Lake Rotorua

During last summer Volcanic Plateau members have been observing the populations of small gulls in the Sulphur Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. Since 1962 — when Brian and Denise Reid studied the same populations — the number of Black-billed Gulls has decreased from 800 to 600 birds, and Red-billed Gulls have increased from 800 to about 2000 birds. This summer members banded 137 Black-billed Gulls (including 10 adults) and almost 400 Red-billed Gulls. One pleasant surprise on the colony was finding an adult Red-billed Gull which had been banded as a chick in November 1980 by Jim Mills at Kaitiaki, and was now nesting on the Rotorua colony when captured in December 1982. Rotorua members plan to continue banding for at least another season. Last summer all chicks were banded on the left leg.

JOHN INNES

Bird topics in School Science Exhibition

Birds and conservation themes featured in several entries for this year's Auckland Schools' Science Exhibition. A prize winner was a display showing measures to protect the Pied Shags of Panmure Basin, and another, entitled Estuary Bird Census, presented hourly counts through a whole day of 20 species on and around a recently impounded inlet of the Manukau Harbour. Copies of our Interested in Birds pamphlet are being sent to the schools concerned.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Annual Report 1983 Rare Birds Committee —

There has been some confusion during the year as the Secretary of the Rare Birds Committee left New Zealand to set up home in Australia. As an interim move, Brian Bell acted as Secretary for a few months until a replacement could be found. Council had much pleasure in announcing the appointment of the new Secretary, John Fennell, at the AGM.

The reorganised Rare Birds Committee was very grateful to John Squire, who got the mechanics of the system working with the reporting forms, efficient circulation of reports to members of the committee, and decisions on various sightings. This has established a sound basis to expand on.

The reporting of rare birds has been good at national level and most members have used or followed the 'Unusual Bird Report.' This has given a much better and more complete description in most cases. However, there is a need for more use of the form for local rarities — this also trains observers to take a more detailed description as well as providing a report.

The highlights of the 1983 year were two sightings — Fairy Martin and Chestnut-breasted Shelduck — both new records for New Zealand. In addition to these the following records were accepted:— Crested Tern (now placed on the local list, as it appears to be a regular visitor), White-bellied Storm Petrel, Oriental Dotterel, and attempted nesting of South Island Pied Oystercatcher in the North Island. Reports were received for the following species but unfortunately there was insufficient detail for the Committee to confirm a definite identification:— Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Black Falcon, Common Tern, Antarctic Tern and Bush Wren.

I would like to express my thanks and that of my predecessor to the Committee and other people with special knowledge who were consulted for their prompt attention to reports etc.

BRIAN D. BELL, Acting Secretary

Ornithologists wanted

Two keen ornithologists are required by the Forest Service to assist with banding and counting birds. The successful applicants will be based at the Okarito State Forest and the duration of employment will be from October 1983 until March 1984. Further enquiries should be made to: Dr Eric Spurr, phone Christchurch (03) 517-099 collect.

ERIC SPURR

Regional Roundup

Far North/Northland: Mark Bellingham and Alison Davis have been making an intensive study of the birds of Rangaunu Harbour for the last two years and the publication of their results in New Zealand Wildlife Service Technical Report No. 3 is a welcome addition to the ornithology of Northland.

Auckland: Following a further Easter visit to Great Barrier, reported by Gillian Eller and Brigid Pike in *Tara* No. 30, the island was again the focus of members' attention when Ewen Cameron spoke to the region's August meeting. The current interest should lead to further expeditions to study special aspects of the island's wildlife, such as the status of Kokako, the numbers and distribution of Brown Teal and Banded Rail, and the breeding of Black Petrels on Mount Hobson.

To supplement the regular monthly meetings which have an attendance of about 80, the region is experimenting with small group study weekends. These aim to deepen the interests of practiced members and to let beginners find out what aspects of ornithology may particularly appeal to them. Several such groups will convene this spring at Piha where the Forest and Bird Lodge, Tai Haruru, provides a comfortable base for 8-10 people. During the first week-end, 12-14 August, the group conducted beach patrols, located 2 N.Z. Pipits at Karekare, and attempted to get to grips with moult recording.

South Auckland: Bellbirds are rare on the mainland of northern N.Z., with the exception of the Coromandel Peninsula, so it was pleasing to find 5 at Waharau on 1/5/83. One of these was a female and it is proposed to watch this area carefully to determine if they are increasing their numbers and range.

Waikato: Betty Seddon reports that the combined weekend with the Hamilton Junior Naturalists at their Oparau Lodge in June was very successful. The winter census of Kawhia Harbour was completed on 26/6/83, when 15 OSNZ members were assisted by some eager Junior Naturalists. Some of the interesting species seen were: 2664 SIPO, 173 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Knot, 2 Wrybill, 453 Banded Dotterel, 22 N.Z. Dotterel, 11 Black Stilt, and 6 Paradise Shelducks.

Cattle Egrets returned to Henderson's Farm at Rangiriri this winter, with 4 being seen on 6/4/83. Numbers gradually increased and by 28/8/83 there were 120 present.

Bay of Plenty: Rewarding beach patrols were completed in July when a keen and fit group of members covered from Mount Maunganui to Whakatane in one day, then a good stretch of Matakana Island Ocean Beach and all of Ohope Beach a few days later. No great quantity of birds was found but quality came in the form of 1 Yellow-nosed Mollymawk at Mount Maunganui, and 1 Light-mantled Sooty Albatross at Matata. The Yellow-nosed Mollymawk was no great surprise as 8 live birds were seen north of Motiti in late July.

Volcanic Plateau: John Innes reports that at least 1 female Chestnut-breasted Shelduck survived the duck shooting season at L. Rotomahana, it was seen there in the company of Paradise Shelducks on 19/6/83.

By 12/8/83 Black-billed Gulls and Red-billed Gulls had fully occupied the Sulphur Bay, Lake Rotorua, sanctuary site. At this time there was no sign of nesting material but the birds were defending territories.

Gisborne/Wairoa: A report from Jim Henley says that the 4, possibly 8, Chestnut-breasted Shelducks seen on Whakaki Lagoon on 25/4/83 have not been seen again despite frequent checks of the area. A possible sighting near East Cape is still being investigated.

A flock of 25 Spur-winged Plovers was seen at Muriwai Lagoon by Phillipa Foxley. This represents something of a population explosion for this area.

Manawatu/Wanganui: Seven members enjoyed the mild weather on 15/5/83 and patrolled 35km of beach north of the Rangitikei Rivermouth. The bag included 3 Sooty Shearwaters, 3 Short-tailed Shearwaters, 3 Buller's Shearwaters, 1 Fluttering Shearwater, 2 Broad-billed Prions, 1 Thin-billed Prion, 3 Prion sp. and 1 Sooty Tern. The Sooty Tern was found by Roger and Pam Slack on the Himatangi-Foxton stretch.

A count of birds at the north side of the Manawatu Estuary on 1/5/83 by Bob and Sybil Creswell provided an impressive list for that time of year, which included: 30 Banded Dotterel, 12 Wrybill, 450 Pied Stilt, 30 SIPO, 3 VOC, 17 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Black-tailed Godwit, 1 Far Eastern Curlew, 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, 1 Terek Sandpiper, 1 Red-necked Stint, 36 Royal Spoonbill, 1 White Heron, 17 Caspian Tern and 12 White-fronted Tern.

Nelson: In August an adult Nankeen Night Heron was seen at Pakawau by Eric Gillespie and Graham Beardmore.

The bird roosted in pine trees at the Collingwood Motor Camp and this enabled good views to be obtained.

Canterbury: Members completed a Cattle Egret count on 27/8/83 and located a total of 63 — 3 at Waikuku (the first to return there for 3 years), 38 at Doyleston, 7 at Ridge Road (L. Ellesmere), and 15 at Clandeboye.

The passerine study group has been busy banding finches this year. In addition to recording morphometric, plumage, and moult other useful information has come from the recovery of a juvenile Greenfinch in Blenheim during July, this bird was banded near Darfield in February.

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

Summer Field Course — South Canterbury

A summer field study course will be held in South Canterbury from 8-15 January 1984.

Based at the Raincliff Youth Camp, members will be able to assemble on Sunday afternoon, 8 January, and finish after breakfast on Sunday, 15 January, with six full days in the field.

Raincliff Youth Camp is situated on the banks of the Opihi River, near its junction with the Opuha River and can be reached via the Geraldine-Fairlie Highway, turning off at Guidex Road. It is close to Pioneer Park, which contains native bush.

The course will study the birds inhabiting the Orari, Opihi and Pareora Rivers (known breeding areas of Black-fronted Tern and Black-fronted Dotterel) and nearby coastal lagoons — Spider, Washdyke and Wainono. Among other possibilities are surveys of Blue Ducks on foothill streams; bush birds in Peel Forest; waterbirds in the Lake Alexandrina area (e.g. Crested Grebe, Australian Coot, Grey Teal, Scaup).

The cost is \$14.00 a day, which covers accommodation and three meals; a total of \$98.00 for the whole course. All you have to bring is sleeping bags, plus personal and birdwatching gear.

Accommodation is in bunkrooms, with six bunks per room; so family groups can be accommodated with a certain amount of privacy. Caravan sites fitted with power points are also available.

Send booking notice and \$40 deposit to the organiser: Paul Sagar, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4 (Phone 429-720), by 30 November 1983; otherwise accommodation cannot be guaranteed.

PAUL SAGAR

Projects Review

Many projects and requests for information have appeared in *OSNZ news* since the first issue in January 1977. Some have been organised and run by OSNZ, and there have been many requests from individual members. The type of information and assistance requested have varied enormously as projects have covered individual species and groups of species, both at the national and local level. Many members have spent a lot of time and effort contributing to the projects and much valuable information, not otherwise obtainable, has been gathered.

The initial announcements of projects are advertised widely but then keeping track of their progress becomes difficult unless follow-up reports appear regularly. Therefore RRs have requested a review of the current status of all projects. The aim of this is to maximise members' efforts in obtaining information, by keeping them informed of their progress.

To complete this review all coordinators of projects and RRs were requested to provide the most up to date information available about the status of projects. The Society's permanent schemes (Recording Scheme, Pacific Islands Recording Scheme, Nest Record Scheme, Beach Patrol Scheme, Molt Recording Scheme) are not included in this review and members are referred to the annual reports of these schemes for the latest information.

The following projects are complete and no further information is required:

- (1) *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand*
Aim: To provide maps showing the detailed distribution of birds throughout New Zealand.
Coordinators: P. C. Bull and P. D. Gaze.
Publications: Bull, P. C.; Gaze, P. D.; Robertson, C. J. R. 1978. *Bird distribution in New Zealand — a provisional atlas — 1969-76*. Ornithological Society of New Zealand. 254 pp.
Bull, P. C.; Gaze, P. D.; Robertson, C. J. R. In preparation. An atlas of bird distribution in New Zealand.
- (2) *Birds of the Manawatu River Estuary*
Aim: To determine the seasonal abundance of shorebirds at the estuary during 1976-81.
Coordinator: L. J. Davies.
Publication: In preparation for *Notornis*.

- (3) *Distribution and numbers of Crested Grebes in New Zealand*

Aim: To determine the number and distribution of Crested Grebes in New Zealand during the summer of 1980.

Coordinator: P. M. Sagar.
Publication: Sagar, P. M. 1981. *Distribution and numbers of Crested Grebes in New Zealand*. *Notornis* 28: 301-310.

- (4) *N.Z. Dabchick*

Aim: To investigate the population status — distribution and seasonal changes of N.Z. Dabchick.

Coordinator: B. D. Heather.
Publication: In preparation for *Notornis*.

- (5) *Black-footed Shags*

Aim: To determine the distribution of colonies and complete a breeding census.

Coordinator: B. D. Bell.
Comment: The response was inadequate in most regions, probably because the scope of the inquiry was too broad.

- (6) *Reef Heron Enquiry*

Aim: To establish the status and distribution of Reef Herons in New Zealand.

Coordinator: A. T. Edgar.
Publication: Edgar, A. T. 1978. *The Reef Heron (*Egretta sacra*) in New Zealand*. *Notornis* 25: 25-58.

- (7) *Cattle Egret events*

Aim: To record the numbers, movements and distribution; plumage changes and behaviour of Cattle Egrets in New Zealand.

Coordinator: B. D. Heather.
Publications: Heather, B. D. 1978. *The Cattle Egret in New Zealand in 1977*. *Notornis* 25: 218-234.
Heather, B. D. 1982. *The Cattle Egret in New Zealand, 1978-1980*. *Notornis* 29: 241-268.

- (8) *Black Swan movements*

Aim: To determine the dispersion and dispersal of Black Swan populations in New Zealand.

Coordinator: M. Williams.
Publications: Williams, M. 1981. *The demography of New Zealand's *Cygnus atratus* population*. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Swan Symposium. IWRB, England*. pp. 147-161.
Williams, M. 1980. *Some demographic characteristics of New Zealand Black Swan*. *Wildlife — a review* 11: 14-32.

The following projects are in progress and information is still required:

- (1) *Bird distribution in New Zealand*
Aim: To add further information to the Atlas of New Zealand birds — see (1) above.

Regions involved: National.
Aim: To improve and update the Atlas of bird distribution.

Information required: Species lists from poorly covered 10,000 yard squares and breeding records of uncommon species; such records will be stored for future use as it is too late to include them in the new Atlas.

Coordinator: P. D. Gaze, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Nelson.

- (2) *Little Black Shag movements*

Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine the dispersal of Little Black Shags from the Lake Rotorua breeding colony.

Information required: Sightings of Little Black Shags with a metal band on the left leg.

Coordinator: Graeme Taylor, 43 Springfield Road, Rotorua.

- (3) *Spotted Shag movements*

Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine the dispersal of Spotted Shags from Somes Island, Wellington Harbour.

Information required: Sightings of colour banded Spotted Shags. Birds have been banded with a different coloured band each year since 1979.

Coordinator: R. W. Benfell, Somes Island, P.O. Box 38-155, Petone.

- (4) *Canada Goose movements*

Regions involved: South Island.
Aim: To record movements of Canada Geese and to determine whether or not sub-populations have established in the South Island.

Information required: Date and location of any goose seen wearing a neck band (collar). It is important to note the colour of the collar.

Coordinator: Dr K. J. Potts, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.

- (5) *Chestnut-breasted Shelduck*

Regions involved: National.

Aim: To coordinate sightings from all regions during 1983, and to monitor further developments if the birds remain in New Zealand.
Information required: Date, location and number of shelducks seen.

- Coordinator: B. D. Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream.
- (6) *Blue Ducks*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine the distribution and population of Blue Ducks. Information required: Date, location and number of Blue Ducks seen. See separate item in this issue of *OSNZ news*.
Coordinator: Duncan Cunningham, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.
- (7) *Coastal bird survey*
Regions involved: Far North, Northland, Auckland, South Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty.
Aim: To monitor population changes of N.Z. Dotterel, Variable Oystercatcher, Reef Heron and White-faced Heron on ocean beaches of northern New Zealand. Information required: Date, location and number of these birds seen.
Coordinator: Derek Bettesworth, c/o Post Office, Omapere, Northland.
- (8) *Variable Oystercatcher movements*
Regions involved: Manawatu, Wellington, Wairarapa.
Aim: To determine the movements of Variable Oystercatchers colour banded as chicks at Somes Island, Wellington Harbour.
Information required: Date, location and number of colour banded birds seen. It is important to note the colour of the band.
Coordinator: R. W. Benfell, Somes Island, P.O. Box 38-155, Petone.
- (9) *Banded Dotterel movements*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine the migration pattern of Banded Dotterels between Australia and New Zealand. Information required: Date, location and colour combination of any colour banded birds seen.
Coordinators: Clive Minton, c/o IMI Australia Ltd, Heine House, 11 Queens Road, Melbourne 3004, Australia; Ray Pierce, Glenmore Station, via Post Office, Lake Tekapo.
- (10) *New Zealand Dotterel*
Regions involved: Auckland, South Auckland.
Aim: To study seasonal movements, plumage changes, pair maintenance, breeding biology and population trends using individually colour banded birds. Information required: Date and location of any colour banded birds seen, plus any notes on behaviour, plumage and breeding.
Coordinators: G. M. H. Peterson, P.O. Box 22-230, Auckland; Maria Hansby, 432 Massey Road, Mangere, Auckland.
- (11) *Red-billed Gull movements*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine the movements and population dynamics of Red-billed Gulls.
Information required: Date and location of any individually colour banded birds seen.
Coordinator: Dr J. A. Mills, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.
- (12) *Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls*
Regions involved: Volcanic Plateau, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay.
Aim: To compare the current size and status of the Sulphur Bay Red-billed and Black-billed Gull colony with earlier reports, and to determine gull movements.
Information required: Date and location of observations of metal banded gulls.
Coordinator: John Innes, Loop Road, Okareka, Rotorua.
- (13) *Black-fronted Tern*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine seasonal movements, age composition of flocks, and plumage changes of Black-fronted Terns.
Information required: Date, location and number of birds seen at coastal areas. It is important to check flocks for colour banded birds and to note the plumage characters of any banded birds seen.
Coordinators: B. D. Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream (all North Island records); P. M. Sagar, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4 (all South Island records).
- (14) *Caspian Tern population*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine the distribution and size of breeding colonies. Information required: Material to hand is being assembled but it is rather dated and current information is required to make it more meaningful. Therefore it is proposed to complete a colony census in 1984/85.
Coordinator: B. D. Bell, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.
- (15) *Caspian Tern movements*
Regions involved: Auckland and adjacent northern regions.
Aim: To study dispersal patterns, seasonal movements and colonial breeding, by following birds of known age.
Information required: Sight records of colour banded birds, giving locality and whether birds are single, paired, in flock, or nesting (with plumage notes where possible).
Coordinator: M. J. Taylor, 28 Awarua Crescent, Orakei, Auckland 5.
- (16) *White-fronted Tern movements*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To monitor population movements, migration and breeding success of White-fronted Terns.
Information required: Sightings of colour banded birds with details of plumage, if possible.
Coordinators: George Wilkinson; Jenny Hawkins, 772 Atawhai Drive, Nelson.
- (17) *Harrier movements*
Regions involved: National.
Aim: To determine movements and longevity of Harriers.
Information required: Information from band returns. It is particularly important to inspect all road killed Harriers for bands.
Coordinator: W. M. Jukes, 11 Waterford Drive, Winton.
- (18) *South Island Robins*
Regions involved: Marlborough.
Aim: To determine the longevity of colour banded Robins at Kowhai Bush, Kaikoura.
Information required: Sightings of colour banded birds at Kowhai Bush. It is important to record the colour band combination on each leg, including the position of the metal band.
Coordinator: R. G. Powlesland, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington.
- (19) *South Island Fernbird*
Regions involved: Southland.
Aim: To determine territory size and habitat requirements.
Information required: Sightings of colour banded birds.
Coordinator: Maida Barlow, 38 Filleul Street, Invercargill.
- (20) *Brown Creeper*
Regions involved: All South Island.
Aim: To determine distribution and habitat preferences.

Information required: Any information relating to population, habitat and associated species.
Coordinator: C. S. Lauder, 9 Winnie Street, Greymouth.

- (21) *Whitehead and Long-tailed Cuckoo*
Regions involved: All North Island.

Aim: To learn more about the regional abundance and ecology of these species.

Information required: Location, observation time, number of encounters with species, plus any other observations. A specially printed form is available from the coordinators.

Coordinators: John Innes, Loop Road, Okareka, Rotorua; Rob Guest, 20 Ailsa Street, Te Kuiti.

- (22) *Yellowhead distribution*

Regions involved: All South Island.

Aim: To establish the present distribution of Yellowheads and to compare this with past records of the species range.

Information required: Location and dates of observations of this species.

Coordinator: P. D. Gaze, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Nelson.

- (23) *Bellbird survey*

Regions involved: South Auckland.

Aim: To observe remnant population of Bellbirds at Waharau, eastern Hunua Ranges, to estimate numbers and ascertain whether breeding occurs.

Information required: Members covering high level walk of Waharau Regional Park should list date, time, birds heard and seen, and by careful observation of plumage, sex.

Coordinator: Beth Brown, 39 Red Hill Road, Papakura.

- (24) *North Island Kokako status*

Regions involved: South Auckland.

Aim: To determine the distribution of Kokako in the Hunua, Coromandel and Hapuakohe Ranges.

Information required: Observations of the distribution and numbers in these areas. Map references of sightings are necessary.

Coordinator: Beth Brown, 39 Red Hill Road, Papakura.

After reading this article members should have no difficulty deciding what to do in their spare time — the range

of information required by these projects should cater for all interests and abilities. If you require more information about particular projects, then please do not hesitate to write to the appropriate coordinator. I am sure that you will receive all the assistance you require. The more localised projects listed are included to inform travelling OSNZ members what to look for in regions they visit.

One thing is certain, the publications listed with the projects already completed shows that information supplied by members is being put to good use, and more publications are in preparation.

PAUL SAGAR

National wader count — November 1983

A perusal of the contents of *Notornis* and *OSNZ news* through the years shows that counting waders has been a major preoccupation of New Zealand birdwatchers since the earliest days of the Society. Records show that almost every major wader habitat has been surveyed at least once during the past 50 years. Currently, regular (monthly or seasonal) wader counts are conducted at a number of estuaries and harbours e.g. Firth of Thames, Manukau, Kawhia, Manawatu Estuary and Nelson Haven. However, despite these extensive surveys it still is not possible to answer two basic questions:

- (1) how many waders are there in New Zealand during any one summer, and
- (2) what is the relative national importance of each locality for a particular species?

The possibility of completing coordinated national wader counts in New Zealand has been discussed by Council and Regional Representatives at the 1982 and 1983 AGMs. There is general agreement that the counts should be completed but it also recognised that there would be severe logistic problems. Even if counting was restricted to well-known wader haunts it would need precise organisation and a large band of keen observers to cover all areas within say a weekend (this short period is required to reduce the risk of counting birds that had moved from one area to another).

To attempt to gauge the potential for conducting national wader counts, Council and RRs agreed that all regions should be encouraged to count waders during November 1983. This month was accepted as being a period when wader numbers appeared to be stable

in most localities. The priority areas for counting in each region should be those known to support the largest concentrations of waders e.g. in Canterbury it will be essential to cover the Ashley Estuary, Heathcote-Avon Estuary, Lake Ellesmere and Lake Ki-Wainono, while Brooklands Lagoon, Akaroa Harbour, Ashburton Rivermouth and Washdyke Lagoon will only be covered if time permits. While members are encouraged to count all waders, special attention should be paid to Bar-tailed Godwits, Knots, Turnstone and SIPO. Most Wrybills, Banded Dotterels and Pied Stilts will be on their breeding grounds and too dispersed to even contemplate counting during November but a winter count, say June, will be a good time to count these.

David Crockett, Beth Brown, Jenny Hawkins and Paul Sagar are coordinating the November count overall, with each RR responsible for local organisation. However, the success of this trial depends upon your participation. Contact your RR now and put your name down as a participant.

Results of the count will appear in the March issue of *OSNZ news*, along with an assessment of the success of the trial. Meanwhile, watch the December issue for the results of preliminary wader counts completed during January 1983.

PAUL SAGAR

Beach Patrolling 90 Mile Beach - January to June 1983

For the first time the 90 Mile Beach in the Far North has been patrolled on a monthly basis. In January the beach was covered by Northland and Auckland members organised by Mike Kearns of Whangarei, and in February David Crockett utilised the services of the northern Forest and Bird members. Since then a hard core of 9 people have covered an average of 71km per month. Some long-distance patrolling has been undertaken with the 29.2km section Hukatere to the Bluff being divided in two on most occasions. For the six months 467.4kms have been covered for a total of 796 seabirds. Notable recoveries are: Goulds Petrel, 1 in Jan.; Pycrofts Petrel, 1 in March; White-tailed Tropic Bird, 1 in March & 1 in May; Allied Shearwater, subspecies *tunneyi*, 1 in June. The latter was identified at the National Museum. By comparison, limited patrolling on the East Coast Beaches has revealed a veritable 'desert.' With 188km of beach north of the Maungataniwhas there is no shortage of 'scope' in the Far North for beach patrolling.

Laurie & Alison Howell