



OSNZ news

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4,
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No. 31

June, 1984

NOTE: Deadline for the September issue
will be 21st August.

Unpaid Subscriptions

Members who have not paid their sub-
scriptions for 1984 are requested to do
so without delay. Unpaid subscriptions
result in additional work and expense.

DOUG BOOTH, Hon. Treasurer

Welcome Swallow roosts

(1) Investigating a Welcome Swallow
roost was an exciting find for a group
of Hawkes Bay members.

The roost was on a small island in
the middle of the Esk River, separated
from the bank by a 3 m wide deep
channel. 4 or 5 bushy willows, each
about 6 m tall grew on the island, and
this was the roost for 500-500 swallows.
At 2000 hours only a few birds were
seen flying upstream but by 2030 hours,
when the sun was setting, large numbers
were flying quite high up. These birds
suddenly swooped down and all circled
the island before landing momentarily
but with more and more settling on the
branches. The noise of their twittering
increased until the light lessened, when
it tapered off, ending almost abruptly
just after 2100 hours.

A. L. HODGSON, M. A. RAMSHAW
& A. C. SAXBY

(2) A check was made of another roost
at Lake Oingo, Fernhill, on 27/1/84
where swallows were thought to be
roosting in some karaka trees. At 2030
hours about 1000 swallows were seen
hawking over the lake and surrounding
hills. However, at 2100 hours the
swallows went to roost suddenly, all
birds settling at once in raupo along the
lake margin, not in the karakas.

J. S. & R. N. HAMILTON

Blue Duck versus Paradise Shelducks

While on a winter tramping trip in
the Cameron River area I saw a Blue
Duck and 2 Paradise Shelducks flying

high overhead, down the valley. About
20 minutes later they flew up the valley
very low, passing us then circling round
several times. My first reaction was
that the Paradise Shelducks were chas-
ing the Blue Duck but then it became
obvious that in fact the opposite was
occurring. The Blue Duck (sex un-
known as no call was heard) was being
sexually aggressive towards the female
Paradise Shelduck, with the male
Paradise Shelduck trying to fly between
them. These antics continued for at
least an hour and over several kms of
the valley, before the Blue Duck was
finally seen preening.

PETER HOWDEN

Request for assistance

The Spanish Committee on nomen-
clature and systematics of birds is pre-
paring a checklist of the birds of the
world in Spanish. The first step is
compiling all the relevant information
about new systematics findings, taxon-
omic agreements, lists of national and
regional avifaunas and Spanish common
names in Iberoaerica. Any information
and advice which you can give us in
this respect would be greatly appreci-
ated. More data about our project are
available at request from: I. F. Aguillo
& M. Fernandez-Cruz, Chairmen, Com-
ision de nomenclatura y sistematica de
la Sociedad Espaola de Ornitologia,
Catedra de Vertebrados, Planta IX,
Ciuda Universitaria, Madrid-3, Spain.
Dr M. FERNANDEZ-CRUZ & I. F.
AGUILLO

Far North survey

The Far North Anniversary weekend
survey was held again this year, from
28-30 January, when just over 30
migratory participants from Auckland,
Whangarei and throughout the north
gathered at Larmer's Road Bush Camp
in the Herekino Forest, near Kaitaia.
After the Saturday morning briefing
session many groups moved farther
north to camp near their respective
areas.

This year 24 dune lakes were sur-
veyed. It was noted that Dabchicks
(38 counted) are now on 10 lakes and
Australian Little Grebes (13 counted)
on 3 lakes. However, no Hoary-headed
Grebes were seen this year.

Some 98.6 km of beaches were
patrolled for wrecked sea birds. These
included Ninety Mile Beach (85 km,
105 birds), Karikari Beach (3.8 km, 7
birds), Pukeke Beach (3.3 km, 0 birds),
and Henderson Bay (6.5 km, 28 birds).

Aupouri State Forest was surveyed
for the first time. This exotic pine
forest now stretches from Ahipara up
to near Cape Maria van Dieman and
includes many habitats, ranging from
stabilised sand dunes, newly planted
pines, and various ages of pines up to
20 year-old trees. 40 forest compart-
ments were surveyed and the birdlife
recorded. It is proposed to repeat these
surveys at 5-year intervals.

Participants enjoyed the annual bird-
ing activity in the north and although
the weather did not exhibit the usual
perfection, conditions were good for our
activities.

MIKE KEARNS

Farewell Spit, January 1984

For 6 days in mid-January 1984 the
outer part of Farewell Spit came under
the scrutiny of 8 OSNZ members.
Those who participated were: Jenny
Hawkins, David Baker, Beth Brown,
Bill Cash, Peter & Margaret Child, Tim
Lovegrove and George Wilkinson.

By prior arrangement we were able
to use one of the vacant homesteads at
the Lighthouse Station — now un-
occupied because the light is being auto-
mated. We are hoping that the Ministry
of Transport might agree to keep this
house after the light has been automated,
so that it can be used by visiting
scientific parties. It was certainly a
comfortable and convenient base for
working the area between Mullet Creek
and the Shell Banks.

Big tides during several hot, sunny

days gave us excellent conditions for looking at waders on the main roosts between Mullet Creek and the tip of the spit.

We were also keen to check progress at the new Gannet colony on the Shell Banks. We found 3 distinct groups of birds. The outer one was a roost of c. 200 birds while the other 2 consisted of about 150 birds each and included quite a few breeding pairs. We did not examine the nests closely, because the adults appeared flighty. However, from a distance we could see that some nests contained large downy young.

A flock of mixed smaller waders was checked each day, and yielded quite a variety of the less common species.

The following shorebirds were seen in the area between Mullet Creek and Spit End: SIPO 1372, Variable Oystercatcher c. 20 (some pairs with young), Bar-tailed Godwit 3690, Knot 3497, Asiatic Whimbrel 16, Long-billed Curlew 7, Red-necked Stint 17, Curlew Sandpiper 5, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 3, Terek Sandpiper 1, Sanderling 2, Golden Plover 8, Large Sand Dotterel 1, Banded Dotterel 223, Turnstone 220. Black-backed, Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls were also noted, along with White-fronted, Black-fronted and Caspian Terns. 23 juveniles were amongst the 67 Caspians on the middle shell bank. As usual there were immense numbers of Black Swans on the Bay Flats.

Wekas were numerous around the Lighthouse Station — there were probably about 6 pairs in this area alone. We also managed to find Fernbirds in various suitable places between Mullet Creek and the Lighthouse. There was some good habitat between the end of the airstrip and the Bay Flats. Apparently Fernbirds have not been encountered in that area before; so they may have colonised this part of the spit only recently. The Fernbird habitat is continually improving as the spit regenerates since grazing ceased some years ago.

TIM LOVEGROVE

Requests for information

(1) Sightings of colour banded Wrybills and Banded Dotterels

During a study of the habitat requirements of riverbed birds in Canterbury I have been involved in the colour banding of Wrybills and Banded Dotterels. During 1982 I colour banded 42 Wrybills on the Lower Rakaia and Ashley Rivers, with another 31 being banded in 1983. In the latter season

106 Banded Dotterels were also colour banded in these two study areas.

The Banded Dotterel banding programme should provide additional information on migratory patterns to that already being obtained from operations in Australia and on the Cass River, where over the past few seasons Ray Pierce has colour banded several hundred dotterels. For this study to be successful a close watch must be kept on wintering haunts, including Farewell Spit and the Auckland harbours. It is important to emphasise that the METAL band is included within the combination for Banded Dotterels, so please make sure that left legs are left legs and right is right as well! For example, 3 Banded Dotterels, all colour banded and seen at a Cass pond produced a total of 5 reported combinations by a group of visiting OSNZ members.

Please send the details of Wrybill sightings to: Ken Hughey, Department of Entomology, Lincoln College, Canterbury; and Banded Dotterel sightings to: Ray Pierce, c/o Glenmore Station, via Post Office, Lake Tekapo.

KEN HUGHEY

(2) White-fronted Terns colour banded

This year on the Nelson Boulder Bank 300 White-fronted Tern chicks were banded with a green band on the left leg and a metal band on the right. Some of these birds were seen at Farewell Spit 6 weeks later. Members are asked to check White-fronted Tern flocks for these and birds banded in previous years, and to forward any sightings to: Jenny Hawkins, 772 Atawhai Drive, Nelson.

JENNY HAWKINS

Ornithological tour

In Search of the Slaty Egret — now found only in the Okavango Swamp and district of Botswana. On 23 July 1984 a group of birdwatchers are setting out from Johannesburg on a once only expedition in search of the Slaty Egret. Although we are firstly attracted to viewing this species, endemic to the Botswana Deltas, the 3 week birdwatching safari will cover an enormous number of species and take us to many secluded areas not normally visited.

The Okavango Delta is divided into 3 habitats and each provides the opportunity to see a vast variety of wildlife.

Transport is by fully equipped 4-wheel drive expedition vehicle and most accommodation is in 2-man tents with sewn-in ground sheets and mosquito nets.

Tour leaders are David Orchard and Verona Pope. Previously David was

Station Commander for the National Environment research Council on British Antarctic Survey's research stations in the Antarctic. His experience extends to Europe, North & South America, Antarctica, Australia, Asia and Africa. Verona has been an expedition leader for 3 years and has been a birdwatcher in Australia, the Far East and Africa.

The cost of the expedition is \$750 (land arrangements only). For further details you should contact The Adventure Travel Shop, P.O. Box 3336, Auckland 1, or P.O. Box 13635, Christchurch.

Unusually coloured House Sparrow

Most readers will have observed hundreds of House Sparrows. However, I wonder how many have seen males with throats that are entirely chestnut. On 2/2/84 a male House Sparrow with a chestnut throat was observed by Geoffrey Harrow at Kaiteriteri, Nelson.

Witherby *et al.* in the *Handbook of British Birds* has indicated that frequently there is some chestnut amongst the black on the chin, throat and centre of the upper breast and very occasionally as much chestnut as black but no reference is made to males with entirely chestnut throats.

G. A. TUNNICLIFFE

Mount Cook notes

Three observations of special interest were recorded over the summer. On 24/11/83 a NZ Falcon made repeated attacks on an Iroquois helicopter which was hovering close to some bluffs on Mt Sebastopol during a search and rescue exercise. The Falcon kept swooping up underneath the helicopter and was pushed down by the rotor wash. After about 10 minutes it flew to a nearby rock and the rescue team moved operations further along the bluffs, away from the presumed nesting area.

A mountaineering Pukeko was seen walking around outside the Tasman Saddle Hut (altitude 2,350m) on 5/2/84.

Finally, a park visitor saw a stoat carrying an unidentified object near Mueller Hut (altitude 1,850m) on 25/3/84. The previous highest recorded sighting of a stoat at Mount Cook was 910m, on the Ball Hut Road. If this is not an isolated case, it could have serious implications for Rock Wrens living in the alpine zone.

JOHN ATKINSON

Annual Report of the Rare Birds Committee

Over the past 12 months the Rare Birds Committee has encouraged the submission of observations of rare birds seen in 1983/84. Records from previous years, that had not been submitted previously, were also welcomed. The collection and central filing of such data will be valuable for future analysis of the occurrence of vagrant species in New Zealand.

Most records received were accompanied by good descriptions and the Committee was able to accept many records with confidence. Few reports were received for species of Local Rarity, which are reviewed by the appropriate Regional Recorder and later filed by the RBC. These records are as important as those for species of National Rarity level. Please check with your RR to see if you have past records which should be documented.

Accepted records for 1983/84 are listed below and include 2 species new to New Zealand — Black Falcon and Wilson's Phalarope.

King Penguin — Single birds at the Snares in Jan/Feb 1983 (C. Miskelly *et al.*) and Stewart Island in Feb 1983 (R. Thomas).

Chatham Island Mollymawk — 1 bird at the Snares Western Chain in Jan 1983 was out of its normal range (C. Miskelly *et al.*).

*Masked Booby** — 1 was found near Hamilton in July 1983 and later died (C. R. Veitch *et al.*).

Lesser Frigatebird — Records from Cape Campbell in Oct 1983 (A. & G. Schroder) and Farewell Spit in Nov 1983 (T. Watson) could refer to the same bird.

White-necked Heron — 1 at Waipu Estuary in Jan 1984 (A. H. Gordon).

Wood Duck — 1 at the Snares in December 1983 (C. Miskelly *et al.*).

Black Falcon — The first record for NZ was seen at Gisborne in Nov 1983 (A. Blackburn).

Ringed Plover — An immature bird at Miranda from Nov 1983 onwards (S. Davies, B. Chudleigh *et al.*).

Oriental Dotterel — 1 at Lake Ki-Wainono in Jan 1983 (R. Pierce, C. Coop).

Lesser Yellowlegs — 1 at Westshore Ponds, Hawkes Bay, in Feb 1983 (K. V. Todd, N. MacKenzie).

*Common Sandpiper** — 1 near Opotiki in Dec 1983 (P. C. M. Latham *et al.*).

*Hudsonian Godwit** — 1 at Lake Elles-

mere in March 1984 (A. McBride, J. Fennell).

Wilson's Phalarope — Singles at Foxton in September 1983 (J. & M. Moore *et al.*) and Lake Ellesmere from Nov 1983 to April 1984 (P. M. Sagar *et al.*) were the first records for NZ.

*Barn Owl** — 1 was found near Papa-toetoe in March 1983 (B. J. Gill).

Spine-tailed Swift — 2 were seen at the Snares in Jan/Feb 1983 (C. Miskelly *et al.*).

Fork-tailed Swift — 1 at Te Anau in May 1983 (J. V. Morrison, H. Shaw) and 2 at Napier in July 1983 (W. & M. Twydale).

*Kookaburra** — 1 near Rangiora in June 1983 (C. M. Clarke).

Fairy Martin — 2 birds at Outram, Otago, in company with 2 *Tree Martins* during Feb/March 1983 (A. Nevill).

Species marked * are on the Local List and were verified by the Regional Recorder. The remaining records were accepted by the RBC.

JOHN FENNELL, *Secretary*

Annual report of the Atlas Committee 1983/84

As members will be aware, our hopes to have the new atlas published 'by Christmas 1983' (OSNZ news 27) were not realised; it now seems that Christmas 1984 is a more likely time. The main problem has been that Mr C. J. R. Robertson, who alone has mastered the intricacies of producing the special computer maps and microfiches for the atlas, was unexpectedly required by his Department to devote all his time to another urgent task for which no one with the necessary expertise was available. The new task involved collecting and presenting field information required urgently to stave off serious threats to the Black Stilt's main breeding habitat; members of OSNZ, while regretting the delay to the atlas, will no doubt agree that the Black Stilt was a top priority. Dr M. C. Crawley (Director of Research, Wildlife Service) has promised that once the current Waitaki Survey is finished (hopefully, early June), he will do his best to ensure that Mr Robertson has adequate time promptly to complete his part in the publication of the atlas. Given this assurance we can reasonably expect the atlas to be available to members sometime during the final quarter of the year.

It would be wrong, however, to imply that no progress has been made with the atlas over the past year. The proof maps have all been checked and errors

corrected, the maps have been furnished with notes and references to supplementary information on breeding range and population size, and a new introduction has been written. Also, the committee has recently been successful with several of its applications for money to help meet the costs of publishing the new atlas. Grants, totalling \$12,250, have been received from the NZ Lottery Board, the NZ Forestry Service, the Environment Council, Mobil Oil NZ Limited, and the J. R. McKenzie Trust Board. This positive response to our applications for funds suggests that the Society's work, as exemplified by the Provisional Atlas, is highly valued by organisations interested in conservation, and that there is a real need for the new atlas.

P. C. BULL, *Convener*

Moult Scheme — Annual Report 1984

Over the last year 759 moult records were received covering 57 species, of which 51 species were new to the scheme. Overall 569 records referred to birds not in active moult, the remainder (190) for birds in moult.

Therefore to date there are 1279 records for 73 species deposited with the scheme and contributed by 7 observers. 578 are of active moult, 701 of non-moulting birds.

The largest contribution over the last year came from David Melville, who contributed records from museums and field observations (Chatham Islands). In particular 515 records of primary moult in waders were received from him, covering 26 species and comprising 117 of moulting and 398 of non-moulting birds. Overall David sent in 669 records for 46 species, most of which were new species for the scheme.

Other contributors were Paul Sagar, who sent in 63 records from the Snares (mostly non-moulting birds though moulting information on Black Tomtits was included); Michael Taylor sent 24 records and Brian Gill 3 records from the Auckland region.

The records received during 1983/84 are summarised below; for each species the first number refers to records of birds in active moult, while the number in brackets refers to birds not in moult:

Black-browed Mollymawk 0(38), Shy Mollymawk 5(24), Grey-faced Petrel 0(1), White-headed Petrel 1(0), Flesh-footed Shearwater 0(1), Grey Duck 1(0), Australasian Harrier 31(9), NZ Falcon 7(9), Spur-winged Plover 1(14), Eastern Golden Plover 20(47), NZ Dotterel 3(13), Banded Dotterel 22(43),

Black-fronted Dotterel 0(5), NZ Shore Plover 7(24), Wrybill 5(33), Far Eastern Curlew 2(1), Asiatic Whimbrel 1(3), Bristle-thighed Curlew 0(3), Little Whimbrel 3(2), Hudsonian Godwit 0(4), Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit 8(72), Wandering Tattler 2(5), Siberian Tattler 1(2), Turnstone 12(17), Knot 4(49), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 5(5), Pectoral Sandpiper 4(4), Curlew Sandpiper 2(4), Red-necked Stint 2(12), Sanderling 2(0), Pied Stilt 7(25), Black Stilt 5(5), Grey Phalarope 0(1), Oriental Pratincole 0(2), Arctic Skua 1(1), Black-backed Gull 5(1), Red-billed Gull 4(0), Black-billed Gull 2(1), Black-fronted Tern 3(0), White-winged Black Tern 2(0), Caspian Tern 2(0), Fairy Tern 1(0), White-fronted Tern 2(0), Sooty Tern 1(0), White Tern 2(0), Oriental Cuckoo 1(0), Pallid Cuckoo 0(1), Kingfisher 1(1), N.I. Fantail 0(1), S.I. Fantail 1(3), Black Tomtit 4(2), Song Thrush 0(4), Blackbird 0(2), Silvereye 0(19), Goldfinch 0(2), Redpoll 0(36), House Sparrow 0(2), Myna 3(0).

BEN D. BELL

Nest Record Scheme

There are now 16,466 Nest Record Cards covering 150 species. This year 66 members contributed 676 cards covering 64 species.

Substantial contributions to the scheme were received from Graeme Taylor with 82 cards of 19 species, Brian Chudleigh with 75 cards of 16 species, and Jack Cowie with 61 cards of the Black-fronted Tern.

Other significant contributions were received from: P. C. Bull (33), D. Buzan (40), B. Elliot (30), J. G. Hamilton (34), J. Hawkins (13), P. Jenkins (12), M. Lane (22), P. C. M. Latham (40), C. Miskelly (48), A. S. Rowe (10), P. M. Sagar (19), A. C. Saxby (12), B. M. Taylor (14), K. V. Todd (35), M. & P. W. Twydale (29).

107 Colonial Cards were received covering the following 12 species: Gannet, Black Shag, Pied Shag, Little Black Shag, Little Shag, Black Swan, Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Black-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Black-fronted Tern, White-fronted Tern.

The Nest Record Scheme provides an ideal opportunity for individual members to contribute valuable information to a permanent store of facts that are available at any time to members and research workers.

My sincere thanks to all contributors to the Scheme and to those who have encouraged members to take part and to my wife, Ruth, whose assistance has been most valuable.

List of contributors: D. G. Baker, K. Barrow, D. Bate, B. D. Bell, K. Bond, P. C. Bull, D. Buzan, W. F. Cash, B. Chudleigh, J. Cochrane, P. Cook, W. Cooper, J. A. Cowie, M. T. Craven, P. G. Dorman, L. Duff, B. Elliot, P. Fooks, D. G. Geddes, A. R. Giblin, B. G. Gill, A. Gordon, J. G. Hamilton, R. Hamilton, J. Hawkins, A. L. Hodson, M. Hutton, D. Kirby, P. Jenkins, P. Jenner, B. G. Johnson, S. C. Johnson, M. Lanem, N. Langham, P. C. M. Latham, R. M. Lees, S. B. Leitch, J. Lloyd, C. McRae, C. Mackinder, A. D. Martin, C. Miskelly, E. Murphy, I. A. Nicholson, F. Nieuwland, M. H. Powlesland, R. G. Powlesland, M. A. Ramshaw, R. Reid, A. S. Rowe, P. M. Sagar, A. C. Saxby, R. P. Scofield, B. Searle, B. Seddon, J. Seddon, M. Skinner, B. M. Taylor, G. A. Taylor, M. J. Taylor, B. Thomas, K. V. Todd, B. Trott, C. S. Tully, J. Tully, M. Twydale, P. W. Twydale.

List of species contributed during 1983/84: Little Blue Penguin 3, NZ Dabchick 1, Australian Gannet 4, Black Shag 2, Pied Shag 5, Little Black Shag 1, Little Shag 2, Spotted Shag 5, White-faced Heron 1, Royal Spoonbill 1, Black Swan 19, Domestic Goose 10, Paradise Shelduck 4, Mallard 9, Mallard x Grey cross 2, Grey Duck 2, Grey Teal 1, NZ Scaup 3, Harrier 1, Pukeko 5, Australian Coot 1, SIPO 5, Variable Oystercatcher 29, Spur-winged Plover 11, NZ Dotterel 50, Banded Dotterel 43, Black-fronted Dotterel 4, Pied Stilt 23, Black-backed Gull 39, Red-billed Gull 13, Black-billed Gull 19, Black-fronted Tern 69, Caspian Tern 18, Antarctic Tern 4, Fairy Tern 2, White-fronted Tern 26, NZ Pigeon 1, Rock Pigeon 3, Kingfisher 3, Skylark 14, Welcome Swallow 19, Hedge Sparrow 6, Snares Island Fernbird 7, Brown Creeper 1, Grey Warbler 7, South Island Fantail 15, North Island Fantail 5, Pied Tit 3, Yellow-breasted Tit 1, Black Tit 2, Song Thrush 45, Blackbird 34, Silvereye 6, Tui 1, Yellowhammer 6, Cirl Bunting 1, Chaffinch 7, Greenfinch 6, Goldfinch 37, Redpoll 2, Starling 5, Indian Myna 1, White-backed Magpie 1.

DAVID E. CROCKETT, *Convener*

Beach Patrols 1983 — interim report

During 1983 3926 km of coast were covered (3298 km in 1982) by 298 OSNZ members and their friends on a total of 497 patrols. 5589 dead seabirds were found (6957 in 1982). The most notable feature of the 1983 results was the finding of 36 Long-tailed Skuas. Other unusual finds included 3 White-tailed Tropicbirds, a Lesser Frigatebird,

a Yellow-nosed Mollymawk, a Pomarine Skua, and a Grey Ternlet.

The following are the provisional totals for each region of coast patrolled.

Region	Km	Birds
Auckland West	2232	3238
Taranaki	176	324
Wellington West	311	841
Auckland East	652	722
Bay of Plenty	193	138
East Coast N.I.	92	59
Wairarapa	19	4
Wellington South	20	22
North Coast S.I.	8	28
Westland	24	6
Canterbury North	39	44
Canterbury South	24	70
Otago	90	67
Southland	2	1
Outlying Is. (Chatham Is.)	46	25

The continuing success of the Beach Patrol Scheme is due to the efforts of the many members and their friends who took part in patrols during 1983.

RALPH POWLESLAND, *Convener*

Manawatu lakes survey

On the weekend of 31/3-1/4 12 Manawatu/Wanganui and 8 Wellington OSNZ members surveyed coastal lakes from Rangitikei to Waikanae.

It was no surprise that Mallards were the most numerous of the waterfowl, with big flocks being noted on 5 lakes. Black Swans were widespread but the only big flock seen was at Lake Horowhenua. It was pleasing to find small flocks of Grey Teal at 7 lakes. Small numbers of Scaup were present, which is interesting because there does not appear to be any other recent records of this species from our region. Although 2 flocks of Brown Teal were found in last year's survey no birds were located this year. A Chestnut-breasted Shelduck was seen at Wairongomai.

Dabchicks were widespread and numbers were similar to those recorded in previous years. A few Little Black Shags were seen on 2 lakes, and some of these birds may have been overlooked. Because of low lake levels significant numbers of Pied Stilts were seen around the muddy margins of many lakes, and 15 Black-fronted Dotterels were noted on the mud at Lake Omanuka. Spur-winged Plovers were found at 7 locations, and their numbers were about double that of last year's count.

LINDSAY DAVIES

Changes of address

Members are requested to advise the Treasurer of any changes of address if they expect journals to arrive regularly.

D. F. BOOTH, *Hon. Treasurer*

Christmas Card Report 1983

Whereas the year's trading has achieved a good return of \$3,500 profit for the Society's funds, we are now facing a very serious decline in the viability of selling greeting cards as an additional source of revenue in future years.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society has entered the mail order business and we no longer have access to their mailing list. However, we have sold bulk lots of our cards to that Society at a discounted price for resale via their regular catalogues. Smaller quantities of bulk lots are also sold to other trading outlets.

Despite the discounted price of \$2, the response from our own members has been poor.

When the cost of printing cards reached a level where it was no longer economical to produce the small quantities of new designs each year, we had printed several years' supply in one run. Our stock on hand is still high thus giving us a very low cost card in today's market but we now face a situation that in 1984 we will not be able to offer a new design. Whereas this may not be a serious problem this year as mixed packs are by far the most popular, new designs are necessary to ensure the continuing interest of our cards.

The cost of printing a small run of new designs would not be economic in view of our declining sales. Our future direction will be seriously reviewed during 1984.

I wish to thank Mr C. J. R. Robertson and his team for the work they did in the distribution of cards.

R. THOMAS, *Convener*

* * * *

Membership of OSNZ Committees

Atlas: Dr Peter Bull (Convener), Peter Gaze, Barrie Heather, Chris Robertson.

Checklist: Graham Turbott (Convener), Sandy Bartle, Don Brathwaite, Dr Brian Gill, Dr Phil Millener, Dick Sibson.

Christmas Cards: Russell Thomas (Convener), Chris Robertson.

Rare Birds: John Fennell (Secretary), Dr Ben Bell, Brian Bell, Barrie Heather, Paul Sagar, Dick Sibson.

The President is an *ex officio* member of all committees.

The conveners of the Society's permanent schemes are listed on the inside front cover of *Notornis*.

Australasian Harrier banding study results

I have banded Australasian Harriers at Springhills, Southland, for many years and the following is a summary of recoveries.

Bands have been returned from 246 dead birds, which is 11.5% of the total number banded. The cause of death was recorded as follows:

Shot 89, Dead on road 67, Trapped 35, Poisoned 4, Other or no reason given, 51. Included in 'other reasons given' by the finders were: sick and injured 6, electrocuted by electric fence 1, caught in fence 1, killed by dogs 2, band only found 1.

The distance birds were recovered from the banding site:

Distance (kms)	No. birds	% total recovered
600+	2	0.8
500-600	0	0
400-500	2	0.8
300-400	2	0.8
200-300	11	4.5
100-200	17	7.0
50-100	40	16.3
0-50	172	70.0

Complete results are not available for the age and sex of birds recovered because this was not recorded until well into the study. However, from 8/3/75 to 6/7/80, when I finished banding, recoveries were obtained from 30 juvenile and 23 adult females, 35 juvenile and 36 adult males plus 5 aged males.

The age of birds recovered was as follows:

Age	No. birds
Under 1 month	24
1-11 months	68
1-2 years	48
2-3 years	29
3-4 years	20
4-5 years	11
5-6 years	3
6-7 years	6
7-8 years	3
8-9 years	2
9-10 years	0
Over 10 years	1

The longest period between banding and recovery was from a bird banded on 8/6/68 and found dead 15 km away on 29/2/79, 10 years 8 months 11 days later.

OSNZ members can assist with this study by checking any dead Harriers they find, to see if they are carrying a band.

W. M. JUKES

Some hill country birds in Central Otago

During March we observed birds in Central Otago ranges. In the Old Man Range Pipits, Skylarks and Harriers were common on the upper slopes, 14 White-backed Magpies were on the summit ridge, about 40 Banded Dotterels fed near Obelisk Rock (1,650m), and a Blackbird surprised us at 1,640m! Pipits and Skylarks were the only species at 1,200m on the Hawkduin Range. Along the summit ridge of St. Bathans Range (2,000m) were a Harrier, 2 Pipits and a Falcon. The latter glided over us at 2134m. Redpolls and Hedge Sparrows ranged up to 1,200 in open tussock and scrub.

Hedge Sparrows, Silvereyes, Redpolls, Blackbirds and Yellowhammers were common in lower gullies and narrow side valleys with matagouri-*Olearia virgata*-sweet briar thickets. In the headwaters of the Manuherikia River these birds were joined in river flat scrub by Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Song Thrushes, Chaffinches, Grey Warblers and the occasional Fantail. Starlings sought out old musterers' huts and White-backed Magpies favoured pine plantations. Spur-winged Plovers, Black-backed Gulls, White-faced Herons, Black Shags and Paradise Shelducks were along the shingle flats. Near Nenthorn a Falcon pursued a Harrier and the 2 birds grappled talons and tumbled over several times before parting.

KIM & JENNY MORRISON

Robert Falla Memorial Award

At the AGM in Nelson the President, Mrs Beth Brown, announced that the recipient of the Robert Falla Memorial Award for 1983 was Mr R. B. Sibson. This announcement was greeted with prolonged applause.

The two basic criteria for the award are valuable contributions to the study of birds in New Zealand, together with sustained service to the OSNZ.

Council believes that Mr Sibson meets each of these requirements to an exceptionally high standard.

The pages of *Notornis* from volume 1 to 30 (1983) contain over 100 articles written by Mr Sibson (more than 150 if joint-author papers, letters and reviews are included). Though his specialty is waders, Mr Sibson's contributions cover a very wide range of species and topics.

The breadth, detail and accuracy of his knowledge have enabled him to make an outstanding contribution to bird study in New Zealand through his work on 3 successive checklist committees and (especially) as co-author of the several

editions of the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. He has also made important contributions to bird conservation by his many years of service on the Fauna Protection Advisory Council (advisory to the Wildlife Service), by his involvement in the Miranda Trust, and through his recent book *Birds at Risk*.

These achievements comprise only part of Mr Sibson's contribution to the study of birds in New Zealand. The other part, no less important, is represented by his extraordinary success in stimulating other people to participate in and to enjoy the study of birds. This has been done as a teacher (Kings College Bird Club), OSNZ Regional Organiser, and above all, by his enthusiastic participation in countless group outings, field trips and study courses.

The record of his services to OSNZ speaks for itself.

- (i) A foundation member of OSNZ.
- (ii) Regional Organiser (Auckland) 1940-1950.
- (iii) President OSNZ (two terms): 1952-1954 and 1980-1983.
- (iv) Editor *Notornis* 1955-1971 (except 1964).
- (v) Organiser of Recording Scheme and Classified Summarised Notes 1978-1980.
- (vi) Member of the 1949, 1946 and 1980 Checklist Committees.
- (vii) Current member of the Rare Birds Committee.
- (viii) Benefactor. Together with other authors of the *Field Guide*, he generously donated to OSNZ the very substantial royalties from the book.
- (ix) As a stimulator of every facet of OSNZ activity, not least through his 'conversion' and encouragement of Ross McKenzie (the first recipient of the Robert Falla Memorial Award) who often referred to RBS as his 'mentor'.

R. B. Sibson richly deserves the award.

P. C. BULL & B. D. HEATHER

Rotorua gull colonies

The number of Red-billed Gull nests in the Sulphur Bay sanctuary has increased steadily from 27 in 1945 (H. R. McKenzie), to 400 in 1961/62 (Reid & Reid), to about 1,000 in 1983/84. However, Black-billed Gulls, which outnumbered Red-billed by 3:1 in 1954/55, have declined since the early 1960s and by 1983/84 only 230 pairs nested.

Sightings of banded Red-billed Gulls have shown that many stay on the Rotorua lakes all winter or feed around the

city. At Lake Taupo on 17/3/84 I saw Black-billed Gulls which had been banded as chicks at Lake Rerewhakaaitu, and another banded at Sulphur Bay. I am not aware that the winter movement of some Black-billed Gulls from Rotorua to Taupo has been verified before.

JOHN INNES

SW Pacific Records Scheme Report for period April 1982 to March 1984

There has been a steady but slow flow of contributions to the scheme, although apart from Norfolk Island the rate of accumulation for any particular island group is quite slow. It is planned to prepare a report on Norfolk Island at the end of 1984 and possibly one for W. Samoa. Any additional observations for these islands would be very welcome.

The list of contributions since the last report is:

Island Group	Date	Observer
Norfolk I.	Jan 1968	R. B. Sibson
"	Nov/Dec 1971	C. A. Fleming
"	Nov 1979	A. Habraken & D. White
"	Sept 1982	J. C. Henley
"	Sept 1982	B. D. Heather
"	Oct 1983	J. C. Henley
Kiribati	Aug 1981	P. Child
W. Samoa	Sept 1982	L. McPherson
"	April 1983	J. L. Moore
Nuie I.	Oct 1982	L. McPherson
Tonga	April 1983	J. L. Moore
Cook Is.	April 1983	J. L. Moore

J. L. MOORE, *Convener*

Antarctic Research 1985/86

The Ross Dependency Research Committee (RDRC) invites proposals for research projects to be considered for inclusion in the 1985/86 New Zealand Antarctic Research Programme. Research proposals can cover any of the earth, life or atmospheric sciences and be directed to a better understanding of the unique environment of Antarctica, its geological and geophysical structure, or those natural phenomena most suited to research conducted from southern latitudes.

Research proposals can be either short or long term, and based at New Zealand's Antarctic stations or in the field, depending on the logistic support required. Proposals should include a detailed outline of past research in the topic, biographical notes on team members, an outline of anticipated work, and details of required logistic support.

Applications are reviewed by the biological, physical or earth sciences working groups of the RDRC, and applicants will be informed of the status of their proposals in late December 1984.

An information package on research directions, available facilities and how to prepare a proposal is available along with a support-information form from: The Secretary, RDRC, c/o DSIR Head Office, Private Bag, Wellington.

Egmont's Birds

To satisfy my curiosity about Mt. Egmont birds, I counted birds along 3 transects, each at a different altitude. Birds were counted while I walked along each transect, on 5 occasions between 8/10/80 and 2/7/81.

The main result to emerge from this small study was the striking similarity of the Egmont bird community to the Rahu Saddle area (alpine forest) sampled by Dawson *et al.* (*Notornis* 25). Rifleman was the most conspicuous species, with Grey Warblers and Pied Tomtits next most conspicuous. Egmont lacks the numbers of Bellbirds encountered at Rahu Saddle, perhaps because *Nothofagus* forest, and hence honeydew, is absent. Silveryeyes, Fantails and Blackbirds were more conspicuous on Egmont in January and April. Finally, the number of species and number of birds on Egmont decreased with increasing altitude. However, this difference was less marked in the summer and autumn counts.

With the exception of Bellbirds, the bird communities of Rahu and Egmont are very similar, even though the forest types are different at these 2 west coast localities.

JOHN CLARK

High Altitude Starlings

I had previously recorded Starlings at about 1400m on the Rock and Pillar, and Old Woman Ranges (see *Notornis* 22: 150). On 30/11/83 a pair appeared to be nesting on each of 3 tall tors on the Old Man Range. The nests were in a crevice or wind-eroded cavity high up on the tors (about 10m above ground level), which themselves were about 1 km apart, at altitudes of between 1600 and 1700m.

PETER CHILD

George Edward Lodge

Sir Charles Fleming (42 Wadestown Road, Wellington) will be glad to supply on request, from owners of *George Edward Lodge. The Unpublished New Zealand Bird Paintings*, xeroxed copies of a sheet of corrigenda.

Martins increase on the Taieri

Despite the early appearance of the Fairy Martin (see *OSNZ news* 30) it was not seen again last summer. Tree Martins returned later than usual, the first bird being seen on 11/1/84. A second bird joined the first on 18/1/84 and these 2 were seen regularly on the clothesline, where the first bird could be distinguished by its paler face. On 21/1/84 a third, rather fluffy bird joined them and by the evening of 14/2/84, among some 20-30 Welcome Swallows, was a row of 6 small, fluffy Tree Martins in addition to the 2 sleek birds. During the next 4 weeks there seemed to be martins everywhere we looked. We were able to count 11 at rest on one occasion but there were probably quite a few more present.

We plan to organise a search of likely nesting sites next summer.

ALISON NEVILL

ICSEB - III

The third International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology will be held from 4-10 July 1985 at the University of Sussex, near Brighton, England.

The following Congress Symposia are being organised: Symbiosis in Evolution, Conservation of Tropical Ecosystems, Biogeographic Evolution of the Malay Archipelago, Adaptational Aspects of Physiological Processes, Co-evolution in Ecosystems and the Red Queen Hypothesis, Angiosperm Origins and the Biological Consequences, The Measurement of Rates of Evolution, Molecular Biology and Evolutionary Theory, Co-Evolution and Systematics, Molecules v. Morphology in Phylogeny, Random and Directed Events in Evolution, Biochemical Innovation in Microbial Communities.

There will also be Special Interest Symposia on other topics, as well as sessions for contributed papers, films and poster papers.

For further information write to: Professor Barry Cox, ICSEB Congress Office, 130 Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex BN1 3WE, England.

Regional Roundup

Auckland: Our first Cattle Egret of the year was seen at Mt Roskill on 16/4, 2 days later than last year's first report. Red-crowned Parakeets, Kaka and Banded Rail are among the records from Great Barrier Island where, for the third Easter in succession, a small party of members surveyed various habitats from beaches to the summit of Mt Hobson. In anticipation of a visit in

June by American birder Jim Vardaman, who is devoting 1984 to setting all sorts of records for species seen, Stephen Davies and Michael Taylor spent an April day a-tallying around the region. The modest result was 45 species. However, we had deliberately omitted the main wader roosts, which could have brought the total close to 60.

During the remainder of 1984 the RR will be overseas, and monthly meetings will be taken by Brian Gill, Auckland Museum zoologist. Topics include several travel talks, accounts of Stitch-bird and Pukeko, a research study of eggshell characteristics, and illustrated talks on painting and photographing birds. Meetings are held in the Museum on the first Tuesday of the month. Visitors from other regions are most welcome at these, or to join in weekend field activities. (Michael Taylor)

South Auckland: The Ringed Plover has remained at Access Bay, Firth of Thames, and was reported in late April when its colour had deepened as it went into breeding plumage. Brian Chudleigh has taken a series of photographs of the bird, including 1 showing the foot in detail. This species has only slight webbing between the outer and middle toes whereas the Semipalmated Plover has sizeable webbing between these toes.

At Karaka, Ken Fisher watched a Marsh Sandpiper sweeping from side to side with its bill as it fed there on 29/1/84. On the same day 8 Far Eastern Curlews were also present. The highest count of Red-necked Stints at Karaka was 51 on 23/3/84, and 3 Terek Sandpipers were seen as well by Tony Habraken. Ken Fisher reported 2 Mongolian Dotterels colouring up on 7/4. One of these was in breeding plumage by 17/4, when the Marsh Sandpiper was still present, and 6 Whimbrels, all seen by Ken Fisher and Alan Slade. (Beth Brown)

Waikato: Bird counts were completed at the Hamilton Lakes in February and April, and another is planned for October. This is the third year that counts have been made and some interesting facts are beginning to emerge, particularly on the increase in the number of Australian Coots.

In early March, Lex Hedley reported that a NZ Falcon killed one of his pigeons, on his back lawn! (Betty Seddon)

Bay of Plenty: Since last July's grand Beach Patrol our efforts have been far less ambitious, largely because weather conditions did not warrant large scale patrols. However, Mt Maunganui to the Kaituna River has been covered com-

pletely since July, with many shorter patrols also being done. The results of these included 1 Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, 1 White-capped Mollmawk, 1 Salvin's Mollmawk, 1 Black-browed Mollmawk, 11 Buller's Shearwaters, 5 Sooty Shearwaters, 3 Short-tailed Shearwaters, 11 Diving Petrels, 1 Mottled Petrel and 4 Gannets.

An Eastern Common Tern was seen on the sandspit at the mouth of the Rangitaiki River by Paddy Latham, Brian Chudleigh and W. M. Hutton on 8/4/84. (Paddy Latham)

Volcanic Plateau: On 3/3/84 John Innes, Ray Jackson and Roy Weston spent the day surveying the new hydro lake on the Rangitaiki River. Birds observed included 17 Dabchicks (some of which were juveniles), 23+ Australian Coots (including 6 recently hatched young), 110 Scaup, 340+ Paradise Shelducks, 15 Grey Teal, 54 Pied Stilts, 20 Shoveller Ducks, 1 Royal Spoonbill, plus Marsh and Spotless Crakes. Not bad for a 3-year old wetland. (John Innes)

Taranaki: A White-winged Black Tern in non-breeding plumage was recorded at Lake Ratapiko on two occasions during January. On 8/3/84 Janet Marshall found a Grey Ternlet dead on a road near Stratford. In March 2 Long-tailed Cuckoos were found dead in residential areas of New Plymouth and Waitara. The specimens are now in the Taranaki Museum. Beach patrols so far this year have resulted in the recovery of very few dead birds. (David Medway)

Manawatu/Wanganui: W. Jackson and M. Olsen completed a survey of Lake Horowhenua on 6/2/84 and birds seen included 46 Dabchicks, 17 Scaup, 4 Canada Geese, 1 Bittern and a female Chestnut-breasted Shelduck. The sighting of the Scaup is interesting because this species is not usually seen in the southwest of the North Island.

There was a small influx of White-winged Black Terns early in the year. A juvenile was seen at the Manawatu Estuary on 24/1/84, and a bird in similar plumage was seen at Lake Horowhenua on 27/1/84. Subsequently, 2 birds were seen at Lake Horowhenua and the last sighting was of 1 bird at the Manawatu Estuary on 4/3/84.

Recent reports from W. Jackson and M. Olsen indicate a sharp increase in Cattle Egret numbers during mid-May. Up to 12/5 they noted 12 CE just south of Lake Horowhenua but on 22/5 a flock of 42 was present. Similarly, up to 12/5 about 5 CE were present in paddocks south of Foxton but on 22/5 a flock of 28 was present. Other re-

ports of CEs from our region include 4 at Foxton No. 1 Lake on 4/5 and 6 near Bulls on 7/5. The group at Bulls first appeared about 25/4. (Lindsay Davies)

Wellington: Allan Tennyson observed an Arctic/Common Tern at Waikanae on 10/5. The bird was in typical non-breeding plumage. 44 Black-fronted Terns were present at Waikanae on 11/5.

Peter McKenzie looked after a sick Cattle Egret that had been recovered from the beach at Waikanae. Fortunately the bird recovered and was released in June. The bird had been banded in New South Wales, as a chick in December 1983.

Beach patrols during May recovered 9 Little Blue Penguins, 1 Shy Mollymawk, 4 Buller's Shearwaters, 4 Sooty Shearwaters, 2 Fluttering Shearwaters, 4 Short-tailed Shearwaters, 1 Mottled Petrel, 1 Giant Petrel, 1 Diving Petrel, 9 Fairy Prions, 4 Antarctic Prions, 1 Thin-billed Prion and 1 Gannet. (Russell Thomas)

West Coast: Cattle Egrets appear to have arrived in greater numbers again this year. Reports received are of 70 seen from the road between Harihari and Haast on 18/4 by Colin O'Donnell and Noel Ward. Alvin Brett saw about 20 at Karamea in early April and Derek Onley reported 6 at Canoe Creek. Marion and Ross Lane saw 10 at Karamea, 2 at Little Wanganui, 5 at Mohikiniui, and 4 at Inangahua on 15/4. (Stewart Lauder)

Canterbury: The Wilson's Phalarope remained at Lake Ellesmere until at least 24/4. By this time it had assumed full breeding plumage and was easily identified as a female. Other species present during April included 71 Red-necked Stints, 5 Pectoral Sandpipers, 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 13 Curlew Sandpipers and 30 Knots. (Paul Sagar)

Otago: Black-fronted Dotterels have bred again at Manuherikia and the lower Taieri. Royal Spoonbills appear to be visiting Otago estuaries in increasing numbers. 16 were seen at the Shag River estuary on 7/4 by Tony Hocken, and others have been seen at Hawkesbury Lagoon (5) and Kaikorai Estuary. (Bob Smith)

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

Classified Summarised Notes

Members are reminded that the period for notes is 1 July to 30 June, and these should be with your RR by 31 July. All material must go to your RR, who will prepare a regional summary. However, if you have visited another region, send your notes on the visit to that region's

RR. Would members sending in reports please use the format of the CSN published in the March issue of *Notornis*.

Remember that our observations build up over the years and provide valuable information for the future. Don't keep your observations to yourself. Send them in promptly, but make the job of compiling them easier by following the standard format.

P. D. GAZE & L. HOWELL, CSN
Compilers

News from the AGM

The AGM was held at Nelson Girls' College, Nelson, during the weekend of 19-20 May. In complete contrast to the previous year's AGM the 80 or so members attending enjoyed perfect weather. The very full programme of meetings, field trips and talks went very smoothly and provided a lot of interest.

Council met on the Friday and considered a full agenda before the end of a long day. This included consideration of committee and scheme annual reports, most of which are produced elsewhere in this issue. Considerable time was spent discussing the finances of the Society and the need to increase our membership. Prompt contact with new members was considered essential to promote the image of OSNZ.

Three new Regional Representatives were appointed: Laurie Howell in the Far North, Folkert Nieuwland in Wai-kato and Peter Schweigman in Otago. In addition, Laurie Howell was appointed North Island compiler of CSN, with Peter Gaze compiling South Island records.

Regional Representatives met on Friday evening and Saturday morning and completed some well worthwhile discussion. They reported that the National Wader Count had been well received by members and further counts were planned. While RRs were meeting several carloads of members visited the Nelson Haven and Boulder Bank area to watch birds.

The afternoon session involved a discussion to consider the function of Classified Summarised Notes in the context of other recording schemes currently being run by the Society, and to clarify what information should be sought for this scheme in the future. Brian Bell chaired the session in which he introduced the topic before Doug Booth gave a brief history of CSN, Peter Gaze reviewed the history of the Atlas, Barrie Heather gave an amusing outline of other OSNZ recording schemes, Paul Sagar commented on the distinction between Short Notes and *OSNZ news* articles,

and finally John Fennell outlined shortcomings of CSN and made suggestions for improvements. Discussion was then thrown open to members and comments showed that there is a lot of interest in revising the CSN system. At the end of the afternoon the meeting recommended to Council that a sub-Committee be formed to formulate guidelines on revising the CSN.

Following the happy hour or two and dinner, the AGM was convened by the President, Mrs Beth Brown. In her review of the Society's activities the President paid tribute to the continued hard work and support from all RRs and scheme organisers. The announcement that the Falla Memorial Award had been awarded to Mr R. B. Sibson was greeted with immediate enthusiastic applause. The announcement that the Junior Member Award went to Paul Schofield (Auckland) was also received with acclamation. It was announced that a Field Study Course would be held in the Lakes Taupo/Rotorua area in January 1985 (full details will appear in the next issue).

Following the AGM there was a film showing some of the activities of the Wildlife Service on the Chatham Islands. Some ornithological discussion then continued most of the evening.

On Sunday morning Don Merton gave an excellent account of his work with the Noisy Scrubbird, and Mike Hurst reviewed the initial stages of the Totoro Expedition.

Thanks are due to Jenny Hawkins and Peter Gaze for organising an excellent weekend's activities.

PAUL SAGAR

Little Black Shags service the nation!

The number of nests in the Little Black Shag colony in Lake Rotorua's Sulphur Bay fell from 980 in 1982/83 to 320 in 1983/84. Rotorua OSNZ members banded 158 chicks with a red colour band on the left leg this summer.

Some of the 680 young banded during 1982/83 returned to the colony this summer, but we do not think they bred. Young shags which died or were caught (for band reading) in over-wintering quarters have been reported from Kerikeri, Warkworth, Auckland, Opoutere, Cambridge, Kawerau, Tauranga, Ohope and Wanganui. The Wanganui bird was found dead on a farm pond 300m from the sea, above Mowhanui Beach. The farmer who found it reported that Dabchick visited the pond recently too.

JOHN INNES