

OSNZ news

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for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

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

No. 32 September, 1984

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

Fiordland Island

The Seal Islands and Petrel Islands in Dusky Sound range from 0.2 to 24 ha. *Hebe-Olearia-Dracophyllum* scrub covers the smaller islands and rata-kamahi forest the larger ones. In February 1984 Bellbirds, Silvereyes and Tomtits were common throughout the islands, Wekas were widespread, Fiordland Crested Penguins were moulting ashore and Sooty Shearwaters were breeding. On Parrot Island, Kiwi probes were seen but there was no sign of a recently reported S.I. Robin. However, Robins were plentiful and well distributed on the Breaksea Islands.

During April 1984 DSIR staff trapped Norway Rats on Breaksea Island and nearby Outer Gilbert Island, Breaksea Sound. Interesting birds were a White Heron on Resolution Island, and 2 Welcome Swallows which appeared while we watched Fiordland Skinks on Outer Gilbert Island. In Dusky Sound, a flock of 65 NZ Pigeons wheeled over podocarp forest on Indian Island where the miro was fruiting well. Mottled Petrels were breeding again on Front Island. One of the Shelter Islands, Dcutbful Sound, was well used by Fiordland Crested Penguins and Sooty Shearwaters.

KIM MORRISON

Scott's Point, Mahurangi Peninsula

The Homestead at Scott's Point provided an excellent base for an informal weekend seminar (3/3-1/4/84), during which 12 members were accommodated in the adjacent cottages and very well looked after by courtesy of the Auckland Civic Trust.

Heavy rain on the Friday evening fortunately cleared, and we were able to devote Saturday morning to an exercise in attempting to map the location

of common birds within the A.R.A. Reserve where the Homestead is situated. The Reserve includes rocky shores, a small beach backed by large pines, an old orchard, and bush-clad slopes. The species tally was 25 and included counts of 16 NZ Pigeons, 18 Tuis, and at least 1 Kookaburra which was both heard and seen. Eastern Rosellas were also seen, and at dusk we watched a Morepork being scolded by a pair of Grey Warblers. Other activities during the successful weekend were an inspection of Casnell Island, a 7 ha outpost accessible at low tide, an evening of slides and discussion, and visits to the Burton Wells bush reserve and possible wader haunts of Mahurangi Inlet.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Saddlebacks and Stitchbirds on Kapiti Island

Saddlebacks: For the past summer, as in the previous two summers, the Wellington District Office of the Department of Lands and Survey have continued to fund the Saddleback study on Kapiti Island.

This season work has again concentrated on the reasons for the decline of Saddlebacks on Kapiti. Further observations have been made on roosting and nesting behaviour, the two aspects where predation seems to be most significant.

Of the 6 young birds produced during 1982/83, none has survived. Only 3 birds survived from the batch of 22 produced during the 1981/82 breeding season. 244 birds have been introduced to the island during the transfers, and only 13 now remain.

This season we started with 7 pairs. These birds reared 28 young during what has been a most productive year. One of these pairs was astonishingly productive, rearing 10 young in 4 broods.

However, figures from previous years

indicate that we can probably expect only about 1 in 7, i.e. 4 of these young birds to survive until the end of the year. In the meantime there will probably be a further decline in the total of longer established birds. To date too few locally bred young birds have survived to fill the gaps caused by predation in the adult population. Unfortunately the Saddlebacks seem to be declining to local extinction on Kapiti.

Clearly the birds can breed very successfully, despite the threat of predation at nests by Norway Rats. However, survival for the remainder of the year is very low. This heavy mortality outside the breeding season is because of the Saddlebacks' roosting behaviour. The birds roost in cavities on or near the ground, where they are very vulnerable to predation by rats. I have found the rat-eaten corpses of birds at roosting places.

Our next step on Kapiti will be to try a management experiment using the few birds that we have left. This will involve putting up rat-proof artificial roost sites. It may prove to be difficult to induce the Kapiti birds to use these artificial roost boxes, because there are already so many natural roost sites. Initially the boxes will be placed close to known roosts, in the hope that the birds will investigate them.

Another part of the experiment will involve placing large numbers of these roost boxes on 2 of the northern Saddleback Islands — Motukawanui Island (Cavalli Group), and Stanley Island (Mercury Group). Both of these islands have young forest, and thus a natural shortage of good roost sites for Saddlebacks.

The plan is to try and establish Saddleback populations on these islands, in which the birds habitually use the artificial roost sites as well as natural sites. Once the birds are using the boxes we can then transfer some of these roost box users to Kapiti, where such roost sites are already provided.

In the long term we hope to establish

a new, viable Saddleback population on Kapiti, having overcome the problem of predation by Norway Rats at roosts. This may well prove to be a valuable contingency plan that has been tried and tested, which could be implemented should rats ever get ashore onto any of the other Saddleback islands.

Stitchbirds: In August 1983 30 *Stitchbirds* were captured on Little Barrier by the Wildlife Service and OSNZ volunteers, and transferred to Kapiti Island.

From my observations during the summer, it appears that at least 6 individuals have survived, and these birds have bred. Three nests were found, and 2 broods fledged from these, 1 brood containing at least 2 young, and the other 3. All the nests were built in holes high above the ground, 2 at about 10m in a lofty Pohutukawa and 1 at 8m in a large Rata.

At 2 of the nests the male was the same individual — i.e. a case of polygamy. Such a flexible breeding system is certainly an advantage on Kapiti, where we have started with only 2 males and 4 females.

Stitchbirds also roost in holes, hence they are potentially vulnerable to predation by rats. However, all of the *Stitchbird* roosts that I have located have had small entrance holes 8-10m above the ground. In sites such as these the birds should be less vulnerable to predation by Norway Rats than the ground-roosting Saddlebacks.

At present future prospects for *Stitchbirds* on Kapiti look most promising. Another transfer of birds from Little Barrier is planned for August this year.
TIM LOVEGROVE

Farewell Spit — June 1984

In the usual fine Nelson weather the winter census of Farewell Spit was completed by a party of 10 which included, Donald Bate, Anne Boniface, Bill Cash, Peter Cook, Bruce Fowler, Jenny Hawkins, Eileen Heatherbell, Wayne Hutchinson, Hugh Robertson and George Wilkinson.

The spring tides were only 3.5m which meant the bay flats also had to be counted. This year most of the common wader numbers were higher than in 1982 (no reflection on the 1982 counters!).

	1984	1982
SIPO	7,107	6,606
Bar-tailed Godwit	1,589	1,268
Knot	389	64
Turnstone	337	149

Also of interest were 7 NZ Dotterel, 2 of which showed some degree of breeding plumage, 1 Large Sand Dotterel, 1 Black Stilt, 20 Royal Spoonbills, only 1 Curlew and a possible Whimbrel sighting.

The estuaries of Golden Bay and Westhaven were also surveyed.

The exertion of all this plus the pre-dawn starts led to one member, while drying the dishes, carefully drying the sink plug and wondering what this odd cooking utensil was used for as he put it away in the drawer.

An unusual array of headgear was again paraded on the Spit, but Barrie Heather still holds the 'crown' with his modified crash helmet of June 1982. Any challengers for Barrie's 'crown' should be sent to the undersigned with photo and \$2 entry fee. The winner will be announced next A.G.M.
JENNY HAWKINS & HUGH ROBERTSON.

Hamilton Lake Survey

Surveys of Hamilton Lake were carried out on 26/2/84 and 14/4/84 by a group of Waikato OSNZ members.

At the February count, the numbers of most species were comparable with those recorded at the same time in 1983. However, a continued increase in Australian Coots was noted (132) compared with the previous year (58), and Little Shag numbers increased from 5 to 24. In April the same trend was noted in Little Shags but, for the first time since September 1982, there was a decrease in the number of Coots. This may be due to the fact that few birds were on the open water and canoes were not available to us (as they had been on previous occasions) for counting in the reeds.

MERCIA BARNES

Totorore Expedition

The Totorore Expedition, which is assisted by funds from OSNZ, left Auckland on 26/2/83 and now has been on the coast of southern Chile for over a year.

After a 2 week delay at the Chatham Islands, where the crew had to be changed because of acute sea sickness, Mike Hurst (from Wellington) joined at very short notice and accompanied skipper Gerry Clark for the voyage to Chile. The route taken was along the Antarctic convergence to observe the birds in that area, then up in a wide sweep to Robinson Crusoe Island, in the Juan Fernandez group.

Being autumn, the Southern Ocean was rather violent as expected but some interesting observations were made, the most notable of which were Steneger's Petrels and Juan Fernandez Petrels, both of which occurred in much higher latitudes than previously suspected. However, the most regular companions for the voyage were White-headed Petrels and Grey Petrels. Cape Pigeons were conspicuous by their absence.

After a crossing of 43 days, *Totorore* stayed at Robinson Crusoe Island for 2 days,

offloading stores. Then Gerry left Mike there while he sailed to Valparaiso to pick up John Atkinson (from Wellington) and Bill Bourne (Aberdeen, Scotland), for the survey of the avifauna of the Juan Fernandez Islands, including the little-known island of Masafuera.

Conditions were not easy in these islands and frequently landings were difficult. However, the winter bird populations, though sparse, were very interesting.

In July *Totorore* returned to Valparaiso, where Bill Bourne left to attend an ornithological convention in Iceland. Jim Watt (Whangamata), a keen bird photographer and a major supporter of the expedition, joined the expedition here. While John and Mike travelled by land to Valdivia to rejoin the expedition briefly before returning to New Zealand, *Totorore* made transects in offshore waters down the coast. At Valdivia, Jim found many waterfowl to photograph in the extensive wetlands created by the 1960 earthquake. Even more waterfowl were found in the deep fiords and estuaries south of Puerto Montt, and around the island of Chiloe. During the winter months large numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, Southern Fulmars and White-chinned Petrels were found deep in the fiords, sometimes over 120 km from the open ocean. In the enclosed Gulf of Ancud, thousands of Narrow-billed Prions were seen, as well as hundreds of Wilson's Storm Petrels. It was a birdwatcher's paradise with a rich variety of seabirds, waders, ducks, geese, swans and even flamingoes to delight the eyes. The expedition was fortunate to be able to link up with some very keen and experienced ornithologists in Chile, who participated in the expedition from time to time and made many valuable contributions with their local knowledge.

Jay Nelson (Alaska) joined the expedition in September and assisted in producing a species list for the offshore island of Guafo, where a large breeding colony of Sooty Shearwaters was discovered. This species was seen in enormous numbers off the coast of southern Chile throughout the year but the only previously known breeding grounds were in the Cape Horn Islands.

After a brief look at Isla Ypun, Jim returned to New Zealand and his place was taken by Dr Roberto Schlatter, from the Universidad Austral de Chile. The expedition then made a survey of Isla Guamblin.

The expedition progressed down the coast, keeping mainly outside the normal shipping routes, to study unknown avifauna of the outer islands. With two Chileans as crew, the more rugged offshore islands south of the Gulf of Penas were tackled, and valuable new information was obtained. New breeding colonies of Rockhopper Penguins, Macaroni Penguins and Black-browed Mollmawks were discovered, considerably extending the known breeding range of these species. New information

about the distribution of Red Phalaropes and Pink-footed Shearwaters was also obtained.

Few birds were found at Duke of York Island but as the annual rainfall is over 9m that was not surprising!

After visiting Punta Arenas an excursion was made to the very difficult island of Noir, offshore from the south Fuegian Islands. This was most rewarding and large colonies of Rockhopper and Macaroni Penguins were found, as well as Giant Petrels and Narrow-billed Prions. During our time ashore the weather was terrible, and extremely dense scrub made tramping a slow, uncomfortable business. Gerry and Chilean ornithologist Andreas von Meyer were caught out on the island and had to spend an extremely cold, never to be forgotten, night in very thin plastic survival bags.

After a quick look at islands south to the Gilbert Islands and Isla Stewart, *Totorore* returned to Punta Arenas in early March. Here Anthea Goodwin (Clevedon) joined the expedition for an offshore voyage to Cape Horn. Andreas was replaced by his sister Julia, as he had to return to the family farm in Puerto Montt.

While sheltering in a cove on Waterman Island, the new crew was introduced to the violence of the 'rafagas' or williwaws, for which this part of the world is renowned. However, having experienced this nothing else that followed alarmed them unduly. A few days were spent in the Morton Group and a day visit was made to the Ildefonso Islands, which were covered by Black-browed Mollymawks and Rockhopper Penguins.

The next main objective was a species list for the virtually unstudied Isla Hornos. This was accomplished and the most exciting discovery was a breeding colony of Blue Petrels on the top of Cape Horn itself. Landing on the Cape was not easy and the expedition members can join those who can claim to have had a swim off Cape Horn! Camping on the peak also was not easy the tent was very nearly blown away. An early cold spell with heavy snowfalls followed and that seemed to drive most of the land birds away to the north. The expedition's work on the other islands of the group was rather restricted by gales but several other small colonies of Blue Petrels were found. On the return journey to Punta Arenas *Totorore* anchored close to a large glacier one night. In the morning we were not only surrounded by a field of ice chunks from the glacier but the water surface itself was frozen and the ice was thickening by the hour. It was necessary to force a slow passage through about 2 km of ice to escape, but the scenery was fantastic.

The *Totorore* expedition now plans to spend the winter in the Falkland Islands and South Georgia before returning to Chile for the late spring and summer. There

is still tremendous scope for the ornithologist in the outer islands of the Patagonian Archipelago, about which there is little literature available, and the expedition hopes to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge.

GERRY CLARK

News from the Rare Birds Committee

The functions of the Rare Birds Committee include helping observers to identify birds when they are unable to reach decisions, and to check the validity of all sightings of rare and vagrant species.

The Regional Representatives have a list of species for which full descriptions are needed before records can be accepted. Acceptance by the RBC is required before the Checklist Committee will include any record in the National Listing.

Descriptions should be submitted on an 'Unusual Bird Report' form, and this can be obtained from your RR. This form has been revised recently to assist observers with their submissions.

Obviously when a rare or unusual bird is seen it is best to take full written field notes at the time and not to rely on memory. From the records we have received in recent months it is clear that observers are providing good descriptions of shape, plumage colouration and behaviour to support their claims. This is the essence of proficient field recording.

Records accepted recently are:

Red-tailed Tropicbird — 2 adults near the Three Kings Islands on 17/3/84, and 1 adult *Long-tailed Skua* also in the vicinity (A. McBride). *Common Tern* — 1 bird seen in summer plumage at the Rangitaiki Rivermouth, Bay of Plenty on 8/4/84 was accurately described and photographed (P. C. M. Latham, B. Chudleigh, W. Hutton). After consultation with Chris Corben of Brisbane the RBC are able to accept the species identification but not to the subspecies level. The current thinking on the identification of Common Terns would not support acceptance of Eastern Common Tern on the basis of the black bill as other races may show such colouration at certain stages.

Orange-fronted Parakeet — 1 bird was seen at close range in the Hawdon Valley of Arthur's Pass on 5/2/84 (A. Read, P. McClelland).

Moseley's Rockhopper Penguin — a bird found at Moa Point was kept at Wellington Zoo from January to March 1984. It was identified as a male and later released (P. J. Moors).

Snipe — a bird was flushed from the swampy borders of Lake Tekapo on 31/12/83 and 1/1/84 but did not allow close examination of the plumage colouration (R. J. Pierce).

Details of the flight characteristics are being studied to see if these will help specific identification. In the past Snipe have been determined as Japanese Snipe. However, it is possible that Chinese Snipe could reach here as both are regular in Papua New Guinea. At present this record is accepted at the generic level only.

JOHN FENNELL *Secretary, RBC*

Brown Teal study — assistance requested

In May this year I began a 3-year research project into the ecology of Brown Teal on Great Barrier Island. An outline of the project has been published recently in *Flight*, the journal of Ducks Unlimited. A colour banding scheme will begin in August and it is feasible some marked birds may move to the Coromandel and Northland areas. Anyone seeing colour banded Brown Teal should report the sighting to Grant Dumbell, Zoology Department, University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland. Information required includes the colour combination, location (preferably a map reference), time and date, and some idea of the bird's activity. The inclusion of the observer's name and address will allow a reply to be forwarded.

GRANT DUMBELL

Nankeen Night Herons

During the summer of 1981/82 the Nankeen Night Herons at the Wellington Zoo had a very good breeding season. This resulted in housing problems and the Wildlife Service gave the Zoo permission to release the birds into the zoo grounds. Permission was given because Night Herons were already appearing in the wild in New Zealand, apparently having crossed the Tasman Sea from Australia. Night Herons usually remain in the vicinity of their release point and several zoos overseas have resident colonies of free-flying Nankeen Night Herons.

During the first year the birds remained in the Zoo, coming to the aviary at 1400 hours to be fed, before they returned to the pine trees at the back of the Zoo to roost until night. Then gradually they became more secretive, only returning to the Zoo aviary when all was quiet in the late afternoon. Now we seldom see them at all unless one happens to be fishing around the shores of the Zoo lake.

This summer it became apparent that the birds had started to disperse. Wellington OSNZ members were reporting birds in Lower Hutt and even as far away as Blenheim and Nelson. The original birds had been at the Zoo since 1975 and were colour banded on the left leg, with a

numbered metal band on the right leg. In 1978 these were joined by 4 young birds from the Perth Zoo and these were fitted with a colour band on the right leg and numbered metal band on the left.

Anyone seeing one of these birds is asked to note the band combination and report their sighting to the Zoo.

RON GOUDSWAARD

Record number of Brown Teal released

Ducks Unlimited have just released a record 96 rare Brown Teal in Northland.

Fifty-six Brown Teal were released at the Matapouri Estuary and 42 were released at the Mimiwhangata Farm Park on 4/8/84. These releases are part of Ducks Unlimited's Operation 'Pateke' which aims to reverse the decline of the rare and endangered Brown Teal by rearing birds in captivity and releasing them into suitable wild areas.

The record release is a result of the record number of 147 Brown Teal being reared by Ducks Unlimited members during the last breeding season. At present only around 1,000 Brown Teal survive in the wild — around 600 of these are on Great Barrier Island and around 400 in Northland.

Habitat destruction in Northland is thought to be one of the major reasons for the species decline on the mainland and in the two areas where Brown Teal were released Ducks Unlimited and the Wildlife Service have been creating and restoring habitat; with the creation of suitable ponds, planting suitable vegetation and by fencing the habitat. Vital habitat work is also being carried out in other areas of Northland and Ducks Unlimited, whose members have reared nearly 500 Brown Teal in the last 4 seasons, is confident that it will be able to prevent further decline in Brown Teal numbers.

The Brown Teal is a species found only in New Zealand.

NEIL HAYES & PAUL PIRANI

Winter count of Crested Grebes

During the weekend of 21/22 July 1984 Canterbury members once again completed a winter count of Crested Grebes on the high country lakes. Following the pattern of previous count weekends, the weather was far from ideal, with strong NW winds. However, the count was completed on most lakes.

A total of 123 grebes were located, compared with 117 in 1983 and 139 in 1981. Once again Lake Alexandrina topped the list with 68 birds. The next highest total came from Lake Heron, where 18 grebes were counted. A feature of this winter's counts was the fact that very few lakes were

frozen over, which highlights the rather mild winter experienced this year.

Other interesting counts made during the weekend were of 1131 Scaup and 106 Australian Coots on Lake Heron, and 1000+ Scaup on Lake Alexandrina.

The Crested Grebe counts were as follows:

Pearson Group: L. Lititia — 5; L. Pearson — 4; L. Grassmere — 1; L. Sarah — 0; L. Marymere — 2.

Coleridge Group: L. Lyndon — 2; L. Coleridge — 6; L. Selfe — 4; L. Georgina — 0 (half frozen over); L. Evelyn — 0 (frozen over); L. Henrietta — 0 (frozen over); L. Lillian — 0 (frozen over); L. Ida — 0 (frozen over); L. Catherine — 0 (frozen over).

Ashburton Lakes: L. Heron — 18; L. Emily — 0; Maori Lakes — 2; L. Denny — 0; L. Emma — 0; L. Roundabout — 0; L. Camp — 0; L. Clearwater — 7.

Alexandrina Group: L. McGregor — 4; L. Alexandrina — 68; Glenmore Tarns — 0.

Thanks to all participants — Colin O'Donnell, P. Pearson, P. Notman, J. Whitford, D. Crow, L. & N. Adams, J. Ackerly, A. Bray, D. Booth, K. Cooper, D. Geddes, E. Grigg, P. Howden, M. & R. Lane, V. McKilray, S. Strange, L. & O. Symons, Enfys Graham, Dominic Graham, Dylan Graham, Les McPherson, Peter Wilson, Peter Langlands, Stephen Leitch, Jeffrey Richards, Ray Pierce.

PAUL SAGAR

Tree planting on Tiritiri Matangi

At 08.30 on 22 July 1984 M.V. *Ngaroma* sailed from the Auckland Ferry Wharf with a party of 114 on board for Tiritiri Island, to help with the tree planting programme. The Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board plans to plant over 25,000 trees a year (with the assistance of volunteers); the main aim of the project being to rebuild the forest cover and wild bird habitat so that rare and endangered birds may be established. The island is a reserve and despite having been farmed for more than 80 years it still has some forest remnants and only kiore have been introduced.

Our party, organised by Dick Veitch of the Wildlife Service, comprised groups from Pukekohe Tramping Club, Northcote College, Air New Zealand, and Auckland and South Auckland OSNZ members. Once we left the shelter of Rangitoto Island a rough sea soon took its toll. Some folk turned a ghastly white, others turned greenish, while some enjoyed being rocked to sleep. However, all soon recovered after a hot drink on our arrival at the seedling nursery on Tiritiri Matangi.

Following a brief talk, everyone set to work on their allotted task and at the end of the day, despite continuous rain until

mid-afternoon, our totals were as follows: trees planted — 1,712; seedling pohutukawas pricked out — 9,280; Saddleback roosting boxes assembled — 120, plus 60 nailed to trees; 60m of benched track cut.

The last hour before the boat sailed was spent as we pleased. Some went in search of Saddlebacks but they were probably keeping well down in the gully out of the wind. However, Bellbirds, Fantails, a Tui and Pukekos were seen throughout the tree planting area.

This is a very worthwhile project, which is progressing well and deserves good support.

B. J. SEARLE

Alarm display by Yellowhead

In the silver beech forest of the Blue Mountains, Otago, I frequently see flocks of Yellowheads. Sometimes they are well below the treetops, and I have seen one scratching on the forest floor. On a steep slope in the gorge of the Rankleburn I have watched Yellowheads as they worked for food along branches of beech and of broadleaf; some of these birds have come within 2m of me and looked at me straight in the face before carrying on with their activities.

After becoming used to the rather casual attitude that they display towards Man, I was not ready for the verbal attack made on me by a Yellowhead in the Rankleburn area on 11/5/84. Five Yellowheads had been active in a tree beside me during a stop for a 5-minute bird count, and after they moved off another of their species flew from across a small gully and alighted on a branch only 3m from me, watching me as I leant against a fern-covered bank. The Yellowhead immediately commenced a loud, unmusical chattering. It kept this up for 2 minutes, all the time jumping around to face this way and that. Its display brought down a male Bellbird to the same perch. This bird did not perform the Bellbird alarm call, but gave an energetic rendition of a very loud song, accompanied by vigorous bending of the legs and long extension of the neck. Then a pair of Grey Warblers flew down beside the Yellowhead and hopped about in an agitated manner before they flew away.

The Yellowhead departed before I had to move on.

MALCOLM FOORD

Seabird wreck on Northland west coast.

On 5/8/84, while walking near Lake Kanano, I noticed a prion fly over and we decided that this augured well for a beach patrol. The wind had been blowing from the south-west for most of the previous week

and occasional squalls still occurred this day.

The seas on the west coast were very rough, with large breakers and large amounts of foam on the beach. Many live Kerguelen Petrels, Blue Petrels and prions were seen flying along the beach and more were found exhausted on the sand or at the water's edge.

Our 27 km patrol produced 209 dead birds, an average of 7.7 per km, in addition to the live birds seen. Many of the dead birds had been washed ashore very recently.

The Northland OSNZ team was out in force the following weekend (11/8) and patrolled the usual 60 km from Schick's Road to Maunganui Bluff. We picked up a further 1,635 birds which with our 209, and 252 picked up in mid-week by Bill Campbell and Ray Forgatt, gave a total of 2096 for the wreck at an average of 35 per km. On 11/8 it was notable that no live birds were found and that the sea was calm, a marked contrast to the previous weekend.

The 5 main species recorded were: Fairy Prion — 1028, Narrow-billed Prion — 342, Blue Petrel — 250, Antarctic Prion 167, Kerguelen Petrel — 97. Another 16 species were also recorded.

PAT & KAREN MILLER

(Reports from other northern regions emphasise that this was a major wreck. Additional preliminary reports from Laurie Howell in the Far North include 55 Blue Petrels, 13 Kerguelen Petrels and a Sooty Tern in a total of 772 wrecked birds; while Pat Crombie reports 249 Fairy Prions, 126 Blue Petrels and 30 Kerguelen Petrels in a total of 498 birds picked up on Auckland beaches. Ed.)

A 'kwinking' thrush in Manurewa

During June I heard a persistent 'kwink, kwink' call in the suburbs of Manurewa. There was no native bush in the area, only suburban trees, shrubs and gardens and consequently I thought it was a caged Rosella because it was always heard in the same place. However, after a fortnight I traced the sound to a tall gum tree, and a Song Thrush singing its own song but interspersed with strident rosella-like 'kwinks'. Rosellas are fairly numerous in Manurewa now and this thrush obviously likes their sound.

JOSIE DRIESSEN

Field Study Course - Taupo 1986

A case of yes, but ...

In order to use the perfect venue, the proposed January 1985 study course at Taupo has been postponed until January 1986. OSNZ has now booked the Waitetoko

Youth Camp at Mission Bay, Lake Taupo for 11-18 January 1986. This is a spacious, peaceful camp near Turangi, with bunk rooms, camping space and family units. Planned activities include the first full census of Lake Taupo, evening speakers, at least 1 day trip to Rotorua Lakes, plus options for surveys of central Volcanic Plateau mountainlands.

Mark the dates in your calendar.

JOHN INNES

Falcon taking mustelid

On 8/1/84 I was driving along the western bays of Lake Taupo when my attention was caught by a disturbance in grass beside the road. Then a NZ Falcon, with a still-struggling ferret in its talons, rose out of the vegetation. Although the ferret was quite small the Falcon lurched somewhat in flight, and it would appear that a small ferret is still a large prey for a Falcon.

BRENT CALDER

Dotterel count — Labour Weekend 1985

Plans are being made to conduct a survey of Black-fronted and Banded Dotterels on the major rivers of Hawkes Bay during Labour Weekend 1985.

Members from other regions are cordially invited to assist and would be specially welcome. Full details will be published at a later date.

KATHLEEN TODD

Regional Roundup

Far North: For the past 20 years the Far North region has been associated with the Northland region, and the one RR has been responsible for the two regions. In February 1983, Laurie and Alison Howell moved to Kaitaia where Laurie took up the position of engineer for Mangonui County.

Since their arrival Laurie and Alison have been organising Far North beach patrols and other surveys. At the AGM in May Laurie's appointment as RR for the Far North was confirmed by Council. I know members will wish to join me in extending sincere congratulations to Laurie. (David Crockett)

South Auckland: At the time of writing (10/8/84) a seabird wreck is in progress. Birds were reported as having started to come ashore on 4/8 on the west coast, from Waikato Heads to Flat Rock, near Waiuku. Many were alive but weak and were being attacked by gulls and Caspian Terns. A patrol the next day found about 250 birds. These were Kerguelen Petrels and Blue Petrels in the main, with lesser numbers

of Fairy and Narrow-billed Prions. No final figures are available yet as birds are now being found on the eastern shores of Manukau Harbour. Various people have tried to revive birds. One bird was picked up from a busy road in Papakura and was well enough to climb from foot to head of a friendly rescuer. It was given into Wildlife Service custody.

A Royal Spoonbill was reported from Lake Rangiriri in mid-June and one, possibly the same bird, was pictured in the NZ Herald shortly afterwards. It was recorded on Manukau census day, snoozing on a post at Onehunga wharf.

At Aka Aka, near Waiuku and close to the Waikato River, a flock of 6 Glossy Ibis stayed for a week from 24/5/84.

A pure Black Stilt is at Weymouth and was seen by Ron Cometti on 10/8/84. A bird showing a small amount of white has been seen in the same locality in previous years.

A Large Sand Dotterel in fine breeding plumage was seen near Taramaire, in the Firth of Thames, by many of the winter wader census party. A high count of 600 Grey Teal was recorded from Piako on the same day.

In Manukau, the census count of Banded Dotterels was well up with a total of 1010 for the harbour. SIPO numbers continue to climb and reached 28,042, an increase of 2455 on last winter's figure. 'Wimble', the long-lived NZ Dotterel now aged 33½ years, was seen again at Seagrove on census day. (Beth Brown)

Waikato: 12 very determined members ignored the atrocious weather in July to study waterfowl on Lakes Hakanoa and Okawhau. Their enthusiasm was rewarded with close views of coot, Mallard, Grey Duck, Grey Teal, Shoveller, Paradise Shelduck and Black Swan. (Folkert Nieuwland)

Volcanic Plateau: A full census of Lake Okareka on 19/8/84 yielded 40 Dabchicks, 135 Australian Coots, 116 Scaup, 4 Grey Teal and 1 nesting Black Swan. In addition there were 2 Little Black Shags, obviously overwintering here, instead of the usual northern harbours.

At least two pairs of Kokako were successful in rearing two chicks each at Pureora last summer.

Malcolm Hutton is seeing Banded Rails in Bay of Plenty coastal areas. He also reports a Little Egret near the Nukahau Stream. (John Innes)

Taranaki: The survey of bird numbers and distribution in Egmont National Park, being carried out by two members of the Society for the Department of Lands and Survey, has been extended until the end of March 1985.

On 30/6/84 Thirty Cattle Egrets were present at Barrett Lagoon, on the outskirts of New Plymouth, and on 28/6/84 a Little Egret was present at the lagoon near the mouth of the Waiwakaiho River.

The region continues to hold monthly meetings with entertainment provided by members. At our August meeting Audrey Eagle gave an informative address on her recent visit to the Auckland Islands. (David Medway)

Manawatu/Wanganui: Walter Jackson reports that 2 White Herons were present in a stream flowing into Lake Horowhenua on 21/7/84. Both birds had obvious plumes cascading down their back, indicating that breeding may not be too far away. Other species reported from Lake Horowhenua during the winter include a Little Egret (8/7), about 750 Black-billed Gulls (21/7), and the White-winged Black Tern was still present on 21/7.

Wellington: Local members are continuing surveys on Kapiti Island. Saddlebacks were noted at three locations and Stitchbirds at one location during the July survey. An additional count was made in early August, prior to the poison bait drop for possum eradication. (Russell Thomas)

Canterbury: On a recent field trip Barry Armstrong led local members to several bush remnants on Banks Peninsula, where Brown Creeper flocks, Tomtits, Bellbirds, Grey Warblers, Riflemen, Silvereyes and NZ Pigeons were among the birds seen

Recent sightings at Lake Ellesmere include a Hudsonian Godwit, 2 Black Stilts and 158 Wrybills reported by Kathleen Harrison, Sheila Petch, Peter Wilson and Peter Langlands. (Paul Sagar)

Otago: About 20 members and friends participated in the winter wader count, enabling a good number of areas to be covered.

A Crested Grebe was observed for over a month at Andersons Bay Inlet. This seems to be a first for Dunedin. The population of Eastern Rosellas seems to be increasing in the Dunedin area. Two were observed in willows near Lake Waipori recently.

The White Ibis is still in the Oamaru area. (Peter Schweigman)

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

CATTLE EGRET SURVEY

The interim total, with perhaps another 100-150 birds still to be accounted for, is just under 1500 birds. Our previous high, in 1980, gave a total of 771.

Rather strangely, this massive increase has been largely a North Island affair. South Island 367 in 1980, 377 in 1984 (but perhaps 100 still to come); North Island 404 in 1980, 1095 in 1984.

Within the North Island, although numbers are up in all districts, they are large increases in all western regions except Taranaki. In the South Island, the only really large increase is in Southland, and Canterbury numbers are down markedly. An early influx of over 100 into West Coast did not last.

This year, two banded birds have been recovered, both banded as chicks at Lawrence, NSW, in Dec 1983. One was found dead at Waitotara, South Taranaki, in late April, and one was found barely alive near Waikanae, west Wellington, in late April. The latter was cared for by Peter Mackenzie at Nga Manu Sanctuary, was colour dyed and released in late May, and soon found the Lake Horowhenua flock, where it has remained since.

If the numbers continue to rise like this, they will soon be beyond our ability to count, and any future counts may have to be confined to major flocks. Counts have remained possible so far only because, in most regions, the birds are still bunching up on the same few farms.

Regional Results (1980 totals in brackets)

North Auckland: 220 (91) — Awanui 80 (126 in July), Ruawai 135, Whangarei 5. L. & A. Howell, M. Hows, A. & A. Gordon, D. & R. Crockett, M. Wallis, W. Campbell.

Auckland: 129 (18) — Tapora 7, Helensville 101, Orewa 21. B. Brown, D. Booth, C. Exley. S. *Auckland/Waikato:* 356 (157) — Piako 69, Port Waikato 12, Aka Aka 30, Rangiriri 210+, Lake Ngaroto 30, Hamilton 4, Hautapu 1. B. Brown, F. Nieuwland, B. Seddon, C. & J. Aston, M. Barnes, M. Daly, B. Woolly, F. Bailey, R. Lawes, S. & J. Rowe.

Bay of Plenty: 41+ (0) — Opotiki 15, Awaiti 26 (Maketu flock of 12 not found), P. Latham, M. Hutton, B. Chudleigh.

Volcanic Plateau: 4 (0) at Lake Aniwhenua near Galatea: J. Innes.

North Taranaki: 32 (31 for all Taranaki) — all at Barrett's Lagoon, New Plymouth. Other likely flocks near Hawera, Patea and Waitotara not accounted for. R. Wheeler.

Manawatu/west Wellington: 230 (77) — Lake Horowhenua 82, Foxton 80, Woodville 14, Linton 14, Kakariki 4, Flock House area 17. Exact numbers not yet confirmed of small flocks Whangaehu, Kai-iwi, Wanganui.

L. Davies, S. & R. Creswell, O. Torr, R. & P. Slack, W. Jackson, M. Olsen.

Gisborne: 38 (26) — Gisborne 24 and 1 Awamate, Wairoa 12. Tolaga Bay 1. A. Blackburn, G. Foreman, J. Henley.

Hawkes Bay: 30 (4) — Lake Hatuma 8, Swamp Road 14, Maraekakaho 2, Meeanee 6. Many more have been reported but not yet confirmed. K. Todd, F. Boyce, M. Craven, J. Drake, J. & R. Hamilton, A. Hodgson, L. Lewis, J. Lloyd, C. McRae, N. MacKenzie, C. Saxby, B. Taylor, W. & M. Twydale, M. Vaessen, L. Whiteley, B. Wright.

Wairarapa: 15 (0) — Masterton 5, Te Hopai 1, Kumenga 9. T. Dennison, D. Sim.

Nelson: 29 (55) — Appleby 6, Golden Bay 23. J. Hawkins, J. & C. Bernhill, B. Fowler, G. Quayle, Heatherbell family, B. Soper, G. Wilkinson, J. Wills.

Marlborough: 50+ (32) — all at Grovetown; others reported earlier, especially at Kaikoura, were not found. P. Jenkins, D. Bate, W. Cash, T. Davies, E. Fox, D. Jowett, S. & A. Kennington, B. North, B. Elliott.

West Coast: 42 (25) — Karamea 11, Arahura 6, Totara Flat 25. A. Brett, N. Stopforth, P. & S. Lauder.

Canterbury: 31 (167) — Lake Ellesmere 30, Culverden 1. No reports yet from Mid and South Canterbury. P. Sager *et al.*

Otago: 59 (55) — Berwick 21, Outram 7, Balchutha 21, Clinton 5, Oamaru 5. P. Schweigman, A. Baines, K. Gager, Mr & Mrs G. Grant, A. Hocken, I. McVinnie, A. Nevill, M. Taylor, A. Robinson.

Southland: 166 (33) — Te Anau 1, Croydon 3, Wyndham 54, Centre Hill 1, Hokonui 6, Papatotaru 11, Orepuki 1, Waianiwa 12, New River Ferry 24, Makarewa 32, Waimatua 7, Rimu 14. W. Cooper, M. Barlow, I. Mathieson, K. & J. Morrison, M. Sutton, R. Sutton, R. Wood, A. Wright.

These results represent a great deal of effort by those who took part, especially in such districts as Manawatu, Hawkes Bay, West Coast, Otago, and Southland, where the birds were well spread and often hard to find. An excellent co-operative job.

BARRIE HEATHER

National Wader Count — June 1984

During June 1984 OSNZ members and friends completed the first-ever national winter wader count. Some 200+ people participated and another pleasing aspect of the count was that a greater number of localities were covered than during the November 1983 count. The result was a truly national wader count.

Members were encouraged to count both arctic migrants and our own wader species. Such a count would provide very useful information regarding the proportion of the summer migrant population which stays on to overwinter in New Zealand, plus provide information about the number and distribution of our own wader species.

Total numbers: A summary of wader totals by region is given in Table 1. As expected NZ-breeding species comprise the large majority of birds counted and S.I. Pied Oystercatchers easily topped the list with 79,983. Pied Stilts, overwintering Bar-tailed Godwits, Banded Dotterels and Wrybills were the next most abundant species.

The nearly 80,000 SIPOs counted shows that the population has continued to expand. In 1973 Alan Baker estimated the total population to be approaching 49,000 but noted that it was still rising following the 1940 legislation prohibiting the shooting of shorebirds. Nobody has been bold enough to estimate the size of the Pied Stilt and Banded Dotterel populations. However, recent discussions with some wader enthusiasts resulted in a consensus prediction of total populations of 25 — 30,000 Pied Stilts and an upper limit of 15,000 Banded Dotterels. The results presented here tend to substantiate their predictions. Some 17,

300+ Pied Stilts were counted but as this species is known to take advantage of any marshy ground away from estuaries (and hence OSNZ members) many birds were probably missed during the count. Results of the Australian winter wader count are not available yet but some 5,000 Banded Dotterels probably contributed to their grand total. When added to the NZ total this gives a population of at least 12,500.

Some Wrybills must have proved elusive during the count as 3,883 represents an underestimate of the total population, which is estimated currently to be about 5,000 birds.

The Bar-tailed Godwit total represents about 12.6% of the 1983 summer population, while similar figures for Turnstone and Lesser Knot are 13.0 and 5.0% respectively.

Distribution: An indication of the number of waders counted at each locality is shown in Figure 1, and the localities where more than 1,000 waders were counted are listed in Table 2. These show that important wintering areas for waders are in the north (Parengarenga to Kawhia), Lake Wairarapa, Nelson, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Lake Ellesmere and Otago Harbour (Aramoana, Papanui and Hoopers Inlet).

The number of localities covered was

much higher than during the summer count. Now we should aim to maintain, and even improve it still further. A quick look at the map will show where effort is required for future counts.

Localities covered during the June 1984 survey were:

Far North/Northland: 90 Mile, Spirits Bay, Tom Bowling Bay, Waikuku, Parengarenga Harbour, Henderson/Kowhai, Rangaunu Harbour, Tahanga, Puheke, Kari Kari, Matai, Tokerau, Whangarei Harbour, Ngunguru Estuary, Horahora, Pataua, Whananaki, Ruakaka, Waipu.

Auckland/South Auckland: Kaipara Har-

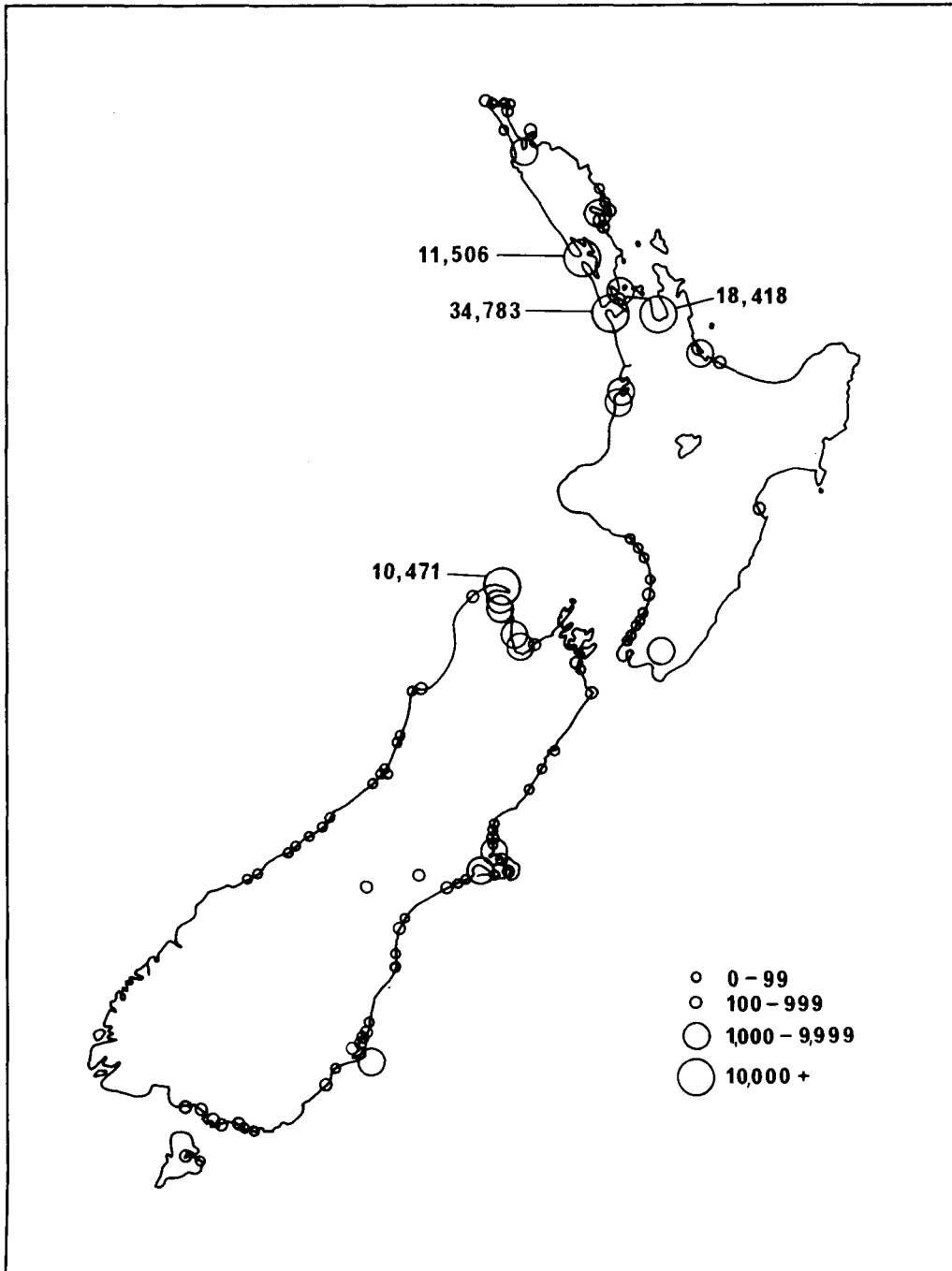


Figure 1: Distribution and numbers of waders counted in New Zealand -- June 1984

bour, Manukau Harbour, Firth of Thames, Waitemata Harbour (part), Tamaki Estuary (part).

Waikato: Aotea Harbour, Kawhia Harbour. Bay of Plenty: Tauranga Harbour.

Hawkes Bay: Ahuriri Estuary.

Manawatu/Wanganui: Wanganui Rivermouth, Whangaehu Rivermouth, Turakina Estuary, Rangitikei Estuary, Manawatu Estuary, Hokio Stream mouth, Ohau Rivermouth, Waikawa Stream mouth.

Wellington/Wairarapa: Lake Wairarapa, Porirua Harbour, Pauatahanui Inlet.

Nelson: Farewell Spit, Westhaven Inlet, Golden Bay, Motueka Estuary, Waimea Estuary, Nelson Haven.

Marlborough: Grassmere/Marfell's Beach, Kaikoura Peninsula, Grove Arm, Vernon Lagoons.

West Coast: Haast Rivermouth, Karangarua Rivermouth, Okuru Rivermouth, Mahitahi Rivermouth, Waiatoto Rivermouth, Manakiaua Rivermouth, Okarito Rivermouth, Arahura Rivermouth, Serpentine Creek, Taramakau Rivermouth, Greymouth Airfield, Blaketown Lagoon, Cobden Lagoon, Coal Creek wetland, Barrytown Ponds, Punakaiki, Okari Lagoon, Orowaiti Lagoon.

Canterbury: Conway Rivermouth, Hurunui Rivermouth, Waipara Rivermouth, Kowai Rivermouth, Ashley Estuary, Brooklands Lagoon, Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Lytleton Harbour, Akaroa Harbour, Lake Forsyth, Lake Ellesmere, Coopers Lagoon, Rakaia Rivermouth, Ashburton Rivermouth, Opihi Rivermouth, Washdyke Lagoon, Lake Ki-Wainono, Valetta, MacKenzie Basin.

Otago: Waitaki Rivermouth, Shag Rivermouth, Karitane/Hawkesbury Lagoon, Blueskin Bay, Purakanui Estuary, Papanui/

Hoopers Inlet, Aramoana, Taeri Rivermouth, Tokomairiro Rivermouth.

Southland: Awarua Bay, Fortrose, Waituna Lagoon, Waimatuku Rivermouth, Riverton Estuary, Waikawa Harbour, Invercargill Estuary.

Stewart Island: Old Neck, Freshwater Mudflats.

Table 2 — Localities where 1000+ waders were counted during June 1984

Location	Numbers
Manukau Harbour	34,783
Firth of Thames	18,418
Kaipara Harbour	11,506
Farewell Spit	10,471
Tauranga Harbour	4,283
Golden Bay	4,115
Whangarei Harbour	3,992
Waimea Estuary	3,603
Kawhia Harbour	3,436
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	2,387
Motueka Estuary	2,329
Lake Ellesmere	2,192
Lake Wairarapa	1,371
Taihangā	1,245
Papanui/Hoopers Inlet	1,163

Species distribution: Alan Baker (1973) showed that population levels of SIPO at major wintering grounds in the South Island had shown smaller increases in comparison with their northern counterparts. This trend has continued so that currently some 68.5% of SIPOs were counted in the North Island. Pied Stilts have long been known to move north for the winter and this survey confirms the Manukau Harbour and Firth of Thames as major wintering areas with 3077 and 3344 stilts respectively. Other

major wintering areas for Pied Stilts were in the Bay of Plenty, Lake Wairarapa and Lake Ellesmere. Banded Dotterels proved to be something of an enigma. Most stayed in the South Island with 1,541 and 990 being counted at Lake Ellesmere and Farewell Spit respectively. However, large numbers did move north and favoured wintering areas were Manukau Harbour (595), Bay of Plenty (749), Kawhia Harbour (387), and Pāren-garenga (612). As expected, most Wrybills were at the Firth of Thames (2,561) and Manukau Harbour (866).

NZ Dotterels deserve a special mention. Numbers counted in the northern regions were high, when one considers that this species normally resides on beaches rather than congregating in estuaries. The 7 birds seen at Farewell Spit must be the highest count recorded from that area and it is anyone's guess about where they came from — perhaps a remnant breeding population in the NW Nelson mountains? The Southland birds presumably crossed Foveaux Strait from Stewart Island.

As far as the endangered Black Stilt is concerned, the 8 recorded at Kawhia Harbour must be the highest number for several years.

The success of a project such as this depends solely upon the enthusiasm of every participant. My sincere thanks to everyone who assisted, and I am sure that you will agree that your efforts were well worthwhile. Now we can look forward to the November 1984 count, and how these results will compare with the 1983 count. Don't delay, contact your RR and enroll as a wader counter now!

PAUL SAGAR

Waders counted in New Zealand — June 1984

	Far North Northland	Auckland S. Auck.	Waikato	B o P	Hawkes Bay	Manawatu Wanganui	Wellington Wairarapa	Nelson	Marlb.	West Coast	Cantby	Otago	South- land	Stewart Island	Total
S.I. Pied Oystercatcher	2 569	48 601	3 000	542	11	62	32	17 021	181	517	3 095	2 686	1 359	307	79 983
Variable Oystercatcher	391	6	23	108	-	31	11	177	19	62	6	39	42	13	928
Spur-winged Plover	6	-	-	-	-	5	5	53	25	40	82	-	148+	-	364
N.Z. Dotterel	203	61	16	99	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	15	-	401
Banded Dotterel	1,245	729	387	749	11	120	239	1 268	68	96	2 173	183	251	8	7 527
Large Sand Dotterel	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	3	64	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	68
Wrybill	247	3 533	-	77	-	18	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	3 883
Far-Eastern Curlew	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Asiatic Whimbrel	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Whimbrel species	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Bar-tailed Godwit	1 218	3 132	187	1 586	31	31	1	2 021	15	-	227	175	447	-	9 071
Greenshank	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tattler species	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Turnstone	114	145	-	24	-	-	2	351	32	-	-	-	51	-	719
Lesser Knot	106	1 844	-	16	-	-	-	389	-	-	-	-	7	5	2 367
Curlew Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Red-necked Stint	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	9
Pied Stilt	1 883	8 937	318	1 081	662	209	1 104	818	267	74	1 171	430	354	-	17 308
Black Stilt	-	-	8	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	47	-	-	-	57
Hybrid Stilt	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	10
TOTAL	7 988	67 006	3 941	4 283	715	479	1 459	22 110	607	709	6 826	3 483	2 674	333	122 722