



# OSNZ news

No. 33 December, 1984

Note: Deadline for the March issue will be 15th February.

## Obituary — A. Blackburn

We regret to record the death of Mr Archie Blackburn on 6th December, and our deep sympathy is extended to Mrs Blackburn and her family. An obituary will be published in *Notornis*.

## Yellow-bellied Grey Warblers

During February 1984 I worked on bird-counting lines for the Forest Service, in the Blue Mountains, Otago. On two occasions I saw Grey Warblers with a colouration which was so strikingly different from normal that at first it was not clear what species of bird I had found. The underparts, including the abdomen and possibly the breast as well, was a bright lemon-yellow. Each bird was working on its own, actively searching for food in the usual Grey Warbler way, and I was able to watch each one from a distance of about 10 m.

One sighting was in a pine plantation to the east of Manuka Road, and the other was in the silver beech forest near the Rankleburn. In both areas Grey Warblers are fairly common, averaging from 1 to 2 sightings per 5-minute counting period, depending on the season.

I have returned to these sites on two occasions during May 1984, without making any further sightings of these brightly coloured birds.

MALCOLM FOORD

## Falla Memorial Award

Nominations for the above award should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, OSNZ, c/- Post Office, Pauatahanui, Wellington, by 30 April 1985. Nominations must be signed by at least two financial members of OSNZ and should state clearly the claims of the nominee on a national scale, together with a brief ornithological vitae.

The basic requirements of the award are detailed in *OSNZ news* 19. R. S. SLACK, Hon. Secretary

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.

## Library News

Work on the integration of the OSNZ library with the Auckland Museum library has begun and the journals have been moved onto special shelving in the Periodicals Room, where they are available to members in the usual way. The circulation scheme will continue as before.

We are now receiving *Naika*, from the Vanuatu Natural Science Society, and we also have a collection of reprints from back issues.

Amongst recent additions to the library is a copy of *A review of Norfolk Island Birds: Past and present* by R. Schodde, P. Fullager and N. Hermes.

Thanks to B. D. Heather, L. B. McPherson, J. L. Moore and G. A. Tunnicliffe for material donated this year.

ANTHEA GOODWIN, Hon. Librarian

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## 1985 Subscriptions

Members are advised that subscriptions for 1985 are now due and a subscription renewal notice is enclosed with this issue. Please note that you will not receive your March *Notornis* and *OSNZ News* if payment is not received by 28 February 1985.

D. F. BOOTH, Hon. Treasurer

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

## NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following four Council members retire in May 1985 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mr R. B. Sibson (Vice President)

Mr Brian D. Bell

Dr Ben D. Bell

Mrs J. M. Hawkins

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1985, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1985 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1985 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1985 Annual General Meeting will be held in Hamilton on Saturday, 25 May.

R. S. SLACK,  
Hon. Secretary, OSNZ

c/o Post Office,  
Pauatahanui,  
Wellington

## Alarmed Redpolls

In the Pomahaka Forest of the Blue Mountains on 12/11/83 I was intrigued to see a pair of Redpolls jumping up and down. They were in a plantation of *Pinus radiata* which was littered with the debris of recent thinning and pruning operations. From this tangle of twigs and trunks the two birds jumped straight up for about 20 cm, assisted by some wing action, and quickly settled back on the stick they had left. This odd behaviour occurred a few times before I saw the reason for their display. Approaching the Redpolls among the sticks beneath them came a Shining Cuckoo.

This bird spent some minutes in the vicinity of the Redpolls, usually out of my sight, as I watched with binoculars from 25 m away, but it occasionally came into view. I did not see the Redpolls make any attack on the cuckoo but they frequently made the jumping action from their perch.

During my five minutes of observing these birds, another Shining Cuckoo called from a neighbouring tree.

MALCOLM FOORD

## The Black Robin — back from the brink of extinction

In 1980, the entire world population of the critically endangered Chatham Island Black Robin was down to 5 birds, which included only one active breeding pair. It was perhaps, one of the most endangered species in the world. The future of the species seemed to rest on the shoulders of one aged female — known as 'Old Blue' — and on the New Zealand Wildlife Service, which had been trying since 1979 to save the robin from extinction.

Confined to small, remote, and wind-swept Little Mangere Island, 850 km south east of New Zealand, the Black Robin has for the past century put up a gallant struggle against all odds to survive. Formerly widespread in the Chatham Islands, it had disappeared from all but Little Mangere by late last century.

The robin survived in about 5 ha. of wind-battered woody scrub at the top of this exposed rock stack. However, by 1976, with its tiny habitat dying, the robin population had shrunk to 7. A decision was made to transfer the remaining robins back to Mangere; in the last 10 years, Mangere had been made a nature reserve — gone were the sheep, rabbits and cats, the native bush was regenerating vigorously and a new forest of 120,000 native trees had been planted. The transfer, which involved scaling Little Mangere's 200 m vertical cliffs, catching the birds, and transporting them by rubber zodiac, was successfully executed.

The next step in the rescue operation involved the creation of a cross-fostering programme; the first and second clutches of

eggs laid by each female were removed and transferred to the nests of Chatham Island Warblers. Although the experiment worked (the warblers hatched out the robins, leaving the adult robins free to lay other clutches), warblers proved imperfect foster parents because their fostered chick died after 10 days. Therefore the Wildlife Service decided that the following year the eggs would be placed with Chatham Island Tomtits on nearby South East Island. The tomtits proved to be ideal foster parents.

Time was running out for the robins, however. After a poor breeding season in 1982/83, that saw only 2 chicks raised, the post-breeding populations actually dropped from 12 to 11, 2 of which did not survive the winter.

Fortunately the 1983/84 cross-fostering programme was an outstanding success. By the end of the season, the 3 pairs of robins had laid a total of 22 eggs. Of these, 17 hatched, 13 chicks fledged and 11 survived to independence, bringing the total population to 20 — the highest recorded since actual numbers have been monitored. Had we not intervened in the nesting cycle, no more than 4 or 5 chicks could have been expected that season.

There were also a number of significant firsts:

- \* The first Black Robin that had been hatched and reared by tomtits, itself mated and bred successfully.
- \* Four 3-egg clutches were recorded. No 3-egg clutches had been known before. Remarkably, one female laid three 3-egg clutches.
- \* A one year old bird was recorded breeding. Black Robins were previously thought to breed only from their second year but during 1983/84 an 11-month old female mated successfully with an older male.

In February 1984 there were 11 males and 9 females — 8 on Mangere and 12 on South East. Old Blue has been the most successful (and sometimes the only successful) breeder since 1979; of the 20 robins alive then, she was mother of 6 and grandmother of 11. However, she has not been seen since December 1983, at which time she was at least 13 years old.

In spite of close inbreeding all young are vigorous and healthy; the fertility of the new generation of robins has been faultless. No losses can be attributed to genetic degeneration; eggs and young lost are invariably results of accidents (generally *petrels crashing into foster nests at night*). All eggs have been fertile and all eggs incubated full time have hatched. Every chick hatched by and left with robins has reached independence. So much for inbreeding depression and random drift!

17 of the 20 robins survived the 1984 winter and we now have 4 breeding pairs — the greatest number to survive in a decade. The cross-fostering programme is being

continued this season, but will probably not be necessary in future years if current trends continue. 13 eggs have been laid so far this season, of which 4 have already hatched under their Chatham Island Tomtit foster parents. The remainder are still under incubation. A further 11 eggs are expected to be laid this season.

The Wildlife Service now believes that the Black Robin 'crisis' is over. However, the species' future is not assured yet as genetic problems and inbreeding depression may surface.

BRIAN BELL & DON MERTON

## Courtship display by Blackbird

At the end of July I noted an interesting courtship display by a male Blackbird as it approached a female on the far side of our drying lawn. It pressed its bill flat to the ground, raised it, and then pressed its tail flat to the ground, raised it, and approached the female about 1 m. This sequence of actions was repeated 8 times, until it was within about 0.5 m of the female, which then flew off, followed by the male. The female had remained motionless throughout the performance, intently watching the male. Although of course this may be standard behaviour, I have seen no reference to it in the literature.

A. BLACKBURN

## Migratory Patterns of Banded Dotterels

For several years Banded Dotterels have been colour-banded in order to study population dynamics, breeding behaviour etc. During the course of this work there have been a number of sight recoveries of birds on the wintering grounds, the circumstances of which suggest there may be major regional differences in migration destination. For example, is it just the high country or southern South Island birds that migrate to Australia, while lowland birds are NZ residents? The colour-banding and dying (by the Victoria Wader Study Group) of Banded Dotterels wintering in south-east Australia has added much spice to this hypothesis. To date there have been about 25 trans-Tasman (either direction) sight recoveries, but few recoveries within NZ of NZ-banded birds.

To help solve the migration mystery, Ken Hughey and I have extended our banding operations to include many new areas in the eastern South Island. By the end of the 1984/85 breeding season there will be 500-600 surviving birds with colour bands. If the total population is less than 15,000 (see OSNZ news 32), then an average of 1 in 25 or 30 will be banded. Except for birds in our main study areas which have individual colour codes, we have used colour codes for

different areas, ages and sex. Each tarsus will have up to 3 colour bands, and metal is part of the combination, so it's necessary (I'm afraid) to note the position of the metal band.

This banding is useful only if the recoveries come in. Post-breeding dispersal has begun early this season, so it's time to polish those binoculars and telescope lenses. Details needed are: Locality, Date, Number of birds checked for bands, Number of banded birds, Colour band combinations including metal band (take care not to confuse left and right legs!). Please supply details to your RR, or write direct to us: Ray Pierce, c/- Glenmore Station, Lake Tekapo; Ken Hughey, Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1308, Christchurch.

RAY PIERCE

### Lost — Subadult Black Stilts

Although the Black Stilt management programme, instigated in the MacKenzie Basin during the 1981/82 breeding season, has resulted in over 59 Black Stilts being fledged, the breeding population has continued to decline and in the current breeding season only 8 pairs are known.

As yet it is too soon to draw any conclusions about the Black Stilt population. However, it appears that heavy losses of birds are occurring between fledging and the time birds return to breed, at about 3 years of age. It is possible that many of these youngsters still survive, perhaps in association with Pied Stilts somewhere outside the MacKenzie. These young birds will be easily distinguished now as they should be in black adult plumage. Furthermore, most are colour-banded too.

The co-operation of members in locating these elusive birds would be greatly appreciated. Please report any sighting to the project leader: Ron Nilsson, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Dunedin.

BRIAN BELL

### Royal Spoonbills

During Labour Weekend 1984 I visited the Vernon Lagoons and observed the Royal Spoonbills. They appear to have split into 3 groups, with about 6 birds occupying an island in Chandlers Lagoon while others remain on the Little Islands. A further group of 16 are nesting on the ground among a Black-backed Gull colony on Budges Island. There are 55 Caspian Terns with a total of 15 nests on the edge of this colony. If these birds are disturbed the Royal Spoonbills are the first to fly and the last to return to their nests. The Black-backed Gulls are well known pillagers so it is fortunate that the nests are on an island and thus less likely to be disturbed.

Platforms have been erected at the lagoons in the hope that the Royal Spoonbills will

nest on these, and thus avoid predation by mustelids. However, the large platform has been occupied by Pied Shags, which nest earlier than the spoonbills. During this visit to the lagoons I also saw 110 Bar-tailed Godwits, 1 Lesser Knot and 3 Far Eastern Curlews.

About 2 years ago a television film was made about the Royal Spoonbills but unfortunately this has yet to be screened. However, the Wildlife Service has a copy for use.

W. F. CASH

### The Ibisbill — specialised wader of Himalayan Riverbeds

The Ibisbill is a little-known oystercatcher-sized wader that occurs on shinglebed rivers of the Himalayas. It is one of the 3 riverbed waders which specialises in feeding on aquatic invertebrates, the others being the Wrybill and the Black Stilt. Unlike the 2 N.Z. species, the Ibisbill has a strongly down-curved bill, and in February-April 1984 I visited the Indian subcontinent primarily to study Ibisbill feeding.

There were a number of pleasant (and not so pleasant) distractions in and about the wetlands of India, before I glimpsed the Himalayas through the smoke haze. In Nepal, it soon became obvious why so little was known of Ibisbills — inaccessibility and lack of local knowledge were the main problems but merely added to the challenge. After several (often unsuccessful) visits to different rivers, I eventually hiked for 5 days into the upper Langtang Valley following the advice of an English birder, which on this occasion turned out to be good advice.

Above 4,000 m the Langtang Valley was reminiscent of some of the 'high country' valleys of South Canterbury, particularly the Murchison — being steep-sided and with a braided riverbed consisting of boulders and cobbles, the river fed by snow and ice. There, Ibisbills were common and easily studied, although I often yearned for my gumboots as I ached my way through water of -2°C. Fluctuating water temperatures enabled me to compare foraging responses of Ibisbills with those of Wrybills and Black Stilts. Daily feeding routine depended on water temperature with invertebrate activity, just as it does with Black Stilts in N.Z. rivers. The Ibisbill was better equipped than either of the N.Z. species to utilise its food resources, and apparently occurs on the river year round, whereas Wrybills and Black Stilts move to mudflats and other wetlands.

Recent taxonomic recommendations of Ibisbills have involved 3 Families — oystercatchers, stilts and a monotypic Ibisbill Family, so I was interested in observing breeding behaviours too. Some of the feeding responses were similar to those of stilts in N.Z., but probably represent secondary

adaptations to a similar environment. Certain territorial features, particularly calls, resembled those of oystercatchers, but others were unique and probably negate from lumping with that Family.

Overall, the riverbed avifauna was impressive and much richer than that in N.Z. It included fishing eagles, owls, River Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, stone curlews (2 species), and many passerines eg dippers, redstarts, forktails and wagtails, while River Terns and Black-bellied Terns frequented the sandy riverbeds of the lowlands. Overhead were the ever present raptors, ranging from the tiny Red-thighed Falconet to the Lammergeier and various eagles. It was like a lucky dip each time an Ibisbill cocked an eye skyward; in all 46 species of raptors were seen. Apart from the lack of good icecream it was a thoroughly successful expedition.

RAY PIERCE

### Pagodroma Nature Expeditions

These are educational tours that allow birdwatchers and naturalists the opportunity to share New Zealand wildlife, coasts and forests with a professional naturalist. This summer there will be 3 expeditions to Otago/Stewart Island featuring albatross, penguins, seals, sea lions, Kaka, Black Stilt and possibly even kiwis. A North Island trip in February will include visits to Kapiti, Kawau, and Little Barrier Islands, Mount Bruce, Cape Kidnappers and Rangauini Harbour. Trips to Banks Peninsula, Rakaia River and Kaikoura operate on demand. I also have information on Ornitholidays, a British firm that offers birdwatching holidays throughout the world.

For further informations write to: Graham Wilson, Pagodroma Nature Expeditions, P.O. Box 21-079, Christchurch.

GRAHAM WILSON

### Little Egrets on the Orowaiti

On 25 November this year I saw a Little Egret in breeding plumage on the Orowaiti Estuary, near Westport. Looking back over 4 years of regular watching at the estuary I noticed that Little Egrets have been recorded in every month of the year. Usually at least 2 birds are present, with a maximum of 5 in May 1982.

Summer records of Little Egrets are unusual in New Zealand; there is, for example, only 1 December record in Classified Summarised Notes for the past 7 years (that excludes my own records of course). Forever optimistic I started asking local people whether they had seen any small white herons nesting and came up with two completely separate accounts of 'white herons' nesting by the Buller River (about 2

km from the Orowaiti) last year. One informant, who lives right by the estuary, said that Little Egrets had been present all year round for the last 9 years.

Unfortunately this note does not end with confirmation of a new breeding species for New Zealand, for I can only report a few long, fruitless hours by the Buller River. However, if you do visit Westport, keep your eyes open, and if you have any old records of Little Egrets from that area I would be interested to hear about them.

DEREK ONLEY

## Information Wanted — Fruits eaten by birds

As part of a research project looking at the potential effects of brushtailed opossums on native birds I am trying to collect information on fruits of native trees and shrubs eaten by native birds. The available information is surprising meagre except for a few species such as Kokako, and is hardly sufficient to produce a list of fruit species eaten by the various birds, without attempting to look at the relative use of fruits. Any information that members may collect this coming summer/autumn on observations of birds eating fruits of native trees and shrubs would be appreciated.

The basic information required is: Date, location, species of bird, species of native tree/shrub whose fruit was eaten, whether bird was eating ripe or unripe fruit.

Reports should be sent to: Dr P. E. Cowan, Ecology Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Lower Hutt.

P. E. COWAN

## Spotless Crake Survey

A recent survey of Spotless Crakes in Taranaki has revealed that this shy rail is widely distributed. Taranaki's largest population of Spotless Crakes is in the large Te Wera Forest and Makahu-Pohokura Land Settlement Farm swamps. Spotless Crakes have also been seen at Wiremu Farm Settlement in western Taranaki; Uriti Valley swamps and Pukearuhe Road; Purangi and Lake Rotokare.

All these localities are raupo swamps, which appear to have been formed following forest clearance.

JOHN CLARK, TIM BLAKE &  
ANDREW GRAY

## Join the R.A.O.U.

The Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, founded in 1901, is recognised throughout the world as the main voice of ornithologists in our biogeographic region. By reading *Emu* and the illustrated quarterly *RAOU Newsletter*, you can keep fully in touch with the progress of ornithology in this

part of the world, and keep up to date with the RAOU's varied activities. Recent issues of the *Newsletter* have included many articles of interest to New Zealanders, such as an illustrated account of the new albatross from Amsterdam Island, and notes on the recent wreck of petrels that affected both countries. Now you can pay locally in New Zealand currency for RAOU membership.

Subscriptions are due on 1 January each year. Membership is \$NZ 61 with *Emu* and \$NZ 26 without *Emu*. The *Newsletter* is sent to all members. Send your subscription to: B. J. Gill, Auckland Museum, Private Bag, Auckland.

If a receipt is required please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Confirmation of membership, and all other correspondence will be direct from RAOU headquarters in Melbourne. The address is: RAOU, 21 Gladstone St., Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039, Australia.

BRIAN GILL

## Lake Holm Swallows Line

On the morning of 24 October 1984 there were 4 adult Welcome Swallows on and around our clothesline. One of these birds was distinctive because the head was white blotched with black, and the eyestripe was absent. The beak and feet were pale and there were white feathers on the edge of the wings and tail. This 'pied' swallow was seen several times during the following two days. By lunchtime on the 24th we had the first influx of young swallows (some 5 weeks earlier than in 1983 and 2 weeks earlier than in 1982), and up to 20 birds could be seen on the clothesline. Despite the presence of all these young birds no feeding was seen. Since then there has been up to 40 birds on the line several times a day. The interesting feature has been the high proportion of young to adult birds. Seldom would there be more than 4 adults among the 40 birds on the line and we wonder whether our clothesline acts as a 'Day Care Centre' for young swallows; where the parents bring the fledglings as soon as they can fend for themselves, stay a couple of days then depart to rear another brood. Perhaps our pied swallow will give us some insight. The swallows depart at dusk to roost elsewhere.

ALISON NEVILL

## A Weekend in Marlborough

The Marlborough region was grateful to receive an offer from Wellington to assist with the wader survey during November. On the weekend of 10-11 November 1984 we were pleased to welcome Elsie Gibbons to assist local members Donald Bate, Glenda Brooks, Bill Cash, Pauline Jenkins, David Jowett, Beverly North and Leslie White.

On the Saturday morning we set off for Lake Grassmere. Excavations for a salmon

farm have altered the intake to the salt works but the usual waders were present, with the exception of Turnstones. A beach patrol was done on the way back to the cars.

After lunch at Marfells Beach an attempt was made to see crakes near Elterwater but there was no reply to our tape. However, a stoat was seen at the edge of the raupo swamp, which was very dry. This area has had very little rain since last summer and Elterwater is virtually dry; as a result the Pied Shag colony has departed.

One car then when home and the other went on to the mouth of the Ure River. No migratory waders were seen but there were plenty of Pied Stilts and Banded Dotterels. A flock of 150 Black-billed Gulls was found roosting in the riverbed.

The next day 5 members visited the Vernon Lagoons, which had several thousand Black Swan, together with plenty of various duck species. Banded Dotterel had running young, and Pied Stilts and White-fronted Terns were also nesting. In the distance, on Budes Island, the Black-backed Gull colony could be seen. Towards the rear of the colony a whiter patch indicated the Caspian Tern breeding colony, while scattered through the gull colony were 8 pairs of very white, and much bigger, Royal Spoonbills. During lunch 2 royal birds flew by us.

On a short visit to Grovetown 17 Cattle Egrets were located. Only 1 was really coloured and none had the surprised appearance they get when breeding plumage forms a halo round the eyes. When the wind blew the breeding plumes were easy to distinguish. During the past few weeks Cattle Egret numbers have dropped and the remaining birds have become restless; they shifted from one group of cows to another and were often difficult to find. On 20 November only 13 Cattle Egrets could be found, 4 of which had coloured plumage. These were in a newly mown paddock which was been irrigated. No Cattle Egrets have been seen subsequently.

We hope that other migrants will visit us from Wellington in the future. Marlborough members have been invited to join Nelson members at Pelorus Bridge on 1 December 1984, when we hope to learn of the work being done on NZ Pigeons by members of the Ecology Division, DSIR.

PAULINE JENKINS

## Christmas Island Calendar — 1985

For 4 years the Christmas Island Natural History Association has produced a beautiful wall-hanging calendar. It depicts in 13 glossy photographs the unique and fascinating features of this tropical Australian Territory in the Indian Ocean.

This year the calendar is being made

available to all New Zealanders. For a calendar with a difference at the best value available, send a bank draft for \$A. 6.50 to: The Secretary, CINHA, Christmas Island, Indian Ocean 6798.

TONY STOKES, Secretary

## Every New Zealand Bird Illustrated

Landsdowne-Rigby propose to publish a comprehensive book containing colour photographs of all species and subspecies of New Zealand birds listed in the **Annotated Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand** and the **New Guide to the Birds of New Zealand**. This will therefore include species from the Kermadec Islands in the north to the Ross Dependency of Antarctica.

The publishers invite photographers to submit good quality **colour transparencies** in 35 mm or larger format of any bird species listed in the above publications. (Colour prints are not wanted). Birds may be depicted in portrait attitude, flight or any aspect of behaviour.

In addition, photographs are also required showing the habitats of the Kermadec Islands, southern offshore islands and Ross Dependency.

Submitted material must be clearly marked with —

1. **Name and address** of photographer, on the back of the mount (35mm), or back of clear plastic envelope.
2. **Common and scientific names** of species, on the front (top).
3. **Location** where photograph was taken, on the front (below).

NB. Glass slides should not be sent.

Reproduction Fees, payable on publication:

Small reproductions	\$50
Medium reproductions	\$70
Full page	\$100
Double page	\$150

The loss of or irreparable damage to transparencies while in the custody of the publishers, but not while in transit, will be compensated in term of the publisher's insurance cover. The receipt of transparencies will be acknowledged in writing, also the return of transparencies.

**Editorial:** The selection of transparencies for publication will be based on professional standards of photography and ornithology. The identification and description of birds and the accompanying text, will be subject to careful editorial and ornithological scrutiny.

**Quality:** The book will present high quality overall. Landsdowne-Rigby won second prize in the 1984 Wattie Book of the Year Awards for **The New Zealand House** by Sir Michael Fowler.

**Deadline for submission of slides:** 30 June 1985.

Address for slides and correspondence: Every New Zealand Bird Illustrated, Landsdowne-Rigby, P.O. Box 85-007, Sunnybrook, Auckland 10.

## MacGillivray's Petrel Rediscovered

MacGillivray's Petrel, known only from a single specimen collected in 1855, still survives on Gau Island in Fiji. A single adult bird was caught near the summit of the island in April by Dick Watling. After a detailed examination and photographic session the bird was released again.

This was the culmination of over a year's searching by Dick Watling, whose research has been sponsored by the International Council for Bird Preservation and by the local firm of Central Manufacturing Company. The bird was enticed into the ridge top search area by a combination of spot lights and amplified calls of the related Collared Petrel, which were in operation during atrocious weather — strong winds, driving cloud and rain squalls. Dick was concentrating on several Collared Petrels playing at the edge of the light and did not notice the dark MacGillivray's Petrel flying in low and fast until the last moment, when it clipped his ear with its wing tip. This was rather an undignified return for a lost petrel.

## Poor Knights Islands

In the latter half of August OSNZ members Gillian Eller, Barrie Heather, Hugh Robertson and Paul Sagar spent 10 days on Aorangi Island, Poor Knights. The main purpose of the visit was to continue the study of Bellbirds initiated in 1978 by Paul Sagar. Weather and sea conditions made landing difficult but a hard trek up a ridge soon restored warmth.

During our stay the weather was very changeable, with frequent changes in wind direction and a lot of heavy rain. However, despite this the major part of the scientific programme was completed. Mist nets were erected at Tuatara Pool and 273 Bellbirds were banded. In addition, 110 Bellbirds banded on previous visits were recaptured, giving a grand total of 383 Bellbirds captured. These birds comprised 321 adults and 62 juveniles and as on previous visits males outnumbered females. It is hoped that sufficient recaptures of banded Bellbirds will enable survival rates of males and females to be calculated, and such information may explain whether the disproportionate sex ratio is real, or a result of behavioural differences. Among the recaptured birds were 2 males which had been banded originally as adults in January 1978. This means that these birds were at least 7 years old at the time of our visit.

Red-crowned Parakeets provided some

entertaining variety in the mist nets and soon all members of the party were complaining of nipped fingers. Standard measurements and the weight of all 63 parakeets captured were recorded before the birds were banded and released. Six of these birds had been banded on previous visits, the oldest being 2 birds originally banded as adults in February 1980.

In addition to the mist netting operations feeding observations of Bellbirds and parakeets were recorded; territories of colour banded Bellbirds were mapped; occupied study burrows of Diving Petrels, Fairy Terns and Allied Shearwaters were checked regularly; and a log of all bird sightings was made. Perhaps the most interesting sighting was of a Long-tailed Cuckoo, seen at Tuatara Pool on 24 August, which must be an early record.

The trip ended well too, with an immature Yellow-nosed Mollymawk and 3 Black-browed Mollymawks being among the seabirds sighted during our boat journey back to Tutukaka.

PAUL SAGAR

## Southland Region's Tribute to Roger Sutton

Earlier this year Roger Sutton retired as RR for Southland, after 17 years dedicated service. Southland members arranged a special meeting to thank him and the following is the dedication read at the time.

"As you all know, this gathering has been arranged for a particular purpose, but I hope you will forgive me if I first digress from the matter in hand.

As amateur ornithologists you will all be familiar with the field guide, which is the bird watcher's bible. As you know it gives information about various species under 4 different headings .... description, voice, habitat and range, and breeding.

The description usually begins with a measurement in inches from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail and, in some instances, of the legs extending beyond the tail. Plumage is then detailed, together with notes on carriage, posture and behaviour where this is judged to be helpful. With voice, syllabification along traditional lines is usually attempted. Habitat and range are described as accurately as possible and a summary is given of known breeding habits.

With that in mind I thought it might be appropriate if this gathering decided to approach Dick Sibson with the suggestion that, when the Field Guide is next being revised, a new entry should be included in the section under waders to recognise the emergence of a new species.

Its common name is Stout-hearted Leader, its Latin name *Lornvillus Suttonii*, its Maori name ariki. I have a few brief notes (classified and summarised) which could be put forward as the basis for a possible entry.

**Description:** Length, 70 inches (34 inches with legs retracted). A large, friendly wader often to be seen with other like-minded species on estuaries, tidal inlets, river banks and occasionally on bush fringes. Overall colour pink, when in moult, at other times greenish grey upperparts, slightly darker underparts but has been known to assume brighter colours in the breeding season. Normally upright in stature but occasionally assumes recumbent position, characteristically around feeding time in the field. Even while feeding, however, remains alert, sharp eyes scanning the sky. Normally placid but can assume aggressive stance when confronted with any member of the feline species. Oddly, is often followed by dogs.

Bill short, decurved. Fleashy crown, dark eye stripes. No wing bar visible in flight.

**Voice:** A well modulated, somewhat hesitant 'By crikey'.

**Habitat and range:** While far from a sedentary species, prefers to remain within the borders of Southland province. Ranges far and wide within this relatively restricted area but occasionally makes rapid long-distance flights to other parts of New Zealand. Has been known to make reverse migration against prevailing winds to Australia and has been reported fossicking in Queensland.

**Breeding:** Is known to have laid 3 eggs and raised 3 young to maturity. These young characteristically interbreed with other species and become dispersed throughout the province. Has large nest which seems to be a gathering place for others and frequent piping parties are known to have taken place.

But enough of levity. I was not being facetious when I gave the species *Lornvillus Suttonii* the common name Stout-hearted Leader. That is what Roger has been for 17 years; years during which ornithology in Southland has made considerable strides. With the dedicated backing of Christina, Roger has been an inspirational leader of the amateur birdwatchers of this province but more than that, he has awakened in all who have made contact with him a love of respect for the natural world and the creatures in it.

I have vivid memories of taking part in expeditions under Roger's leadership. I recall slogging up the Hokonuis to catch freshwater crayfish, scouring riverbanks on bird surveys, collecting Black-backed Gull eggs on the peat bogs, watching Harriers come in to roost, wading through the waters of the estuary and Awarua Bay on wader counts, and roaring up and down the West Coast covering map squares.

These are the memories which all of us will carry for the rest of our lives and we owe them to Roger. He has inspired us to get up and go places and see what is to be seen. I can recall on a number of occasions looking out of the window on the morning of a projected expedition, seeing the clouds scudding past, and ringing Roger in the expectation that the

weather would prevent the outing. Invariably he would predict an improvement and invariably there would be one. Sure we have braved gales and rain on some occasions, but Roger would never expose his charges to danger. He is always the prudent adventurer.

I am not going to detail Roger's many other accomplishments in the fields of natural history and conservation .... accomplishments which have justifiably won him national honours on more than one occasion. I just want to thank him, on my own behalf and on behalf of all those present, for his friendship, his guidance and his inspirational leadership during his 17 years as regional representative for the Ornithological Society in Southland. And I want to thank Christina for the support she has given Roger in his work for the Society and for being such a gracious hostess on the many occasions we have held meetings and social gatherings at the Sutton home in Lorneville. I have fond memories of wonderful coffee, delicious seafood and scrumptious casseroles following a long and tiring day on the estuary.

Both Roger and Christina have given unstintingly of their time and of themselves to support everyone. A simple thank you seems totally inadequate, but it comes from hearts full of gratitude and admiration."

## Nest Record Cards

The format of nest record cards has been revised and new cards are being printed. Would members holding any old, unused cards please return them to the convener: D. E. Crockett, 21 McMillian Avenue, Kamo, Whangarei.

D. E. CROCKETT

## Regional Roundup

**Far North/Northland:** During August the largest number of seabirds washed ashore in our region since 1974 was recorded. Pat and Karen Miller alerted patrollers to the possibility of a wreck following a short beach patrol on 5 August. The usual monthly patrol was brought forward and patrollers took to the Dargaville West beaches. This resulted in a haul of over 2,000 birds, and a further 1,500 were recovered from beaches in the Far North.

A summary of the August 1984 seabird wreck on the Dargaville West coast beaches is: Birds recovered — 2,096; kilometres covered — 60; No. birds per km — 34.9. Species totals included 97 Kerguelen Petrels, 250 Blue Petrels, 167 Antarctic Prions, 342 Narrow-billed Prions, 1,028 Fairy Prions and 24 Lesser Broad-billed Prions. The recovery of 250 Blue Petrels is the largest recorded wreck of this species to date, surpassing our previous highest total of 112 in 1981 and also exceeding the 243 recovered off all Auckland West Coast beaches in 1981. (David Crockett & Bill Campbell)

**Auckland:** Seabirds featured on the beaches of the Auckland West Coast during August too, and species totals included 133 Blue Petrels, 18 Lesser Broad-billed Prions, 31 Antarctic Prions, 114 Thin-billed Prions, 271 Fairy Prions and 31 Kerguelen Petrels. (Pat Crombie)

On 25 August a Kaka was seen in tall pines in Mt Roskill, and this was followed by a pair of Kakas in tall gum trees on 15 September. (Bruce Goffin)

**Waikato:** Beach patrol results during August included unusually high numbers of prions and southern species. Totals included 23 Kerguelen Petrels, 26 Blue Petrels, 32 Narrow-billed Prions, 5 Lesser Broad-billed Prions and 3 Fairy Prions.

A total of 12 members took part in the Kokako search field trip. Thanks to Roy Dench's good offices and Arthur Cowan's hospitality 6 of us spent a whole weekend in the Rangitoto Ranges area, while another 5 members were there for a day. Eventually 11 Kokako were heard and 3 seen. Bob Zuur made a single handed foray into the Hauturu Road area of Pirongia State Forest and reported hearing 4 Kokako on 3 territories. While this is a promising start, it should by no means be the end of our efforts.

During our Kokako field trip Roy Dench saw a male N.I. Tomtit feeding in a rather unusual manner. The bird was perched on a log at the bank of the Tunawai Stream and made a series of forays over the water, hovering just above the surface and dipping its bill into the water before returning to its perch. Has anyone seen this behaviour before?

The Robin catching and transfer project has so far yielded 1 male N.I. Robin, which was transferred from a doomed area of cut-over bush in the Mamaku Forest to a well-protected area of native bush near Waingaro. This new area is about 30 ha. of bush surrounded by farmland and belongs to one of our members. The purpose of this project is not only an effort to save Robins and Toms but also to gain experience in the catching and transfer of birds from endangered habitats to new areas. The fate of transferred birds will be followed with interest. (Folkert Nieuwland)

**Bay of Plenty:** Beach patrolling provided an impressive list for the Bay of Plenty from June to September and the tally included: 52 Kerguelen Petrels, 49 Blue Petrels, 4 Antarctic Prions, 3 Narrow-billed Prions and 67 Fairy Prions.

Low numbers of Black-fronted Terns wintered in the region this year with 26 being the highest count. (Paddy Latham)

**Taranaki:** The largest population of Fernbirds in Taranaki was found in the Te Wera Forest and Makahu-Pohokura Land Settlement area. Visiting birdwatchers will receive a good response to Spotless Crake and Fernbird tape recordings played at the roadside swamps in these areas. Tim Blake

and I have achieved good success photographing these 2 species at Makahu. (John Clark)

**Manawatu/Wanganui:** This winter a total of 221 Cattle Egrets were found in Manawatu/Wanganui which is a big increase on previous years when the maximum was 70-80 birds. The largest flocks were 82 at the south end of Lake Horowhenua, 58 at Foxton, and 22 near the Manawatu Estuary. Interest now centres on the behaviour of these large flocks to see whether they remain for the summer or depart for Australia.

Recent sightings include 3 Glossy Ibis at Foxton, seen on 6/10 by J. & M. Moore and on 8/10 by W. & E. Jackson; 1 White-winged Black Tern was still at Lake Horowhenua on 27/9. (Lindsay Davies)

**Wellington:** This winter produced several severe storms which brought in larger numbers of seabird wrecks than experienced over the past few years. White-headed Petrels were predominant during October and prions in August. (Russell Thomas)

**Canterbury:** The seabird wreck which occurred in August and September was not confined entirely to the west coast of the North Island because Canterbury patrollers were able to pick up several Thin-billed Prions, Lesser Broad-billed Prions, Blue

Petrels, Kerguelen Petrels, Antarctic Fulmars and Cape Pigeons. Most of these birds come ashore towards the end of September somewhat later than those in the North Island.

Recent sightings include 5 Royal Spoonbills at the Bromley Wildlife Refuge, 2 Eastern Long-billed Curlews at the Ashley Estuary and several reports of up to 4 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in the Lake Coleridge area. (Paul Sagar)

**Otago:** Black-fronted Dotterels nested earlier this year and in early November there were at least 3 chicks with adults on the Taeri River.

Otago members assisted with a survey of Yellow-eyed Penguins on Otago Peninsula in early December. This was to assist John Darby carry out a final test of the census techniques he has been developing for this species over the past 3 years.

Other recent reports include 3 Crested Grebes on Otago Harbour, near Mission and Broad Bays, and Graeme Loh's sighting of 7 Wrybills on the Dart River. (Peter Schweigman)

**Southland:** The migratory waders from the Northern Hemisphere arrived on time once again; Maida Barlow recorded them on the Invercargill Estuary on 27 September.

Tattlers are back at the head of Awarua Bay again this summer, 2 were seen on 7/10 and 4 on 24/11.

Cattle Egrets were still present late in the year; Roger Sutton saw 19 at the end of October and I saw 24 beside Orion Road, Makarewa, on 25/11. (Wynston Cooper)

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

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## Asian Colour-dyed Waders

Between late August and November, 1984 an international study of wader migration throughout eastern Asia is being conducted. Migratory waders of all species will be caught, banded and colour-dyed on the underparts. In Borneo they will be dyed yellow; in Thailand, blue and in Japan, green. All bird-watchers are requested to look out for these birds in their travels over the next six months. After a month or so the dye tends to fade, however does so less rapidly on the underwings, where it can be seen on birds in flight. Details of number of birds, date, location and species should be sent to your local Regional Representative who will then inform the banding office and Wader Studies Co-ordinator.