

# OSNZ news

No. 39

June, 1986

Note: Deadline for the September issue will be 12th August.

## Annual Conference & AGM – Wellington

The Annual Conference and AGM of the Society was held in Wellington on 23-25 May 1986. For me a highlight of the weekend was the obvious depth of enthusiasm among members.

Council met on the Friday and worked through a long and varied agenda. Most of the morning was spent working through the committee and scheme annual reports. Most of these appear elsewhere in this newsletter. A considerable amount of time was spent discussing means to increase the membership of the Society. An increase in membership is seen as essential if OSNZ is to maintain its role in promoting ornithology in New Zealand. In addition, an increase in membership would assist with maintaining the costs associated with the Society's activities. The Society's application to host the 20th International Ornithological Congress (IOC) in 1990 was discussed enthusiastically – if NZ is successful with its bid then the next few years would be a very exciting time for NZ ornithology. A loan of \$10,000 from the Projects Assistance Fund was made for promotion of NZ's case in Ottawa, where the IOC organising committee are meeting during June 1986. Among other business the Projects Assistance Fund warranted special attention. Funds were made available to: Alison Davis, for her study of Shore Plovers; Drs Rod Hay and Hugh Robertson, for their proposed study of the endangered Rarotongan Flycatcher; and Ducks Unlimited for their proposed facilities at the Sinclair Wetland in Otago.

Regional Representatives met on Friday evening and again on Saturday morning. There was an excellent attendance with all but one region being represented. There was much discussion about bird recording in New Zealand and this was followed by even more discussion about means to attract members. Beth Brown reviewed the points raised at the Council meeting and asked RRs to search for a member who could be OSNZ's public relations and promotions person. Following the meeting there was a substantial lunch – which was much appreciated – before RRs and Council members travelled to the Natural

History Unit of the National Museum. Here Sandy Bartle, the museum's ornithologist, gave us an enthusiastic and informative tour of the bird rooms. This included a summary of the organisation of the collections and how ornithologists – both amateurs and professionals – may make use of them. It wasn't long before cabinet doors were opened and specimens were being examined. Isn't it much easier to separate Arctic, Common and Antarctic Terns when specimens of all three species can be compared in the hand!

Those not attending the RRs meeting were able to visit Kapiti Island or the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre.

The AGM was held in the Royal Society rooms and was attended by about 90 members. The President, Mrs Beth Brown briefly reviewed the Society's activities over the past year and paid tribute to the many voluntary workers who maintain the activities of the Society. Special mention was made of Dr Peter Bull, who retired from Council this year after many years service to the Society, which included the organisation of the bird mapping scheme and the production of the Atlas. Members' support of this tribute was shown by prolonged applause. The Falla Memorial Award was conferred posthumously to Peter Child of Alexandra for his contributions to ornithology in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands and to the Society. The motion to make Mr. R. B. Sibson an Honorary Life Member of the Society was passed unanimously.

Brian Bell, Hugh Robertson and Paul Sagar were elected to Council. Under items of general business several members made constructive comments and suggestions about promotion of the Society and ways of increasing membership. The AGM ended in plenty of time for a happy hour before dinner. After dinner Sir Charles Fleming addressed the meeting and summarised the ornithological achievements of past presidents of the Royal Society of New Zealand. In this he was aided by the large range of portraits which decorated the walls. Obviously ornithology played an important role in the early development of science in NZ. After adjourning from the Royal Society rooms some of the less formal activities of the weekend continued until the small hours – did I even hear mention of Morris dancing?

On Sunday the programme continued with 8 short talks about current projects which are investigating endangered species. Ralph Powlesland reviewed the status of Kakapo and raised optimism about the success of liberating birds on Little Barrier Island. Graeme Elliott then reviewed some aspects of his field study of Yellowheads. This was followed by Don Merton's review of the status of Black Stilts (not very good without continued management of the remaining population) and Brian Bell's review of the Takahe (recent management gives good grounds for optimism). Jim Jolly reviewed his study of Little Spotted Kiwis with particular emphasis on population size, breeding success and possibilities for island transfers. This was followed by Duncan Cunningham's intriguing story of the decline of the Rockhopper Penguin population on Campbell Island and the search for possible causes. While the growth rate of chicks appears to be all right there is real concern about chick mortalities caused by rats and plague. I'm sure that we will hear a lot more about this study. Mike Imber reviewed the search for the breeding grounds of the Chatham Island Taiko and suggested that islands off Pitt Island may be the best localities for future searches. Finally, Don Merton brought us up-to-date with the Black Robins. There were 26 birds at the start of last season. These comprised 7 pairs, of which 5 bred and produced 34 eggs; 24 of these eggs hatched and 18 chicks fledged but there was unprecedented mortality of young after fledging and only 9 survived to reach independence. The total population now is about 35 birds.

After another substantial lunch we were treated to a sneak preview of the latest TVNZ production 'Beyond the Roaring Forties' which examined NZ's subantarctic islands – there is some excellent footage in this. Thanks to Gavin Woodward for arranging for us to view this fine film.

The meeting closed with a well-deserved vote of thanks to Russell Thomas and his committee for organising such an enjoyable weekend. The 1987 Annual Conference and AGM will be held in Dunedin. See you there.

PAUL SAGAR

## Seabird specialists

The Seabird Specialist Group of the International Council for Bird Preservation invites ornithologists interested in seabird biology and conservation to communicate with us. Our recent book *Status and conservation of the world's seabirds* (ICBP Technical Publications No. 2, 778 pp., £24.95 plus £2.00 postage, from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, England) summarises our knowledge to 1982. We desire to keep current on the status and prospects of the world's seabirds in order to take action on behalf of the birds where we can, and to encourage communication between seabird people. If you are interested in participating or providing information, contact the current chairman, Ralph W. Schreiber, Natural History Museum, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007, USA.

RALPH W. SCHREIBER

## Nest Record Scheme — Annual Report 1986

This year saw the introduction of a new style of Nest Record card which holds more information, especially latitude and longitude, altitude, and an assessment of the fate of the nest. The new design also allows easier transfer of data onto computer files.

The Ornithological Society is employing Christine Reed to develop computer packages for handling the Nest Record data, with the eventual aim of safely storing all nest record data, running detailed summaries of cards held, and, most importantly, analysing the data held in the scheme. Excellent progress has been made on the computerisation; programmes have been developed to accept all of the data off the old cards and the new style card. Christine and I have started the huge task of going through the old cards, adding locality information wherever possible. Ross Pickard of the Wildlife Service has helped to develop the computer programmes and is also currently helping to write packages to summarise the cards and analyse the breeding data.

A paper giving detailed instructions on the OSNZ Nest Record Scheme was published in the March 1986 issue of *Notornis*.

This year, 32 members contributed 460 cards covering 61 species, bringing the total to 17,515 cards. Main contributions to the scheme were received from Don Hadden of Christchurch, with 113 cards of 33 species; Hugh Robertson of Wellington with 90 cards, including 67 Welcome Swallow nests from the Manawatu; Paul Sagar of Christchurch with 78 cards, including 33 Bellbird nests from the Poor Knights Islands; and Anthony Sparks, also of Christchurch, with 30 cards including 19 Spur-winged Plover nests from Canterbury. Other important contributions this year

included: 20 detailed Banded Dotterel cards from Michelle Noonan, Christchurch; 11 closely studied NZ Pigeon nests from staff of Ecology Division, DSIR, Nelson; Bill Cash (20), Richard Holdaway (11), Marion Lane (12), Bruce Keely (11) and Justin Penney (20).

28 Colonial Nest Record cards were received, covering the following 11 species: Black Shag, Pied Shag, Little Shag, Royal Spoonbill, Black Swan, Canada Goose, Pied Stilt, Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Caspian Tern and White-fronted Tern.

My thanks go to all the contributors to the scheme and to those who have encouraged members to take part. Christine Reed and Ross Pickard have made a significant contribution in starting the process of computerising the Nest Record Scheme, and Christine has helped to work through the huge pile of cards waiting to be dealt with.

**List of contributors:** B. Campbell, W. F. Cash, M. N. Clout, J. E. C. Flux, P. D. Gaze, R. B. Goffin, A. J. Goodwin, M. Graham, D. Hadden, J. R. Hay, R. N. Holdaway, B. R. Keeley, M. Lane, P. Langlands, P. C. M. Latham, B. McKinlay, M. Noonan, C. C. & R. C. Ogle, G. R. Parrish, J. R. L. Penney, C. H. Pettigrew, M. H. & R. G. Powlesland, C. Reid, H. A. Robertson, J. L. & P. M. Sagar, A. Sparks, K. Spencer, M. J. Taylor, C. R. Veitch.

**List of species contributed during 1985/86:** Little Blue Penguin 1, Southern Crested Grebe 1, Black Shag 2, Pied Shag 4, Little Shag 4, White-faced Heron 3, Royal Spoonbill 1, Mute Swan 1, Black Swan 7, Canada Goose 5, Muscovy Duck 1, Paradise Shelduck 2, Mallard 2, Grey Duck 1, Harrier 1, Pukeko 5, Australian Coot 1, SIPO 4, Variable Oystercatcher 5, Spur-winged Plover 31, NZ Dotterel 7, Banded Dotterel 30, Snipe 1, Pied Stilt 13, Southern Skua 9, Black-backed Gull 7, Red-billed Gull 6, Caspian Tern 2, White-fronted Tern 1, NZ Pigeon 11, Red-crowned Parakeet 1, Yellow-crowned Parakeet 1, Shining Cuckoo 1, Morepork 1, Kingfisher 1, Rifleman 2, Rock Wren 2, Skylark 1, Welcome Swallow 95, Pipit 1, Hedge Sparrow 5, Fernbird 5, Grey Warbler 2, Fantail 9, Tit 6, Robin 2, Song Thrush 17, Blackbird 31, Silvereye 9, Stitchbird 1, Bellbird 34, Tui 6, Yellowhammer 3, Chaffinch 5, Greenfinch 14, Goldfinch 7, Redpoll 4, House Sparrow 5, Starling 11, Myna 1, White-backed Magpie 8.

As this report goes to press I have received a large number of cards from Peter Reese, Donald Geddes and Peter Howden. These will be included in the report for 1986/87.

HUGH A. ROBERTSON, *Convenor*

## Beach Patrol Scheme 1985 — Preliminary Report

This report concerns the results from cards submitted to 31 March 1986. In 1985 5,380 km of coast was patrolled during 474 outings. An average of 4,122 km of coast were patrolled per year during 1975-84. During 1985 27,301 dead seabirds were found — a record. The previous highest total was 24,747 in 1974.

The main reason for the 1985 record number of dead seabirds was a storm in August. Most of the resultant birds were picked up in September (11,078) at an average of 19.7 birds per km patrolled. Generally birds are found at the rate of 1-3 per km.

The most numerous species found in September 1985 was the Fairy Prion (8,945); they accounted for 80% of the birds found that month. A new species for the Beach Patrol Scheme was a Manx Shearwater, found on a Wellington West beach in January. Species found in greater numbers than usual in 1985 were: Little Blue Penguin (5,227), Buller's Mollmawk (54), Antarctic Fulmar (365), Grey-faced Petrel (103), White-headed Petrel (282), Blue Petrel (515), Fairy Prion (10,799), Buller's Shearwater (426), Sooty Shearwater (1,796), Fluttering Shearwater (2,323), Diving Petrel (943), Australasian Gannet (487), Pied Shag (41), Black-backed Gull (470), and White-fronted Tern (128).

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

Coast	Birds	Km
Auckland East	3,064	598
Auckland West	20,187	2,662
Bay of Plenty	1,029	426
Canterbury North	104	293
Canterbury South	91	36
East Coast NI	132	118
North Coast SI	53	63
Outlying Islands (Chathams)	8	7
Otago	80	108
Southland	161	34
Taranaki	577	328
Wairarapa	98	48
Westland	2	12
Wellington South	569	210
Wellington West	1,146	439

The success of the scheme in 1985 was due to the efforts of many members and their friends who took part in patrols, and particularly to the enthusiasm of the people who organised regular patrols.

Funding from the Society's Projects Assistance Fund (\$5,000) and the NZ Lottery Board (\$10,000) has enabled us to employ Christine Reed to write computer programmes to input and analyse the beach patrol data. To date the results of the 1982-1985 patrols have been entered. My thanks to the Wildlife Service for use of the computer facilities.

RALPH POWLESLAND, *Convenor*

## Moult Recording Scheme – Annual Report 1986

Records continue to be received, though at a relatively slow rate. The new design of moult card – used during the moult recording exercise at Hamilton last May – has been sent to several observers for field evaluation.

Christine Reed is due to work on the existing moult data later this year, and so final printing of the card has been delayed, since her computer analysis may result in further changes in its scope and design. By using the IBM 4341 computer at Victoria University it is hoped to have most, if not all of the moult data transferred from cards and sheets by the end of 1986.

The printing of the new cards should be in late 1986, and so they will be ready for the 1987 annual 'moult season'.

BEN D. BELL, *Convenor*

## Annual Report of the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee

More reports of rare birds were received during 1985/86 than in the previous year. This may be due, in part, to a greater awareness of the rare bird reporting procedures. The committee has recently produced a list of species for which descriptions are requested before the acceptance of records. This list has been distributed widely and was published in *OSNZ news* 38.

There is concern that records not submitted through the Rare Birds Committee may still be published in Society reports. If unverified reports are further quoted this could lead to the continued publication of mistakes.

The records accepted by the committee during the past 12 months were:

**Chinstrap Penguin** – One photographed on Campbell Island on 14/3/84 (G. Harper).

**Providence Petrel** – A beach wrecked specimen was found at Omamari, Northland, on 22/9/84 (P. Miller).

**White-necked Petrel** – One dead at Karikari Bay on 27/1/86 (J. Dowding, G. Arnold, J. Macefield).

**Gould's Petrel** - One dead at Marokapa Beach on 13/1/85 (J. & A. Rowe).

**Manx Shearwater** - One found dead on Waikanae Beach on 25/1/85 was considered to be of British origin (A. Tennyson).

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** - One dead near Tikonui Stream, Northland, on 14/4/84 (P. & K. Miller).

**Brown Booby** - Two at Little Huia in August and 1 there on 8 & 12 October 1985 (C. Smuts-Kennedy, B. Green).

**Intermediate Egret** - One at Ohinewai on 24-31/8/85 (B. Seddon, B. Brown *et al.*).

**Nankeen Night Heron** - One seen in Queen Charlotte Sound 12-17/5/85 may have been

an escapee from Wellington Zoo but no bands were seen (C. Robertson).

**Nankeen Kestrel** - A female was seen at Tiwai Point on 28/7/85 (C. Miskelly, W. Cooper). One at South Brighton, Christchurch on 25/10/85 (D. Stewart).

**Asiatic Dowitcher** - This species was added to the NZ list when I was seen at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary from 29/8/85 to 6/9/85 (A. Crossland, P. Langlands, J. & J. Fennell).

**Marsh Sandpiper** - Singles at Awarua Bay on 2/12/84 and Waituna Lagoon on 3/12/84 (K. & J. Morrison, W. Cooper).

**Ruff** - One at Lake George, Southland, from 9/12/84 to 16/3/85 (W. Cooper, C. Miskelly). One in Hawkes Bay area in November 1985 (R. Parrish *et al.*).

**Japanese Snipe** - One at Mangere Ponds on 13 & 14/10/85 (D. Baker, R. Child, S. Davies). Two at Lake George on 22/3/85, where at least one had been present since December 1984, were probably of this species (W. Cooper, C. Miskelly).

**Great Knot** - One seen and photographed at the Wanganui Estuary on 1/2/86 (P. Battley, O. Torr).

**Western Sandpiper** - One at Access Bay on 29/11/84 (B. Brown).

**Red-necked Phalarope** - A bird was seen at Mangere Ponds on 6-10/6/85 (R. B. Sibson).

**Oriental Pratincole** - One flew over Jordan's Farm, Kaipara Harbour, on 30/11/85 (D. Booth, S. Chamberlain, B. Searle, C. Exley).

**Long-tailed Skua** - Two birds were identified at sea 45°S, 175°W on 11/3/85 and 12/3/85 (C. Robertson, B. Bell).

**White-winged Black Tern** - One at Karaka on 9/2/85 (S. Davies, A. Riegen).

**Gull-billed Tern** - A bird was present at the Wanganui Estuary for most of December 1985 (P. Battley, G. Randle).

**Crested Tern** - A bird was seen at Kaikoura on 24/5/85 (G. Wilson).

**Arctic Tern** - One was photographed at Bowentown on 20/1/85 (B. Chudleigh).

**Tree Martin** - This species probably bred at Outram, Otago, as young birds were seen from January to March 1984 (A. Neville).

J. F. M. FENNELL, *Secretary*

## Checklist Committee Report 1986

The committee has continued with the preparation and circulation of first drafts. This work, which requires the entering of drafts on the word processor at the Auckland Museum, has been greatly assisted by sponsorship provided by Rank Xerox (NZ) Ltd: in addition to photocopying drafts free of charge, the firm has made a grant of \$500 towards the cost of employing a word processor operator. The committee is most grateful to Dr Brian Gill for approaching Rank Xerox for sponsorship; in addition, Dr Gill has continued to supervise the entering of drafts on the word processor.

E. G. TURBOTT, *Convenor*

## Library Report - 1986

Work this year has centred around the journal circulation scheme, with 38 members now reading up to 19 titles. Servicing interloan requests has been made easier by more efficient organisation on the new shelving in the Periodicals Room of the Auckland Institute & Museum library.

Interloan requests and borrowing by members are slightly down on last year but there have been more requests for information and I thank Ian Thwaites and his staff for helping to answer some of these.

20 new books and 57 reprints and pamphlets were added to our collection and we are grateful to the following donors – B. D. Heather, R. B. Sibson, E. G. Turbott, and Dr M. J. Taylor.

ANTHEA GOODWIN, *Librarian*

## Banding Liaison Officer - Annual Report 1986

During the year I have not received any requests for my services. I enquired of the Banding Officer whether he had any queries or complaints from members. Only one query concerning procedure was received by him and this he assures me was resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. In this instance the member did not deem it necessary to involve me in the discussion.

The Council's decision to list the post and name of the office holder on the front cover of *Notornis* to make known the service offered I consider to be worthwhile and may well generate better liaison with the Banding Office for members.

With regards to both matters of concern to the Council mentioned in my reports of 1983 and 1985: –

- (a) duplication of early banding records;
  - (b) computerisation of records, and progress towards establishment of a ready retrieval system.
- (a) still remains low on the priority for alteration - owing to pressure of other work. (b) all records (except banders' own recoveries) are up to date and entered into the computer. This means that retrievals, on request, (assuming that formalities of consent of banders are in order, and that costs are met by the user of the system) are now available.

The absence of complaints from members leads one to conclude that the banding service continues to satisfy the needs of members. The liaison office is still there to facilitate change or make representation on members' behalf should it become necessary from time to time.

L. GURR, *Banding Liaison Officer*

## OSNZ Rare Bird Recording - 2

In the March issue of OSNZ news (no. 38) the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee published a list of species for which descriptions are required before records can be accepted and added to the NZ list. Descriptions can be done most conveniently on Unusual Bird Report (UBR) forms, a supply of which is kept by each Regional Representative. Society members that keep good field notes can transfer their records directly to these forms. The notes should be as complete as possible to aid acceptance.

Most species have key identification features but if in doubt as to what is a key feature it is better to include everything that you noted. Of course written field notes are always more reliable than memory and so try to get into the habit of systematically making notes about plumage, appearance and habits of birds.

Soon we plan to publish an article about

how to take field notes but Regional Representatives can also play a part here by perhaps introducing this training at a local meeting or field trip.

In the last few years some records have not been accepted and some of these were because the descriptions given were incomplete or poorly presented. We want to avoid this as much as possible. Therefore as an aid we are publishing below an example of a UBR which contains sufficient information for acceptance of the record. The example is a modification of a real submission recently sent to the committee and contains descriptions of many key features. It is not a totally complete description but it is a good description.

The drawing included helps the identification but no masterpieces are expected. (If we receive a masterpiece we will auction it to boost Society funds!)

JOHN FENNELL, Secretary,  
Rare Birds Committee

## Summer Camp in Southland

Members are advised that Southland will host an OSNZ summer camp in January 1987.

**Dates:** Friday 9 to Thursday 15  
January, 1987.

**Place:** Camp Longwood,  
Riverton, Southland.

The objectives of the camp are to strengthen the ornithological knowledge of several areas and to provide an opportunity for visitors to become more familiar with the birds of the region.

Activities will include a survey of the Riverton Estuary; a census of known wader roosts in Southland; visits to forest, waterfowl and river areas.

### UNUSUAL BIRD REPORT

#### GULL-BILLED TERN

SPECIES: (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) Subspecies (if evident):

OBSERVER'S NAME: A.N. OBSERVER  
ADDRESS: 14 LARK LANE, TOMTIT TOWN  
OTHER OBSERVERS: A. NUTHERWATCHER  
DATE(S) OF OBSERVATION: 1-2-86 and 3-2-86  
LOCATION: THE SWAMP NEAR TOMTIT TOWN  
HABITAT: TIDAL MUDFLATS  
VIEWING DISTANCE: 20 METRES  
OPTICAL AIDS USED (binoculars  telescope  magnification): 10x50, 40x  
DURATION OF OBSERVATION: ON EACH DATE hours: 45 minutes:  
BOOKS CONSULTED: PIZZEY F.G. TO THE BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA  
HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU ABOUT THE IDENTIFICATION? CERTAIN  
HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE SPECIES? SEEN IN AUSTRALIA IN 1984

State any relevant weather or sea conditions that helped or hindered observation: LIGHT WIND, SUNNY CONDITIONS

State weather conditions in the days before observation that may explain the bird's presence: STRONG WESTERLIES

If the bird was caught, banded, photographed or tape recorded please provide measurements, photographs or tapes in support. NONE

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE BIRD(S)

In the following pages please give a full description of the bird from your field notes and impressions gained at the time of sighting. Use sketches wherever possible.

Whenever you make comments that have been prompted by the books you consulted, state clearly that you have done so.

If you easily identified the bird to family level, eg. albatross, penguin, duck, tern, finch etc., you can start your description by saying so. The notes at the sides of the following pages are prompts but you can do your description in your own way if you prefer.

REGIONAL RECORDER COMMENTS ..... SIZE, PLUMAGE, TAIL AND BILL SHAPE ARE RIGHT FOR THIS SPECIES. SWOOPING FLIGHT TYPICAL.  
RECOMMEND ACCEPTANCE

RBC COMMENTS ..... ACCEPTED  
OBSERVER NOTIFIED 24/2/86

#### KIND OF BIRD

FIRST IMPRESSIONS  
'jizz'

#### SIZE

general compared with were other species in the same field of view?

#### SHAPE

body-  
neck  
tail  
wings

#### PLUMAGE COLOUR

upperparts  
forehead  
crown  
back  
rump  
wings  
wingbars  
speculum  
tail  
face  
lores  
eyestripe  
eye ring  
earcoverts

#### underparts

chin  
throat  
neck  
breast  
belly  
flanks  
undertail  
underwing

#### SOFT PARTS

colour of eye  
bill  
legs  
length of bill  
legs  
shape of bill

#### DESCR

A TERN OF MEDIUM AND OF BULKY SHAPE. DARK PATCH AROUND

LARGER THAN LITTLE TERN WITH WHICH SIZE AS R.B. GULL

MORE SOLIDLY BUILT WITH BROADER WING TAIL SQUARE AN

WINGS AND BACK TAIL WHITE NARE AND HINDNECK WING TIPS DARK, ON THE UNDERWING SMALL DARK PATCH

WHITE UNDERPARTS AND UNDER TAIL

LEGS BLACK AND

BILL THICK, BLACK

The majority of activities will be unsuitable for children under 13. The maximum number able to be accommodated is 60.

Full details of the Summer Camp will appear in the September issue.

WYNSTON COOPER

### Classified Summarised Notes

Members are reminded that the period for notes is 1 July to 30 June, and these should be with your regional recorder by 31 July. All material must go to your recorder, who will prepare a regional summary. However, if you

have visited another region, send those notes on the visit to that region's RR. Would members sending in reports please use the format of the CSN published in the June issue of *Notornis*.

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

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



## South West Pacific Records Scheme - Annual Report for 1985

The first reports to be issued based on information submitted under the S.W. Pacific Records Scheme was published in *Notornis* 32 (4). It summarised notes on Norfolk Island birds received from 10 OSNZ members, and included data collected on visits made between 1968 and 1984.

Although one or two requests for information have been dealt with, the year has been disappointing in that no new submissions have been received. OSNZ members who have information from visits to any S. W. Pacific island are asked to make it available to the scheme.

JAMES L. MOORE, Recorder

DESCRIPTION

M - LARGE SIZE. VERY PALE  
 WING WITH A SMALL BUT NOTICEABLE  
 DARK SPOT AT THE EYE

SMALLER THAN WHITE-FRONTED  
 IT ROOSTED. ABOUT THE SAME

SMALLER THAN WHITE-FRONTED TERN AND  
 WINGS  
 SLIGHTLY FORKED

PALE GREY

WITH GREY 'WASH'  
 EXTENT OF DARK GREATER  
 AROUND EYE (SEE SKETCH)

INCLUDING UNDERWINGS  
 COVERTS

LONG. BIRD SAT QUITE HIGH

AND GULL-LIKE

BEHAVIOUR

- flight
- feeding
- preening
- perching
- swimming
- display
- song or call

REACTION TO OTHER BIRDS

- flocking
- fighting

REACTION TO HUMANS

- tame
- wary

TRY A SKETCH OF THE BIRD

PHOTOGRAPHS

Use another page if needed

DESCRIPTION (Cont'd)

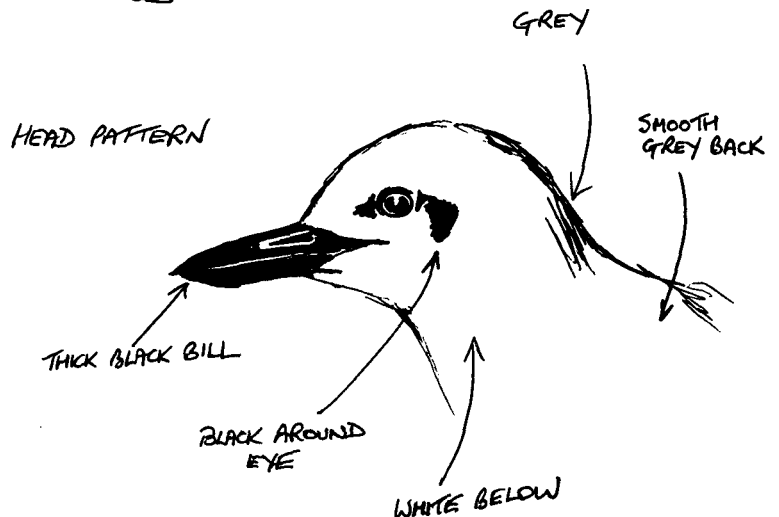
FLIGHT QUITE GRACEFUL AND BUOYANT.  
 WINGS POINTED AND SWEEPED BACK MORE THAN  
 GULLS  
 FREQUENTLY SWOOPED TO THE GROUND TO CATCH  
 PREY. ALSO SWOOPED OVER CALM WATERS.



DID NOT DIVE INTO WATER DURING THE PERIODS  
 OF OBSERVATION

REMAINED ALONE MOST OF THE TIME BUT DID  
 REST WITH GULLS, TERNS AND WADERS.  
 SHOWED SLIGHT AGGRESSION TO GODWITS  
 THAT APPROACHED IT.

WARY AND WAS THE FIRST BIRD TO FLY WHEN  
 APPROACHED



## OSNZ News - Annual Report 1986

During the past year *OSNZ news* has continued to provide members with news and accounts of the activities of the Society and its members. Usually the amount of material received closely matched the space available. Therefore each issue contained topical articles and a minimum of copy was held over for a subsequent issue. Recent issues have included maps of bird distribution, which I hope will encourage members to include relevant tidy diagrams with future contributions.

While the newsletter is being put to good use there is room for further developments. For example, organisers of national schemes could prepare interim reports while such schemes are still in progress. Such reports help maintain and may even stimulate further interest in the scheme. There is also scope for more contributions about what members are doing and for members' comments about anything ornithological.

Finally, I thank all those who contributed to *OSNZ news* during the past year, and all those who encouraged other to contribute.

PAUL SAGAR, *Editor*

## OSNZ Committee on International Ornithological Congress - Report of May 1986

Over the last few months the Committee has been very active preparing the official invitation to hold the 20th International Ornithological Congress (IOC) in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 18-25 November 1990.

The original committee of 3 - Ben Bell (convenor), Brian Bell and Peter Bull - was expanded to 6 in January 1986 with the co-option of Ralph Powlesland, Chris Robertson and Hugh Robertson.

During 1986 the Committee met frequently and in addition there were numerous working meetings of Committee members, especially in late April, when final drafts of the invitation were being completed.

In order to obtain official scientific recognition for holding such a Congress in New Zealand, the Chairman of the National Committee for Biological Sciences was approached. An application to his Committee was fully endorsed, and that Committee in turn recommended support of our Congress proposal to the Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand. In turn, the RSNZ enthusiastically supported the idea, and offered Ben Bell financial support to travel to Ottawa to present the bid. Regular contact has been maintained with the RSNZ's Executive Officers and the result of these negotiations is the joint sponsorship of a New Zealand Congress by the RSNZ and OSNZ.

Copies of the official invitation were sent

to the 10 members of the Permanent Executive Committee of the IOC in early May. The PEC will evaluate the various invitations - which we expect will be from Austria, Japan and New Zealand - and then make a recommendation to the full IOC. A decision regarding the 20th IOC is expected at the end of June.

All members of the OSNZ IOC Committee have worked very hard to get together the official invitation in time. Rarely, I suspect, has a committee of the OSNZ Council worked so actively on a topic, and it is my pleasure to thank all for their tremendous efforts. Tasks were delegated and often shared, but some particular credits appear appropriate: Brian Bell with Hugh Robertson for work on the excursion programme; Ralph Powlesland with Hugh Robertson for the scientific programme; Chris Robertson with Brian Bell for the budget; Lesley Fairbairn for the information about NZ and Christchurch; and Chris Robertson for organising the production of the final document and presentation package.

These activities show that New Zealand is prepared, willing and capable of hosting the 1990 IOC. If our bid is successful - and we are now in with a fair chance - the next 4 years will be very memorable for New Zealand. And if we are not, then 1989-90 could still be of note for we now have some very attractive proposals for an Islands cruise to celebrate 50 years of OSNZ.

BEN D. BELL, *Convenor*

## Membership of OSNZ Committees

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

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

**Christmas Cards:** Russell Thomas (Convenor), Chris Robertson.

**IOC:** Dr Ben Bell (Convenor), Brian Bell, Peter Bull, Ralph Powlesland, Chris Robertson, Hugh Robertson.

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

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

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

## Band and Tag

Most outstanding schedules for the 1985/86 banding year have been forwarded to the Banding Office but we have the feeling that not every operator has sent them in. Therefore please send all outstanding schedules in as soon as possible. Then we can get our computer file up to date.

Our contribution to 'Banding Mail Bag'

in the March issue contained an error. Black-browed Mollmawk C. F. - 24674 was found dead at Whangamata Beach on 27/10/85 not 27/10/84 as previously reported.

We have had some problems with the production of the 1983/84 and 1984/85 banding reports. These reports were written before the end of 1985 and we were waiting for a new letter-quality printer for our computer in order to produce the reports. This printer arrived early this year but constant breakdowns have prevented us from extracting the tables from the hard disk. All those who have requested a copy of these reports will receive them as soon as our computer problems are resolved.

With the game shooting season in progress the Banding Office is flooded with game-bird returns, and so banders may experience some delays with requests for materials etc. Please order well in advance so that you will not get caught out.

Recently new permits were issued for S.I. Robin in the Mt. Misery area, Nelson Lakes National Park; Broad-billed Prion and Sooty Shearwater on islands in Breaksea Sound, Fiordland National Park; Blackbird and Song Thrush in the Havelock North area; and all seabird species at sea.

No especially interesting recoveries were reported to us since our last contribution but we are still awaiting information about several overseas bands.

RODERICK O. COSSEE

## Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand

The Atlas is an essential resource manual and guide for the enthusiastic birdwatcher, the environmental planner and manager, and the student of bird ecology in New Zealand.

Due to increased postal charges and the introduction of GST this publication will be more expensive after 1 October 1986.

BUY NOW AT \$33.00 (includes postage and packing).

After 1 October 1986 the new price will be \$38.50.

Orders to OSNZ Atlas, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington North.

## NZ Antarctic Research Programme 1987/88

Proposals for research projects to be considered for inclusion in the 1987/88 NZ Antarctic Research Programme are invited by the Ross Dependency Research Committee. Research proposals can cover any of the earth, life or atmospheric sciences and be directed to a better understanding of the unique environment of Antarctica, its geological and geophysical structure, or those natural phenomena most suited to research conducted from southern latitudes.

Research proposals can be either long or short term and based at either NZ's Antarctic stations or in the field. Proposals should include a detailed outline of anticipated work, and details of the logistic support required.

Applications, which close on 31 July 1986, are reviewed by the biological, physical, or earth sciences working groups of the RDRC.

Applicants will be informed of the status of their proposals in late December 1986.

Information on the direction of current research, facilities available, and how to prepare a proposal is available from: The Secretary, RDRC, c/o DSIR, Head Office, Private Bag, Wellington.

## Colour-dyed waders – some should reach NZ

As part of the RAOU's Northern Australian Wader Study Expeditions this year, a trip has been organised to the Broome-Port Hedland area of Western Australia in August-September to study the arrival of waders migrating southwards. During this expedition, some species of waders will be colour-dyed bright yellow in the hope that they will be seen elsewhere in Australia and New Zealand during and after the southward migration. The species involved include Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, which migrate to southern Australia, and Lesser Knots which probably migrate along the north coast of Australia and on to New Zealand. Some of the latter species probably touch down in Queensland on the way.

Information about the movements of these species obtained from this exercise is best obtained if searches for colour-dyed waders are made regularly at as many places as possible.

This is an opportunity for OSNZ members to participate in another international project (the study of Banded Dotterel movements also involves observers in both NZ and Australia). Obviously observers in the Far North, Northland, Auckland, South Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Nelson and Southland are best place to check flocks of Knots. However, observers in other parts of the country are also encouraged to check for colour-dyed Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, just in case we can upset current thinking. Remember – it is just as important to report where flocks were checked and no colour-dyed birds were found.

OSNZ members can obtain further details about the project and detailed instruction sheets from: Australasian Wader Studies Group, c/o Paul Sagar, 38a Yardley Street, Christchurch 4.

BRETT LANE & PAUL SAGAR

## Robert Falla Memorial Award

At the AGM in Wellington the President, Mrs Beth Brown, announced that Council had conferred the Robert Falla Memorial Award for 1985 posthumously to Peter Child.

Council believes that Peter Child made a valuable contribution to the study of birds in New Zealand and the South Pacific, and gave services to OSNZ.

Peter will be remembered for his consistent, meticulous and reliable recording of bird life in Central Otago. Since joining OSNZ in 1956 Peter spent almost every weekend and school holiday in the field. The avifauna of Pacific Islands was also a major interest and this led him further afield. The results of his observations are recorded in numerous articles in *Notornis* and major works include the recording of Pacific Island avifaunas, birds at high altitude, and the fluctuations of birdlife in Central and North-west Otago over 30 years of observation. His publications created a lot of enquiry and correspondence. Everything he put out was new knowledge and a stimulus to others.

His wide knowledge of the recorded history of New Zealand and Pacific Island species was based on his wide reading and his lifetime habit of burrowing into books. In turn, this led him to produce his own master index to *Notornis*.

Peter and Margaret Child lived in Alexandra, isolated from other ornithologists. He would probably have said that his ornithological friends provided stimulus, mainly by correspondence. Nevertheless, it was self-motivation that got him up early and into his boots, day after day and year after year.

His services to OSNZ include being recorder for the 1972 Fiji expedition, and compiler of a master index to *Notornis*. The latter has been bequeathed to the Society and will be held by the OSNZ Library, at Auckland Institute and Museum.

In our view Peter Child was an ornithologist with a high degree of skill. We believe that he was the kind of ornithologist whom Sir Robert Falla encouraged and valued. The posthumous award of the Falla Memorial is the best acknowledgement the Ornithological Society of New Zealand can make of Peter Child's work with birds, and for the Society.

ROGER SUTTON & MAIDA BARLOW

## Regional Roundup

**Auckland:** Field work, both by individual members and as part of our regional programme, continues to provide much of interest. A visit by 16 members to Ponui Island, 24-26/4/86, to extend the observations of Easter 1985, has enabled most of the 6 km long island to be covered. Kiwis were heard in bush at north, central and southern

locations, and so evidently they have spread widely from the original release group. All of the raupo swamps tested for Spotless Crakes produced numerous responses to taped calls. NZ Dotterels, Variable Oystercatchers and Reef Herons were found in several areas, and a species tally close to 50 was logged. Transport to and around the island by the yachts of Tom Harty and Harold Goodwin was much appreciated.

A close watch for the arrival of Cattle Egrets, assisted by newspaper coverage, has yielded records from several fresh sites. The first reports were on 1/4/86 and these appear to be staging posts to the 3 main flocks. The flock at Parakai comprised 70 birds when seen on 10/5/86 by John Dowding and Nan Rothwell. During that weekend a visit to the Tapora wader roost revealed flocks of 60 Wrybills and 48 Banded Dotterels (none bearing leg bands). The expected godwit flock was accompanied by a lone Golden Plover. No Little or Fairy Terns were found, but the group of Caspian Terns included 6 banded birds among a total of 31. Several other objectives of the trip were achieved: 5 kiwis (3 male & 2 female) were heard within the bush reserve where the birds were placed over the period 1981-84. A thorough look at the lake on McLean's farm revealed a colony of nesting Pied Shag and a flock of 100 flighty Little Black Shags in winter residence. Crakes and Bitterns were also recorded but Dabchicks appear to have vacated the area.

Elsewhere in the region there have been reports of White Herons and Royal Spoonbills. Local studies being undertaken by members include surveys of the distribution of doves, Kakas, and Kookaburras. Regular beach patrols have been well supported. (Michael Taylor)

**South Auckland:** A Long-tailed Cuckoo was heard calling over Awhitu on 7/3. Another cuckoo was stunned after hitting a window at Ponga Hill, near Papakura, on 2/3 but recovered when investigated by a dog. Two apparently young Kokakos were reported on the Kokukohunui Track, Hunua Ranges, on 2/5. They flew to join a third bird when it called.

It looks as though it will be a bumper year for Cattle Egrets. Reports include 2 at Clevedon on 1/4; 10 at Turua on 5/5 (these were heading towards the usual area used by the large flock at Piako). There were 110 at Frost Road, near the Port Waikato Road, on 4/5 and this flock had increased to a record 170 by 11/5. A little further west there were 80+ at Te Kohanga on 8/5. The latest report is of a flock of 210+ at Puni on 17/5. This may be the Frost Road flock plus some from an extra flock 5 km distant.

The flock size of Spur-winged Plovers is increasing, with 25 at Frost Road on 11/5 and 50+ on drained swampland in the Mangatawhiri Valley on 3/5.

Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits have been seen again with 2 at Urquhart's property, Karaka this autumn and a single bird at the Limeworks, Miranda, on 27/4. A Mongolian Dotterel and a tattler have been seen by many at Access Bay. Rooks are still to be seen around Miranda with 36 on 18/4.

2 Cape Barren Geese arrived at Mangere and another at Whitford some months ago. One of the pair was killed when it hit a wire. It is possible that more may be about and so members are asked to keep watch for any. (Beth Brown).

**Bay of Plenty:** 11 Bitterns were seen in a swampy area of Thornton Lagoon on 13/5/86. There were at least 35 Cattle Egrets roosting in the Awaiti Wildlife Management Reserve on 16/5/86. (Roy Weston).

**Hawkes Bay:** Despite the modified nature of the area the birdlife was surprisingly rich during Easter 1986. A pair of Fernbirds was seen feeding along the edge of the pine forest and others were heard calling from a swampy area. Kiwis were heard at night near the lake and Kaweka hut. 2 Robin were seen in the pine forest and 1 was heard from the track between Lakeside Road and Tutaekuri River. An adult Shining Cuckoo was seen near the end of the Lawrence Road to Tutaekuri River track. (Bob & Sybil Creswell).

**Manawatu/Horowhenua/Wanganui:** Although the summer did not produce any notable waders at the Manawatu Estuary there were good numbers of the regular visitors. A complete count of the estuary on 9/3/86 produced the following species: 426 Bar-tailed Godwits, 112 Knots, 1 Far Eastern Curlew, 23 Golden Plovers, 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 28 Banded Dotterels, 14 Wrybills, 43 SIPOs, 2 Variable Oystercatchers, 271 Pied Stilts, 3 Spur-winged Plovers, 15 Royal Spoonbills, 8 Caspian Terns and 1 White-winged Black Tern.

The number of godwits has been over 400 all summer but counts of Knots were variable e.g. 112 on 9/3 and 216 on 29/1. Golden Plovers were usually difficult to find with 12 on 29/1, 40+ on 9/2 and 23 on 9/3.

Walter Jackson reports that Cattle Egrets returned to the Lake Horowhenua area in early April. There were 3 on 4/4 and 8 on 5/4. Of the 2 banded birds present in this flock during the 1985 winter 1 had been banded at Lawrence, near the NSW/Queensland border, but no information is available about the other bird as it appears to have lost some bands.

Wanganui members were active over the summer, when regular visits made to the river proved rewarding. Their species list included 127 Bar-tailed Godwits, 1 Golden Plover, 25 Knots, 1 Asiatic Whimbrel, 1 Great Knot, 1 Wrybill, 1 Gull-billed Tern, 5 Little Terns, 300 White-fronted Terns (including 3 with bands - from Nelson), and 2 Cattle Egrets. (Lindsay Davies).

**Marlborough:** Cattle Egrets are back at Grovetown. There were 22 on 13/4 and 61 by the end of April.

Nancy Pickens was on Mt Stokes during early February and near the bushline was pleased to see a flock of 12 Yellowheads.

In January Rex Frost saw only 1 coot at Lake Elterwater and a pair of coots at Lake Rotorua (Kaikoura). (Beverly North).

**West Coast:** A Buller's Shearwater flew north past Charleston on 1/1/86. Although Gannets have been recorded regularly in small numbers there is no sign of an increase in the roost on the Steeples. There were usually 3-4 Arctic Skuas off Charleston in January and 4 Black-fronted Terns were present briefly at the Orowaiti Lagoon on 2/2/86. There were a few White Herons in the usual places and a Little Egret at the Oporara on 23/11/85. A bird reported from the Orowaiti on 28/1/86 is almost certainly a White Ibis but the bird was not present over the following days. 2 Grey Teal at the Orowaiti are the first records for that area; there were also 2 at Canoe Creek.

Keas were recorded breeding in the Smythe Range and were present on Mt Bovis, while there was an unusual record of 1 over the main street of Westport on 19/2/86. Kakas and parakeets were recorded from L. Haupiri in October, the Ngakawau Basin in January and the Karamea catchment in September. Rock Wrens were present at the Hunt River on 26/1/86 and in the Smythe Range on 9/11/85.

Last year local trappers were asked to report sightings of Blue Ducks and other obvious birds such as Keas, Kakas and Kiwis. The Blue Duck response was especially good, with often detailed notes on location and family size. Perhaps you could ask local trappers to do the same? (Derek Onley & Stewart Lauder).

**Canterbury:** Lake Ellesmere continues to be the scene of much activity. Recent reports include 1 Black Stilt, 2 Little Whimbrels, 1 Greenshank, 1 Siberian Tattler, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Little Tern, 2 Crested Grebes and 35 Royal Spoonbills (a record number for the area). Most of the arctic waders had left the lake by the end of April and during a survey in May only 1 each of Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper remained.

Andrew Crossland reports 32 Royal Spoonbills at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary in May - presumably most of the birds which were reported from Ellesmere in the Autumn. Other species at the estuary include 1 Little Egret, 1 White Heron and 4 Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits. Some of the latter have assumed breeding plumage.

Cattle Egret numbers appear to be higher than in recent years with at least 72 in the vicinity of Ellesmere.

The urban bird mapping scheme, based on the greater Christchurch metropolitan area,

got off to a good start. During the past season 73 species were recorded when sheets were filed for 124 of the 284 squares in the scheme. Attention has now turned to surveying squares during the winter months (May-July inclusive).

An unusual report for Christchurch is the sighting of at least 2 Keas from several suburbs. (Paul Sagar).

**Otago:** Mr & Mrs Widgery report seeing a flock of godwits at Access Bay behave in a rather unusual fashion. During a heavy rain-squall lasting about 10 minutes, the godwits all lifted their bills straight up in the air. The effect was somewhat like a group of soldiers presenting arms at a parade. When the rain eased the birds resumed feeding in the normal fashion.

As far as I know the first sightings of Canada Geese for the Dunedin area were 4 at Hoopers Inlet on 23/2/86, and 6 in flooded pastures in the East Taieri on 28/2/86. 2 had red colour-bands and had been banded at Lake Ki-Wainono.

Trevor Morrison, one of our regular beach patrollers, found 1 Shy Mollmawk and 2 Fluttering Shearwaters near Hampden. Cattle Egrets are returning; Kim Morrison saw 4 near the Titri Bridge on 1/3/86, and they were seen there again on 9/3 by Tony Hocken. Kim Morrison saw a male Gull Bunting in the Berwick Range on 15/2/86. (Peter Schweigman).

Compiled by PAUL SAGAR

## OSNZ Greeting Cards

Due to increased postage charges and the introduction of GST OSNZ Greeting Cards will only be sold direct to members up until 15 September 1986. The minimum order is 5 packs (of 10 cards each).

The cards available are: Tui, Shining Cuckoo, Welcome Swallow, Fantail and Mixed Packs. Each pack contains 10 cards and envelopes.

Price includes post and handling.

5 packs at \$13.00

10 packs at \$22.00

Orders for more than 10 packs will cost \$2.00 per pack.

Order now from OSNZ Cards, P.O. Box 29041, Wellington.

## Mobile nest

A Kaikoura fisherman was interested to find a Black-backed Gull nesting in a life-buoy on his boat. The birds left the nest when the boat put to sea but returned when their nest was at anchor.

IAN FLUX & JANE MAXWELL