



OSNZ news

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4,
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No. 41 December, 1986

**Note: Deadline for the March issue will
be 21 February 1987.**

Membership renewal

Subscriptions for 1987 are due on 1 January and to ensure receiving the March *Notornis* and *OSNZ news* promptly, please forward payments with invoice to the Hon. Treasurer before 28 February.

D. F. BOOTH, *Hon. Treasurer*,
P.O. Box 35337, Browns Bay, Auckland.

Falla Memorial Award

Nominations for the above award should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, OSNZ, c/- Post Office, Pauatahanui, Wellington, by 30 April 1987. 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*.

New OSNZ car stickers

A new OSNZ car sticker, designed by TV graphics designer Stephen Ellis, has been printed and is available from your RR.

These stickers need not be confined to your car but can go into books, on boats, binocular & telescope cases, packs, hats, toothbrushes etc. The price is only \$1.00, all of which assists the funds of your region. They are tremendous value and last for ages - one of mine outlasted my car.

PAUL SAGAR

IOC Sponsorship

The IOC committee are seeking sponsorship for the meeting in NZ.

Members can assist the committee by advising them of the names and locations of business' which use birds in their names or logos/heraldic arms etc. How are birds used and where e.g. in advertising?

Therefore as you take your summer holidays note down any uses of birds and the species. You could start a whole new 'tick list'.

Please send your observations to:

C. J. R. Robertson, P.O. Box 12-397,
Wellington North.

C. J. R. ROBERTSON

OSNZ Annual Conference & AGM, Dunedin, May 1987

Another reminder about next year's
Annual Conference & AGM.

Planning of the live-in Conference, at Knox College, is well in hand. All activities, bar the field trip, are under one roof.

The accent will be on the Otago Yellow-eyed Penguins. We will have an update on the Banded Dotterel project and various other speakers have been secured.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following four Council members retire in May 1987 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mr. D. F. Booth (Treasurer)

Mr. B. D. Heather (Editor)

Mr. R. S. Slack (Secretary)

Mr. P. D. Gaze

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28th February 1987, 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 1987 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1987 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1987 OSNZ Annual Conference & A.G.M. will be held in Dunedin on Saturday 23rd May.

R. S. SLACK
Hon. Secretary

c/o Post Office,
Pauatahanui,
Wellington

RAOU subscriptions

To avoid costly bank drafts, subscriptions for 1987 may be paid in NZ currency to the RAOU account in Auckland (c/o B. J. Gill, Auckland Museum, Private Bag, Auckland). Rates are NZ\$64 with the journal *Emu* and NZ\$32 without *Emu*. All members receive the quarterly newsletter. Enclose SAE if receipt required.

B. J. GILL

Binders for Notornis

During the past 2 years Council has considered options to make binders for copies of *Notornis* available to members. Although several custom-made covers are available on the market, Council has been unable to obtain a quote economical enough for members to obtain covers at a reasonable price. Therefore Council has decided not to finance such a scheme.

Several members have used the standard Olympic 16K School Journal Cover, which holds one volume (i.e. 4 issues) and an index. These covers, which cost about \$1.20, are sturdy and provide a practical way of binding a volume of *Notornis*. Council recommends this method of storage.

To personalise each folder an OSNZ car sticker (available from RRs) can be added to the front cover.

D. E. CROCKETT

Gordon Williams Postgraduate Fellowship in Biological Sciences

Further to the announcement in *OSNZ news* 40 Lincoln College advise that the first Fellowship has been awarded to Mr J. D. Holloway.

James Holloway is currently completing his M.Agr.Sc. at Lincoln and the award, of about \$3,600, is subject to him being formally admitted to a Ph. D programme next year. His particular interests centre on wildlife management, especially the integration of wildlife and agriculture. He would like to see increased levels of animal diversity on farmland and believes this could occur without undue changes to agricultural management.

Farewell Spit summer census — November 1986

Between 3 and 5 November the summer census of waders on Farewell Spit was undertaken by 17 OSNZ members.

The main census was completed on 3 November in fine but windy (only half a gale) conditions which made observations using telescopes difficult and some of the large flocks of waders particularly touchy. With so many eager counters available the

Spit was divided into 5 sections, which meant that some had to walk into the wind.

Many shearwaters and mollymawks were passing eastwards just off Ocean Beach.

The following day was allotted to looking for the rarer waders and acquainting the first-time visitors with some of the other areas of the Spit and the birds that they were not familiar with. The weather was perfect with fine, calm conditions and most people returned to the cottage that night with their first sunburn of the season.

On 5 November the farm paddocks received some attention and 200 SIPO and 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper were located.

Highlights of the trip were 2 Wrybills, 2 Sanderlings, 13 Far-Eastern Curlews, 7 Royal Spoonbills, 1 NZ Dotterel, and bucket loads of delicious mussels.

JENNY HAWKINS &
HUGH ROBERTSON

Auckland Region Field Studies Group

A regional Field Studies Group has been set up in Auckland on a trial basis.

The broad aims of the group are to co-ordinate fieldwork and to explore ways in which the quantity and quality of fieldwork carried out in the Auckland region might be improved.

Areas where the group could make a useful contribution are:

- (1) Attempt to increase co-ordination with allied groups.
- (2) Help promote the Society's existing national schemes and encourage members to participate in national counts and other projects as they arise.
- (3) Provide assistance, when asked, with individual or group projects. This might include advice on planning a study, providing manpower, or helping with analysis of data, literature searches or publication.
- (4) Initiate projects as the need or opportunity arises and periodically, evaluate the region's projects, suggesting modification to them where appropriate.
- (5) Learn methods e.g. for surveying, counting, analysing data etc. and transmit them.
- (6) Collect and maintain a file of information useful for planning and carrying out fieldwork. This would be available for all members to consult and may include maps, survey forms, information about methods etc.

The group realises that most OSNZ members are amateurs and many will not want to become deeply involved in complicated projects. However, the work of the group may help members strike a balance between obtaining useful and

meaningful results and getting a lot of enjoyment out of their birdwatching.

Current members of the group are Sara Brouwer, Stephen Davies, John Dowding, Betty Searle and Michael Taylor.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Cook Strait — September 1986

The DSIR research vessel *Rapuhia* worked in Cook Strait throughout September and therefore was well placed to note when the first returning migrant shearwaters appeared.

First seen was a Flesh-footed Shearwater on 8 September (41° 50'S, 174° 55'E). Sooty Shearwaters appeared on 10 September (41° 59'S, 175° 00'E) and Buller's Shearwater on 15 September (42° 01'S, 174° 51'E). Other sightings worthy of note were single Yellow-nosed Mollymawks on 15 & 20 September; single Southern Giant Petrels on 19 & 21 September; single Southern Fulmars on 9 & 18 September; and a single Kerguelen Petrel on 18 September.

Among the many hundreds of Cape Pigeons in the Strait one on 6 September appeared to be totally white. However, when seen close the patterns on the back and upperwing, usually black, were present but were a light reddish fawn.

Philip Battley's note in *OSNZ news* 38 referring to large numbers of prions seen from Waverly Beach in November was of considerable interest. There have been large numbers of prions in the area each time I have passed through and it appears that the shallows over the banks, which extend well out to sea between Cape Egmont and Wanganui, are an important prion feeding ground. On 21 September 1986 when off the furthest seaward extension of the bank (39° 54'S, 174° 01'E) it was estimated that there were at least 100 000 prions present in about 20 separate feeding flocks. With the onset of south-westerly gales birds feeding here would be on a lee-shore and vulnerable to stranding. This may well be one of the sources of the prions that end up on the North Island west coast beaches.

JOHN JENKINS

Books wanted

I wish to obtain the following books and would be pleased to hear from any OSNZ member wishing to sell.

Witherby *et al.* *Handbook of British Birds* 5 Vols.

Rand & Gillard *Handbook of New Guinea Birds*.

Iredale *Birds of Paradise*. Collins New Naturalist series — any titles.

Lack *Ecological Adaptations for Breeding in Birds*.

Please contact:
John Fennell, P.O. Box 12, Darfield

Hawke's Bay riverbed survey – Labour Weekend 1986

During Labour Weekend 1986, 40 OSNZ members gathered in Hawke's Bay for a survey of the three main rivers – the Tukituki, Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro. River conditions were satisfactory for the Tukituki and Tutaekuri but the Ngaruroro proved difficult in parts because of recent flooding.

Highlights of the weekend included the discovery of 2 SIPO nests, each with 2 eggs, on the Ngaruroro River. One nest was very close to the site where W. & M. Twydlé found a similar nest in 1982. Of the 4 other SIPOs seen upriver from these 2 nests, all exhibited breeding behaviour by skulking and false sitting.

Another interesting sighting by Ray Pierce and Wayne & Margaret Twydlé was of a male Wrybill in breeding plumage on the Ngaruroro River.

The following table summarises the results of the weekend's counts, and presents the results from surveys completed in previous years.

Species	Ngaruroro			Tutaekuri			Tukituki		
	1967	1972	1986	1967	1972	1986	1967	1972	1986
Black Shag	14+	10	5	18	37	49	46	10	36
Little Black Shag	16	1	0	0	0	0	46	0	0
Little Shag	24	7	12	18	18	7	60	0	9
White-faced Heron	10	13	10	8	20	13	17	39	33
Paradise Shelduck	108	52	150	13	35	47	35	31	431
Mallard	29+	50+	31	105	120	59	255	136	273
Grey Duck	0	2	0	30	16	0	23	0	2
Grey Teal	0	0	4	0	0	5	0	0	17
Shoveler	0	0	0	0	30+	0	0	0	15
Pukeko	2	5	0	3	2	0	0	2	2
SIPO	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spur-winged Plover	0	0	56	0	0	38	0	0	183
Banded Dotterel	246+	216+	480	299	174	509	500	310	1149
Black-fronted Dotterel	96	134	145	105	120	200	122	95	341
Wrybill	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turnstone	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pied Stilt	181+	173+	220	344	302+	310	464	323+	482
Black-backed Gull	5032	1600	2134	672	447+	465	518	136+	1202
Red-billed Gull	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0
Black-billed Gull	16	16	8	366	10	62	252	28	174
White-fronted Tern	0	0	0	0	50	63	0	0	0

WAYNE & MARGARET TWYDLÉ (Regional Recorders)

Bird distribution in Christchurch

Now that the definitive atlas of bird distribution in New Zealand has been completed the scene is set for gathering much more detailed information on bird distribution over smaller areas. Starting in October 1985 Christchurch members have been plotting bird distribution in the Christchurch Metropolitan area.

Members are asked to compile bird lists from all 1,000m² grid squares which cover the city. These grid squares are standard on all NZMS 260 topographic maps and there are about 300 in Christchurch. The survey is divided into 2 periods – summer (October-January) and winter (May-July).

A survey such as this could answer such questions as: Which species breed in the metropolitan area? How widespread are native bush birds, finches, wetland birds? Which species are present in winter but not in summer and visa versa? The survey could also provide information on which are the most valuable habitats for different bird species in the city.

All Christchurch members have been issued with survey forms and the information requested includes date, square number, time spent in the square, habitats surveyed, bird species present and whether they were breeding, and an indication of whether the list is complete, partial or a month list.

An advantage of this survey is that all members can participate e.g. by compiling

a list of birds seen from the kitchen window!

During the first summer of the survey some 247 lists were compiled, covering 124 squares. Several squares, particularly those about the central city, university and the Avon-Heathcote, were visited several times. A total of 76 species was recorded. These included Cirl Buntings, Shining Cuckoos (breeding), Cattle Egrets, Little Egret, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wrybills, Golden Plover, Asiatic Dowitcher, and Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits.

A Little Blue Penguin was seen some distance up the Avon River and NZ Scaup, Grey Teal, and Shoveler were breeding on the Avon. I was surprised just how common and widespread all the finches were within the city. All but Chaffinches were found throughout, the Chaffinch being restricted to more established gardens and woodlands. The only native species which occurred widely were Fantails, Silvereyes and Grey Warblers. Little Owl records came from many parks and some gardens from all over the city.

COLIN O'DONNELL

A day on Tiritiri Matangi

On 17/8/86 an OSNZ party, supported by numerous friends and relations, spent the day tree-planting and Saddleback hunting on Tiritiri Matangi.

Perfect weather guaranteed a full complement on the *Ngaroma*, including one unintended passenger. A Mrs Mitchell

ran onto the Devonport Wharf at the very last minute and jumped on board. Off we went and only when we were well up the channel did Mrs Mitchell suspect that perhaps she was not on the 9.40 Blue Boat to Rangitoto after all. Nevertheless, I think that she enjoyed her day.

A welcome cup of tea or coffee was provided on arrival and Ray Walter gave us an introductory talk about the re-forestation plan. Tim Lovegrove then described the Saddleback programme amid steady barracking from the resident Tuis and Bellbirds. The 2000 trees prepared for us were planted in double-quick time and lunch/sunbathing followed. Ray estimates that the first phase of planting the island will be completed by the end of 1987, several years ahead of schedule.

Nearly 2 hours were available for birdwatching and exploration, and most of those who wanted to see Saddlebacks were able to do so. A number of Red-crowned Parakeets were also seen and heard. Three prions and a Black Petrel, all from Bird Rescue, were released.

The 2 Variable Oystercatchers were at their usual station on rocks near the jetty as we left at 3.30 p.m. Flat calm conditions on both legs of the journey meant that a few Fluttering Shearwaters were the only seabirds seen.

Many thanks are due to all friends and their relations for their efforts, and especially to Nan Rothwell for organising such a splendid day so efficiently.

JOHN DOWDING

ICBP XX World Conference: 1990

At the recent meeting of the ICBP Seabird Specialist Group (SSG) at Kingston, Canada in June 1986, there was strong support for holding a symposium and workshop, associated with the 1990 World Conference, on the above theme.

We have been encouraged to proceed on the above theme by the ICBP Secretariat and I agreed to draft and circulate this first preliminary announcement on behalf of the planning group which initially comprises N. J. Collar, P. McGill-Harestad, C. J. R. Robertson, and myself.

A major objective of the symposium and workshop would be to assemble comprehensive accounts of the biology and ecology of all seabird species that could be regarded as threatened, with particular reference to:

- Their conservation – by detailing the threats they face.
- The acquisition of fresh data with which to assess their actual status.

Such a volume might have the following uses – to bring together all that is known about the rarer species; to identify gaps in knowledge and promote efforts to remedy this; to summarise the threats facing threatened species; to recommend and promote appropriate action to remedy these.

At present it is envisaged that a one-day symposium would focus attention on certain species, such as case histories to illustrate the gaps in our knowledge of the rarer species and the range of threats confronting a selection of threatened species. The workshop (1-1½ days) might then undertake to review the prepared species accounts, to prepare a synthesis of the key findings in a way that would have maximum impact and effect, and to prepare co-ordinated recommendations for priority action.

JOHN CROXALL

(The above is included for the information of members, particularly as the meeting itself is likely to be held in NZ. Ed.)

Wrybill migration

Since 1982 over 100 Wrybills have been banded on the Rakaia and Ashley Rivers. This spring about another 40 have been colour-banded, with new rivers being the Rangitata, Cass and Tekapo. Most sightings to date have come from Lake Ellesmere (migration stopover) and from around Auckland. This summer (December-February) I would appreciate a close watch being kept at all Wrybill migration stopover sites (e.g. Ellesmere and Manawatu Estuary) and then on the wintering sites near Auckland. Members can do this while looking for colour-banded Banded Dotterels!

Please note all sighting details, including number checked for bands and

instances of nil returns. Also please note the sex of banded birds – males have a black band across the forehead, females do not. Such information could be useful in cases where some older birds may have lost bands.

All returns should be sent to Ken Hughey, Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, P.O. Box 19-546, Christchurch.

KEN HUGHEY

An old Wrybill?

On 7/10/86 I trapped a female Wrybill on its nest near the Potts River delta, South Canterbury. Although I could read only the prefix and last 3 digits of the metal band on the right leg the Banding Office confirmed it as B-48438.

The bird was first banded on 6/4/78 at Miranda, Firth of Thames, by Rod Hay who recorded it as a juvenile. It was colour-banded and when recaptured at Miranda on 17/8/80 it retained its full complement of bands. This bird had no colour bands when I caught it but is now banded with an individually recognisable combination.

Is a 9-year old Wrybill old? Perhaps a few more years of watching this bird will help us find out.

KEN HUGHEY

Colour-dyed Waders

Members are reminded to watch out for colour-dyed waders. All Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Lesser Knots, and Bar-tailed Godwits caught by the NW Australia expedition in August-September were dyed yellow.

In addition, Interwader is planning to catch and dye waders in SE Asia either pink or blue.

Dyed birds are often best identified in flight, when the coloured underwing can be seen easily in wheeling flocks.

Please report any sightings to Paul Sagar, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4.

PAUL SAGAR

Unusual encounters of the bird kind

On 7/11/85, in the eastern Bay of Plenty, I had 3 unusual encounters with different birds in the space of about an hour.

The first was on the side of the old Motu Road, immediately adjacent to the entrance to Ruamoko Marae, where 2 Bitterns were standing on the margin of the road (a considerable distance from any cover). As I drove past they flew across the road, one almost touching the roof of my car.

The second and third encounters were in a side stream of the Takaputahi River, to the east of Toatoa. A pair of Paradise Shelducks flew off at my approach (now on foot) and then circled and flew back towards me, whereupon the female collided with a strand of fencing wire suspended across the stream. She made a wobbly landing but appeared uninjured as later she flew without any apparent trouble. Obviously birds experience similar problems to our aviators. A little further upstream a Harrier was being harassed by 2 Spur-winged Plovers. Tired of dodging them, the Harrier landed on a wire fence. However, it was a precarious landing on the wire strand and the Harrier toppled forward. Instead of falling to the ground, the tip of one talon became wedged between 2 strands of wire and it was neatly suspended upside down, where it would have remained if I hadn't released it.

W. B. SHAW

Wrybills galore

Unusually large numbers of Wrybills were seen at the Manawatu Estuary and Wanganui Rivermouth in October.

At the Manawatu Estuary numbers were low on 2/10 with 7 birds present (M. Olsen & W. Jackson), but on 5/10 about 80-90 were present (M. Tarburton & M. Wenham). By 9/10 there were 117 Wrybills (M. Olsen & W. Jackson). Then on 12/10 800+ Wrybills were sheltering from the weather or feeding on the mudflats at the northern side of the sandpit (G. Randle). Numbers were still relatively high on 22/10 at 60 birds, but had fallen to only 11 by 27/10 (M. Olsen & W. Jackson).

Over the past 12 years we have never seen more than 36 Wrybills at the Manawatu Estuary at any one time and so the big influx in October this year is most unusual.

At the Wanganui Rivermouth 30+ Wrybills were seen at the beginning of October (G. Randle) and 34 on 5/10 (O. Torr), but a week later none was present. Counts of only a few birds are normally expected at Wanganui.

It appears that this year the Manawatu and Wanganui Estuaries were stopover points for Wrybills migrating to South Island breeding grounds. These estuaries do not appear to have been important stopover points in the recent past and so it will be interesting to see if we are again visited by large flocks in autumn and spring 1987. The influx in October would seem fairly late for breeding adults to move south and the birds may have been non-breeding juveniles. Alternatively there may have been some disruption to normal breeding activities in early spring down south.

LINDSEY DAVIES

A bird trip to Tahiti

From 2 to 13 October 1985 8 kiwis, led by Stuart Chambers, enjoyed a birdwatching trip to Tahiti, Moorea and Bora Bora. Members of the trip were Pyke & Maureen Fagan (Waitakaruru), Althea Northey (Greenlane), Jessie Gourdie (Ashburton), Peg & Roger Chorlton (Wellington), and Stuart & Alison Chambers (Hamilton).

The trip was planned as pleasure rather than an arduous ornithological effort. However, we researched the literature and found it meagre. Sandy Bartle at the National Museum, obliged us by locating the only English language copy in the country of *The Birds of Tahiti* by J. C. Thibault & D. T. Holyoak. This source gives 33 species for the region but we increased this to 46 by consulting several other references.

We saw 27 species and included the first reported sighting of Red-vented Bulbul and Zebra Dove. We spent 3 days each on Tahiti, Moorea and Bora Bora, with a further day on Tahiti on the way home. Access off the road and to the interior is not easy. There are a few rugged side roads and well-known tracks to waterfalls. The road to Lake Vaihiria, high in the mountains of Tahiti, is the access route to new hydroelectric works and with cable laying in progress our drivers had difficulties. Grey Ducks were on the lake.

Shorebirds seen included the melodious Wandering Tattler, Golden Plover and Reef Heron (white and dark phase). Seabirds seen often were Tahiti Petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird and Lesser Frigate Bird. Crested Terns and Brown Noddies were everywhere. Only the Brown Booby was seen of the 3 booby species reported from the region. Migratory species such as Long-tailed Cuckoo were still away in NZ and most waders were still in the north.

The beautiful Fruit Dove was seen in bush under cliffs on Moorea, and Zebra Dove was present on all 3 islands. We did not see the Pacific Pigeon or the rare Tahiti Lorikeet. Some of these rare birds may survive high in the mountains which we did not attempt to climb. We did have close views of the 2 kingfishers – Venerated Kingfisher and Bora Bora Kingfisher. Of the smaller birds we could not confirm a sighting of Scarlet Tanager but found the 2 species of waxbill (Red-browed and Common) regularly on open grassland and around houses, together with the Chestnut-breasted Mannakin and Red-vented Bulbul.

Travel in Tahiti apart from rental car is by the ubiquitous truck, with its primitive bench seats.

ROGER CHORLTON

National Wader Count – Winter 1986

Further to the account in the previous issue (*OSNZ news* 40: 4-5) I now have all results to hand. The revised national total is 132 527 birds our highest of the 3 winter counts completed so far.

The final total of Banded Dotterels (see Table) was 8486, up nearly 1000 on our previous high. This may reflect higher

breeding success last summer or increased effort and knowledge of their whereabouts on our part. The final total of 3145 Wrybills is down substantially on previous years and is cause for concern. The number of Pied Stilts is also the highest recorded to date.

An addition to Table 2 (*OSNZ news* 40: 4) is Parengarenga, where 2445 birds were counted.

PAUL SAGAR

Waders counted in New Zealand, June-July 1986 — amended totals

	Far North	National Total
S.I. Pied Oyster Catcher	11	80 318
Variable Oystercatcher	287	1 789
Golden Plover	-	1
Spur-winged Plover	79	463
NZ Dotterel	183	761
Banded Dotterel	817	8 486
Mongolian Dotterel	-	1
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	88
Wrybill	128	3 145
Far-Eastern Curlew	-	8
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	10
Whimbrel species	-	4
Bar-tailed Godwit	248	9 610
Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit	-	1
Hudsonian Godwit	-	1
Greenshank	-	1
Tattler species	-	1
Turnstone	154	970
Lesser Knot	665	5 417
Curlew Sandpiper	-	3
Red-necked Stint	-	11
Pied Stilt	1605	21 339
Black Stilt	-	58
Hybrid Stilt	-	41
TOTAL	4177	132 527

Cuckoo behaviour

Recently, I watched pre-mating behaviour of Shining Cuckoos at Kowhai Bush, near Kaikoura.

The behaviour involved quiet calling with the (presumed) male giving the first upward half of the usual song and the female giving the second downward part (although not always in the right order). The male approached the female 4 times during the half hour observation and touched her bill as though courtship feeding. No food was passed, the female squatted slightly, held her tail in a Stutchbird-like posture and moved it back and forth similar to a Willie Wagtail motion.

I am interested in the timing and details of courtship and copulation in both species of cuckoos in NZ. If anyone has made observations similar to the above, or

seen other behaviour indicative of mating in either Shining or Long-tailed Cuckoos, please could you contact me.

IAN McLEAN, Dept. Zoology, University of Canterbury, P.B. Christchurch

Regional Roundup

Far North/Northland: Cattle Egrets were recorded from a large number of sites this year. The earliest record was of 2 at Owkata on 27/3 (John & Mavis Stoneham), followed by 2 at Cape Maria van Diemen on 29/3 (Pat Miller), and 14 in a pine tree at Owkata on 31/3 (Kathy Moreton). Birds were also recorded from near Cape Reinga, Ngataki, Pukepoto, Unahi, Herekino, Waimanoni, north of Kaitaia Borough boundary, Oruru Valley, Kainarua, Oruaiti, Kaeo, Rangiahu, Kawakawa, and Pakaraka.

Australian Little Grebes continue to

increase. The first sightings of this species in Northland was made by Pat Miller on a roadside lake near Glinkes Gully in 1972/73. Since then they have turned up in a number of places, from the Pouto Lakes to the Far North.

The 10 grebes noted by George and Julia Watola on Lake Owhareiti in July is the largest concentration noted in the north. Since then the grebes appear to have dispersed, no doubt to smaller bodies of water where they could breed. (Laurie Howell & David Crockett)

Auckland: Our recent meetings have covered aspects of the Canadian Arctic by Ian Jamieson, studies of Kiwis in Northland by Gretchen Rasch, and Brown Teal research by Grant Dumbell.

To encourage and co-ordinate field work in the region we have formed a studies group and this move reflects an upswing in the range of activities in which members are becoming involved.

The spring survey of tracks in the Waitakere Ranges took place on 13/9 and it was pleasing to see and hear Tomtits at a number of sites. Two weeks later 20 members conducted a coastal search around Orewa and the Whangaparua Peninsula with dotterel and oystercatchers as the main focus.

Recent visitors have included Peter Sherrington from Calgary, who greatly enjoyed a weekend in which he was helped to find 63 species including old friends (feathered) from his native UK. Other birders are not always so rewarding to entertain, especially those with highly specific wants on the endemic list but quite prepared to turn the nose up at a Terek Sandpiper.

A Terek Sandpiper was a recent arrival at the Mangere Ponds, where it roosted on dry ground in the company of stilts and 4 Golden Plovers.

News from Mangawhai, reported by Dick Hooper on 20/10/86, is that the Caspian Tern colony was well advanced and, with more than 250 birds within the fenced part of the dunes, the colony was decidedly larger than last year. (Michael Taylor)

Bay of Plenty: During the winter Black-fronted Terns were most inconsiderate in not getting together in one flock, where they could be seen and counted. The best

counts were of 6 at the Rangitaiki Rivermouth and 25 feeding over fields at Awaiti on 29/6. The most rewarding aspect of this winter's Black-fronted Terns was that 8 or 9 of the birds were first-years.

The Matata Lagoons were surveyed on 19/7/86 and the species list included: 1660 Mallards, 39 Black Swans, 135 Shoveler, 60 Grey Ducks, 18 Paradise Shelduck, 90 Scaup, 16 Black Shags, 7 Little Shags, 14 Little Black Shags, 5 Canada Geese, 2 White Herons, 88 Pied Stilts, 3 NZ Dotterels, 3 Variable Oystercatchers, 2 Spur-wing Plovers, 1 Bittern, 16 Black-fronted Terns and 2 Caspian Terns. (Paddy Latham)

Manawatu/Horowhenua/Wanganui: Members have made regular visits to the Manawatu and Wanganui Estuaries during September, October and November.

Counts on the north side of the Manawatu Estuary have provided a good indication of the arrival times of arctic waders in our region. These indicate a gradual increase in godwit numbers from mid-September before numbers stabilised around the 3-400 mark from early October. A small number of Knots appeared in the second week of September and there was a rapid increase in numbers in the second week of October. Numbers of Golden Plover were a little more erratic until the third week of October.

In mid-September some of the godwits and Knots still had breeding colour. Other interesting sightings at the Manawatu Estuary were 1 Red-necked Stint on 22/10, 1 Turnstone on 7/11, 1 Asiatic Whimbrel on 25/10 and 1 Little Tern on 2 & 25/10. Observers at the estuary were M. & M. Olsen, W. Jackson, M. Tarburton, and M. Wenham.

At the Wanganui Estuary 200 godwits were present at the start of October. This is an unusually large number for this estuary, but numbers had fallen to 30 by 13/10. Up to 30 Knots were present in early October, which is also a large number for this estuary. A whimbrel was seen on 1 & 9/11. Observers at the estuary were G. Randle and O. Torr.

Walter Jackson continues to keep a close watch on the Cattle Egrets at Lake Horowhenua and at Whirikino, near Foxton. From winter high counts of 60 and 240 respectively, numbers had fallen to 18 and 120 respectively on 13/11. No sign of

any breeding activity locally as yet. (Lindsay Davies)

Canterbury: Waders and other water birds provided most interest in recent months.

In October Kay Stark reported a Large Sand Dotterel at the Ashley Estuary. Then during November Lake Ellesmere provided members with sighting of 17 Royal Spoonbills (these were a little late in returning to their breeding site – or are they going to set up another colony at the lake?), 2 Glossy Ibis, 1 Little Tern, 128 Golden Plovers, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Black Stilt, 1 Terek Sandpiper, 2 Pectoral Sandpipers, and 5 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

At least 42 Cattle Egrets were still present near Ellesmere on 2/11, perhaps they have decided not to make the long journey to Australia. (Paul Sagar)

Otago: George Grant reported a Rook at the Taieri side of Three Mile Hill on 21/8/86. The next day this bird was seen sitting on the back of a sheep. Bill Ahlers and Dave York saw another Rook, also on the back of a sheep on 13/9, near Papanui Beach.

Alison Nevill and Dave York commented on the large flocks of Brown Creepers in the Berwick Forest and Ross Reserve during August.

On 5 & 7/9 Rob Soulsby observed 2 Glossy Ibises near Lake Tuakitoto.

Finally, on 21/9 Tony Hocken saw a Curlew at Papanui Inlet. It is not very often that we have a Curlew overwintering in Otago. (Peter Schweigman)

Southland: Through the drive of Maida Barlow and the physical efforts of herself, her uncle, Roger Sutton, Ian Matieson, Jim McKenzie, Dale Walker, and Grant, Bill and Michael Allen the new Redcliff Hide is now on site.

Recent sightings include 2 White-winged Black Terns, seen feeding in a paddock beside the road south of Joseph Hill on 27/8. A Nankeen Kestrel was reported twice in the last week of July. Both sightings were made on the north side of Awarua Bay. A relatively fresh specimen of a Sooty Tern was found recently on Centre Island by Gary Slater, the lighthouse keeper. Kim Morrison reports finding 2 further island breeding sites of Broad-billed Prions in Chalky Inlet. (Wynston Cooper)