



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. 42 March, 1987

Note: Deadline for the June issue will be
16th May.

Annual Conference & AGM – Dunedin

Preparations for the 1987 Conference and AGM to be held in Dunedin during the weekend of 23-24 May are complete. By popular demand this conference follows the trend set in Nelson in the form of a live-in gathering at Knox Theological College, Arden Street, North Dunedin: with accommodation, AGM, conference and lectures all under one roof.

The field trip on Saturday will take us to the Otago Peninsula. Participants in a bird study course, part of the University of Otago Extension programme, are also being invited to participate in this field trip. Birds likely to be seen during the trip include Stewart Island, Spotted and Little Shags, and Yellow-eyed Penguins. Although a visit to the albatross colony near Taiaroa Head is a distinct possibility. This time an effort has been made to enable Council members and RRs to participate in the field trip.

Sunday has been set aside for the AGM and talks on Yellow-eyed Penguins, birds of South Westland, Royal Albatross at Taiaroa Head, and Banded Dotterels.

Otago members assure you of an interesting and pleasant weekend and would welcome a large attendance.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

Congratulations to Dr Mike Imber

OSNZ congratulates Mike Imber on being awarded the degree of D.Sc. by Massey University, in recognition of his long-term and outstanding research on New Zealand seabirds. This is the highest science degree available at a university, and is awarded only to scientists who have made major, internationally-recognised contributions to science.

Southland Summer Camp, 9-15 January 1987

The aims of the programme were to familiarise visitors with Southland's main bird habitats, to utilise the gathered expertise in a comprehensive wader census and provide species lists of other areas, and to carry out the first full survey of the Riverton Estuary. Coastal, estuarine, riverbed, wetland, marine, and bush habitats were visited, and 91 species were recorded over the five full days of the camp.

All members participated in the wader census held on the first day. 11 parties, each with its leader and local guide, visited the extensive wader habitats between Fortrose and Riverton, using cars, boats and legs (lots of the latter!). No one was lost, many were sunburnt, and everyone had a great day among the birds. The results are listed in the accompanying table which includes, for comparison, counts made in January 1963 and January 1969 during previous Southland national field weeks. Fewer areas were covered in those years and so exact comparisons cannot be made. Also listed are the local members' November 1986 summer census results. The difference in numbers of endemic species is due to seasonal movements between November and January.

When discussing the results, Barrie Heather mentioned particularly the increased number of Knots, Turnstones and Golden Plovers over the years, our inability to explain these increases, and the need for specific studies of their food and feeding patterns. Of the endemic waders the numbers of Pied Stilts were significant. On census day 81 were counted at Riverton Estuary but 3 days later 638 were counted during the full survey of the estuary. In addition, 106 were counted on the previously unchecked Pourakino Arm of this estuary, and 57 on nearby Lake George (also not checked on census day). Therefore it is possible that the January 1987 count of Pied Stilts in the coastal zone could total 1,897.

On the second day Roger Sutton led a bus tour of the Western Southland district, including a visit to Redcliff

Wetland Reserve with its flock of 3500 moulting Paradise Shelducks. Along the way Roger used the public address system of the bus to discuss points of interest, Southland RR Wynston Cooper spoke about his work with the Mottled Petrel colony at Lake Hauroko, and John Hall-Jones discussed the historical background to features along the way. After dinner that evening, John used his splendid photographs to follow the movements of Captain Cook and his men in Dusky Sound, reproduced some of Cook's artist's work, and spoke about Richard Henry of Resolution Island.

Outings on the following days were to Ian Mathieson's fine block of regenerating podocarp bush; to Lake George wetland (where most people had fleeting views of snipe in flight, presumably the 2 Japanese Snipe that have been in the area for 2 years); and the Riverton Estuary survey.

Optional day-trips had been arranged and 6 people took the flight to Mason's Bay, Stewart Island, where most saw one or two Kiwis and a chick. Another 6 people flew to Centre Island and returned with a species list for this seldom-visited island. A large party spent a day at Borland in the Manapouri area, where Yellowheads and Crested Grebe on Island Lake obligingly fronted up. Some people took a day-trip by ferry to Stewart Island and returned glowing with pleasure, full of their day with Cape Pigeons, mollymawks, petrels and penguins.

Throughout the week many people visited and revisited Banded Dotterel flocks, especially at the Tiwai Aluminium Smelter, where the viewing conditions of scores of birds feeding on acres of mown lawn are hard to beat. The object was to check for and record colour-banded birds. As a result several people gained expertise and enthusiasm to return to their own districts and pursue this sometimes rewarding, often exasperating activity. Of the 915 Banded Dotterels seen during the week, 699 were checked for bands and 21 were found to be banded. These included an Australian-banded bird, one each from Matukituki and Makaroa, and 2 from the Oreti River. Apart from 1 doubtful the remainder were birds banded locally.

A search for Black-fronted Dotterels on the Aparima River produced 20 adults and 1 chick, compared to the local members' October 1985 count of 22 adults.

On most days, usually in the evening, Owen and Jill Linscott took small groups of people to their farm at Thornbury, where many had their first sightings of Marsh Crakes. In her last-night review of the camp OSNZ President Beth Brown mentioned especially Owen and Jill's hospitality.

There were opportunities for botanising as well as birding in More's Reserve, 10 minutes walk from the camp. David Stone, the youngest member present, found a Rifleman's nest there and returned the most comprehensive list for that area.

Some local members had made a collection of used nests. These, together with a display of nest photographs (mostly taken by Lionel Lobb), were a focus of interest as people tested their identification skills. Hugh Robertson led a Nest Record Scheme promotion session, when the nests were discussed, most were identified, and people were left in no doubt of the value of nest recording. Barrie Heather led another excellent evening session in the field recording, especially in recording the description of an unknown bird. Everyone, from beginner to expert, appreciated this useful and sometimes hilarious exercise in observation and recording technique.

There were few hitches in the considerable logistical exercise of getting people to places and birds they wanted to

see. Back at base, the way people pitched in with the camp chores, under the unobtrusive, competent leadership of Helen Jukes, contributed a lot towards the general bonhomie. All in all, this was a lively and relaxed camp, blessed by good company, good weather, and good birds.

The Southland Summer Camp, based at Camp Longwood, Riverton, was attended by the following: W. Cooper, G. Allen, C. & M. Barlow, M. Divers, J. Hall-Jones, M. & H. Jukes, D. Lamont, O. & J. Linscott, P. Muller, N. Smith, and R. Sutton (Southland); P. Schweigman, B. Ahlers, M. Child, K. Gager, P. Wood, and D. York (Otago); D. Goodale and M. Davis (Canterbury); B. North (Marlborough); J. Hawkins (Nelson); K. & M. Brown, J. & I. Coulter, J. Bullock, N. Crockford, E. Gibbons, B. Heather, I. Morice, M. Neill, H. Robertson, D. Stone, and E. Vande Walle (Wellington); B. Brown, D. Baker, K. Bond, B. Binning, J. Driessen, C. Exley, M. & S. Graham, H. Hagen, K. Haslett, N. Peachman, and B. Searle (Auckland).

MAIDA BARLOW

The Rise and Fall of a Renowned Editor

While on the southern sojourn, having just departed from the rigours of the Riverton summer study course, a certain person who shall be nameless but who is well known for his editorship, had progressed as far northwards as the Eglinton Valley.

At this point in time he endeavoured to emulate the acrobatic artistry of his tutor Graeme Elliott and sight a Yellowhammer situated upon the nidification site of it and its mate some 0.01 km above the dark mossy carpet (upon which robins were feeding).

He was given a full course of hands on tutelage in the strategy of vertical ropemanship and commenced to levitate with grace and dignity to the aforementioned nidification site by virtue of a 11 x 10-6 kernmantel rope. Having proceeded to 10,000 mm above grass roots an intricate array of reflecting and illuminatory devices were utilized in order to make a visual observation of the previously aforementioned nidification site, wherein lay an avian member of the fairer sex.

Upon the accomplishment of this mission it thereupon became necessary to descend downwards towards planet earth. At this particular juncture it was deemed advisable for the tutor to issue further instructions reversing the ascending procedure forthwith.

SOUTHLAND WADER CENSUS RESULTS:

	National Summer camp 10.1.87	Local members' summer census 15.11.86	National field study week January 1969	National field study week January 1963
Royal Spoonbill	-	-	1	-
White-faced Heron	259	61	385	258
Cattle Egret	5	50	-	-
Australasian Bittern	1	-	-	3
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	7855	1007	4319	4957
Variable Oystercatcher	34	5	13	14
Spur-winged Plover	391	222	322	49
Golden Plover	174	131	112	103
Grey Plover	-	-	2	-
Banded Dotterel	900	64	420	1093
Wrybill	-	1	-	1
New Zealand Dotterel	10	-	51	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	1
Far-Eastern Curlew	11	1	5	17
Whimbrel sp.	-	1	-	-
Asiatic Whimbrel	1	-	-	-
Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit	2646	3242	7452	3918
American Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	1	-
Greenshank	1	1	-	1
Tattler sp.	-	2	-	-
Siberian Tattler	2	-	-	-
Terek Sandpiper	-	-	2	-
Turnstone	1615	602	863	1304
Knot	1168	469	188	101
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	10	5	24	38
Pectoral Sandpiper	3	-	-	-
Curlew Sandpiper	7	6	-	3
Red-necked Stint	28	27	22	9
Pied Stilt	1177	249	637	887
Eastern Little Tern	-	-	-	5
White-winged Black Tern	1	-	-	1
Black-fronted Tern	38	-	23	43
White-fronted Tern	137	136	770	268
Caspian Tern	109	81	135	43
Total number of birds seen	16583	6363	15747	13119
Total number of species seen	25	21	21	24

Due to the volume and increased rate of precipitation raining downwards upon both participants, verbal and auditory communication could not be seen, heard or otherwise established at all times.

Whereupon the complex requirements necessary for manually manipulating the apparatus caused serious entanglement of the aerial editor and the apparatus. The stricken cries issuing forth from the canopy eventually produced prompt action from the terrestrial instructor and in due course a suitable severing appliance was despatched to the hapless, horrified hero who was still swinging some 10,000 mm above terra firma.

After suitable application of the severing appliance the editor was released from his bondage and against earlier expectations finally reached mother earth with no obvious permanent damage.

For poor readers the following version is included:-

After the Riverton Summer Camp Barrie got stuck on a rope up a tree after looking at a Yellowhead nest in the Eglinton Valley. Graeme saved him.

THE CONCISE FIVE

Migration Watching – Something Else To Do?

Due, no doubt, to the lack of obvious migratory land birds, there has been little interest in this aspect of ornithology in New Zealand. This is in contrast to Europe where migration studies have been a major interest of amateurs for many years. I was intrigued to see large numbers of Goldfinches moving north in autumn along the West Coast a few years ago and subsequently I have visited the end of Farewell Spit for the last couple of years in March and April. These visits revealed quite obvious movements of Goldfinches, Chaffinches, Redpolls, Welcome Swallows, and Silvereyes, with a few surprises like Tomtits, Kingfishers, Harriers, and perhaps even Dunnocks getting in on the act (see *OSNZ news* June 1985).

Now I would like to get a wider view of the migratory goings on in New Zealand and hope that some OSNZ members will partake of a little early morning migration watching during March and April for the next few years.

The basic idea is to sit down in one place and record the numbers and direction of flight of every bird you see! Here are a few ideas on how to go about it.

1. Place: Ideally choose a place where you might expect migrants to become channelled or concentrated, so that the exercise is not too boring and includes more than a couple of lost House Sparrows. Promontaries and headlands like Farewell Spit and Cape Foulwind seem to be ideal,

as do islands (one in Cook Strait would be interesting though ambitious) which are traditional sites for migration studies in Europe. Narrow lowlands between the sea and mountains are also promising sites in New Zealand.

It is also helpful if the site has few resident birds – windswept headlands again – as this avoids too much confusion with a multitude of sparrows and Starlings for example. Failing this it is useful to know something of the resident species and so any increases due to migration can be assessed.

Having said all that you may well make useful observations from your garden or even your bedroom window (see time of day!).

2. Time of Year: Autumn is clearly the most interesting time and March and April probably the best months. Our spring visit to Farewell Spit was interesting for banding but very dull (scientifically interesting I keep telling myself) from a watching point of view.

I would also be very interested to hear from anyone who can observe in mid-winter, especially immediately after cold weather when Silvereyes appear to make extensive movements. (You do not have to get up so early but may have to stay all day!)

Observations at any time of the year could be interesting as these pointers are based on my South Island experience and extrapolation is apparently very dangerous.

3. Time of Day: You have to get up well before dawn and be in position by first light as Silvereyes for instance fly from roost at the first glimmer of light, and there may be a few nocturnal migrant thrushes around. Goldfinches will start moving soon afterwards but swallows may not arrive until several hours later. You can probably knock off for morning coffee or breakfast 2-3 hours after dawn, when movements seem to slow.

4. Weather: Relatively settled weather is better for birds and birdwatchers.

5. Recording: Record site, weather and time of sunrise.

Record starting and finishing times. This is important as it can give some indication of effort and hourly rate of passage.

For each species record the number and direction of each bird or group as they pass. The direction you record is the one that the birds are going **not** the one they come from. Four main compass points are enough, though you will need to choose the most appropriate one for your site.

An example of recording could be: Goldfinch 2N, 6N, c.4ON, 2W, 6E etc. Record the number of birds not moving but visible eg feeding flocks, without a

compass direction. You may need to expand on these observations if the birds came from somewhere and stopped by you.

Record every bird that passes you even if you know it is the same one nipping back and forth to a favourite *Coprosma* bush. This gives a base indication of resident species and makes your assessment of a migrant bird a lot less subjective.

Record the end of every hour's watching by a couple of lines and a note of the time in your species accounts.

At Farewell Spit we recorded the following species: Kingfisher, Silvereye, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Redpoll, Welcome Swallow, Yellowhammer, Cirl Bunting, Skylark, Dunnock, Fantail, Grey Warbler, Tomtit, Harrier, House Sparrow, Starling, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Pipit, and Greenfinch. There may be more eg Tui, Bellbird and cuckoos come to mind.

You will find that different species perform in different ways. Chaffinches dribble through almost continuously in ones and twos, with a flock of ten being a real treat. Goldfinches fly past in tight, tinkling flocks of about 15-50 and Redpolls tend to be hangers on to other flocks. Silvereyes often fly very high and you may need to listen intently for their flight calls and then estimate numbers. Indications of thrush movements may be limited to high numbers on the ground one day and few the next. It helps enormously if you know the flight calls of the smaller birds.

If you do manage to get out and record this autumn please send your records to me: Derek Onley, Little Totara Farm, Private Bag, Westport. I will collate them and publish ongoing accounts in *OSNZ news* before trying to make sense of the observations in a more formal paper. Good luck.

DEREK ONLEY

A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Displaying

On 8/2/86 at the Manawatu River Estuary I saw a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper display to another. The displaying sandpiper was vibrating its slightly arched wings, while its rump was fluffed up and its tail fanned and held vertically. Its bill was open, as though the bird was calling, but any sound was lost under the noise of feeding SIPOs and godwits.

The other Sharp-tailed Sandpiper took no notice of this display at the time, and kept feeding. A display such as this is described in the *Reader's Digest Book of New Zealand Birds*.

Other birds seen that day include 2 Far-Eastern Curlews, 3 Turnstones, and a Mongolian Dotterel which was assuming breeding plumage.

PHILIP BATTLETT

Tiritiri Matangi Island Regeneration Study

Tiritiri Matangi Island is a 220 ha open sanctuary in the Hauraki Gulf. It lies 3.5 km east of Whangaparaoa Peninsula and is 28 km from Auckland. The island is designated a scientific reserve, which is being managed by the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board (HGMPB). The HGMPB envisages the creation of a "suitable habitat for some of the rarer endangered fauna and flora, where people . . . can view them". To this end, the natural revegetation of this island is being accelerated by a programme of tree planting, the first of which should be completed by the end of 1987. OSNZ members and friends have been assisting with this planting (see *OSNZ news* 41).

The regeneration of Tiri has presented a golden opportunity to monitor changes in bird species and numbers within a relatively closed environment. Red-crowned Parakeets and North Island Saddlebacks have already been successfully introduced and it is hoped to add Brown Teal, Little Spotted Kiwi, and Whitehead or North Island Robin or Pied Tit within a few years.

Over the coming years Auckland OSNZ members are planning to conduct regular bi-annual surveys to record these changes. The surveys will be conducted by a team of 15 spending the weekend on the island and doing counts of fixed transects and coastal stations. Counts on each transect would be made by at least five individuals on each of the two days. The surveys will be held in the spring and the autumn. A preliminary survey was conducted in early November 1986.

SARA BROUWER

A visit to Tetiaroa Atoll

On 22/1/87, during a visit to Moorea in the Society Islands, I spent 3 hours on Tetiaroa Atoll. This atoll, the only one in the windward Society Islands, lies some 60 km north of Moorea at 17°S, 149°34' W. It has a total area of 1288 ha and contains 13 islets themselves having an area of 645 ha. One of these islets is owned by Marlon Brando, who sometimes resides there. The atoll is otherwise uninhabited.

During 7 visits totalling 36 days between 1972 and 1975 Thibault (*L'Oiseau et R.F.O* 46 (1976): 29-45) recorded 10 breeding, 6 migrant, and 3 introduced species on the atoll. Particularly important were the breeding colonies of Red-footed Booby (some 5000 pairs in 1972-73) and Brown Noddy (some 30 000 pairs in November 1972).

I visited only 2 of the islets on the atoll during my short time ashore. One of them

was a small islet which our guide called Bird Island although it has a native name which I do not know. Thousands of Brown Noddies were present on and about this islet. Many of them were still nesting, with eggs and young at various stages. Much fewer numbers of Red-footed Boobies inhabited the islet, some of them having nests with well-grown young. One adult Brown Booby was seen as well as several White Terns and 4 Grey-backed Terns. Elsewhere on the atoll I saw 2 Reef Herons (both white phase), 10 Wandering Tattlers, and 1 Golden Plover. Just offshore was an unidentified frigatebird.

Red-footed Boobies were by far the most common birds at sea between Tetiaroa and Moorea, with fewer Brown Noddies. 27 shearwaters and petrels were seen within a few miles of Moorea, the majority of those observed clearly enough to be identified being Audubon's Shearwater with smaller numbers of Tahiti Petrels.

The introduced Indian Myna was the most ubiquitous bird along the coastal strip of Moorea. Also seen on the north-west coast of the island were the Grey-backed White-eyes (our *Zosterops lateralis*), Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, Red-browed Waxbills, and domestic pigeons. Zebra Doves were also present in small numbers. Chorlton (*OSNZ news* 41: 5) says that the species seen by his party included the first reported sighting of the Zebra Dove but this species was in fact introduced to Tahiti about 1950 and now occurs also on Moorea and Bora Bora. Brown Noddies and White Terns were seen daily. Offshore, Crested Terns were always present fishing in the lagoon and unidentified frigatebirds appeared from time to time. Solitary Wandering Tattlers were seen around the island. All Reef Herons noted along the coast of Moorea were of the dark phase.

The most definitive work presently available on the birds of French Polynesia is that of Holyoak and Thibault "Contribution à l'Étude des Oiseaux de Polynésie Orientale" which appeared in *Mémoires du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle*, Series A, Zoology, Volume 127 (1984): 1-209. It was briefly reviewed in *Notornis* 33: 65.

DAVID MEDWAY

Little Shag Feeding Behaviour

While at the Waipu Estuary from 12/1 to 18/1/87 I observed a Little Shag feeding in a manner that I had not noted previously.

It was standing in a large puddle, about 3 cm deep, on the sandy flat at low tide. The shag lay on its belly in the water, with its neck stretched out and head submerged.

Then it would proceed to walk forward (rather awkwardly) while moving its head and neck sideways through the water. By holding its bill open the shag sieved the water and every 20' to 30 seconds it would stand and swallow a small fish. Obviously this method of feeding is very profitable in shallow water.

Other birds present at the estuary during the week included 2 Reef Herons, 1 White Heron, 80 Variable Oystercatchers (many with young), 15 NZ Dotterel, 23 Banded Dotterels, 105 Bar-tailed Godwits, 1 Siberian Tattler, 28 Turnstones, 180 Knots, 5 Red-necked Stints, and up to 4 adult and 1 juvenile Fairy Terns. A Bittern was seen near Waipu Cove on 12/1/87.

PHIL BATTLE

Sound Recordings Requested

I am preparing a sound guide to the birds of New Zealand. Eventually this will be available as a series of cassettes (the first of which will be available shortly) which will include the calls and/or song of all species & races of birds on the NZ list.

Currently I still require taped calls of the following and would be very grateful for any assistance from members in obtaining them:

Chinstrap Penguin, Mosely's Rockhopper Penguin, Royal Penguin, Erect Crested Penguin, NZ Dabchick, Hoary-headed Grebe, Snowy Albatross, Buller's Mollymawk (northern race), Salvin's Mollymawk, Snow Petrel, White-headed Petrel, White-naped Petrel, Juan Fernandez Petrel, Bird of Providence, Phoenix Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Kerguelen Petrel, Chatham Island Taiko, Stejneger's Petrel, Pycroft's Petrel, Gould's Petrel (2 races), Chatham Island Petrel, Antarctic Prion, South Georgian Prion, Auckland Island Prion, Narrow-billed Prion, Fulmar Prion, Lesser Fulmar Prion, Chatham Fulmar Prion, Wedge-tailed Shearwater (Indian Ocean race), Christmas Island Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Norfolk Island Little Shearwater, Kermadec Island Shearwater, Subantarctic Little Shearwater, Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Kermadec Storm Petrel, Black-bellied Storm Petrel, White-bellied Storm Petrel, Subantarctic Diving Petrel, White-tailed Tropic Bird, Little Black Shag, King Shag, Bounty Island Shag, Auckland Island Shag, MacQuarie Island Shag, Greater Frigatebird, Lesser Frigatebird, Reef Heron, Northern Shoveler, Nankeen Kestrel, Auckland Island Rail, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Mongolian Dotterel, Large Sand Dotterel, Oriental Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterel, Far-Eastern Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper, Siberian Tattler, Stewart Island Snipe, Antipodes Island Snipe, Auckland Island

Snipe, Knot, Great Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Australian Avocet, Oriental Pratincole, Pomarine Skua, Whiskered Tern, Crested Tern, Chatham Island Pigeon, NI Rifleman, Bush Wren, Rock Wren, Auckland Islands Pipit, Antipodes Island Pipit, Codfish Fernbird, Stewart Island Fernbird, Chatham Island Warbler, Chatham Island Tit, Auckland Island Tit, Black Robin, Three Kings Bellbird, NI Kokako, SI Kokako, SI Saddleback, Painted Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope, Asiatic Dowitcher.

Anyone able to assist should contact Les McPherson P.O. Box 21-083, Edgware, Christchurch.

LES MCPHERSON

Wildlife Research Study Award Announced

The waterfowl and wetlands conservation group Ducks Unlimited has recently announced the establishment of an annual award which will provide \$3,000 per year towards financially assisting university based wildlife research projects.

For a number of years Ducks Unlimited has financially assisted a number of waterfowl research projects; the largest assistance being \$6,500 towards Brown Teal research on Great Barrier Island.

The Brown Teal research on Great Barrier Island ends this year and in establishing its Wildlife Research Study Award Ducks Unlimited believes the award will encourage and assist university students to look seriously at wildlife research projects.

The award will naturally have a bias towards waterfowl and wetlands research as very little is in fact known about many of New Zealand's waterfowl or the habitats they use, but all wildlife research applications will be considered.

All NZ universities are being circulated with details of the award and applications will close at the end of October each year.

NEIL HAYES

RAOU Scientific Day

The next RAOU Scientific Day will be held in Melbourne on Saturday 30 May 1987. The theme of the meeting will be bird banding in Australia. Speakers come from throughout Australia and will present papers on waders, raptors, penguins, giant petrels, honeyeaters, Gouldian and other finches, trans-Torres Strait migrants, and moult in Australian birds.

The meeting is intended to be a forum for discussions on banding within Australia and will be of interest to anyone interested in the study of birds. On Sunday 31 May there will be banding field trips for all participants.

OSNZ members are invited to attend the meeting. Further details may be obtained from: Dr Kim W. Lowe, RAOU, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039, Australia.

Get Away With The Birds Next Time You're in OZ

The Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union runs 3 bird observatories where you can stay - Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria - each with a variety of different courses, including ones for beginners at birdwatching.

The accommodation is basic - bunks usually - and you take your own sleeping bag. Eating is communal and a helping hand with either cooking or the washing-up is not turned away. Similarly, cleaning at the end of the stay is a combined effort.

Rotamah Island Bird Observatory is a converted farmhouse on the edge of the water in the Gippsland Lakes National Park, Victoria. A weekend stay there costs just over \$A100 per person, making it an extremely interesting yet inexpensive holiday weekend.

Newcomers to birdwatching, we found it exciting to clock up about 30 different birds during the weekend. Most memorable were the spoonbills flying in formation; Fairy Wrens darting amongst the grasses; Pelicans on the edge of the water; Crested Grebes among the many waterbirds; the Welcome Swallows; the thornbills; the wattlebirds; the lorikeets; . . . and the Pied Cormorants on the posts of the jetty.

Eyre Bird Observatory is in sand dune country near the Nullabor, Western Australia, where the early explorer, John Eyre, paused on his epic-making journey. Built in local limestone in 1897, it was a telegraph station until RAOU converted it into an observatory.

It is within the Nuytsland Nature Reserve, a magnificent wilderness area of mallee woodland extending 500 km along the picturesque coastline of the Great Australian Bight.

Here you could find the Southern Scrub Robin, the Blue-breasted Wren, Mallee Fowl (if you are lucky) and clouds of Pink Cockatoos - the signature of the observatory. Being on the coast, waders are another feature.

Barren Grounds Bird Observatory, NSW, is inland from coastal Kiama, in the Barren Grounds Nature Reserve - a 2000 ha

wilderness with a variety of heathland scenery. The Birds for Beginners course, includes a close look at some species by mist-netting and banding.

Some courses here are on particular species such as honeyeaters, Lyrebirds, and the parrots, also insects; bats; fungi and wildflowers. Others are devoted to taxidermy; bird calls and their meaning; and a sound recording workshop for those interested in making birdsong tapes. As well as an introduction to nature photography for beginners, there is a course for serious nature photographers with some darkroom work involving colour printing.

Further information can be obtained from: RAOU, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039, Australia; Rotamah Island Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 75, Painesville, Victoria 3880; Eyre Bird Observatory, Cocklebidy, via Norseman, Western Australia 6443; Barren Grounds Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 3, Jamberoo, NSW 2533.

JUDITH DOYLE

A visit to Stanley Island

During October 1986 I was lucky enough to be invited to go to Stanley Island (Kawhitihi), in the Mercury Group, to help Tim Lovegrove with part of the Saddleback programme. The trip out took us via Rangitoto, Tiritiri and Little Barrier. Between Little Barrier and the Mercury Group the sea seemed alive with birds at times and we logged 4 species of shearwater, Cook's Petrel, White-faced Storm Petrel, Diving Petrel, and a Giant Petrel.

On Stanley Island we found Grey Warblers and Saddlebacks in almost equal numbers (!), while Red-crowned Parakeets were common and Bellbirds less so. No Tuis were seen during the visit. Daylight hours were spent buiding an aviary for later Saddleback transfers and assembling and placing about 100 roost and nest boxes.

At night we saw the winter-breeding Grey-faced Petrels and Little Shearwaters, which had nearly finished raising their young, and summer-breeders such as Little Blue Penguins, Fluttering Shearwaters, Diving Petrels, and 1 Sooty Shearwater. However, the highlight had to be the nightly visit of a Pycroft's Petrel to its burrow just a few metres from our tent.

A most enjoyable trip to an excellent island.

JOHN DOWDING

Australian Wader Studies Group Expedition to Northwest Australia

Betty Seddon and I packed tents and sunlotion and set off for Perth in late August 1986. Two days in Perth gave time to visit the bird observatory at Herdsman Lake, Lake Monger, King's Park, and Kalamunda National Park. We made sure that one trip took us through Fremantle where we saw the New Zealand team's headquarters for the America's Cup and watched KZ5 and an Australian yacht in trials.

At Port Hedland we joined the expedition and met the team, mainly Australians, but also people from Indonesia, China, the Phillipines, the United States, and one other New Zealander, Brian Chudleigh, whom we both knew. Camp was at the hot and barren saltworks. Comforts were few but birds were not and as we pitched our tents Avocets and an Asiatic Dowitcher were spotted in the shallows among the less exciting Black-winged Stilts, Bar-tailed Godwits and Pelicans. A team count of various ponds later produced a list which included a Ruff, Greater Knots, Broad-billed Sandpiper and many more common species in greater numbers.

Next, the expedition moved to Broome. This was a considerable undertaking for there was a great deal of gear required for the 20-25 people who made up the changing group while we were part of it. There were two 4-wheel drive vehicles and two trailers, one of which was 4-wheeled and very heavy. This was the larder. There was also a car, a light plane, and lastly a netted gazebo to provide some shelter for the food and the cooks.

Eight or so hours on the road found us at our next spot, a low cliff above a beach with the town of Broome visible in the distance. It was a beautiful site with a brilliant turquoise sea beyond the rust-rose beach with its weathered rocks and patches of bent mangroves.

Here an ABC Television team joined our cannon-netting forays and as luck sometimes has it, we had a time of trial without results. With the nets set well before high water we waited out the hours and at last a small catch was made and one particular Greater Sand Plover was banded, weighed, measured, checked for moult, aged and colour-dyed for the benefit of TV viewers. At the Broome Weather Station facilities were made available for us to take photographs of the radar scanner, some of which showed flocks of incoming migrant waders.

Swims and cold showers were available at Cable Beach and gave welcome respite

from the heat. Water was precious in camp. Containers were filled daily, often miles away.

A typical bird list for the area would be: Greater, Lesser, Red-capped and Grey Plovers; Bar-tailed Godwit; Great and Red Knots; Greenshank, Terek, Curlew and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers; Red-necked Stint, Asiatic Whimbrel, Sooty Oystercatcher, Far-Eastern Curlew, Turnstone, Common Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, White Egret; Crested, Gull-billed and Whiskered Tern; Pelican and less often Common Tern, White Ibis, Little Egret and memorably, Jabiru, Beach Thick-Knee (formerly Beach Stone-curlew), and Straw-necked Ibis.

On a sultry afternoon we packed into the transport and bounced miles inland to Lake Eda and saw over 60 species. Highlights included 50+ Brolgas, 6 Australian Pranticoles, a Long-toed Stint - yellowish and slim - and a Wood Sandpiper on the edge of the lake and in its centre were Pink-eared Duck, Hardheads and Hoary-headed Grebe. Yellow-billed Spoonbills 'vacuumed' their way along in the shallows where Budgerigars and Cockatiels came later to drink fleetingly. Handsome Long-tailed Finches sat on a fence with Bee-eaters swooping above. Around a scrubby area of ponds, were Great Bowerbird, Golden-headed Cisticola, several species of doves, martins and woodswallows. On the gate by which we reluctantly left was a notice: "Tresspassers shot. If not collected, bodies will be disposed of within 14 days". We had permission and hoped it was a joke.

We woke one morning to a very heavy dew, sopping wet tents and flies. The birds loved it and sang from the pre-dawn until 0745. A Little Corella called above my tent, 2 Great Bowerbirds came by and Red-collared Lorikeets fed beside camp. Our resident Rufous Whistler sang on and on. We netted later and caught 19 Great and one Lesser Sand Plover, 14 Red-necked Stints which we dyed yellow on the underparts, 5 Turnstones and 2 Grey-tailed Tattlers.

The last camp was on 80 Mile Beach, reached via Anna Plains, a 1 000 000 acre station owned by a pastoral company. Tents were just behind the beach in sand with sparse low growth. The tide rose 8.4 m and towards high water moved faster than a man could walk. Not even paddling was safe. There were sharks visible right to the shore, with larger ones preying on them. The sand was pale grey to white. There were great drifts of beautiful shells, especially orange and clear yellow scallops and baler shells from small to enormous in size. Vast numbers of mustard-coloured crabs that ran rapidly on tip-toes rushed seaward one day, perhaps to mate.

Seasnakes were found ashore and foxes came to dig crabs.

A lean and hungry Sanderling, just in from migration, persistently braved two Silver Gulls for snatches of fish from a piece cast onto the beach. It was a harsh but beautiful place.

Thousands of birds were coming in daily and we travelled long distances to net in the better places. It was a privilege to be part of a team processing Terek Sandpipers and Grey-tailed Tattlers. The vehicles were used to "twinkle" the birds towards the nets and from them we also made sample counts of flocks. The plane was used for aerial counts and passengers needed strong stomachs to withstand the twisting, dipping flight necessary for counting.

Bath time at Anna Plains meant a trip to the hot water bore which gushed rustily and powerfully from a large diameter pipe. It was good to feel clean but clothes remained unwashed for the water stained and I was surprised to find my feet a bright orange after the first visit. We would sometimes see kangaroos at dusk and one evening Nightjars were moving through.

The expedition was part of an RAOU project assisted by World Wildlife and Earthwatch. The area worked in is the most important place in Australia for waders. Used in the non-breeding season as well as by incoming and outbound migrants, shorebird numbers here exceed 850 000 in total. Close to 400 000 were counted as they came in from across the Indian Ocean during 14 days in August/September 1982. In addition to the expedition to our area, a similar one tackled the Gulf of Carpentaria to make wader counts, and a third was to visit the coast of Arnhem Land, which had so far only been surveyed from the air. The work has been much needed to provide better knowledge of distribution, numbers and the importance of various habitats to northern as well as local migrants in Australia. It is also important to New Zealand for we know that some of our migrant waders move up and down the eastern side of the Australian coast.

Leaders of our expedition were Brett Lane, known to many in this country, and Mark Barter who bands in Victoria. Both are well known for their work on waders. Stephen Davies, RAOU Director, was treasurer and right-hand man to the leaders. One person was in charge of food supplies and we all cooked and shopped in 4-person teams on a roster system. The expedition over, all agreed that we would not have missed any of it and that we had gained from shared experience.

Betty and I continued overland via Broome, Kununurra, where we broke the journey for 2 days and spent a memorable day on its huge manmade lake, and then

on to Darwin. Here we stayed with Barry Rowe, known widely for his work with the Otorohanga Zoological Society, and his wife Treve. Barry is project manager for a fine Wildlife Park that is taking shape at Berry Springs. With the imaginative planning that is going into this project, it will be a remarkable place when completed.

We visited Fogg Dam, near Humpty Doo, and were unprepared for the vast assembly of waterbirds, especially Magpie Geese. Lotusbirds were common as were Green Pygmy Geese and there were three species of white egrets, two of ibises, Royal Spoonbills, Jabirus and Brologas. White Cockatoos, as well as Red-tailed Blacks, Corella and Cockatiels were about and Blue-winged Kooaburras sat on roadside wires.

We went on to Kakadu National Park, stayed at Coinda and did day trips. The weather was very hot and the birds were congregated on and around the remaining wet areas. Warning signs about salt-water crocodiles were prominent and we saw some big ones. We were told not to drive at night. Buffalos like to lie on the newly sealed road and they are invisible. It was not difficult to obey since we were packing so much into our days. I was especially happy to find the lovely Pied Heron with its shining deep blue upper surfaces, white underparts and charming crest. Sea-eagles were breeding and so were the very vocal Whistling Kites. Darters were everywhere and we watched flocks of up to 60 Plumed Whistling Ducks, Nankeen Night Heron, Mangrove Heron, Oriental Pratincole, White-headed Shelduck and the jewel-like Azure Kingfisher. One find was the Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon whose whole population is found in one small area at Nourlangie Rock and its environs, where it is plentiful. We visited aboriginal rock drawing sites, some of which are of great antiquity, and saw a Great Bowerbird carrying white stones with which to decorate its bower.

Finally we went back past the fire warning signs that say "We like our lizards frilled, not grilled" to Darwin. Before departure we managed to glimpse a few more birds among which were 11 Little Whimbrels and a Spangled Drongo. We still did not suffer ornithological indigestion and felt that we could take some more.

BETH BROWN

Regional Roundup

Auckland: 10 Auckland members took part in the Southland Camp and a similar number teamed with Far North members over the provincial holiday weekend, 24-26/1/87. This was followed by a good turnout for the survey of South Kaipara

Lakes on 8/2, when highlights included a flock of 160 moulting Paradise Shelducks, Bittern, and Dabchicks on several lakes, and sightings of a pair of Australian Little Grebes with a chick.

In January the N.Z. Herald carried a striking picture of the artificial feeding of the Fairy Tern chick hatched at Auckland Zoo for return to the wild. Meanwhile, in the Papakanui Refuge another of these rare youngsters fledged on 6/2, just in time to get away before the influx of weekend visitors to South Head. Shane Dalton and Chris Jowett were then able to take a break from their warden duties to join the Muriwai beach patrol. Chris proceeded to pick up a White-faced Storm Petrel in fresh enough state to add to the store of specimens for the careful measured drawings on which Geoff Arnold is working.

Noteworthy sightings at Mangere have included a Pomarine Skua, seen harrying immature Black-backed Gulls by Robin Child, 2 Grey Ternlets found by Geoff Arnold on 7/2/87, and 5 Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits beginning to assume breeding plumage. One or two Cattle Egrets have remained as they did last summer.

Our meeting programme began well with an evening of lively accounts of members' travels and recent activities. Planned trips include an excursion into the Waitakere Ranges by train, a survey of Tiritiri Island, and a 2-day cruise to explore shorelines of the Kaipara Harbour. For all of those we hope for fine weather and the good support which has characterised events of the past year. (Michael Taylor)

South Auckland: Heartening news from the Hunua Ranges was that up to 9 separate Kokakos were heard by an Auckland Regional Authority ranger and others on 11/11/86 during a regular walk into the rain gauge at Kohukohunui Trig. Four Large Sand Dotterels were at Karaka on 7/12. The summer census of the Firth of Thames revealed higher than usual numbers of Golden Plovers - 150 at Piako - and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers - 32 at pools in the Limeworks/Access Bay area. A probable Great Knot was seen at Kaiua on 11/11/86.

In February the Firth produced some rarities, which included an Asiatic Dowitcher on 6/2, and 1 Marsh Sandpiper and 2 Terek Sandpipers on 1/2.

Our last field trip for 1986 took 16 members to the far southwest of the region. While one group patrolled the long beach at Kokonga West, another walked southward to join them over the headland from Limestone Downs. Their list included 73 Paradise Shelducks, and 6 Canada Geese in fields; Spotted Shag

colony now confined to the inner stack - 47 with 10 nests and 3 'flapping' fledglings; 250 White-fronted Terns on the middle stack, many on nests; 13 Black Shags about the cliffs but no breeding evident and none on the outer stack where they formerly bred in sparse scrub. Banded Dotterels, NZ Dotterels, 1 Reef Heron, VOCs, and Pied Stilts were along the shore. A mixed bag of 3 Short-tailed Shearwaters, 1 Buller's Shearwater, several prions, 1 Black Shag, and a mollymawk rewarded the beach party. From Port Waikato later, 27 White Cockatoos were seen across the Waikato River high in the pine trees of Waiuku State Forest at Maoro.

Speakers at evening meetings from July to November were: Gretchen Rasch on work at Pureora to control predators in Kokako habitat; Beth Brown on the RAOU Congress and Campout in north Queensland; Betty Binning and John Brown about trekking in Nepal; Derek Brown gave a detailed and interesting slant on plant and bird conservation in the Chatham Islands; and Craig Hodsell on Takahe in the Murchison Mountains. Our annual barbecue was held at Barbara Burch's home beside the sea at Weymouth on a perfect evening. (Beth Brown)

Gisborne/Wairoa: In November a team of 12 Hawke's Bay members ventured north to Wairoa for a weekend to assist with the national wader count in that region. Areas covered were the Wairoa Estuary-Ngamotu Lagoon, Whakaki Lagoon, and the lower reaches of the Mohaka River.

At Wairoa wader numbers were well up on previous counts and the Ngamotu Lagoon, on the eastern side of the estuary, is much improved for waders following a winter of high river levels. A good channel has opened into the lagoon, giving tidal movement which had all but ceased over the last couple of years.

For many of the Hawke's Bay members it also was a first look at nesting Canada Geese, which was well underway on the Ngamotu bar. Canada Geese are now well and truly part of this district. Up to this season they have confined their nesting to the coastal shingle bars but this season nests on grassy cliff faces and islets in ponds have been used.

Also nesting on the Wairoa bar was a mixed colony of Black-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns. Before nesting got underway in early November about 2500 terns and 400 gulls were present. On 15 November there about 2500 terns and 400 gulls were present. On 15 November there were 164 Black-billed Gull nests containing eggs. I did not try to count the tern nests but estimated 700. This colony has been in existence for at least 12 years.

Other sightings of interest have been

a single Dabchick at Whakaki Lagoon on 8/11/86, a Royal Spoonbill at Muriwai Lagoon in early November reported by Brian and Sue Johnson), and 2 SIPO at Oraka on 23/10 and 2/11 – the first I have seen in this district.

Jim Henley reports that Spur-winged Plovers are now plentiful around Gisborne. Recently a group of 42 was seen near Gisborne and 13 were counted along the coast road. (Geoff Foreman)

Wellington: On 2/11/86 we visited the Pauatahanui Reserve and were amazed to see a pair of Chestnut-breasted Shelducks. Further observations showed that they stayed in the area for about a week. (Don & Muriel Stracy)

Nelson: This year we have decided to visit Motueka Sandspit on a high tide each month to gain more information about the birds using the area.

In November Gail Quayle saw a black-tailed godwit at the top of Nelson Haven and Richard Parrish saw 2 tattlers at Motueka. There has been a Cattle Egret around the pond at Sewerside Drive during December and January. (Jenny Hawkins)

West Coast: Derek Onley reports a pair of NZ Falcons nesting near Punakaiki, at the side of the Pororari track; a Little Tern on 30/11 at the Mokihinui River Estuary; and the usual intriguing 2 Little Egrets at the Orowaiti in December.

Rooks have been seen at Springs Junction and there was 1 at Arapito. Richard Maloney found a Wrybill at the Arahura Rivermouth in November.

A friend found a SIPO nest on the beach at Camerons early in the spring and when we were photographing it one evening an injured Fiordland Crested Penguin came ashore. It was duly collected and taken to the vet and subsequently to Bevan Alexander at Kumara for recuperation before being returned to the sea. One lucky bird. (Stewart Lauder)

Canterbury: It has been a quiet summer in the region. The Wildlife Service, assisted by OSNZ members, have continued the monthly counts of all waders and waterfowl at Lake Ellesmere with about 40-50 000 birds counted each month. 10 Royal Spoonbills spent the summer at Ellesmere and were watched carefully for indications of breeding but none seen. By mid-February there were 32 spoonbills at the lake, the additional birds presumably having arrived from the breeding colony in Otago.

During the last week of February Peter Reese reported a snipe (*Gallinago*-type) at Coopers Lagoon. This was seen subsequently by Sheila Petch but the plans of others were thwarted by a southerly storm. (Paul Sagar)

Otago: The Royal Spoonbills (assumed to be the Moeraki birds) are mobile. They have been reported from Kaikorai Estuary – 1 on 17/12 and 3 on 22/12 – 1 at Taieri Beach on 14/11, and 2 on 15/1/87 all the way down at Waikawa Harbour (about 200 km from Moeraki).

Lloyd Esler reports there were up to 40 White-fronted Tern nests at Lawyers Head this season.

On 2/1/87 Anne Hocken was the first to see a Reef Heron at Moeraki and Tony Hocken was the first to see a Variable Oysercatcher in the same area.

Black-fronted Dotterels are breeding on the Taieri River again, I saw 2 adults with a chick on 12/12/86, 1 km downstream of the Allanton bridge. Dave York saw a Tui feeding fledglings at Ross Creek on 17/12/86.

Bruce & Dinah McKinlay reported the return of a tattler to Papanui on 18/1/87. John Miles reports 3 pairs of Black-fronted Terns nesting near Hawea-Clutha junction, after a long spell of almost total disappearance from the area.

Cattle Egrets have behaved differently this summer. Usually they disappear over the summer but in December there were still 17 birds on the Taieri. On 22/1/87 I saw 33 birds near the Contour Channel Bridge, and 8 of these were in brilliant breeding plumage. (Peter Schweigman)