

OSNZ news

No.48 September, 1988

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.

Note Deadline for the December issue
will be 14th November, 1988

Bird banding at Ward, Marlborough

Emphasis on the study of passerines, especially the common species, has been fostered by Derek Onley with his studies of migration on the West Coast and at Farewell Spit. Paul Sagar also began studies in and about Christchurch with a cooperative banding project. Then Ralph Powlesland and Hugh Robertson began a similar banding project in Wellington and planned a weekend's banding at Jack Taylor's farm, Ward, Marlborough. As usual Jack had cooperated in a very practical way by not spraying his stockfeed peas, thereby letting the weeds grow to attract finches. Brian Bell became involved at this stage and suggested we use Ward not only to band a large number of birds but also as a training ground for OSNZ members - the passerine study group was underway.

An aim of the group was to study the possible movements of passerines, especially the introduced finches. A further aim was to train members in the use of mist nets; removing birds from nets; handling them safely; banding, weighing and measuring birds; and recording moult. As a result we hoped we would be able to establish a network of banding stations on both sides of Cook Strait.

Not all our objectives were met fully, but 65 members took part including 16 juniors or potential juniors. Jack Taylor was involved throughout and made the greatest contribution. Members came from Wellington (34), Nelson (8), Marlborough (8), Westland (3), Canterbury (11) and Auckland (1). Nets at the farm were operated on most weekends between 23 January and 10 April 1988, with Paul, Ralph, Hugh and Brian taking turns to run the weekends. We missed the input from Derek, who was occupied transferring his residence from Westland to Otago.

Only 707 birds were handled which was rather less than we hoped, but we

learnt a lot about how and where to set nets, how to move nets when still set, how to drive birds even in adverse weather (wind and showers), and at what stage of seeding the birds flock to certain weeds. We are not sure whether Jack's farming routine will ever be the same again!

Most got the greatest satisfaction from actually handling the birds, and studying the details of their plumage. We all found there was a lot we did not know about plumages (when does a juvenile become an adult?), and how to measure a bird correctly. The moult sequence had most of us foxed, so there is room for more workshops directed to this aspect.

Ward is a great centre for studying birds and we were able to devote time to other activities in addition to banding passerines - waterfowl at Lake Elterwater, waders at Lake Grassmere and beach patrols at Marfell's and Ward Beaches. Rod Hitchmough was even given a little time

off to go looking for lizards and in so doing he added a couple of bird species to our farm list.

Some of the highlights at the farm were:

Cirl Buntings caught and banded, but don't ask how you distinguish a juvenile bunting from a juvenile Yellowhammer (we think we know but time will tell);

a Little Owl clearing the mistnet by a mere 20 cm;

a Falcon hunting finches over the paddock we were mistnetting in; and the sight of a net with about 20 birds caught after a drive.

And the disappointments (apart from the 5 am "get up and go") were a mist net with about 50 birds caught until the next gust of wind 'trampolened' all but 2 out again, and perhaps going home just when things were starting to go right.

Down the road the highlights included finding a family group of Chestnut-



Banding at Ward, February 1988

(Photo. Joy Sagar)

breasted Shelducks; good views of Sharp-tailed, Pectoral, Curlew and Marsh Sandpipers (without going to Miranda); huge flocks of Grey Teal, Shoveler, and moulting Paradise Shelducks.

List of species

1. Jack Taylor's farm: White-faced Heron, Canada Goose, Paradise Shelduck, Mallard, Grey Duck, Harrier, Falcon, Californian Quail, Spur-winged Plover, Black-backed Gull, Black-fronted Tern, Feral Pigeon, Shining Cuckoo, Little Owl, Kingfisher, Rifleman, Skylark, Welcome Swallow, Dunnock, Brown Creeper, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Silvereve, Bellbird, Yellowhammer, Cirl Bunting, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Redpoll, House Sparrow, Starling, and White-backed Magpie (35 species).

2. Lake Elterwater: Black Shag, Pied Shag, Little Shag, White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Canada Goose, Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, Paradise Shelduck, Mallard, Grey Duck, Grey Teal, Shoveler, Scaup, Harrier, Pukeko, Coot, Spur-winged Plover, Pied Stilt, Black-backed Gull, Black-billed Gull, Feral Pigeon, Kingfisher, Skylark, Welcome Swallow, Grey Warbler, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, and Starling (31 species).

(N.B. these are not complete lists for these areas, but a list of those species recorded by the passerine study group during this season).

And what of the future? Already a number of small banding stations are planned and some will be operating by now. Next year we need to repeat our programme at Ward - to get most value from the birds already banded we must continue to operate and obtain recaptures etc. This year we learnt a lot about the practical aspects of trapping and we are likely to catch a lot more birds next year. What we need to concentrate on in the coming season are the details of plumage;

- differences in the plumage details of the juvenile buntings;
- details of plumage changes with age; and
- more plumage detail as criteria for sexing.

We plan to continue our project much as last year, but will try to get a team together which will spend at least a week on the farm to begin with. If we can get the support of members we will continue with weekend sessions following this. See you there!

Thank you Jack Taylor for your wonderful hospitality and the opportunity to share 'your' birds.

Passerine Study Group

Jack Taylor has confirmed that his property will be available again this summer and many of last years team have indicated an interest in participating in the project. The group held a brief meeting over the OSNZ Annual Conference weekend and suggested that the coming seasons programme will be as follows:

Commencing on Friday 20 January 1989 with a full weeks effort through until Sunday 29 January. This will be followed by weekend efforts at two-week intervals. The programme will also include Easter weekend Friday 23 - Monday 27 March, but may continue on subsequent weekends if the birds are still flocking.

In addition to the banding we will maintain bird counts at Lakes Grassmere and Elterwater and over the longer sessions may be able to look inland for Robins and Brown Creepers.

We hope to be able to maintain the same costings as last season i.e. each person responsible for their own transport to Ward, plus \$8.00 per day for food. A subsidy for junior members travel may be available.

We look forward to seeing many of you.
BRIAN BELL, *Coordinator*

Changes of address

Would members please note that the Hon. Treasurer has moved to Tauranga and all mail should now be addressed to:

Mr W. L. Ormond,
Hon. Treasurer, OSNZ,
P.O. Box 3036,
Greerton,
Tauranga.

Also, Tom & Hazel Harty have taken over the looking after of back numbers of *Notornis* from Margaret Bishop and their address is:

Tom & Hazel Harty,
OSNZ Back Numbers,
Drury R.D. 2,
Auckland.

Call for photographs

In 1990 the Society will celebrate its 50th anniversary by publishing a special volume containing reminiscences from senior members and various essays and other contributions. This is a call to members to submit relevant photographs (prints or slides) for possible inclusion in the publication. Older photographs of the "human interest" kind are particularly sought. All photos for consideration must be received (at the address below by May 1989. All care will be taken with them. They will be collected together pending editorial deliberation, and returned in due course.

B.J. GILL, *Auckland Museum, Private Bag, Auckland*

PASSERINE STUDY GROUP

Summary of birds banded at Ward, January-April 1988

Month 1st date of weekend	January		Weekend catches				March	April	Total Birds	New Birds		
	23	30	February	27	5	12						
Redpoll	3	-	18	54	18	78	48	6	125	350	274	
House Sparrow	46	31	14	37	42	9	19	2	2	10	212	200
Chaffinch	20	1	7	5	4	2	4	1	-	-	44	43
Greenfinch	15	5	9	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	32	32
Goldfinch	3	4	6	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	19	19
Yellowhammer	4	1	2	5	-	-	1	5	-	-	18	17
Cirl Bunting	-	2	2	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	9	9
Blackbird	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Welcome Swallow	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Dunnock	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	4	4
Song Thrush	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
Skylark	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Starling	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Grey Warbler	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Bellbird	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Weekend totals	98	50	40	77	103	32	102	57	8	140		
Accumulated total	98	148	188	265	368	400	502	559	567	707	707	616

Can you help us to study the ecology of NZ Pigeons?

We are setting up a new study of the ecology of NZ Pigeons (Kereru) with the general objective of comparing the breeding, diet, mortality and movements of Kereru in South Island and North Island sites. We hope that a number of keen OSNZ members will be able to help us with one aspect of our study.

An earlier study by Ecology Division staff at Pelorus Bridge in Marlborough revealed that, at that site, Kereru do not breed every year (possibly this is related to fruit availability) and nests and adult birds suffer severely from predation by rats and stoats. The main focus of the new study will be on the breeding of Kereru and how this relates to food availability. Our three proposed study sites (Pelorus Bridge, Hawkes Bay and the Auckland area) will span a latitudinal and habitat range within which the supplies of native fruits will vary considerably.

In order to extend our coverage of Kereru observations to sites well to the south of Pelorus and to other parts of the North Island we seek help from OSNZ members. We would like to hear from people who live near, or can visit, areas of native forest where Kereru breed, and who could regularly spend a few hours each month carrying out a set of standardised observations. This will involve completing regular counts at specific sites, recording the foods eaten by Kereru at these sites (and other foods available), recording the frequency of display dives (which we hope will be a useful indicator of breeding activity), and noting any breeding behaviour.

If you are interested in joining our study team, we will be able to give you more background information on the study, explain the methods we will use (including identifying food plants), and provide you with recording sheets. If you can help we are keen to hear from you.

MICK CLOUT & HUGH
ROBERTSON, *Kereru Team, Ecology
Division, DSIR, Private Bag, Nelson*

Kakapo happenings in 1987-88

The period July 1987 to April 1988 was important for Kakapo conservation. With the eradication of Wekas and possums on Codfish Island by 1987 the island became available as a site to transfer Kakapo to, away from the threat of cat predation on Stewart Island. The first search for Kakapo was made in winter 1987 and resulted in two birds being found. Then, following the decision that all Kakapo remaining on Stewart Island be shifted to Codfish Island, most of the known birds were found and transferred.

While it was relatively straightforward to capture males when they occupied their track-and-bowl systems in summer, finding some of the females proved very difficult. This was because of the large home ranges (about 50 ha/bird) which had to be searched repeatedly for each female, and the birds' arboreal wanderings.

Sixteen birds are now on Codfish Island; five females and 11 males. I estimate that 25-30 birds remain on Stewart Island.

The activity of males on Little Barrier Island at their track-and-bowl systems was monitored from January to April 1988. Males began using the systems in mid-January and continued to do so until late April. However, few systems were in use after cyclone Bola (early March), but the number increased again shortly after the cyclone. Six to eight males simultaneously occupied their systems during each of our monthly visits.

The finding of feathers in and near some of the systems is interesting. On Stewart Island, 10 or more down and contour feathers were found at track-and-bowl systems mainly in the first month of a breeding season, but not in seasons when males boomed and females did not breed. Such clumps of feathers may indicate that mating occurred.

Although it is tempting to suggest that mating took place on Little Barrier during the summer of 1988, the evidence is not conclusive. This is because mostly down feathers were found and these occurred late in the season, sometimes some distance from the systems. Proof of successful breeding must await the sighting or capture of an unbanded Kakapo.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Survey of migratory Black Stilts

From 10 to 31 May 1988 Department of Conservation (DOC) Black Stilt project staff Dave Murray and Christine Reed undertook a survey of Black and hybrid stilts outside of the MacKenzie Basin. Although most Black Stilts remain in the Basin over winter, it has always been recognised that a small percentage of pure Blacks and most of the hybrids migrate with the Pied Stilt flocks after nesting. As many of these birds are now recognisable by colour bands, the main object of the exercise was to accumulate data for the on-going management of the species by recording which individuals migrate.

With the assistance of local DOC staff, OSNZ members and other interested people, a total of 34 sites were visited from the Ashley Rivermouth near Christchurch to Whangarei Harbour. Searches concentrated on areas where Black Stilts have been previously recorded and other potential areas were visited in passing.

Where possible, recognised high-tide roosts were visited, but greater success was achieved by walking the mudflats of known wintering habitat at low tide. With the wet weather experienced throughout most of the survey many stilts were roosting in paddocks and it was easier on the feeding areas to locate and record colour-band combinations and recognise social associations such as the establishment of pair bonds.

A total of 4618 Pied and light hybrid (nodes D and E) stilts were counted, with most of these being at Miranda, Mangere Oxidation Ponds and South Kaipara Harbour. The incidence of light hybrids was far lower than expected, with only 112 birds in the nodes D and E categories. No attempt was made to record node C and B hybrids, but it was apparent that they occurred through all Pied Stilt flocks.

Black Stilts and dark hybrids (nodes F to I) were found only in two traditional areas, South Kaipara and Kawhia Harbour.

At South Kaipara, on the Omokoiti Flats, two pure Black Stilts were located closely associated with six dark hybrids. These included four node I birds (two of which were banded) and one each nodes H and F. Another node I stilt was feeding amongst Pied Stilts about 1 km away.

A Kawhia Harbour, near Te Motu Island, two banded node I hybrids were located. A banded juvenile was associated with one of these birds. This is the first confirmed record of a juvenile Black Stilt in the North Island this century. The black partner and other banded juvenile of this family group were not present and have not been reported since the whole family group was seen at the Ashley Rivermouth in February 1988. Also present at Kawhia were two unbanded node I, two node H, one node G, and two node F hybrids.

One of the most significant finds was that most of the Black and hybrid Stilts were concentrated in only two areas and apparently were socially separated from the Pied Stilts, at least while out feeding. This suggests that young migratory Black Stilts have a better than previously expected chance of pairing with another Black Stilt, rather than with a Pied Stilt.

The survey provided valuable follow-up information about the various management techniques being employed in the MacKenzie Basin. Its success was due largely to the assistance provided by OSNZ members. Valuable information has been provided in the past also by surveys completed by OSNZ members.

The importance of Black and hybrid Stilt sightings in areas outside of the MacKenzie Basin in the future will have increasing significance now that a larger percentage of birds are banded. Observers are encouraged to check traditional sites

regularly, as well as areas where Black Stilts have not been seen previously. A close inspection of any birds sighted is necessary to record band combinations and the plumage category of hybrids. Any sightings should be sent to DOC, Private Bag, Twizel.

D.P. MURRAY & C.E. REED

Starling experiences

For many years we have had four Starling nest boxes on our section in Kamo, Whangarei. Normally a number of fledglings survive the cats and other hazards of the environment, and by late autumn there are usually 12 to 15 birds about the garden. However, come spring nesting time and the numbers dwindle to eight or nine. Also, for many years we have put fat trimmings in an open weave bag hung in a tree for the birds during late autumn, winter and spring. This has been a great success for the House Sparrows, Silvereyes and sometimes Chaffinches.

Three years ago we saw a pair of Starlings on several occasions attempt to get some fat, but because their weight made the bag move they took fright and flew off. The following winter and spring the story was the same, the Starlings would attempt to land on the bag but because it moved would fly off.

Last autumn we used a small wire basket to hold the fat and covered it with an upturned saucer to keep the cats out. This winter and spring a pair of Starlings have learned how to hold onto the sides and bottom of the basket and peck at the fat through the mesh, although the basket swings under their weight. When feeding this way they use their tail as a prop.

Because the birds have no individual identification marks we do not know if it is always the same pair or if we have been witness to a slow learning process. They usually feed early in the morning, just after sunrise, and late in the afternoon.

ALASTAIR GORDON

Thrushes and Blackbirds eating frogs

On 26/6/87 my brother-in-law Charles Nichol of Kapuka, Southland, told me that he had often watched thrushes and Blackbirds eating frogs. These are the small Australian whistling frogs. "Thrushes always eat the whole frog, but Blackbirds bash them up first" he said. Charles and his wife Irene watched from inside the house, through a glass ranchslider door. The birds hunted the frogs in the flower garden, which was planted with annuals, perennials, roses and climbers - a typical Southland country farmhouse garden. Frogs are numerous in the district.

LIONEL LOBB

Daily movement of shags on a regular flight path

A daily occurrence in my 60+ years of living at Gorge Road beside the lower Mataura River is the morning flight of shags. This happens summer and winter, about an hour after daybreak. The birds always follow the same flight path, over the house in a south-westerly direction, flying probably from the Mokoreta area to Waituna Lagoon. When a westerly is blowing - and it can really blow - they have to work hard to keep on their usual beat.

They do not fly in a team or skein, but in irregular straggling groups or single birds. There is no pattern to the numbers.

For many years there were about 80 birds, but the numbers have increased over the last 8 to 10 years e.g., 123 on 21/7/86 and 150 on 17/6/87.

LIONEL LOBB

Plumages of Little Shags

Several hundred forms have now been received and with this excellent response the success of the survey seems assured. Some regions have made monthly counts and it is hoped to use these to investigate aspects of plumage development.

More returns are needed though, particularly from Northland, Auckland South Auckland and Waikato.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

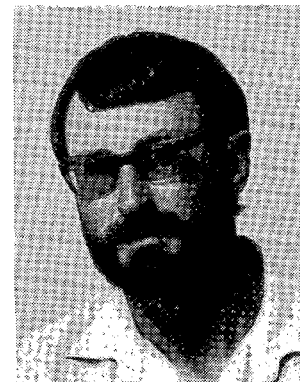
Mr F.C. Kinsky

His many friends in New Zealand will be saddened to learn that Fred Kinsky lost his wife Camilla earlier this year after a short illness. Fred intends to continue living at his Strawberry Hill, Twickenham address in the meantime.

JOHN WARHAM

John Warham recently returned from nine weeks spent working in the libraries of the Natural History Museum, South Kensington and the British Museum. He was collecting and sighting early literature on procellariiform birds for his computerised *Bibliography of the Petrels* and got about 3500 new citations to add to this, most in foreign languages. Of these, a few major items in Gothic script will call for rather careful translation, any reader who might care to help in translating early German material (and in reading the gist of the information into a cassette recorder) please contact Dr Warham at the Zoology Department, University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch.

Wayne Twydle - RR for Hawkes Bay



Wayne Twydle, who is a Napier primary school teacher, has recently been appointed regional representative of Hawkes Bay. Previous to this he was the regional recorder for the region.

His interest in birds goes back to his school days in Nelson, prompted by a gift of Perrine Moncrieff's book *New Zealand Birds and How to Identify Them*. At this time the local finches provided the most enjoyment. This led to bird photography in later years, with many pleasant hours being spent in hides closely observing bird behaviour. A highlight was the photography of a pair of South Island Pied Oystercatchers nesting on a Hawkes Bay river.

In 1979 Wayne joined OSNZ. Since then he has been fully involved in local activities including banding of Banded Dotterels of the past three years. Although interested in all aspects of ornithology, he is particularly keen on bird behaviour and is just as happy watching a godwit feeding as finding a rarity.

Tenick Dennison - RR for Wairarapa



Tenick Dennison, the new RR for Wairarapa has been interested in birds since childhood. Brought up on a farm in North Otago, perhaps his first introduction

to ornithology was bird nesting. This was not only a pastime but also a source of income as the local County Council paid a bounty of 1/6d per 100 for eggs of non-protected birds.

From bird nesting he switched to taxidermy and at one stage had visions of making a career of this. Regrettably he never received any formal training in this art as any books on the subject did not help a lot and the results achieved were not exactly commercial, let alone museum quality. He once proudly brought a bird skin back to Lou Gurr at the Otago University Zoology Department and asked him how to stuff it. Lou promptly told him he had already "stuffed" it in the skinning process, so he decided to continue with medicine and give taxidermy away.

In the 1970s, together with his son Mike, he became actively interested in bird photography and this restimulated his early interest in ornithology.

He was a member of two of the early Taiko expeditions to the Chatham Islands in 1978 and together with Mike Dennison, Hugh Robertson, and Dick Hornabrook studied Chatham Island Warblers on South East Island in 1979. This was the most exciting bird experience he has ever had.

Locally in the Wairarapa his favourite bird is the Dabchick and he has been monitoring and observing these on the local oxidation ponds for some years.

Bar-tailed Godwits & Golden Plovers in Fiji

On 25/3/88 at a small bay about half way between Penang and Nasouri on the eastern side of Viti Levu, I observed a flock of between 500 and 1000 Bar-tailed Godwits. These birds were well spread out, and without exception all were roosting, with the bill tucked under the wing. A few well-coloured Golden Plovers were observed with the godwits, but most of these birds were on the airfields at Labasa, Nasouri, and Nadi during the following five days. Unlike the godwits, the Golden Plovers were never seen in flocks, but usually in loose groups with individual birds well spread out. That same morning, a single Golden Plover called in to feed for about two hours on the bowling green at the Rakiraki Hotel.

MIKE GRAHAM

Ornithological research in the universities

The following is a summary of ornithological research being undertaken at four of our seven universities.

Waikato: Two M.Sc. students are completing their field work.

Phil Teal is studying the habitat utilization and movement of Australian Bitterns in the Whangamarino wetland. This study was initiated to obtain information on the distribution, feeding, and breeding habits of Australian Bitterns found in the wetland complex. Because of the cryptic colouration and secretive habits of the Bittern, radio tracking has been used in conjunction with direct observations. The estimation of home ranges of a few birds, and observations of general behaviour should allow a better understanding of the Bitterns use of habitat in the wetland.

Dale Towers is studying nest parasitism in Grey Teal. This involves the investigation of the incidence of nest parasitism (or nest dumping) in nesting boxes set up to encourage breeding by Grey Teal in the Waikato region.

Dr S. Swales

Massey: Ornithological research at Massey University is being undertaken by two Ph.D students and several members of staff.

M.A. Potter, a Ph.D student, is writing up the results of a study of the ecology and reproductive parameters of the North Island Brown Kiwi and their implications for management. The work has concentrated on the endochronology and spatial behaviour of kiwis.

M. Moffat, another Ph.D student has just submitted a thesis about the abundance and foraging niches of forest birds in part of the Ruamahanga Ecological Area, Tararua State Forest Park. The project has developed a modification of five-minute bird counts and contributed to the analysis and interpretation of counts.

Dr M.K. Tarburton has been awarded his degree for a study of the breeding biology of two populations of White-rumped Swiftlet in Fiji and in Queensland, with special reference to factors that regulate clutch size in birds. During the study it was discovered that the first nestling does much or most of the incubation of the second egg.

Dr S.M. Farabaugh, a post-doctoral fellow, is currently studying the function of song in Australian Magpies.

Dr C.J. Veltman, a lecturer, has several studies in progress including cooperative breeding and non-territorial flock formation in a magpie population; sex bias in the post-natal dispersal of magpies in an Australian population; song sharing within and between magpie social groups; and habitat selection and time-activity budgets of Blue Ducks. The latter study involves investigating the role of individual behaviour in the population dynamics of the species and its implications for management. This study is being undertaken jointly with Drs E.O. Minot & N.D. Barlow.

Blue Ducks are also being studied by Dr I.M. Henderson, a lecturer, who (with C.J. Veltman) is examining the diet and competition for food with introduced trout.

Dr E.O. Minot, a senior lecturer, is undertaking a long-term study of the breeding ecology of Starlings which includes the population dynamics and behaviour of Starlings nesting in boxes. Other studies include parent-offspring relationships and DNA fingerprinting (a joint project with M. Potter, G. Chambers and A. Cooper), and the effect of nest-site spacing on breeding success - a study of Starlings and English titmice (a joint study with C.M. Perrins & R.M. McCleery).

Dr E.O. Minot

Lincoln College: The college has a small but growing programme of ornithological research. Currently the following projects are being undertaken.

In the Enotomology Department, Graham Wilson is writing up his monitoring study of Adélie Penguins at Cape Bird and, in conjunction with Rowley Taylor of Ecology Division, DSIR, a study of the recovery of the Cape Hallett Adélie Penguin population. He is also conducting a banding/radio tracking study of Keas to investigate their home range, movements and social behaviour.

James Holloway has begun a Ph.D study of the impact Canada Geese have on pastures around Lake Ellesmere.

Neil Wright has compared four contrasting South Island Robin habitats to try and elucidate their habitat requirements. He should soon be writing up his M.Appl.Sc. thesis.

Ria Brejaart has completed a study of the foods of Keas and is about to begin an M.Appl.Sc. thesis on management of Keas.

Steve Phillipson has begun work on brood reduction in Fiordland Crested Penguins. This is a joint Lincoln College/University of Canterbury project.

In the Centre for Resource Management, Alison Furminger is attempting to quantify factors that make species vulnerable to environmental changes. By using five threatened species whose biology is well known, she hopes to create a model that can be used to highlight risk factors for less well-known species.

Also in the Centre, Eric Costello, Peter Ackroyd, Rodney Hide and Ken Hughey have just completed a study of the conflicts in Canada Goose management in Canterbury and Marlborough.

Graham Wilson

Canterbury: Dr Ian G. McLean has studies in progress which are examining the community ecology and behaviour of forest birds at Kowhai Bush, Kaikoura; the breeding biology and behaviour of Snares and Fiordland Crested Penguins; and the

interactions between birds and their enemies - how do birds recognise, respond to, and cope with predators and brood parasites?

Of the Ph.D students, Joe Waas is writing up his study of the social organisation and communicatory behaviour in the Little Blue Penguin; Colin Miskelly is writing up his study of the social and environmental constraints on reproductive success in NZ Snipe; and Richard Holdaway has gathered most of his data about the late quaternary avifauna of New Zealand.

Among the M.Sc. Students Teri Meis has submitted her thesis about waterfowl management in North Canterbury; Lynley Hayes is writing up her study of the foraging behaviour of NZ Kingfishers; Richard de Hamel is writing up his study of the foods of insectivorous birds, and a test of a novel rearing technique for forest birds; Shelley Dean is writing up her thesis about mixed-species flocking of forest birds in Kowhai Bush; and Heather Cameron is just starting her thesis on spacing behaviour and territoriality in the Rifleman and Grey Warbler.

B.Sc. (Hons) student Fiona Proffitt is writing up her study of chick-parent recognition in the Snares Crested Penguin.

The Airport Bird-Strike Group, which comprises members of the Department of Zoology under the supervision of Dr Peter C. Harper (Department of Continuing Education), is continuing a study of bird movements at Christchurch Airport. Dr Ian G. McLean.

Wairarapa revival

After a quiet period, birdwatching in the Wairarapa has taken on a new lease of life and new RR Tenick Dennison reports that although still small the number of OSNZ members in the region has doubled in the past two months.

With the help of Wellington members a course on birdwatching in New Zealand is planned for November/December and this may also boost membership. The course comprises five Sunday morning lecture-demonstrations, together with several Sunday afternoon field outings. Lecture-demonstration topics are: identifying birds (taken by Barrie Heather), studying birds in New Zealand (Ralph Powlesland), the complexity of breeding (Hugh Robertson), birds on the move (Rod Hay), and the role of bird study in conservation (Brian Bell or Don Merton).

Welcome Swallow survey

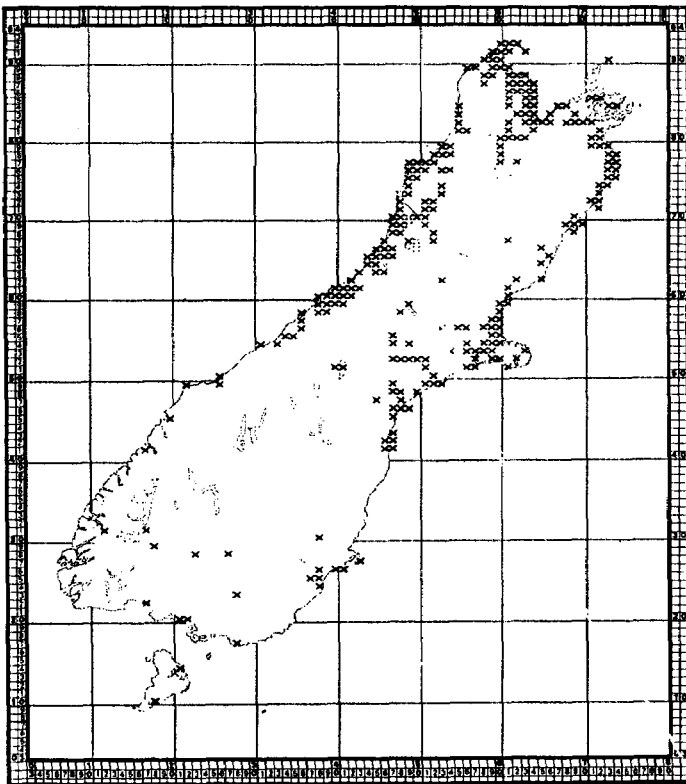
The aim of this survey, carried out by Otago members from August 1987 to February 1988, was to discover the range of expansion of Welcome Swallows in the southern half of the South Island since the completion of field work for the NZ Atlas. Unfortunately very few reports were received from Southland, so it might be better to view this survey as restricted to South Canterbury and Otago.

The instructions were kept simple - report all sightings of Welcome Swallows during the study period.

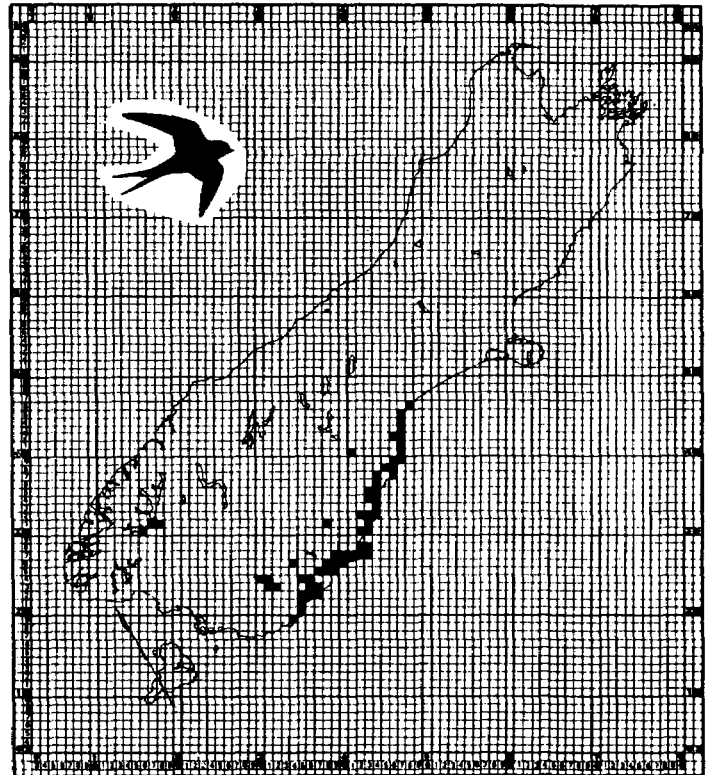
In most parts of coastal Otago Welcome Swallows take up territory in late August/early September and disperse in late March/early April. Consequently birds seen during our survey should reflect the breeding distribution. Assuming this to be correct I can say with certainty that the breeding range of Welcome Swallows in coastal Otago has expanded dramatically since completion of the Atlas (see accompanying maps). The absence of reports from inland Otago during our latest survey does not mean that no effort was made to cover this area; numerous reports of nil sightings were received, something that does not show on the map.

Another reason for this survey was to find out how many members would respond to such a survey i.e., a single species over a short period. Derek Onley's reported failure of the Brown Creeper survey because of a poor response (see *OSNZ news* 38) made me try to prove that such surveys as this are feasible. The response I received confirmed that this assumption was right, for which I thank all those who contributed - Alun Baines, Alan Baker, Helen Bremner, Margaret Child, Ken Gager, Phil Garside, George & Doreen Grant, Tony & Anne Hocken, Richard Maloney, Kim & Jenny Morrison, Derek Onley, Peter Schweigman, Mona Taylor, Mary Anne Thompson, Mary Thompson, Jim Wilson, and Dave York.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN



Distribution of Welcome Swallows in the South Island, 1969-1978. As shown in the *Atlas of Bird Distribution*.



OSNZ - Otago Welcome Swallow survey August 1987-February 1988

Regional Roundup

Far North/Northland: During the period October 1987 to March 1988 inclusive members maintained the monthly beach patrols of Cape Brett to Bream Tail and recorded 539 birds of 23 species. There was an average of 3.5 birds per km of beach patrolled. The most numerous species recorded were Northern Blue Penguin (310 birds), Sooty Shearwater (42), Fluttering Shearwater (27), Diving Petrel (24), Pied Shag (22), Flesh-footed Shearwater (21), and Gannet (20).

Monthly beach patrols along 90 Mile Beach during the period July to December 1987 produced a bag of 221 birds of 25 species. The most common species recorded were Sooty Shearwater (36), Short-tailed Shearwater (35), Fluttering Shearwater (31), and Gannet (29). Among the less common species were Antarctic Fulmars (11), White-headed Petrels (10), Blue Petrels (3), Pycroft's Petrels (2), and Buller's Mollymawk (1). (Alastair Gordon & Isabelle Godbert)

Auckland: Field work over the winter months has been directed chiefly to surveying the wader roosts, with the added spice of 21 Royal Spoonbills at Mangere and 2 on the Kaipara. The impetus of these counts has certainly advanced our knowledge of the Kaipara and one spin-off has been the formation of a Kaipara Naturalists' Association. The first meeting of the Association was held chez Kane and Brigid Glass in Helensville. Among many concerns is the well-being of the roosts and tern colonies. The protection of shorebird habitat featured during Conservation Week, when a seminar on the theme 'Between Land & Sea' included a session on birds of the coast by Adrian Reigen and a field trip to Ambury Regional Park led by Michael Taylor. A Reef Heron provided an unexpected find and there was a Cattle Egret at the tide line, although the latter was harrassed by Red-billed Gulls and soon left for the safety of the beef herd.

With thoughts of spring come plans to extend the region's studies of birds of the Waitakeres. This year the survey of the ranges will concentrate on the restricted access zone of the catchment. This is likely to be followed by visits to selected areas in support of the Protected Natural Areas programme. We hope for good support from members. Two members who will be missed are John Dowding and Elaine Murphy, now married and with the TV Natural History Unit in Dunedin. With John's move, Shane Dalton takes on the organisation of the monthly beach patrols at Muriwai. The July haul included a rare live find in the shape of a Southern Skua. This bird was cared for and released, plus band, by the Bird Rescue network.

The region's June meeting heard accounts of research projects on Little Barrier Island. These formed the M.Sc.

work of David Allen on Whitehead ecology and Terry Greene on parakeets. In July we heard from Geoff. Arnold, who presented a delightful History of Bird Illustration, and in August David Folwell took us through the life and times of Kiwis at Auckland Zoo from 1922 to the present. As usual the talks were followed by lively discussion and the making of plans for ornithological trips hither and yon.

Tara 50 contains accounts and results from field activities and an article by Dick Sibson on the occurrence of Dabchicks at Mangere - 5 since 1959, including 1 this March. Specially featured are contributions from past editors Doug Booth, Robin Child, and Betty Searle. Subscription is \$4.00 from the present editors, Geoff. & Jules Arnold, 5 Marua Road, Ellerslie, Auckland 5. (Michael Taylor)

South Auckland: At our June meeting we were honoured to have a slide show by Geoff. Moon, who focussed on swamp birds. The magnificent photographs left us inspired.

In August we had an update on the Hunuas Kokako survey, by Bruce MacMillan. It is pleasing to learn that there could be up to 39 Kokako still in the Hunua Ranges.

The winter weather has not done a lot to inspire us on field trips, but finally the sun came out in August, and a walk was undertaken in the Hunuas where Tuis and Fantails were seen and Pied Tits heard.

Beach patrollers have been rewarded recently with an adult Wandering Albatross and 3 Grey-headed Mollymawks. In August there were very high numbers of prions (mainly Thin-billed) and Diving Petrels, all were very fresh specimens.

Overwintering at Miranda, there have been about 3000 Wraybills, which is a large proportion of the total population. A Marsh Sandpiper was also seen again at Miranda on 3/7/88, the day of the winter census. (Pam Agnew)

Waikato: On 23/7, members cruised out of Tauranga Harbour to observe seabirds in the Bay of Plenty. The morning was overcast, the seas calm when a course was set for Motiti Island, 11 miles east of Mount Maunganui. Little Blue Penguins were seen sparingly in ones, twos and threes throughout the day. Diving Petrels were abundant from about 2 miles offshore, as were Fluttering Shearwaters. The boats were able to move slowly through 3 large mixed flocks of feeding birds, up to 600 birds in each flock, consisting of Fluttering Shearwaters, Red-billed Gulls, Fairy Prions, and a few Diving Petrels.

With the turn of the tide in the afternoon, the wind and a 1.8 m swell got up, and the feeding flocks disappeared. It was in these changed conditions that a Cape Pigeon was noted and excellent views obtained of, first a juvenile then 3 adult

Yellow-nosed Mollymawks, which, with 25 Black-backed Gulls, remained astern for half an hour. No doubt they were attracted by the bread thrown over the side.

Other interesting bird sightings have been a Glossy Ibis in close association with 265 Cattle Egrets on the Ward's farm at Rangiriri on 21/8. The ibis was first noted on 25/5 by Mrs Jill Ward, who also reports seeing an Intermediate Egret on 7/7.

At Lake Ngaroto, 4 Brown Quail were seen on 20/8, and 2 Kakas have spent the winter months at a Hamilton orchard. (Stella Rowe)

Bay of Plenty: A good number of Black-fronted Terns has frequented the region this winter. At the Rangitikei Rivermouth on 19/6 there was a flock of 45 Black-fronted Terns, with 15 White-fronted Terns among them. Though they were feeding inland it was not possible to find where, otherwise the tally would have been much higher.

Cattle Egrets are back in the same localities as last year, but all have fewer birds than last year - 23 at Maketu, 34 at Awaiti, and 10 at Kukumoa.

A Kaka has made frequent visits to the school at Rangiuru during June, where it favoured a puriri then a lemon tree.

During last summer the flow of water through the flood gates at the Katuna Cut was altered, so the water drained out of the lagoon instead of in. As a result for the first time in years the water level during February, March and April was low enough to attract small waders. And they came. It is pretty obvious that waders are roaming the country pretty much all through the year looking for suitable feeding areas. Anyway, we ended up with 2 Marsh Sandpipers and 2 Pectoral Sandpipers which were not there earlier.

Finally, Brian Chudleigh saw up to 3 Common Terns on the Bowentown Shellbanks over December 1987/January 1988. (Paddy Latham)

Volcanic Plateau: On 19/8/88 I received a report of N.I. Kaka seen in a garden at Thornton. We tracked this report to its source and discovered 3 Kakas (a pair & a subadult?) which had taken up residence in a well-kept garden. The birds were thriving on ripening fruit. Apart from an occasional Kaka reported in the Whakatane area, this is to my knowledge, the first record in the Thornton area. Other birds have been previously reported in gardens of Te Puke, which is closer to native bush.

On 25/7/88 a Northern Diving Petrel was picked up alive at the Kawerau Golf Club. It was being mobbed by White-backed Magpies, presumably having been blown inland by heavy storm weather. It was released later at the coast. This is another first record for Kawerau and brings the total species list for the town to 67. (Roy Weston)

Hawkes Bay: The Royal Spoonbills arrived back earlier this year at the Ahuriri Estuary, with 12 being seen on 2/4. Numbers had built up to 19 by 25/4 and 22 by 12/6. Of these 22, 19 were examined closely through a telescope and comprised 7 immatures and 12 adults.

Since at least 5/12/87 2 Little Terns have been in the area and were last seen on 25/4. A Gull-billed Tern, first seen on 2/4/88 and again on 28/5 was in breeding plumage on 12/6. Two or 3 Black-fronted Terns put in an appearance in early April and numbers had built up to 41 by 12 May. There were 3 first-year birds among the flock.

Eleven members faithfully patrol our beaches each month. In the first 6 months of this year the group had recorded 54 birds of 12 species (Wayne Twyde)

Manawatu/Horowhenua/Wanganui: Great flocks of terns were reported at the Ohau Estuary and beach in May by David Mudge. For a 10-day period at the beginning of May about 4000 White-fronted Terns were present on the shore from the Ohau Rivermouth to about 1.5 km south. Also present were unusually large numbers of Caspian Terns - 70 were counted but there appeared to be more with a maximum estimate of 100. Accompanying these flocks of terns were 8 or 9 skuas.

A survey of Lake Horowhenua on 15/5 by Walter Jackson and Alan Carpenter produced the following list: 186 Dabchicks, 650 Mallard/Grey Ducks, 320 Black Swans, 2 Paradise Shelducks, 6 Shoveler Ducks, 4 White-faced Herons, 13 Pukeko, 7 Little Shags, 9 Black Shags, and 24 Spur-winged Plovers. Note the remarkable number of Dabchicks. A significant fraction of the entire NZ population of this species is obviously using the lake at this time of year.

Royal Spoonbills continue to frequent the Wanganui Rivermouth. O. Torr and P. Battley report 2 birds on 4 & 6/3, 4 on 9/4 and 6 birds on 7/5. (Lindsay Davies)

Canterbury: A beach patrol along 16 km of Kaitorete Spit on 29/5 by 6 members resulted in a bag of 31 birds, including a Shy Mollymawk, Sooty Shearwaters, Hutton's Shearwaters, and Little Blue Penguins.

On 1/8 several members tried mist-netting finches at Lake Ellesmere and caught 40 birds - mainly Redpolls but with some Greenfinches and Goldfinches.

Recent sightings include 3 Glossy Ibis at the L II in August; a Bittern and a Far Eastern Curlew at the Ashley/Saltwater Creek Estuary on 17/8.

Meanwhile, Lake Ki-Wainono continues to provide more than its fair share of rarities with a Mongolian Dotterel seen there in June and July by Richard

Maloney. And in May, Tony Hocken saw a Black-fronted Dotterel, which is the first sighting of this species at Wainono for several years. (Barry Armstrong)

Otago: Attempts to verify the report of a "large kingfisher" at Broad Bay in early June have so far been unsuccessful.

On 15/6 23 Scaup were seen at the Sinclair Wetland, where 7 Australian Coots have also been seen this autumn.

Cattle Egret numbers are low in the West Taieri area this year. There were 3 in June and Alan Wright reported 4 on 11/7 near Henley. Margaret Child saw 10 in almost the same area on 16/7, and then I saw 12 there on 27/7, as did George and Doreen Grant on 29/7. (Peter Schweigman)

Southland: Wynston Cooper has resigned as RR because of the pressure of work, and Maida Barlow is acting RR with help from other members. Owen Linscott is co-ordinating the August Cattle Egret survey, and Lloyd Esler, recently moved from Otago, will co-ordinate the Little Shag plumage survey. Owen was surely meant to volunteer for the Cattle Egret job - about a week after he had offered to do it, 10 Cattle Egrets appeared on his Thornbury farm and within 2 days the flock had increased to about 100. With this kind of co-operation from the birds, who needs a public advertising campaign?

On 17/7 at a pot-luck lunch (which included *Puffinus griseus* à la Linscott), a spring/summer field programme was planned and the decision taken to advertise some of the outings and supply the news media with occasional items (e.g., arrival of migratory waders), so letting the public know that OSNZ exists. The aim is to increase membership. (Maida Barlow)

New publications about moas

Two recent publications about moas may be of interest to member.

An Illustrated Key To The Main Leg Bones Of Moas (Aves-Dinornithiformes) by T.H. Worthy and published by the National Museum is the first complete guide (in contrast with the major monographs) to the identification of moa bones. Leg bones are described because they are preserved more frequently and remain in better condition than other moa bones.

Also published by the National Museum and written by T.H. Worthy is the paper *Sexual dimorphism and temporal variation in the North Island moa species Euryapteryx curtus (Owen) and Pachyornis mappini Archey*.

The price of the key is about \$9.00 and that of the paper about \$1.50. Orders should be sent to the Librarian, National Museum, P.O. Box 467, Wellington.

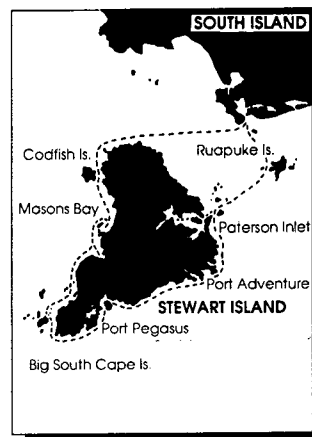
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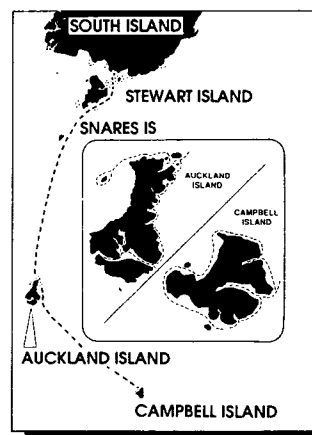


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