

# 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.49 December, 1988

Note Deadline for the March issue will be  
20th February, 1989.

## AGM & Conference 1989

To whet members' appetites (we hope) here is the tentative programme for the conference weekend, Queen's Birthday 2-5 June 1989, on Whangaparaoa Peninsula 30 km north of Auckland. Transport from the city or airport will be provided. Friday evening - informal mixer; Saturday - keynote talks on ornithological topics and guided local birding on the peninsula and Shakespear Regional Park; AGM, social hour and buffet dinner. Topics planned for the talks include the distribution and migration of shorebirds, seabirds of the islands of the Hauraki Gulf, and study aspects of some rare and endangered species. Displays of member's studies are also invited, and some films/videos are planned.

Sunday - a trip on the Hauraki Gulf from Devonport to Tiritiri Island, where reforestation is benefitting Bellbirds, parakeets, and especially Saddlebacks. In the evening, dinner and a special celebration of 50 years of OSNZ. Monday - visits to the Mangere wader roosts on route to the airport and points south.

MIKE GRAHAM & MICHAEL TAYLOR

## Sir Charles Fleming Memorial

Council at its May meeting approved a memorial to Sir Charles Fleming. This would take three major thrusts.

1. A memorial plaque to be erected in the Chatham Islands to 'Old Blue', Sir Charles and the Wildlife Service.
2. A special issue of *Notornis* devoted to papers on the birds of the Chatham Islands.
3. Any surplus funds to be used to help finance junior OSNZ members to attend the 1990 International Ornithological Congress.

Members will be given an opportunity to make a financial contribution to this fund.

The plaque commemorates Sir Charles' contribution in drawing attention

to the important biota of the Chatham Islands and its critical status. His association with the Black Robin began with his rediscovery of this species on Little Mangere in 1938. This interest continued through the translocation and manipulation programme. He followed 'Old Blue's' contribution to the recovery of the species. He was closely associated with the Wildlife Service's endangered species programme through both his official contribution via the Fauna Protection Advisory Council and his personal encouragement of the officers involved in the Black Robin project.

The special (enlarged) issue of *Notornis* devoted to the birds of the Chatham Islands will update the important paper on the birds of the Chatham Islands, which Sir Charles published in *Emu*. This work has been the standard text on the birds of the Chatham Islands for the past 50 years. Ornithologists undertaking major studies on species in the Chatham Islands are being approached individually to write up their work for publication in this special issue. It is hoped that anyone who has helped with programmes or has visited the Chatham Islands and made observations will make

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

## NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following five Council members retire in May 1989 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mrs. B. Brown (President)  
Mr. B. D. Bell  
Mr. D. J. Onley  
Dr. H. A. Robertson  
Mr. P. M. Sagar

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28th February 1989, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election, however, the President will not be seeking re-election.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1989 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1989 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1989 OSNZ Annual Conference & A.G.M. will be held at the Whangaparaoa Peninsula (Auckland) on Saturday, 3rd June.

S. J. TRIGGS  
Hon. Secretary, OSNZ

P.O. Box 12397  
Wellington

these available for a collective paper on incidental observations, covering all species not already covered as a special study. Everyone with records is asked to make them available and all contributions will be acknowledged.

Please send your records to Brian D. Bell, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, New Zealand, who is coordinator of this Fleming Memorial issue of *Notornis*.

## OSNZ supplies new director for RAOU

Dr Phil Moors, a Wellington member of OSNZ, has been appointed Director of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Phil takes up his appointment early in 1989. Watch out Australia, it may be a take over bid, after all Phil is involved in outlying island research. No, don't worry, he's only going home. Yes, he's an Aussie!



Phil is Assistant Director in the Science and Research Directorate of DoC, having moved there after being a scientist with the late Wildlife Service. His early background was in mammals, but these led to studies on predation and later to eradication of predators. This naturally extended to islands and his involvement led to him becoming editor of the ICBP's technical bulletin *Conservation of Island Birds*.

Despite Phil's preoccupation with ferrets, and particularly rats and mice, he has been distracted into birds with studies of skuas on the Antipodes and Rockhopper Penguins at Campbell Island.

Phil and his daughter, Sarah, spent a weekend at the banding school at Ward earlier this year and were planning to come again - it is perhaps a little too far from Melbourne, but they are still welcome.

The appointment of a Director for RAOU who has had an association with New Zealand bodes well for inter-society cooperation. Already good individual association occurs, but there is scope for more formal links involving sharing of ideas for publicity raising finance and general management, cooperative research programmes, an interchange of member participation in activities, and cooperative seminars associated with annual conferences etc.

We extend our congratulations, Phil, and look forward to seeing an era of CER (closer eudyptid research) among other things. We are already involved in the cooperative *Handbook* and this we see as the beginning of much increased cooperation. Phil's appointment could begin a major step forward to real Australasian ornithology.

BRIAN D. BELL



## Exhibition of New Zealand bird paintings

In conjunction with the 20th International Ornithological Congress in December 1990 it is tentatively planned to have an exhibition of New Zealand bird art (paintings, sculptures etc). Although the members of the Executive Committee know of several New Zealand artists who may be keen to take part in such an exhibition, we are sure there are many we do not know of. Anybody interested in taking part in the exhibition or that knows of somebody who may be, please forward their name and address to: Dr Ben D. Bell, Secretary-General 20th IOC, Zoology Department, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington.



## International Ornithological Congress - guides for official tours

More volunteers are required to guide official tours before and after the IOC in 1990.

Those wishing to be a guide will be required to have a good knowledge of New Zealand birds and other natural history, a good general knowledge of New Zealand and its geology and history. They will also be required to help prepare the tour booklet for the tour they are selected for. They must be prepared to attend one, and

in some instances two, training weekends. Application does not mean selection automatically.

All applicants should provide a short statement giving details of themselves and their experience. Applications close on 31st January, 1989 and should be sent to: Brian D. Bell, IOC Tours Convener, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

## Help wanted

For all those many members who volunteered their services in the questionnaire last year, here is your chance to help your Society. We need people with a little time and enthusiasm for the following positions:

- Archivist. The OSNZ business and historical files, presently housed at the Auckland Institute and Museum, need sorting and cataloging.
- Publicity Officer. Questionnaire replies strongly favoured boosting the public profile of OSNZ. We need someone to prepare, coordinate and action a publicity campaign.
- Coordinator of articles for popular magazines/newspapers. OSNZ members are involved in a lot of interesting activities that the general public (3 million prospective members!) should hear about. A coordinator is needed to organise other OSNZ members to write popular articles about their projects/interests.
- Coordinator/Editor for a beginners section in *OSNZ news*. Most members said that beginners need more help and encouragement. You could help by coordinating a new feature for beginners in *OSNZ news*.

Please reply to Sue Triggs, Hon. Secretary OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington

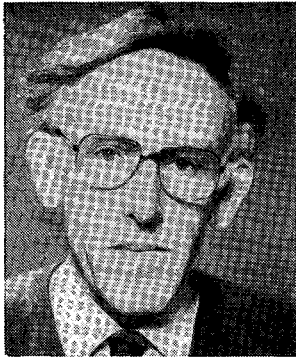
## Classified Summarised Notes

The Society requires someone to coordinate Classified Summarised Notes for the South Island. The work involves receiving contributions from regions in August, ensuring that they meet the Society's standards and preparing them for publication in the December *Notornis*. This job is ideal for someone who enjoys communicating with other ornithologists and would like to encourage the recording of those observations (both common and unusual) that will advance our knowledge of birdlife.

If you are interested please write to Peter Gaze, 25 Richmond Avenue, Nelson.

## Michael Taylor - RR for Auckland

Michael Taylor, RR for Auckland since 1982, who is a member of the Chemistry Department of Auckland University, has been very interested in birds since boyhood in the north of England.



Being particularly keen on woodpeckers, swifts and small songbirds he admits to some avian deprivation in New Zealand. However, his current ornithology includes the study of colonial species - gannets, terns and shags - one aspect being the survey of the plumages of the Little Shag. Bird talks, meetings and field trips, directing visitors, and the reporting of birds in at-risk habitats form part of his RR's brief in a busy region.

Michael and his wife, Christine, have enjoyed rambles in search of birds in various parts of the world. More seriously, he took part with Sylvia Reed, Ken Bond, and others in the 1979 survey of Savai'i, Western Samoa, and has twice visited the Cook Islands making sound recordings to be preserved by the Library of Wildlife Sounds in London.

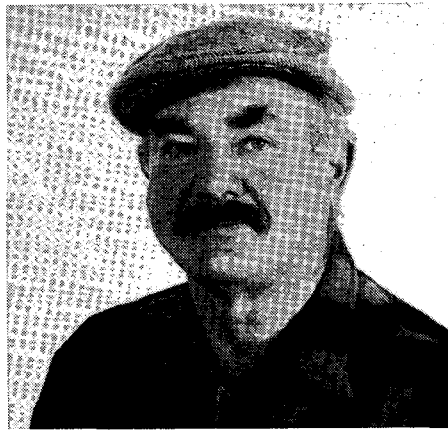
Conservation is a major part of his interest in natural history and he has been involved in several campaigns for the protection of habitat, including the purchase of Forest & Bird reserves in West Auckland and on Waiheke Island. The location of Kiwis and if necessary their relocation ahead of bush clearance has been another practical concern. The need to search, document and protect the important wader roosts of the Waitemata, Manukau and Kaipara Harbours is a further point where his ornithological and conservation activities are closely linked.

Michael's thoughts for 1989 are turning towards the arrangements for hosting the Society's AGM and conference in his region.

### Stewart Lauder - RR for the West Coast

An inquiry from a workmate regarding some birds he had seen and was unfamiliar with led to Stewart's introduction to OSNZ. That was in March 1976 and the birds were Gannets.

Born and brought up on a farm in the Scottish borders he developed a keen interest in the wildlife around him and an early desire to know what things were. Anything that moved had to be identified. A vivid memory of a beautiful Bullfinch on



a fence beside the house has lingered for over 40 years. After a year in eastern USA he arrived in NZ in the last few days of 1951, still considered to be a good move!

In 1976, Joan Douglas was RR for the West Coast and at that time was involved with a study of Fernbirds at Millerton, assisting with that project was his first work with OSNZ.

In 1978 Stewart became RR for the West Coast. Being RR on the Coast is not easy because the region is as long as the distance from Auckland to Wellington and there are only a handful of members. Therefore he is grateful to have some good keen helpers in the region.

His current activities include monthly surveys of local wader habitats, which is now in its second year. Participation in OSNZ surveys, including checking Banded Dotterels for bands and Pied Stilts and Little Shags for plumage variations.

Attendance at AGMs and OSNZ study courses has been very helpful, with Farewell Spit course in January 1988 being high on the list.

Early retirement in April 1987 allows more flexibility for birding and he looks forward to many more years of being part of OSNZ.

### Maida Barlow - RR for Southland



Photo courtesy Southland Times.

Maida Barlow's interest in birds began in childhood, a rub-off from the field work of her mother, Olga Sansom, and her mother's 'birdy' friends - Lance Richdale, Bob Falla and Professor Marples - all foundation members of OSNZ. Maida joined the Society in 1955. All her birdwork has been done in Southland, except in the late 1950s when she was a public health nurse in South Auckland and spent her free time as an apprentice to that old sorcerer, Ross McKenzie.

Her mentors were Lance Richdale ("Study one species, and study it thoroughly"); Ross McKenzie "-rrr-hmm . . . and what makes it *not* a Knot?"); Dick Sibson, bird-man, word-man; and Sir Robert Falla ("Never ignore a fact, however disrupting it may be to any emerging pattern."). It was Sir Robert who encouraged and informally supervised her major projects, on the Spur-winged Plover (1965-70) with Southland stalwarts Peter Muller and Roger Sutton, and the South Island Fernbird (1978-81). First with a child on her back and later with children as catchers, she has banded Caspian Tern chicks on the Invercargill Estuary annually since 1964. From 1964 to 1982 she and Roger Sutton did monthly 12 km beach patrols on Oreti Beach.

Fieldwork has always been fitted around raising a family and her work responsibilities, latterly as head of the Southland Hospital Board's social services. Now, retired from that job and with the children flown the coop, she has begun a new study of Caspian Terns, is one of Ray Pierce's Banded Dotterel team, and is looking forward to similarly stimulating team-work with Black-fronted Dotterel.

Since her first *Notornis* note in 1956, about Stewart Island Shag colonies in Foveaux Strait, she has written several major papers and many short notes. She is author of *The Year of the Spur-winged Plover* and has reviewed natural history books for the Southland Times since 1963. Maida was 1985 recipient of the Falla Memorial Award.

Administrative positions for the Society have been as co-opted Council member in 1966/67; secretary for the Southland region since 1968, during which time she has prepared many submissions to government and local authorities on the ornithological status of proposed reserves and other areas, an experience which has confirmed her strong support of the OSNZ policy against alignment with any conservation lobby; and this year as RR for Southland.

### Change of RR

At its October meeting Council confirmed Maida Barlow as the new RR in Southland and expressed its sincere thanks to Wynston Cooper, the retiring RR for that region, for his services on the Society's behalf.

## New Secretary of the Rare Birds Committee

In August, Dr Mike Imber resigned from the position as secretary to the RBC because of work pressure and also a proposed absence from NZ in 1989. Therefore at its October meeting Council confirmed Rob Guest, 79 Slacks Road, Palmerston North, as the new secretary of this important committee. Council expressed thanks to Dr Imber for his services to the Society.

Members are advised that all Unusual Bird Reports should now be sent (via their RR) to Rob Guest, at the address shown above.

## New members

The following new members are welcomed to the Society: Far North/Northland - Mr & Mrs F.D. Godbert, Mr & Mrs B. Simpkin; Auckland/South Auckland - Mr T. Stein, Ms C. Bates, Mr L. With, Miss C. Hammond, Mr E. A. Holdaway, Mr R. Whitten, Mr B. Dick, Mr H. Gilliland; Waikato - Ms H. Stewart, Mr R. Lawrenson; Bay of Plenty - Mrs J. McWilliam; Volcanic Plateau - Mr P. Buxton, Mr P. West; Hawkes Bay - Miss L. Wilson, Mrs F. E. Treacher, Ms J. Northe; Manawatu/Horowhenua/Wanganui - Mr T. Teasdale; Wairarapa - Mr & Mrs M. Bell, Ms L. Mouritzen, B. M. Fitzwater, Mrs N. Hussey, Mrs J. C. & Mr W. L. Clinton-Baker; Wellington - Miss J. Grant, Paul R. Bell, Michael D. Bell, David J. Bell, Mrs D. Tofield, Miss J. Woon, Mrs P. W. Deacon, Mr M. Efford, Mr M. Wakelin, Mr J. R. Roberts, Mrs A. M. Dickie, Mr M. Simmonds, Mr A. L. Rebergen; Marlborough - Ms B. B. Goodall; Canterbury - Dr D. F. G. Orwin, Mrs L. M. Satchell, Mr J. Hopkirk, Dr P. A. Broady, Mr J. Spence; Otago - Mr C. A. Landis, Mr. D. Hawke; Southland - Marie McSoriley.

Overseas - Mr O. Lindblad (Sweden), Piero Alberti (Italy).

Institutions - NZ Department of Conservation Queenstown, NZ Department of Conservation Christchurch, NZ Department of Conservation Masterton.

## Back numbers of Notornis

Members who are willing to donate to the Society any unwanted copies of *Notornis* are requested to hand them to their RR. The RRs will then be able to bring or arrange to have them brought along to the AGM, where we will be able to collect them.

TOM & HAZEL HARTY, *OSNZ Back Numbers*

## Banding Liason Officer

With the formation of the Department of Conservation, the Science & Research Directorate took the opportunity to re-establish the Banding Committee. Because of the Society's close links with bird banding, OSNZ Council was asked to nominate a Wellington-based member to this Banding Committee. The Society's nominee is Dr P. C. Bull, who became our official representative on the Banding Committee late in 1987 and already has represented OSNZ banders during the recent review of the Banding Office (see article later in this issue for details).

The Council expresses its thanks to Mr L. Gurr for his work over the years as the Society's banding liason officer with the old Wildlife Service. It was through his good work that the Society received due recognition in relation to banding in New Zealand by being asked to nominate a member to the new Banding Committee. PAUL SAGAR

## Information about subantarctic islands

As part of its role in the management of the subantarctic islands, the Department of Conservation (Invercargill) are setting up a database for the area and consequently are cataloguing all available information. Unfortunately they do not have reports from many expeditions and there are large gaps in their knowledge. Therefore anyone who has been to or has information on the subantarctic islands is asked to send the information or a list of it to: Peter McClelland, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 743, Invercargill.

## More Starlings eating snails

The note by Michael Taylor about Starlings hammering snails (*OSNZ news* 47) has drawn two responses.

1) About 20 years ago I was travelling in the Fairlie area, South Canterbury, and as we came round a bend there were a number of Starlings nesting in holes in the roadside rocks and many of them were feeding on snails on the road. This was the first time that I had seen this behaviour in Starlings but I have seen it many times since. The Starlings that nest regularly in the roof of my house feed in this manner.

I suppose it is natural if the snails are plentiful, but how or when the Starlings learned to feed in this manner. I do not know.

STEWART LAUDER

2) I first observed Starlings taking snails in December 1974. The Starlings were taking the snails from long grass, bashing them on the ground to get rid of the shell, and then feeding them to their juveniles.

The search for snails was carried out methodically and it was not just a haphazard chance that the Starlings found a snail. I observed similar behaviour again in December 1976.

ROY WESTON

## Results of questionnaire to OSNZ bird banders

In April 1987, responsibility for running the banding scheme (originally started by OSNZ in 1950) was transferred from the former N.Z. Wildlife Service to the Science and Research Directorate of the new Department of Conservation. In August 1988, the Director of Science and Research (Dr R. M. Sadleir) set up a small in-house committee of departmental officers to carry out a "detailed review of the functions and costs of the banding scheme". In my capacity as OSNZ Banding Liaison Officer, I was invited to join this committee to contribute a Society view to the discussions. To enable me to provide a corporate view, rather than just a personal one, I circulated a questionnaire to the Society's bird banders seeking their views on some of the matters being discussed by the committee. The results are summarised below.

## Response to the questionnaire

Questionnaires were sent to 56 people and 44 replies were received (78%). Six respondents ignored or gave unclear answers to one or more of the questions so there were slightly more answers to some questions than to others.

## Performance of the Banding Office

Four respondents provided unclear answers but, of the rest, 37 (92%) rated the performance as "good" or "satisfactory"; only three people regarded it as unsatisfactory. The main suggestions for improvement (often more than one per person and from people who still rated the overall performance as "good" or "satisfactory") were:

- (i) more "feed back" (of banding results to OSNZ members and to the general public (six respondents),
- (ii) faster issue of permits, reporting of recoveries, or supply of materials (6),
- (iii) less form filling (2) and
- (iv) more training for bird banders (2).

Most of these suggestions were constructive rather than critical, and recognised that the Banding Officer was providing a good service despite the Department's straitened circumstances and other matters beyond his control.

## Cost recovery

The questionnaire did not ask for comments on the appropriateness of a proposal to ask banders to contribute towards the costs of running the banding scheme, yet 18 respondents (41%) volunteered opposition (some very strong) to any such proposal; 12 respondents claimed they would cease banding if they were required to pay for bands or permits. (They felt their current contributions in time, travelling expenses etc. to bird protection, through banding, made them creditors, not debtors to the public purse).

Of the options set out in the questionnaire, the least objectionable form of contribution (if such was to be imposed by DoC), 25 people were prepared to pay (under protest) for bands, 17 for a banding permit and 24 for data retrieval.

Reasons advanced against the levy of any charges of banders were:

- (i) It would be unjust. If banders are charged for bands or permits they could reasonably expect DoC to pay them for the time, transport costs, etc. they contribute in producing information of value to conservation and other related good causes. (Dr J. A. Gibb, with long experience of bird banding in Britain, made a particularly forceful statement concerning the invaluable contribution bird banding had made to bird protection internationally.)
- (ii) Charging amateurs will reduce banding activity to the detriment of acquiring new knowledge.
- (iii) It is extremely difficult to devise a fair system for charging (e.g. how does one equate a group permit with an individual one? and what about big groups v small ones?)
- (iv) The cost of charging for bands or permits would probably far exceed the funds generated, especially if charges were varied to make them fair in relation to special circumstances.

## Ownership of recovery data

Forty-one respondents (98%) were against banders having ownership of recovery data for an indefinite period, 26 favoured a limited period of ownership and 34 favoured release of recovery data at Banding Office discretion after prior notice to the bander who would have a right of appeal or (one respondent) veto. Some suggested that recoveries from minor banding (i.e. not related to an individual's special study) should be freely available, but recoveries from major studies should be restricted for a stated period which could be extended if special circumstances warranted this.

Two respondents made very strong, but diametrically opposite, submissions.

One (concerned with long-term, life-table studies) felt that none of his recoveries should be released without his permission until after the end of the study (for a study of albatrosses this could be fifty years or more); the other person thought all recoveries should be public property forthwith as this would make annual reports more interesting and generally give bird banding a higher profile among ornithologists and the general public thus leading to more recoveries being made by the public and more resources made available for banding (also the person who makes the recovery should have some rights as to the publicity given).

Three respondents referred to overseas practice and suggested we should investigate the details of such practices and their results before making any changes to our own rules.

## Acknowledgements

The questionnaire requested an urgent reply and it was most encouraging that half the people sent questionnaires completed and returned them within a week. I take this opportunity to thank everyone for their co-operation in replying so promptly and helpfully.

PETER BULL, *OSNZ Banding Liaison Officer*

## Band and Tag

It has been some time since a contribution from the Banding Office appeared in this newsletter. However, this contribution must make up for it. Especially with the bumper Banding Mail Bag elsewhere in this issue.

## Banding report

Earlier this year I produced banding reports for the 1985/86, 1986/87 and 1987/88 seasons. These have been distributed to the people on our mailing list. If you are not on the list, but would like to receive copies of these reports, please let us know and we will forward them by return mail. Our address is:- The Banding Office, Science & Research Directorate, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

## RAOU Handbook

In tandem with the 20th International Ornithological Congress in 1990, the RAOU plan to publish the first volume of a Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds. The scope of material to be published is daunting, so we can expect it to be one of the most exciting and comprehensive publications on the birdlife of our region. The New Zealand National Banding Scheme has contributed around 11 000 records (in abbreviated form) of birds recovered more than 100 km from the

banding site. These will be used in the distribution section of the Handbook. This contribution was only possible thanks to the many New Zealand bird banders who released their data. Many thanks to all of you who so generously gave permission for us to provide the data to the RAOU.

## Banding Scheme review

On another tack. You will be aware of the upheaval taking place inside the public sector Government Departments. The Department of Conservation, like many other departments, is under review.

A review of the structure of the Science & Research Directorate of the DoC has been completed. And, you guessed it, the Banding Office and the NZ National Banding Scheme have just been reviewed too. Dr Peter Bull was the OSNZ representative on the review committee, and through a questionnaire he has polled the current permit holders on their views and suggestions for possible changes. At this stage no final decisions have been made, but it is certain that there will be some important changes.

One of them will be the transfer of the main database from the Cumberland Computer Centre to a stand-alone computer to be housed in the Banding Office. This will greatly improve overall data management, accessibility of data for both editing and report generation, as well as reducing the actual running costs of the scheme. In anticipation of this important move we are currently running tests with a copy of the data for Canada Goose. This is one of the larger files that will be created and the results to date are promising. However, it will be six to nine months before the change-over is completed and the system is fully operational.

I will report on the final outcome of the review directly to the permit holders and possibly in a later newsletter.

RODRICK O. COSSEE

## Cattle Egret Survey

In 1984, we were excited with the numbers that added to a national total of 1531 egrets, the record at the time (previous high 771 in 1980). This year, we had a total that was not much less, but few were excited because, in between, we had a BIG high in 1986. As early as April we could tell in all regions that the 1988 influx would not be spectacular; indeed, despite an overall upward trend over a decade of counts, we were back to fewer egrets than in 1984. What will happen in 1989? The reasons for the erratic changes in CE numbers is not known. Meanwhile, we'll keep careful records until we find the means of interpreting NZ events in relation to Australian events.

The table gives the results of the August counts of 1986-88, to which a large number of members contributed time and expense, co-operative effort at its best.

#### CATTLE EGRETS 1986-1988

North Island	1986	1987	1988
Far North	147	c.120	66
Northland	455	c.193	16
Auckland	174	155	53
South Auckland	291	143	64
Waikato	480	485	297
Bay of Plenty	167	109	74
Gisborne/Wairoa	31	9	31
Taranaki	41	16	7
Hawke's Bay	57	46	21
Wanganui/Manawatu	392	446+	158
Wairarapa	52	33	29
Wellington	1	0	0

North Island Totals 2288 1755+ 816

South Island + Chathams	1986	1987	1988
Nelson	84	95	45
Marlborough	110	74	50
West Coast	87	84	20
Canterbury	98	82	61
Otago	207+	117	12
Southland	364+	43	127
Chatham Island	14	0	11

South Island Totals 964+ 495+ 326  
New Zealand Totals 3252+ 2250+ 1142

Here are this year's August numbers, together with such member's names as I have received.

**Far North/Northland:** Awanui 66, Oakleigh (Whangarei Harb) 16. The usual Ruawai flock could not be found.

**Auckland:** Parakai 50, Orewa 2, Mangere 1. (C. Exley, B. Binning, S. Morris, M. Turner, D. Booth, D. Baker, K. Bond, K. Haslett, B. Searle, K. Molloy)

**South Auckland:** Aka Aka 64. The usual Piako flock (47 in June) could not be found. (A. Goodwin, L. Buchanan, B. & C. Searle et al.)

**Waikato:** Ohinewai 265, Lake Ngaroto 32, Te Rapa 8 in early Aug. ( R. Dench, J. Ward, J. Rowe, S. Rowe, I. Reid, S. & C. Carran, H. Stewart, B. Seddon, F. Nieuwland, A. Plant, D. Riddell, J. Robertson, S. Chambers)

**Bay of Plenty:** Maketu 17, Awaiti 47, Opotiki 10. (P. Latham, W. Sloan)

**Gisborne:** Gisborne 22, Awamate 9. (J. Henley, G. Foreman)

**Hawke's Bay:** Horseshoe Lake 2, Waipukurau 19. (W. & M. Twydale, C. McRae)

**Taranaki:** Parihaka 1, Mokoia 6. (M. Davis) Barrett Road, New Plymouth, late July, 9. (D. Medway)

**Manawatu:** Foxton 120, Levin 38. (W. Jackson) No August data for Wanganui district.

**Wairarapa:** Featherston 20, Tuhitarata 9. (H. Cook, D. Sim, T. Dennison, H. Robertson, B. Heather)

**Marlborough:** Grovetown 46, Kaikoura 4. (B. North, B. Elliott)

**Nelson:** Appleby 23, Takaka 22. (G. Quayle, J. Hawkins)

**West Coast:** Karamea 14, Westport 6. (S. Lauder, P. Jenkins, K. Scollay, N. Reedy, L. Adams, J. Adams, N. Adams)

**Canterbury:** Waikuku 5, Ellesmere area 47, Clandeboye 9. (K. Harrison)

**Otago:** West Taireri 12. Usual Balclutha flock not found. (P. Schweigman, T. Hocken, M. Child)

**Southland:** Wyndham 31, Tisbury 5, Underwood 10, Menzies Ferry 4, Mokotua 10, Waianiwa 1, Monowai 1, Edendale 5, Thornbury 60 (M. Barlow, O. Linscott, R. Morgan)

**Chatham Island:** Owenga 1, Waitangi 2, Wharekauri 8. (R. Chappell)

BARRIE HEATHER

#### Banding Mail Bag

It has been a while since the last Banding Mail Bag, so there are quite a few interesting recoveries to report. Here are the details.

Two Northern Royal Albatross banded as adult males at East Sister Island (Chatham Islands) were recovered dead. R-33886 banded on 28/1/74, was found washed up on the beach at Cape Vidal, South Africa (28°00'S, 32°05'E) on 29/6/87. The second bird, R-34398 banded on 12/2/74, was reported from the port of Corral, near Valdivia in Chile (39°50'S, 73°26'W). The details of this last recovery were very vague and a request for further information was sent to the finder.

Other visitors to South America include a Southern Royal Albatross, R-41900, banded as a chick at Campbell Island on 23/6/85. It was found dead on 31/1/87 on a beach at Punta Tombo, Argentina (44°02'S, 65°11'W).

Black Petrel, H-22521, banded at Great Barrier Island on 1/4/78, was found dead in September 1984, on the beach near Guayaquil, Ecuador (02°09'S, 79°36'W).

Three New Zealand Black-browed Mollymawks, all banded as chicks at the Bull Rock colony on Campbell Island, flew to Australian waters only to get caught in fishing gear. M-45143, banded on 18/4/85, drowned on 19/10/87 in the Southern Ocean (39°39'S, 126°00'E) as a result of this mishap. The other two birds were caught off the coast of New South Wales. M-21097, banded on 5/4/69, drowned on 10/6/87, but M-46242, banded on 1/4/87, was freed of the lure and released alive on 10/6/87.

Grey-headed Mollymawk, O-10138, banded as a chick at Campbell Island on 9/3/68, was another victim of fishing activities. It was found drowned entangled in fishing gear on 2/10/87, in the Southern Ocean (39°51'S, 125°40'E).

Australasian Gannet, M-38181, was recovered dead at Mornington, Australia on 12/3/88. The bird was banded as an adult female at Bush Island, off the Coromandel, on 29/12/79. At the age of 9+ years this is an unusual recovery as almost all Gannets recovered across the Tasman are juveniles.

The furthest travelled bird recovered over the last few years was an Antarctic Skua, L-10268, banded as an adult of unknown sex at Cape Bird, Antarctica on 29/11/68. The bird arrived in Kogane, Japan, in an exhausted state, only to be harassed by the local Ravens. It was rescued on 3/7/86 and taken to a local zoo to recover from its ordeal. We do not know if it was released.

Some birds banded under overseas schemes were recovered in New Zealand. The details of these birds are often slow in arriving, but for two of them we now have full details. Brown Booby, 1327-03617, banded as a chick at Johnston Island, North Pacific (16°45'N, 169°32'W) on 21/6/85 was found 35 km off the West Coast between Ross and Okarito on 5/3/86. The bird had drowned after taking a tuna lure. Wandering Albatross, 5117503, banded by the British as a chick at Bird Island, South Georgia (54°00'S, 38°102'W) on 19/10/85, was later found exhausted near Levin on 25/3/86, some 157 days after being banded.

A number of notably long-lived birds were recovered. Canada Goose, 19-53263, banded as an adult female at Lake Ellesmere on 9/1/58, was shot on Lake Forsyth on 25/9/88, more than 30 years after banding.

A Southern Black-backed Gull, S-6153, banded as a chick at Makarewa peat bog, Southland on 7/12/62, was shot at Hokonui Loop, Southland on 7/5/88, nearly 26 years after banding.

Cape Pigeon, 41505, banded as an adult at the Tory Channel Whaling Station on 23/7/58, was found frozen at Ardery Island, Antarctica (66°22'S, 110°27'E) on 21/1/87, 28 years after banding.

Starling, D-121843, banded as a chick at Washpool, Hastings on 29/10/74, was recovered dead over 12 years later, on 9/11/86, just one mile from the banding site.

Grey-faced Petrel, E-84146, banded at Whale Island as a chick on 9/12/69 was recovered alive and well on Whale Island on 15/12/87.

MICHAEL WAKELIN

#### King Shags, Queen Charlotte Sound

On 13/8/88 a small group of OSNZ members from Marlborough and Nelson took the opportunity to participate in a day



trip to Queen Charlotte Sound aboard the charter boat *Haydon James*. The main aim of the trip was to visit the White Rocks Wildlife Sanctuary, with its colony of King Shags.

We set off from Picton in gloriously fine conditions and as we headed out the usual birds of the Sound were seen: Fluttering Shearwater, Gannet, Little Blue Penguin, Pied Shag, Spotted Shag, gulls and terns. The boat cruised into Endeavour Inlet, then past Long Island where several Variable Oystercatchers and Southern Black-backed Gulls were seen on the shingle spit. Both these species probably nest on the spit. A pair of Little Spotted Kiwis is also known to have nested amongst the vegetation on the spit!

A stop at Moruara Island enabled us to stretch our legs on a walk up the track to the lookout tower, where we got a good view of the surrounding area. A large number of friendly Robins were seen on the island, along with other bush birds such as NZ Pigeon and Bellbird. Lunch was enjoyed in the sunshine at Ship Cove before we carried on to White Rocks.

The White Rocks are small rugged islets situated in a very exposed site near the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. Fortunately the seas were very calm during our visit and we were able to get quite close to the shag colony without disturbing the birds. The individual counters quickly reached a consensus that there were 54 adult shags and 18 large chicks in the colony. Two more adult birds returned as we left, making a total of 74 birds in all.

Compared to last years count, which was made at a similar date, the number of adult birds was very much the same, with 52 being counted in 1987. However, it appears that there were considerably fewer breeding pairs this year, based on the number of nests - about 16 this year compared with about 38 in 1987 - though the season obviously started earlier this year than last. Any conclusions about population trends in the King Shag will have to wait for a few years, until more of these recently instigated annual counts are made.

We returned to Picton via Twin Rocks to look at nesting Spotted Shags (unfortunately few were seen), and then through Patten Passage between Arapawa and Blumine Islands.

This trip was organised hastily, but thanks to Bev North and Alvin Brett an enthusiastic response was achieved and the trip proved very successful. This encourages me to suggest that a similar trip be conducted each year, to monitor the King Shag population and to take in many of the other interesting natural features of Queen Charlotte Sound.

DEREK BROWN

## A Black Stilt on Lyttelton Harbour

On 18/8/88, while birdwatching at Governors Bay, Lyttelton Harbour, I came across a colour-banded Black Stilt among a group of 41 Pied Stilts. The bird was completely black, except for a touch of white at the base of the bill and a few white feathers under the tail. I was unable to record full details of the band combination, but it seems almost certain that this was the bird seen at Kaipara Harbour in May by Christine Reed and Dave Murray.

This party of stilts was gone the next day and it seems they had made a brief stop on their southward migration back to the MacKenzie Basin to breed. This appears to be the first record of the Black Stilt on Lyttelton Harbour, although they occur regularly at Lake Ellesmere and at the Ashley Rivermouth.

Lyttelton Harbour has been largely ignored by Canterbury birdwatchers, despite the fact that it supports a large and varied wildlife population. Although White-flipped Penguins, Spotted Shags and White-fronted Terns nest on Quail Island and in the outer harbour, the main habitat for birds is in the area of mudflats in three bays (Charteris Bay, Head of the Bay, and Governors Bay) at the head of the harbour. This area regularly supports up to 3000 wetland birds, including up to 1350 waders.

Lyttelton is easily Canterbury's second most important harbour for Bar-tailed Godwits and Pied Oystercatchers after nearby Avon-Heathcote Estuary, supporting up to 600 godwits and 850 oystercatchers. It also provides habitat for good numbers of Pied Stilts, Spur-winged Plovers, Banded Dotterels, and White-faced Herons. Less common species such as Variable Oystercatchers, Lesser Knots and rarer migrant waders are occasional visitors. Because it is located half way between Lake Ellesmere and the Avon-Heathcote Estuary (both well known for their migrants), Lyttelton has great potential for turning up rarities. Despite this its checklist is relatively small (about 57 species, excluding seabirds), which probably reflects its neglect by birdwatchers rather than its quality as a habitat for birds. The recent occurrence of the Black Stilt and New Zealand's first Fan-tailed Cuckoo in 1960 are proof of this.

Besides waders, Lyttelton Harbour supports a wide range of the common wetland birds found in Canterbury. There are two large colonies of Southern Black-backed Gull at Teddington, a colony of Pied Stilts by the deer farm at the base of Moepuku Peninsula, and nesting White-flipped Penguins around the shore of Quail Island. High tide roosts are at the Ohinetahi Domain in Governor's Bay, at the mouth of Foley's Creek at the Head of

the Bay, and at the mouth of the Orton Bradley Stream in Charteris Bay.

If you are in Canterbury this summer and at a loss for a place to go for a day's birdwatching, consider Lyttelton Harbour. The parts of the shoreline where patches of native bush reach the water's edge provide one of the few places in Canterbury where one can enjoy native bush and wetland birds at the same time. Lyttelton is also a great starting point on a drive around Banks Peninsula, and is only a short distance from Lake Ellesmere over Gebbies Pass.

ANDREW CROSSLAND

## Norfolk Island endemics

Interesting summaries of the current position of four of Norfolk Islands endemic birds appear in the March, April, and May/June Issues of *Norfolk Nature Notes*.

Both the Scarlet Robin and the Long-billed White-eye have been the subject of recent surveys by Doug Robinson of Monash University. His studies show that the Scarlet Robin is now confined to the Norfolk Island National Park and adjoining forested areas and has a total population of 380-400 pairs. Of 18 nests found 17 were within the National Park; the clutch size was usually two. The outcome of 11 nests was known - six were preyed upon, one was deserted and only four were successful.

By comparison the Long-billed White-eye is holding its position much better, with some 700 pairs within the National Park and birds recorded at 11 other sites. All Long-billed White-eye habitats are shared with the Grey-backed White-eye, but the Long-billed species occurs more commonly in the rainforest and eucalypt forest. The two species employ different feeding strategies, with Long-billed birds spending more time probing the trunks and branches of trees and shrubs whilst the Grey-backed birds concentrate on gleaning from foliage, buds, flowers and fruit.

The number of Norfolk Island Parakeets now exceeds 40, compared with the 1983 low of "just over 20". Five nests have been found in 1988, from which 10 young have fledged and a further two fledglings have been seen. Data for the 14 nests found since 1983 are summarised. Three fledglings were taken in March from a nest hole discovered by Dave Crouchley of DoC last September. These were hand-reared by two visiting experts from Taronga Zoo (Sydney) and a further three chicks have since been hand-reared adding five females and a male to the captive stock. The first attempted breeding in captivity occurred in June, but was not successful.

The White-breasted White-eye, the largest and rarest of the Norfolk Island white-eyes was listed recently among the world's 25 most endangered birds because it has not been seen since 1980. However,

its continued existence has been confirmed recently by the sighting of two birds at Bambara.

*Norfolk Island Nature Notes* is available at \$A10.00 per year from Mrs A. Guymer, Treasurer Norfolk Is. Flora & Fauna Society, c/o Post Office, Norfolk Island.

JIM MOORE

## Clint, the Harrier who thought she was a Falcon

Those members who met Clint at the 1987 AGM dinner in Dunedin might be interested in her fortunes (and misfortunes) since then.

Professor Ralph Edwards promised to prepare her for her return to the wild, which he did, and in November Clint was released on the Otago Peninsula. She survived that month, but according to a number of observers she had become too accustomed to civilisation to be able to fend completely for herself and resorted to trespassing in search of food.

When she came into moult Ralph collected her again and looked after her in his backyard. It was during this period, in early 1988, that a dog came onto the scene, i.e. Clint's territory. The resulting confrontation resulted in Clint, minus one tail.

-Tailless Clint is now recuperating. With the tail almost regrown to its full length, the time is near for another attempt to release Clint into the wild, but this time in a more remote area well away from civilisation.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

## Maud Island bird study & work programme, April 1988

Earlier this year Wellington and Nelson members spent a few days on Maud Island. We left Wellington on the 4.00 p.m. ferry on Friday 22/4/88 and made the crossing in perfect weather, which continued for the whole trip. It was calm, clear and sunny for four days, an unheard of experience for a WOSP (Wellington Orni Soc Person), even in autumn. Tapuenuku and the rest of the Kaikoura ranges were silhouetted against a pink sky shading off to powder blue higher up.

Picton to Havelock was soon accomplished and we went straight onto the waiting launch *Kanono* (launchmaster Harold McCrystal). We were at Maud Island by 11.00 p.m. Jenny Hawkins and the Nelson contingent welcomed us after Selwyn Buckwell (Buck) had transported our packs up the hill by tractor and trailer. We packed into the old house and dosed down into comfortable foam rubber mattresses.

Saturday morning revealed the beauty of the island sitting in the calm waters. It is a jewel in a perfect setting in the Sound. Nobody could tell me the meaning of pelorus, so I looked it up - it is a sighting device like a ship's compass for taking bearings.

Our first job was to drench the lambs and Brian made short work of this, aided by some of us. Then we took the flock up the hill to pasture, but some kept doubling back and the human 'dogs' had to keep racing round the hills. No real dogs are allowed in this sanctuary. Then we weeded out the mullein and tauhinu on the steep western slopes and began to clear the verges of the ring tractor road round the island. Slashers, mattocks and axes were wielded with great energy. Lunch arrived on the tractor and later we walked home. After a fine dinner some looked for penguins.

During the mornings of 23 & 24/4 five-minute bird counts were made around the island following the main tracks. The results give an idea of the distribution of birds over the island but do not reflect their overall status. In all, 42 stations were counted, some of them on two occasions. Totals were: Silvereye 35, Fantail 25, Starling, Goldfinch 14, Chaffinch 9, Blackbird 9, Skylark 7, Pipit 6, Dunnock 5, Grey Warbler 5, Redpoll, 5, Greenfinch 5, Tui 5, Native Pigeon 3, House Sparrow 3, Song Thrush 2, Paradise Shelduck 2, Takahe 1, Variable Oystercatcher -1, Rifleman 1, Robin 1, and Yellowhammer 1. A Harrier was the only other species seen on the island but not recorded during the count.

Species recorded in a count from the sea on the afternoon of 24/4 were Black-backed Gull 5, Caspian Tern 3, Blue Penguin 2, Gannet 2, and Pied Shag 1. Fluttering Shearwaters were seen but were not recorded during the count. Bellbirds were heard calling across the water from the mainland.

Tuesday was our last day on the island so the morning was free and people used the time to complete studies and observations and to pack up. Lunch was kindly provided by Jean Bucknell on the lawn of the residence, in the fine garden. The launch arrived at 3.00 p.m. as arranged, and the Wellington contingent were back in the city by 10.45 p.m.

The trip was so well organised that there were no hiccups, Brian and Jenny saw to that. The meals were very good and the cooking facilities, water supply and sanitary system were all effective in the dilapidated old house on the hill. Finally, 'Maud', the friendly Takahe who liked her chin tickled took my finger for a fat worm and nearly amputated it!

Cientele for the visit were: from Wellington - Murray & Olga Vincent, June Bullock, Brigid Pike, Don Stracey, Kerry

Oates, Mark Simmonds, David Lawton, Ron Gourdsward, Roger Chorlton, and Brian Bell (leader). From Nelson - Gail & Tony Quayle with Kelly & Tess, Jenny Hawkins, and Zack & Sam Williams.

ROGER CHORLTON

## Magpies on the western side of the Southern Alps

*The New Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* reports that the magpie is "missing from the extreme north and south of both islands and from the western side of the Southern Alps". The addendum (1981) acknowledges that the magpie "has extended its range south to Invercargill".

I became a member of OSNZ in 1976 and first recorded magpies (2) in Westland on 27/8/77 in pasture on the Ahaura-Kopara Road. The next record is dated 12/3/78 and was the first of 12 sightings that year. This pattern continued for the next two years, with records from many widely separated locations on the West Coast. On 30/5/80, Gordon Pearce, a farmer in the Maitai Valley near Ahaura, told me that there had been magpies there for at least 20 years. There were never more than 5 or 6, but they were always present.

Records during the last 12 years (1976-1988) extend from Arapito (Karamea) with one in August 1986 to one on the south side of the Whataroa River on 30/11/87. We have seldom travelled further south than Okarito, so have few records from South Westland. However, OSNZ members from outside the region have reported magpies in South Westland and Chris Jowett (from Auckland) saw one at Okuru, about 8 kms south of Haast. Therefore the presence of White-backed Magpies on the Western side of the Southern Alps is well established.

Sightings have been recorded in Classified Summarised Notes (CSN) since at least 1975 (see *Notornis* 23: 353), with a record of 12 seen in the Grey and Inangahua Valleys by M.D. Wilcox. Subsequent records appear in CSN for the years 1976-77, 1979-80, 1981-82, 1984-85, and 1985-86, which would seem to be enough evidence to confirm their presence in the region. Other records appear on p.216 of the *Atlas of Bird Distribution*.

It is hoped that subsequent editions of the *New Guide* will set the record straight.

With reference to the Black-backed Magpie, I saw one at Kopara, besides Lake Haupiri, on 7/10/78. However, it was only recently that I saw my next Black-backed Magpies. When looking for Cattle Egrets I saw three Black-backed Magpies (a male and 2 females) in the Arahura Valley on 6/6/88 and this sighting will be my contribution to the current CSN.

STEWART LAUDER



## Recent Reports

This new feature is an attempt to keep members informed and up-to-date on recent observations and to bring together records that, until now, have been published in a variety of places such as local newsletters, C.S.N., Rare Birds Committee reports, and regional roundup.

As well as records of rare birds, I have included news of commoner migrants, changes in range and numbers of commoner species, birds occurring in unusual places or in exceptional numbers, and some information on breeding. Perhaps the feature is best read with one eye on the atlas.

Hopefully it will give you some idea of what to look out for in future. For example, this report suggests you might find it worthwhile to trudge up and down your local beach in early November, searching for dead seabirds and occasionally raise your head to look for Little Terns or perhaps even gaze skyward to look for swifts? October would seem to be a good time to watch for Royal Spoonbills as the winter flocks disperse and just where do Gull Buntings occur and how far will Red-legged Partridges spread?

I received records for this report from Auckland, South Auckland, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay, Wellington, Wairarapa, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Many thanks to the observers who sent them in and those who collated them.

The success of the report depends entirely on observers reporting observations quickly to their Regional Representative, so that the records can be collated in time to be published every three months in *OSNZ news*. For records to be included in the March issue they have to be with me by 24 February.

This is a news feature and to keep the information up-to-date records that have yet to be accepted by the Rare Birds Committee have been included.

### Petrels and Shearwaters

Unfortunately many records were of dead and dying birds. There was a wreck of Diving Petrels at Kariotahi (South Auckland) about 7 Aug. and an exhausted white Giant Petrel came ashore at Helensville (Auckland) in Oct.

The annual wreck of Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters at Muriwai (Auckland) in early Nov. extended down the western coasts of both the North and South Islands to Greymouth (West Coast), although numbers were lower further south and Fairy Prions predominated in the New Plymouth area. Along with this wreck and more unusual, were a Westland Black Petrel and a White-chinned Petrel from Muriwai, 3 Shy and 1 Grey-headed Mollmawk from Kariotahi, 2 each Blue Petrels, Mottled Petrels and Broad-billed Prions from New Plymouth, a Buller's

Shearwater from Urenui (Taranaki), and an exhausted Grey-backed Storm Petrel from Karamea (West Coast).

There were a few observations of live seabirds, including several thousand dark shearwaters off New Plymouth on 11 Sept. which may have been Sooty Shearwaters returning south, although they did not reach Foveaux Strait until 2 Oct., somewhat later than usual. 12 Sooty Shearwaters in Otago Harbour on 6 Nov. along with 200 or so Cape Pigeons and 2 Giant Petrels was unusual. Sea watching at New Plymouth from 11 to 13 Sept. produced a Cape Pigeon, several Giant Petrels, and 5 White-headed Petrels.

About 40 Grey-faced Petrels were ashore at the Omata (Taranaki) colony on 21 Aug.

### Hérons, Spoonbills and Ibises

Cattle Egret numbers were low this year and the last records were 19 at Waipukurau Racecourse (Hawkes Bay) on 19-21 Aug., 4 at New Plymouth on 22 Oct., 20 at Featherston (Wairarapa) on 27 Oct., and 32 at Ellesmere on 11 Nov. The 10 at West Taieri (Otago) were last seen on 18 Nov.

Two Little Egrets apparently arrived about the same time and both stayed for several weeks in September: 1 at Waiwakaiho River (Taranaki) and the other at Mangere (Auckland).

A White Heron at Henley Ponds was the first record for Masterton on 16 Sept. and a Bittern at Wyndham (Southland) on 30 Sept. was the first record there for 20 or more years. 2 Bitterns were seen at the Manawatu Estuary on 17 Nov.

The wintering flocks of Royal Spoonbills at Mangere (25) and Ahuriri (22) both declined to single figures in October and there were only 3 at the Manawatu Estuary on 17 Nov. One, perhaps on its way south, stopped at the Waitara River (Taranaki) from 17 to 19 Oct. There were 4 roosting near nesting Southern Black-backed Gulls on an island in Lake Ellesmere on 19 Nov and 41 birds at the nesting site at Maukiekie Island (Otago) by 20 Nov.

A Glossy Ibis was in the Lake Waipori area (Otago) from 12 to 20 Aug. and there were 3 at the L II Rivermouth (Canterbury) also in August.

### Waders

Overwintering waders included a Mongolian Dotterel each at Porangahau (Hawkes Bay) and Lake Ki-Wainono (Canterbury), and one that appeared briefly at Aramoana (Otago) on 7 Aug. A Hudsonian Godwit was also at Porangahau on 20 Aug. and one that had overwintered at Catlin's Lake (Otago) was still there on 20 Nov. 49 Red-necked Stints at Porangahau was a lot for August.

The main arctic wader flocks arrived at Mangere about 20 Sept. and at the same

time, on the night of 20/21 Sept., the godwits returned to Invercargill Estuary. Bar-tailed Godwits did not arrive at Ahuriri Estuary until 14-16 Oct., when over 200 were present. 10 reached the Waitara River on 18 Oct. and on the same day 1 was found 70 km inland on the Mararoa River (Southland).

By 16 Oct. there were 30 Golden Plovers at Ahuriri, 40 at Kaipara (Auckland) on 26 Oct., 32 at the Manawatu Estuary on 17 Nov., and 33 at Ellesmere on 19 Nov.

There were few reports of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Red-necked Stints. There was a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Ahuriri on 16 Oct. with 3 stints; 8 at Miranda (South Auckland) on 30 Oct. with 11 stints; 4 sandpipers at the Manawatu on 17 Nov.; 1 stint Kaipara on 26 Oct.; and 63 stints at Ellesmere on 19 Nov.

Of the rarer waders a Sanderling was reported at Miranda on 23 Sept. and a Marsh Sandpiper was still there on 30 Oct., along with a Terek Sandpiper and 7 Curlew Sandpipers. There was also a Terek Sandpiper at Mangere in late Sept. and a Large Sand Dotterel at the same time. At Lake Ellesmere on 19 Nov. there were 21 Curlew Sandpipers, 1 Marsh Sandpiper and a Hudsonian Godwit. In Otago, a Pectoral Sandpiper was seen at Inchclutha on 19 Nov. and a Siberian? Tattler at Catlin's Lake on 20 Nov.

A pair of South Island Pied Oystercatchers nested in the North Island at the Turanganui River (Wairarapa) in early Sept., but the nest failed because of floods. A colour banded Black Stilt was at Mangere for several weeks in Sept and 1 appeared briefly at Lyttelton Harbour (Canterbury) on 18 Aug. A Wrybill at Waitangi (Hawkes Bay) was in breeding plumage on 10 Oct., but was unlikely to be emulating the northward expansion of Spur-winged Plovers, which this year reached Waiheke Island and even Remuera Park in Auckland. The Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers (Canterbury) were in flood for most of the spring and this probably was the reason for over 350 Wrybills being counted at Lake Ellesmere in Late October, when they should have been nesting on these rivers.

### Gulls, Terns and Skuas

A red-billed, black-headed gull photographed on Raoul Island last winter may well be the first New Zealand record of Franklin's Gull.

At Henley Ponds, a small new wetland area in Masterton, Black-billed Gull numbers built up to 150 in Sept. and 19 rudimentary nests were built before the birds left en masse, on 30 Oct.

A long staying Gull-billed Tern at Ahuriri was still there on 9 July and a 1st-year Whiskered Tern was reported from Lake Ryan, Greymouth on 19-21 Oct.

An Arctic Tern at the Mimi Estuary (Taranaki) on 4 Nov. was the first record for the region. November was a good month to see Little Terns. There were 10 at Miranda on the 14th, 1 at the Manawatu on the 17th, and 1 as far south as Otago Harbour on the 6th.

A White-winged Black Tern has frequented Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, during October & November. During this time it has developed full breeding plumage, so is a spectacular sight.

Two dark skuas were at the New Plymouth Sugarloaves on 30 Oct. and one dark bird was seen at Inchlutha on 19 Nov.

10 Southern Skuas were feeding on lamb carcasses on Ruapuke Island (Southland) on 10-11 Sept., but there were only 2 there on 5-7 Oct., when the feast was over.

#### and the rest

250 or so Little Black Shags at the Tukituki Estuary (Hawkes Bay) on 5 Nov. was a large flock, although they are common in the area, unlike the Pied Shag at Taradale on 4 Aug.

Canada Geese continue to increase in the North Island, with 230 at Barratt Lagoon (Taranaki) on 7 Aug. being the highest count there so far. 18 at Porangahau on 23 July was the first record for that area. 2 Grey Teal also at Barratt Lagoon, on 22 Oct. were the first recorded in northern Taranaki. The Brown Teal released on Tiritiri Island have bred this spring and Chestnut-breasted Shelduck are still in the country, 1 was at Inchlutha on 19 Nov.

Outside their usual range NZ Falcons occurred at Urenui (Taranaki) on 4 Sept. and Ngawi (Wairarapa) on the 18th.

The Mangatarata releases of Red-legged Partridges had spread to Miranda by 2 Oct.

The 2 White-Cockatoos at One Tree Hill (Auckland) on 5 Nov presumably came from the population of the south of Manukau Harbour, but the 3 on Banks Peninsula and 1 flying around Catlin's Lake in mid November were a long way from any known breeding area. Two new small breeding groups were found near Masterton and at Pahiatua (Wairarapa). A Yellow-crowned Parakeet at Wyndham (Southland) was unusual there.

Two Spine-tailed Swifts flew around the Tiritiri lighthouse in overcast conditions on 11 Nov. recalling a similar event on 15 Nov. last year.

An early, rather ruffled Shining Cuckoo was at East Clive (Hawkes Bay) on 10 Sept. and 1 at Okato (Taranaki) on 15 Sept. was also quite early. First dates of 20

Sept. at Kohimarama (Auckland) and 29 Sept. at Kaita (West Coast) were more usual. First records of Long-tailed Cuckoos were 5 Oct. at Meadowbank (Auckland, 9 Oct. at Greymouth and 28 Oct. at Muriwai.

About 10 Cirl Buntings near Henley (Otago) extend the known range south a fair distance and also in Otago, the presence of Rooks was confirmed at Clydevale, when a flock of about 30 was seen on 19 Nov. At least 1 of the Rooks at Clevedon (South Auckland) was still present on 31 Oct.

12 Mynas, the only Wairarapa colony, hang on, or out, at the Masterton rubbish dump well south of their main range; and a bird spent the first week of Nov. at Tawa (Wellington) even further south.

DEREK ONLEY

### You were looking for what?

This is dedicated to those of us who prefer to gaze into the depths of our teacups at Monday morning smoko rather than suffer the incessant ridicule. I refer, of course, to beach patrollers.

... but we need to know which pelagic birds are in NZ waters ... "eh?"  
... but it makes for a cheap stew ... "yuk"  
... but you should see my compost heap ... "should I"

Well what excuses can you drag up that would impress rugby/netball/golfing/fishing/boating aficionados?

In recent months, however, Foxton Beach has provided us with enough to convince friends and colleagues that we are not totally insane. The breakthrough came when I found a full can of beer. It was Heineken, brewed in Holland, labelled duty free, and judging from the barnacles on the can had been at sea a while. Fortunately the aluminium can was in perfect condition, and so were the contents which were most welcome after a hot day on the beach! Now that was something my colleagues at work could understand and appreciate. My son, Richard, has recently had a similar find more suited to his age - a can of coke produced in Australia for the Brisbane Expo. Now we suspect from the lack of barnacles that this had been left on the beach by a BBQ reveller, but the end result was just as satisfying.

Fishermen can be easily won over with tales of frostfish - alas for us the Southern Black-backed Gulls seem to get there first. But it seems that dead fish on the beach are a more alluring find to most folks than dead birds.

Richard recently made us 'respectable' though - achieving what must be every boys dream. He found a bottle, carefully sealed with wax, with a message in it! It

was written about a year ago by a girl of similar age (10) in Tasmania - and it had been dropped overboard by a friend in the tall ships race to mark the bicentennial of the European settlement of Australia. The local paper had a field day, with a picture of Richard plus letter on the front page and a paragraph describing how "we were looking for dead birds because we were interested in them"!

So now we are tolerated (well . . . just), so a few words of advice. Don't get infatuated with feathers, keep your eyes open for that other flotsam and jetsam that may make you happy to talk on a Monday morning.

ROB GUEST.

### A Sound Guide to NZ Birds

Most members are aware that I am preparing the mastertapes for A Sound Guide for New Zealand Birds and that the first tape in the series is now available.

To make the series as complete as possible recordings of only 27 species or subspecies are required. These are NZ Dabchick, Greater Snow Petrel, Chatham Island Taiko, Stejneger's Petrel, Pycroft's Petrel, Gould's Petrel, New Caledonian Petrel, Chatham Island Petrel, Antarctic Prion, Auckland Island Prion, Narrow-billed Prion, Lesser Fulmar Prion, Chatham Fulmar Prion, Norfolk Island Little Shearwater, Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Kermadec Storm Petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird, Little Black Shag, Bounty Island Shag, Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Painted Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope, Pomarine Skua, North Island Rifleman, Codfish Fernbird, Three Kings Bellbird, and all races of Bush Wren. Any members able to assist with recordings of any of these are invited to contact me at P.O. Box 21083, Edgeware, Christchurch.

LESLIE B. McPHERSON

### Ornithological research at the University of Otago

The following is a summary of ornithological research being undertaken at the University of Otago.

Dr Lloyd Davis has studies in progress which are examining factors affecting the foraging trip durations in Adélie Penguins and involve satellite tracking of Adélie Penguins. A study which is about to begin will examine mate choice in Fiordland Crested, Snares Crested, Little Blue, and Yellow-eyed Penguins.

Dr Gary Miller is studying nest-site selection by Adélie Penguins; diving behaviour of Adélie Penguins; and siblicide in South Polar Skuas.

Gordon Court, a PhD student, is about to begin studies of the population ecology of South Polar Skuas; and pollutants and South Polar Skuas.

Of the MSc students Sue Heath is continuing her study of the ecology of Rock Wrens and Kelly Nordin is examining vocalisations of Yellow-eyed Penguins.

Theses which have been submitted recently are Yolanda van Heezik's PhD study of the growth and diet of Yellow-eyed Penguins; Phil Seddon's PhD study of nest-site selection and behaviour of Yellow-eyed Penguins; Robin Johnstone's MSc study of nest relief patterns and sexing of Grey-faced Petrels; and Beth Speirs' MSc on vocal discrimination of individuals by Adélie Penguins.

LLOYD DAVIS

## Prince and Princess of Wales Science Awards

These awards are made by the Royal Society twice-yearly to New Zealand-based scientists, technologists, and technicians to enable them to carry out overseas studies relevant to New Zealand. Several OSNZ members have received a Science Award in the past. The next closing date for applications is 28 February 1989. For further information write to Sue Triggs, OSNZ Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

## Regional Roundup

**Auckland:** October's Muriwai beach patrol yielded 40 birds, an interesting variety included mollymawks and a White-faced Storm Petrel in mint condition. We also visited the Gannet colony, where this year both cliff sites were occupied at the same time as the rock stack and several hundred birds were nesting.

At the Mangahai Refuge, Craig Hodsell fenced off the Caspian Tern flock before Labour Weekend. Subsequent activity caused by the stranding of a school of Pilot Whales appears not to have seriously upset the birds and a check on 3/11 found 60-70 pairs and some well-advanced chicks.

A recent survey of Waiheke led by David Baker compiled a list of 45 species for the eastern part of the island, adding Spur-winged Plover and locating nests of NZ Dotterels, Variable Oystercatchers and isolated pairs of Caspian Terns. Mangere Ponds are under frequent observation with the aim of learning more about the current use of the various wader roosts and the effects on these of the nesting Southern Black-backed Gulls. Terek and Curlew Sandpipers, a colour-banded Black Stilt, and up to 25 Royal Spoonbills add spice to the visits.

Topics of recent meetings have been the Wandering Albatross by Chris Robertson, management of Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park by Rex Mossman, and 5-minute bird counts in Auckland Domain by Brian Gill. Later Brian shared a talk with Michael Taylor & Dick Sibson to the Entomological Society on the subject of insectivorous birds. In December we hope to hear from Ray Pierce about his travels in South America. (Michael Taylor)

**South Auckland:** At our combined Auckland/South Auckland meeting in September Stephen Davies gave a fascinating insight into some of the mysteries of bird migration, drawing on his experiences at bird observatories in the UK.

In October, Ian Barton explained how the Protected Natural Area survey of the Hunua district was carried out. The predominant types of vegetation around Kohukohunui contained the highest number of preferred Kokako food plants. These were also studied in relation to browsing by goats and opossums.

To finish the year Craig Hodsell spoke on the past and present distribution of the Little Spotted Kiwi, and the efforts being made to establish the species on offshore islands. We wish them every success.

The Tui count of 60 on 18/9 in the kowhai grove at Kawakawa Bay was rather down on previous years. Some waders had returned to Miranda by 17/9 and on 29/9 members visited Kidd's where the brilliant Turnstones were a delight. We are continuing the 3 Roost Counts of Taramaire/Miranda each month. The Black-billed Gulls are only making tentative efforts to nest and the White-fronted Terns none at all, perhaps because of considerable interference.

Beach patrolling was quiet in September, but October produced 12 species with White-headed Petrels predominating. 88 birds were picked up on 6/11.

21 Auckland/South Auckland members with help of local residents and 2 staff members of DoC combined to attempt a coastal survey of the Coromandel Peninsula on the weekend of 12-14 Nov. The weather was kind and all but the most inaccessible areas were covered. 70 NZ Dotterels were recorded, but sadly some of these were sticking to areas where they had no hope of breeding successfully. On a more hopeful note, DoC has engaged summer rangers for the Wharekawa Spit at Opoutere and Waikawau Beach. (Anthea Goodwin)

**Waikato:** At the August meeting members heard John Innes talk about the current status of North and South Island Kokako. This was followed by Neil Deans (Tainui district, DoC) calling for volunteers to identify areas where Kokako are present

locally, and to obtain some idea of their numbers. A workshop and field trip were then held at Oparau for training in Kokako survey techniques, and Pirongia Conservation Park was made the first target of the survey with around a dozen enthusiasts covering different areas. To date 2 Kokako have been found.

In September, a field trip to the Rangitoto Ranges further advanced our experience of Kokako. At 2 locations about dawn Kokako were seen and heard in the tall tawa. Each time a group of 5 or 6 magpies, apparently attracted by the song, flew into the trees which caused the Kokako to stop singing immediately.

At the September meeting members showed slides of the Antarctic, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. In October Bob Zuur gave a stimulating talk on the evolution of NZ's avifauna, and in November Hugh Robertson spoke about his fascinating 4-year study of seasonal and daily movements of Tuiss in Hawkes Bay, this was followed by an entertaining and instructive mini-workshop by Barrie Heather on how to describe and draw a bird before it flies away.

Pam Bovill has recently led two on-beach workshops, where new beach patrollers learned techniques in patrolling, identifying, and measuring birds. Ruapuke and Kawhia beaches have yielded 71 birds in 5 patrols since August. The bag has comprised mainly prions (4 species), shearwaters (3 species), and Diving Petrels plus 1 Antarctic Fulmar, 1 White-chinned Petrel and 2 White-headed Petrels. (Stella Rowe)

**Manawatu/Horowhenua/Wanganui:** Rob & Gillian Guest and family visited the Manawatu Estuary on 6/11, godwit numbers were over 300, Lesser Knots were up to 200, Golden Plover 6, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers 3, Wrybills 10, and Royal Spoonbills 12.

On a short stretch of beach they saw many wrecks, mainly Sooty Shearwaters, and reports have come in since of large losses of these shearwaters along the coast of Australia and from Wellington northwards. Gillian & Richard Guest patrolled Himatangi to Foxton on 12/11 and picked up a total of 95 birds of 13 species. These comprised Sooty Shearwaters 58, Fluttering Shearwater 1, Fairy Prion 10, prion species 13, Thin-billed Prion 3, Diving Petrel 1, White-headed Petrel 2, Little Blue Penguin 1, Antarctic Fulmar 1, Shy Mollymawk 1, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross 1, and 1 each Blackbird, magpie and goose.

Some members stayed at the YMCA complex at Pureora during Labour Weekend. Perfect weather and Roger & David Wasley met a pair of Blue Ducks on Link Road, the ducks were first seen flying. Roger & Pam Slack also heard Blue

Duck whistle as the birds flew up the river close to their tent. A morepork was seen and a pair of Grey Warblers were watched as they went about nest-building. Robins were heard on the Aritiki Road and at Waihora. (Lindsay Davies)

**Wairarapa:** The first session of the course 'Birdwatching in New Zealand' got underway on Sunday morning 6/11 with a programme by Barrie Heather before a group of 29 people. Those present had the opportunity of handling a wide selection of Dave Sim's excellent bird study skins and this greatly enhanced a very good teaching session. Participants are looking forward to the next 4 sessions.

Masterton members are regularly monitoring a new small wetland which is being developed at the edge of the town. The Henley Trust (a group of local citizens) is developing 60 ha at the junction of the Ruamahanga and Waipoua Rivers. They have created a 10 ha recreational lake suitable for boating, sailing and fishing. Since May 1988 some overflow from this has been channelled into a wilderness area and now there are 2 ponds covering some 2-3 ha. of readily wadeable water bird habitat in what previously was dry, stoney paddock.

Bird numbers on these ponds fluctuate, but on 30/9 there were 300+ water birds. The bird list now includes over 30 species including: Southern Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern, Pied Stilt, White-faced Heron, White Heron, Black-fronted Dotterel, Banded Dotterel, Australian Coot, Black Swan, Grey Duck, Mallard, Shoveler, Grey Teal, and Paradise Shelduck.

More ponds are planned and OSNZ members hope to be involved in the development of some of these. (Tenick Dennison)

**Nelson:** At the end of October members visited the Bells Island shellbanks and at one end found 15 Caspian Tern nests with eggs. This is the largest number of these terns in the region, with the exception of the colony at Farewell Spit. Some 100 Southern Black-backed Gull nests were also present on the shellbanks.

By November the 23 Cattle Egrets at Appleby were well coloured and there were still 3 Royal Spoonbills at the Waimea Estuary (there were 36 for a time in August).

Some of our members are keeping a record of the birds seen in their backyard. There are some interesting variations in the species seen over a short distance e.g., Cirl Buntings at the bottom of our drive but not at the top. Cirl Buntings are being reported

from more places now, this maybe the result of better looking rather than an expansion of range!

Gail Quayle was one of the judges at the Nelson Science fair held recently. Nelson OSNZ gave 2 small prizes for bird projects. (Jenny Hawkins)

**Canterbury:** Andrew Crossland continues to scrutinise the Avon-Heathcote Estuary closely. Recent records include 2350 Bar-tailed Godwits (the highest number seen there by Andrew), 1 Asiatic Whimbrel, Lesser Knots, Turnstones, Wrybills, Variable Oystercatchers, a tattler, and a Red-necked Stint.

Speakers at recent evening meetings have been Paul Sagar, who discussed and showed slides of the birds of Kerguelen, and Chris Challies who gave a very interesting talk about the factors that influence the start of the breeding season for White-flipped Penguins. In November there was a workshop on the identification of some of the commoner birds. A range of specimens and slides were available and these were used to show how differences in plumage could be used to sex and age the birds. (Paul Sagar)

**Otago:** Local members are involved in the Otago Harbour survey, the aim of which is to record all birds using the harbour. The survey is being done monthly until June 1989 and is a follow-up to a similar exercise completed in 1977/78. Some rarities have been recorded so far including a Little Tern, Mongolian Dotterel, and some seabird species that usually do not come into the harbour.

Since Derek Onley came to Otago we have Cirl Buntings near Henley (since October) and the Hudsonian Godwit present during the winter wader count was still around for the summer count. It helps if one knows the birds.

The same summer wader count again provided a few rarities for Otago e.g., Turnstones at Aramoana and Inchclutha. George & Doreen Grant found 3 Black-fronted Dotterel chicks in the Taiieri Riverbed on 7/11 and there was a nest containing 3 eggs only 500 m downstream. Tony & Anne Hocken found a pied phase Variable Oystercatcher at Kakanui.

We are involved in the survey of Yellow-eyed Penguins, under the leadership of John Darby. The number of breeding pairs has increased since last year's low - by at least 20% on Otago Peninsula and by about 30% in the Catlins. (Peter Schweigman)

**Southland:** This spring the migratory waders arrived at the Invercargill Estuary

between 1600 h. on 20/9 and 0830 h. on 21/9. Six members did a rostered wader watch morning and evening from 15/9 and Michael Criglington hit the jackpot. A flock of 1200+ SIPOs came in the same night, but whether the birds all travelled together is unknown.

Nesting in all habitats except sheltered wetlands is late and poor. This is undoubtedly due directly or indirectly to an exceptionally wet winter and spring and frequent gales in September and October. Rainfall in Invercargill was above average in July by 120%, August 31%, September 33%, and October 58%. Small, insectivorous native passerines (Fantail, Grey Warbler, Brown Creeper, Pied Tit) are low in numbers. Roger Sutton recently inspected native bush at Kapuka, Waikawa and Centre Bush and saw very few, and in some cases no, Fantails. On my weekly 40-minute walk through Otatara Bush I found on 30/10 Fantail 1 (usually about 8), Brown Creeper 0 (usually in 4 places), Pied Tit 1 (about 4), Grey Warblers 3 (about 12), and Silvereyes 4 (about 10).

Consistently high river flows and many gales through Foveaux Strait have hit coastal and river breeding. At Ruapuke Island from 5 to 7/10 I saw Banded Dotterels, White-fronted Terns, Red-billed Gulls, Pipits, and Skylarks blown off their feet and regaining the ground only with difficulty. Apart from 1 newly-hatched Banded Dotterel (which disappeared, probably blown away) and a pair of Variable Oystercatchers which may have had a nest, there was no breeding on the coast. Many Banded Dotterels behaved like failed breeders and were not defending territories. Most of the 20 Variable Oystercatchers seen were in non-breeding pairs which sometimes grouped into small flocks.

On comparatively sheltered wetlands back from the coast, 2 pairs of Spur-winged Plovers had chicks, a pair of Black Swans had 5 cygnets, and about 24 Paradise Shelducks appeared to be on territory. Big tides on 24-25/10, backed up by gales, swamped the Caspian Tern colony on Invercargill Estuary, but hopefully they will nest again.

Apart from occasional early-nesting thrushes, breeding in suburban gardens did not generally get under way until mid to late October and bird numbers are lower than usual.

Mark Sutton reports that breeding of Mallards is later than usual, with numbers and brood sizes about average. (Maida Barlow)