

# 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.50 MARCH, 1989

Note Deadline for the June issue will be  
20th May, 1989.

## Editorial

That the 50th number of OSNZ news should appear in the 50th year of the Society is coincidental, but nicely timed.

Members must take a lot of pride in achieving no. 50, because it is only through your efforts and interest that OSNZ news has continued to appear; full of interesting reports and observations. The appearance and layout of the newsletter have changed a little since OSNZ news no. 1 was published in December 1976. With age it has grown a little thicker and developed a little more structure, but the subject matter still covers the full range of members' activities, interests, and observations.

I take this opportunity to thank all members who have assisted with OSNZ news through its first 50 issues by contributing articles, observations, and suggestions. With your continued support we can look forward to the next 50 issues.

PAUL SAGAR

## AGM & Conference

By now you have probably made up your mind whether to attend the Society's annual conference, being held on Whangaparaoa Peninsula, Auckland, from 2-5 June. If you are still wavering, perhaps the knowledge that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the formation of the OSNZ will prompt a decision in favour. The next step is to refer to the enclosed programme and complete and return the registration form which accompanied it in this issue. Please make sure that you provide clear details of your plans if you are using public transport and wish to be met in Auckland and taken to the camp, which is 30 km north of the city.

The address for registration, or for any enquires about the meeting is OSNZ Conference, P.O. Box 18430, Auckland. For telephone enquires, please call Nan Rothwell, Auckland 456-057.

MICHAEL TAYLOR

## Change of address for Treasurer

Observant members will already have noted when they received their membership renewal notice that there has been a change of address for the Hon. Treasurer. Therefore this is just to remind you that his address now is: Hon. Treasurer, OSNZ, P.O. Box 18430, Glen Innes, Auckland 5.

## Donations

It has been my practice in the past to individually acknowledge donations to the Society, but the large number received this time as a result of the appeal sent out with the renewal of membership accounts has made this impossible. As at 26 February a total of \$4, 690 had been received for the following uses:

To General funds	\$1422.50
Fleming Memorial Appeal	2522.50
Edgar Memorial Fund	55.00
Falla Memorial Fund	30.00
To assist members to attend IOC	250.00
Checklist	107.50
Notornis Index	302.50

Some extremely generous donations have been made, including one totalling \$500 and several of \$250, and it has been very pleasing to note that several Junior members have also chosen to make donations.

On behalf of the Society I express sincere gratitude to all donees, and regret that it has not proved possible to individually acknowledge each donation.

W.L. ORMOND, Hon. Treasurer

## OSNZ Sweatshirts & T-shirts

Sweatshirts and T-shirts with an OSNZ design on them are now available. The design is of a Takahe, coloured green, blue and red, with "Ornithological Society, New Zealand, 50th Anniversary 1939-1989" in black about and below it. My thanks to Lloyd Esler, Invercargill, and Kerry Oates, Wellington, for doing the drawing and lettering of the design.

The garment colours available are jade, candymint (pastel green), sky (light blue), seaspray (pastel blue), lilac, pink, and



## 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY 1939-1989

white. costs per garment, which includes postage and a contribution to OSNZ funds, are:

Size	6, 8, 10, 12, 14	SM, M, OS XOS, XXOS
Sweatshirt	\$26.50	\$35.00
T-shirt	\$13.50	\$19.50

If you would like a sweatshirt or T-shirt please obtain an order form from your RR and send with payment to R.G. Powlesland, 64 Roseneath Terrace, Wellington 1. Please make cheques payable to OSNZ and crossed "Not negotiable".

## Profiles

Once again we feature some of the office holders of the Society and put a face to the name for you.

### Paddy Latham - RR for the Bay of Plenty.

Paddy Latham, RR for the Bay of Plenty, has been interested in birds as long as he can remember. His father fostered an interest in natural history and he can still remember walking along the edge of sea-cliffs on the west coast of Scotland at the age of 4, in search of nesting Peregrine Falcons.

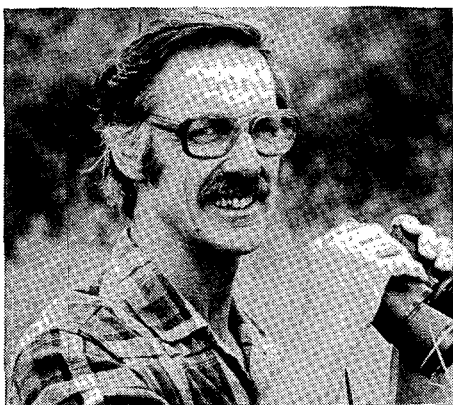
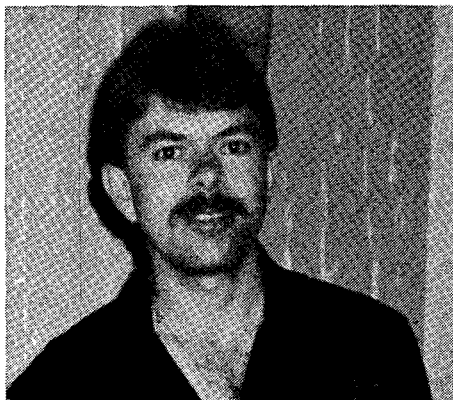


Photo courtesy Bay of Plenty Times

He joined OSNZ in 1970 after being in touch with Ross McKenzie about a wreck of prions at Papamoa. Paddy came under Beth Brown's wing after that, getting a lot of help and encouragement from her. Both Beth and Paddy did most of the organising for the 1978 Field Study Course based at Papamoa. Paddy became RR for the Bay of Plenty in 1983.

Though he has a preference for shorebirds his interests in birds are general. The atmosphere of the saltings and marshlands are particularly enjoyable. Birdwatching has taken Paddy to the UK & Europe, the Middle East, across India, Australia, and Hawaii. Also, he was a member of one of the OSNZ's trips to Fiji, led by the Browns. Other activities have included assisting with projects such as the Taiko on the Chathams, Kakapo on Stewart Island, and Saddlebacks on Cuvier Island. Meanwhile, closer to home, terns have occupied Paddy's interest and he has contributed significant papers to *Notornis* on Arctic Terns and Common Terns in NZ.

**Kerry Oates – RR for Wellington**



Kerry Oates, the RR for Wellington, joined the Society in January 1986 and began taking part in the Wellington walkway counts, which nurtured his interest in bush birds. Kerry has always been interested in birds and has kept notes on the more interesting discoveries made while tramping in bush country around New Zealand.

A personal study of the Blue Ducks on the upper reaches of the Manganui-a-te-ao River in the central North Island was started in September 1986. After 2 years of monthly counts and observations Kerry now has extensive notes on the population dynamics, breeding success, river and habitat use, and territory size and limits for 3 pairs of Blue Ducks and their offspring. These results should be published in *Notornis* in due course.

An interest in endangered wildlife and the exploration of New Zealand's more remote areas prompted Kerry to volunteer for field work on Stewart Island early in 1988. This resulted in him spending 2 weeks assisting with vegetation transects and quantitative sampling as part of the Kakapo project.

Kerry became Wellington's RR following the departure of his predecessor, Russell Thomas, who emigrated to Paris for 3 years. He is enjoying the challenge that the position provides and currently is working on the design of 2 display systems for the promotion of the Society and its activities. One of these will be on permanent display at the National Wildlife Centre (Mt Bruce), Masterton, and the other will travel around the country for use at various clubs and organisations.

**Jenny Hawkins – RR for Nelson & member of Council**



Jenny's interest in birds stems from a childhood association with the Falla family and then, many years later, a walk along the Nelson Boulder Bank with Frank Boyce introduced her to active membership in the Society.

Jenny likes to make the most of the birds on her doorstep and she follows the yearly movements of waders on Nelson Haven and the nesting of the Black-backed Gulls and other birds on the Boulder Bank. She co-ordinates the regular wader counts in the Nelson region and helps organise courses on Farewell Spit and any other field trips in the region.

Jenny went to the Chathams with David Crockett's Taiko expedition in 1979

and has since been to NW Australia with the Australasian Wader Study Group.

## Composition of shag nests

Recently I assisted Department of Conservation and Nelson City Council staff to cut Norfolk pines in which Pied Shags were nesting. This provided an opportunity to examine at close hand numerous empty shag nests, which will be taken to Haulshore Island, where it is hoped to relocate the colony.

Climbing around in the tops of the trees was an arduous and dirty job, so it was some light relief to see the variety of materials the shags had incorporated into their nests. Weedeater plastic cord (metres of it), parts of fishing nets, plastic strips used by fish processing factories around their fish cartons, assorted nylon string, plastic bags, rubber material, steel wire, electrical wire, and a complete dog leash were just some of the materials used.

Pied Shags are not the only birds to use human rubbish in construction of their nests. Sparrows and Starlings have already been reported, but on a recent OSNZ trip to the Marlborough Sounds we noticed a variety of plastic material used in the nests of Gannets.

**HENK HEINEKAMP**

## Feeding House Sparrows - a simple experiment

In Auckland's parks and public spaces I have found that House Sparrows readily take food from the hand, but it is only the female which will do so. By contrast the male birds approach to within a metre and become visibly agitated when the female moves in to accept the offering. To give the birds confidence it helps to rest the hand on the ground and look away while they size up the situation.

The opposite order prevails when food scraps are tossed on the ground. Now the dominant males are first in and it is difficult to feed the sexes on a fair share basis. Try it some time.

**MICHAEL TAYLOR**

## Unusual nesting site for Little Shag

Little Shags are nesting on a rock in a water-level cave at the foot of sheer cliffs in the north-west area of Lake Taupo. There are four or five nests and in November 1988 the birds were all of the pied form. The cave is about 2 m wide at the water line and tapers to a point about 2 m above the water, the height increases inside the cave. The nesting rock is about 6 m from the entrance, where the water depth is 2-3 m. In November one nest contained three naked chicks and another nest had at least one chick. The adults remained on the nest during my inspection.

I have been aware of this cave and its occupants since about 1972 and have seen the nesting birds in most years since then. The cave and its residents are not at all obvious to a casual observer. Access to the nesting rock is only by swimming. Nearby, a waterfall on the Tutaewaeroa Stream is called The Falls of the Whitebreasted Shag on a map that I have had since the early 1960s, so they may have been nesting there for many years. The main nesting areas of Little Shags in this area are Motuaihe and Motuwhara Islands.

T. B. S. TAYLOR

## Projects Assistance Reserve Grants

At its October meeting Council approved the following grants from the Projects Assistance Reserve.

Central Passerine Research Group - \$1000 towards the cost of banding equipment.

Otago Region OSNZ - \$500 towards the cost of building a hide for Yellow-eyed Penguin research.

John Darby - \$500 towards the cost of his continuing Yellow-eyed Penguin research.

John Dowding - \$1000 towards the cost for research of NZ Dotterels on Stewart Island.

Paul Schofield - \$200 towards his Black Petrel research.

Terry Greene - \$200 towards his proposed parakeet study on Little Barrier.

## Preliminary reports on projects

The following are preliminary reports on projects which benefitted recently from grants made from the Society's Projects Assistance Reserve.

**1. Computing of the Beach Patrol Scheme data.** Up to June 1988 the data from 14 011 of an estimated 16 000 cards had been entered into a computer file in the Department of Conservation. Results from patrols carried out between 1943 and 1966 inclusive and between 1974 and 1987 inclusive have been entered into the computer and annual summaries obtained. The data on these cards were entered mainly by Christine Reed and Chris Petyt in 1985-87. They were employed using \$5,000 from the Projects Assistance Reserve and \$10,000 from the Lottery Board. The \$2,000 recently received from the Projects Assistance Reserve will be used to employ Terry Greene, an OSNZ member from Auckland, to enter the remaining data from patrols made between 1967 and 1973. Once all the data are in the computer various summaries will be computed and prepared for inclusion in a paper about the Beach Patrol Scheme for publication in the 50th Anniversary book about the history of the Society.

RALPH POWLESLAND

**2. Banded Dotterels & Black-fronted Dotterels.** Work on migration patterns of Banded Dotterels is nearing completion, despite 1988 being a disappointing winter for band spotting. We have sufficient recovery data on most South Island and Hawkes Bay breeding populations, so banding has mostly ceased in those areas. This spring we concentrated on banding in Marlborough riverbeds (from which only 6 recoveries have been reported so far, all in the North Island), Manawatu (5 recoveries), and Bay of Plenty - East Cape (little or no banding coverage). 1989 is the LAST year of band spotting at stop-over and wintering sites, so we need a final big effort, including especially the Auckland region and northwards.

The timetable is as follows: Sept. 1988 to Jan. 1989 final banding in specific areas. Jan to Aug. 1989 final year of band spotting.

Sept. to Dec. 1989 final analyses and write-ups.

Plans are underway for a study of seasonal movements and breeding ecology of Black-fronted Dotterels throughout New Zealand. Questions which we will attempt to address include: (i) What are the local movements? Whereas Black-fronted Dotterels are present on some riverbeds during the entire year, others apparently move long distances to some wintering sites e.g., in the Bay of Plenty where they are not known to breed locally. Are the birds that winter at Lake Wairarapa entirely local birds or is there an influx of birds from elsewhere e.g., Marlborough?

(ii) What are the colonising patterns of Black-fronted Dotterels on new rivers and new sections of rivers - first-time breeders, adults from over-populated or unstable habitats?

(iii) What are the relationships between Black-fronted Dotterels and Banded Dotterels during the breeding season? Previous Black-fronted Dotterel studies (*Notornis* 20:251-261 & 31:31-39) indicate that although there are some habitat differences, competitive interactions do occur between the two species. Do colonising Black-fronted Dotterels have a negative impact on Banded Dotterels in some situations as was suggested in the latter study?

Black-fronted Dotterels will be individually colour-coded which will help identify individual responses rather than just regional patterns. In one or two study areas I anticipate that Banded Dotterels can be individually colour-coded too, enabling direct comparisons of pair-bond retention, shifts in nest-site etc. The study will involve present members of the Banded Dotterel Study Group and I hope new members as well. The minimum duration of this project will be 3 years.

RAY PIERCE, *convenor Banded & Black-fronted Dotterel Research Group*

**3. NZ Dotterel Study Group.** In the 12 months to October 1988 the NZ Dotterel Study Group has expanded considerably. The study in the Omaha-Mangawhai area in Northland is continuing, banding has begun at Opoutere on the Coromandel east coast and a banding and monitoring programme is about to get underway on Stewart Island and in Southland. An institutional banding permit was obtained recently which covers the whole country and authorities are being issued under this permit to individual banders in the different areas.

**Northland (Omaha-Mangawhai)** Banding and monitoring in this area has focussed so far on Omaha (where 8 pairs breed and there is an autumn flock of about 50) and Pakiri and Poutawa, 2 river mouths to the north of Omaha. Of the 16 breeding birds at Omaha, 11 are now banded. At least one member of all 8 pairs is banded. Morphometric data have been collected, as well as information on breeding success (very low), territory fidelity (very high), and on stability of pair-bonds. A number of birds from the autumn flock have also been banded and these are providing information on how far birds move from their breeding grounds to the flock site (and back), and when they move. Mist-netting of flocking birds has been tried at Omaha with some success.

Information is recorded at Omaha on a regular basis, principally by Simon Chamberlin and Nan Rothwell, using a 'roll call' of banded birds and a map to indicate flock sites, nest sites and territories. I spent a week in the study area in early November to band and observe and I hope to repeat this next autumn when the flocks have formed.

**Coromandel (Opoutere-Wharekawai)** For the past 2 breeding seasons the Department of Conservation and Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society have jointly organised a warden system to protect NZ Dotterels nesting in the Wharekawai Wildlife Refuge on the Coromandel coast. Results so far have been very encouraging.

Recently I issued an authority to Phil Thomson (DoC, Hamilton) and 2 others, so that adults and chicks in the refuge can be colour-banded. As significant numbers of chicks are now fledging in the area, information can be obtained here on recruitment of juveniles into the breeding population; this information is hard to obtain elsewhere due to very low fledging rates.

JOHN E. DOWDING, *convenor NZ Dotterel Study Group*

**4. Research on the petrels of Mangere Island** I carried out field work on Mangere Island, Chatham Islands, between 20/10/87 and 24/3/88. This note summarises the work that I did and my findings so far.

**Status of petrel species on the island** A survey revealed that Fairy and Broad-billed Prions were the most common breeding species on the island and that Grey-backed Storm Petrels and Sooty Shearwaters also breed in reasonable numbers. Eight nests of Black-winged Petrels were found. This species was first reported from Mangere in the early 1970s, but breeding had not previously been recorded. An outline of the breeding biology of each of the above species was obtained.

Mangere I. has been extensively cleared and once had cats present, but it is now free of introduced mammals. White-faced Storm Petrels and Diving Petrels used to breed on the island before modification, but they were not found breeding during the present study. There was no indication that the endangered Chatham Island Petrel or Taiko breed on the island. However, examination of bones in subfossil deposits revealed that 2 other species of *Pterodroma* petrel probably used to breed on the island; both of these species are probably now extinct in the Chatham group.

Vagrant petrel species included a probable Juan Fernandez Petrel and the remains of Fulmar Prions, an Antarctic Prion and a Little Shearwater were recovered from skua middens. If correct, the Juan Fernandez Petrel is only the third record of this species in New Zealand.

**Ecological influences on petrel nesting distribution** I measured physical factors (e.g., vegetation, soil depth, slope) in each of the census quadrats and also attempted to determine the influences of skua predation and competition for burrows. This information has not been analysed yet, however, the results should have wider application in explaining why petrels on the Chatham Islands nest where they do.

**Petrel calls** The calls of adults and chicks of the Fairy Prion were studied in detail and appear to be sexually dimorphic. The amount of aerial calling decreased markedly during the breeding season. Descriptions of the calls of Broad-billed Prions and Black-winged Petrels were also made. I am in the process of analysing all these recordings.

ALAN TENNYSON

**5. Caspian Tern study at the Invercargill Estuary** The aims of this study are to: determine survival rates of chicks, examine allegiance to the natal site, age at first return to the natal site, longevity, and movements. From 1964-86 metal banding of chicks was done annually, with from 11 to 46 chicks being banded each year. In 1987 I commenced colour-banding, using annual codes for birds (adults & chicks) of known age, and a standard code for adults of unknown age. All chicks were fitted with a metal band, but I did not recapture all of these when their legs were long enough to have colour bands added. Last year I

colour-banded 11 adults of known age and 7 of unknown age. Chick survival was poor because the colony was washed out and from a minimum of 58 hatched I colour-banded 21, and metal banded another 10 which may have survived.

To date I have been notified of sightings of 5 colour-banded birds, from Sandy Point, Invercargill; Waikawa Estuary; Bromley Sewage Ponds, Christchurch; and Tukituki River, Havelock North. Four of these birds were 1987 juveniles and the other was an 18-year old adult.

I plan to continue the study for some years.

MAIDA BARLOW

**6. Tiritiri Island Survey.** The island is being visited twice a year by a group of 15 (in April and November). Birds are surveyed using slow walk count technique (Dawson & Bull, 1975, Notornis vol. 22: 101-9) for seven fixed transects in bush, planted and open areas. A further two listening posts are surveyed using five minute counts. Preliminary results suggest that the following species are increasing: Pukeko, Welcome Swallow, Mynas, Silvereyes, Brown Quail, Spotless Crakes, Fantails and Bellbirds. The Brown Teal introduced to the island have now successfully bred. Whilst numbers of the following species have dropped: Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Skylarks. Some species have been consistently recorded in higher numbers in bush areas (compared to planted or open areas) namely: Saddlebacks, Tuis, Bellbirds, Fantails and N.Z. Pigeons. The open areas display fewer species, but greater variability in combinations of species. The specific changes detailed above that have been observed may suggest tentative conclusions, but it would be premature to state for instance defined trends. The differences observed may be due to random fluctuations of bird population numbers etc. Auckland OSNZ is grateful for the assistance from the Projects Assistance Fund that enables costs for volunteers on surveys to be kept to a reasonable level.

SARA BROUWER

### **A White Heron's meal**

A White Heron has been seen a number of times in Anderson Park, Napier. On one occasion when we came across it in the water way near the boating pool a small flock of Goldfinches settled on the bank quite close to it. The heron then struck and took one of the Goldfinches, thrashing it about and dipping it in the water. It repeated this several times with the Goldfinch before trying to swallow it. However, it could not manage to do so and repeated the shaking and dipping a few more times until it finally managed to swallow the Goldfinch.

L. WALKER

### **Little Shags breeding in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens**

On 3/10/88 Miss S.C.R. Molloy, technical assistant in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, reported that in November 1987 a pair of Little Shags built their nest in a tree on an island in a pond just east of the tea kiosk. They raised their chicks on ornamental and other introduced fish that occur in the Avon River and ponds elsewhere in the Gardens.

On 3/10/88 I visited the pond and found a Little Shag nest about 6 m up in a common birch on the north side of the island opposite the Garden's Information Centre. Black and Little Shags regularly occur in the Gardens and in lakes and ponds elsewhere in Hagley Park, but as far as I am aware this is the first record of shags nesting in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. On 4/11/88 I visited the Little Shag nest again but there was no sign of the birds on the nest or in the vicinity.

G. A. TUNNICLIFFE

### **Conservation group buys important North Island wetland**

The national waterfowl and wetlands conservation group Ducks Unlimited has purchased one of the North Island's most important wetlands. The wetlands, which is to be known as the Pearce Wetlands, lies on the eastern edge of Lake Wairarapa and occupies 150 ha.

The wetland supports an abundance of wildlife and nearly 60 species of birds have been recorded using the area. It is the area that had been originally intended for a massive stop-banking polder scheme and two dairy farms. Because of the areas high wildlife value the polder scheme was written off three years ago.

A large number of migratory waders spend the summer months at the Pearce Wetlands. These include Bar-tailed Godwits, Lesser Knot, Greenshank, Turnstone, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and Golden Plover. A number of rare NZ birds are also present and very large numbers of Mallard, Grey Duck, Scaup, Shoveler, Grey Teal, Paradise Shelduck, Canada Goose, and Black Swans are present throughout the year.

Ducks Unlimited, in consultation with NZ's major wildlife agencies, will produce a management plan for the Pearce Wetlands. The plan will include access for ornithology and research and an observation hide will be built to provide clear views over the wetland, which includes nearly 2 km of the lake edge.

NEIL HAYES

## American Birds

Does any reader subscribe to, or know of a source for, this journal? It seems not to be held in any NZ public library and therefore not available via interloan services. John Warham, who is working on a computerised *Bibliography of the Procellariformes*, finds that there are regularly items in *American Birds* that need including and that he must read. If any member can help please write to: Dr John Warham, Zoology Department, University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch.

## A visit to the Southern Kermadec Islands

During September 1988 the navy kindly provided transport to the Kermadec Islands, which lie about 1000 km northeast of Auckland. The main purpose of the trip was to carry out marine surveys in order to assess what marine reserve status should be applied to the group. While the marine surveys were undertaken we carried out surveys of the birds on the southern islets. We landed for a few hours on L'Esperance Rock and Curtis Island, and spent nine days on Macauley Island.

The birdlife of the Southern Kermadec Is is dominated by tropical seabirds, which occur only as vagrants on the NZ mainland. The most abundant breeding species on these islands are the petrels, but the three most common species - Black-winged Petrel, Wedge-tailed Shearwater and White-naped Petrel - had not returned from their northern migrations at the time of our visit. Of the seabirds present, Little Shearwaters had small chicks and were found commonly on Curtis I. and in smaller numbers on Macauley I. A few Kermadec Petrels were flying about Macauley I. and we spotlighted and caught one White-bellied Storm Petrel. Live adults of this species had not been reported previously from the Kermadecs, although chicks have been found on Curtis and Macauley Is.

Other seabirds were the Masked Booby, which was nesting on Curtis and Macauley Is and the Grey Ternlet, which nests abundantly on all three islands that we visited. We saw a few White-capped Noddies about the islands, but found nests only on L'Esperance Rock and Macauley I. Red-tailed Tropicbirds were seen over Curtis and Macauley Is and Sooty Terns were swirling in huge flocks above these islands, but had not yet begun to nest.

A few waders - Golden Plovers, Turnstones and tattlers - were seen on Macauley I. and we were surprised to find a dead Pukeko on L'Esperance Rock. The number of passerines was higher than we expected. Song Thrush, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Silvereve, Starling, Pipit/Skylark, Goldfinch, and

Welcome Swallow were all recorded. Other landbirds were Harrier and Kermadec Parakeet.

We estimated that 17,000 to 20,000 parakeets were on Macauley I. Obviously the population has increased rapidly since 1966, when there were estimated to be only 1000+. Goats were removed from the island in 1966 and 1970 and this has allowed the *Cyperus* sedge to regenerate rapidly, so presumably this has provided more food for the parakeets.

Sea watching to and from the Kermadecs was also fascinating and we saw large numbers of Buller's Shearwaters and lesser numbers of Sooty Shearwaters and Pycroft's/Cook's Petrels returning from their migrations. Grey-faced Petrels were seen constantly in small numbers as far as the Kermadecs. Little Shearwaters were also well out from land and their numbers increased as we neared the Kermadecs. Cape Pigeons and the occasional Wandering Albatross and Black-browed Mollmawk were attracted to the ship. Unusual sightings include Royal Albatross, a white Giant Petrel, White-headed Petrel, three *Procellaria* petrels, and a few mystery *Pterodroma* petrels. Only one Flesh-footed Shearwater was noted.

ALAN TENNYSON, GRAEME TAYLOR

## Plumages of Little Shags

Returns to date cover 560 North Island birds, recorded in eight OSNZ regions on 69 data forms. South Island observers have also supplies 69 returns, detailing 1440 birds in five regions. Thus we already have the plumages of 2000 Little Shags to analyse, but more information is needed, especially from outlying districts. For these, particularly in the north and far south of the country, even returns of fewer than 10 birds are necessary if we are to test the idea that there is a gradation of types and hence genes throughout New Zealand. All members can help to ensure the success of this project, which is planned to end by April 1989.

MICHAEL TAYLOR & JOHN DOWDING

## National Wader Counts - Summer 1987

A record total of 179,713 waders was counted during the fifth national summer wader count, completed during November and December 1987. Once again there was a good coverage of the country (see map), made possible by the efforts of a large number of members and friends. Particular thanks must go to members from the Far North for their efforts in covering the large and important harbours in their region.

As for the previous summer counts, participants were asked to pay particular

attention to migratory waders from the Northern Hemisphere and, whenever possible, also count NZ-breeding species. The following is a preliminary report of the results of the count.

**Total numbers:** A summary of wader totals by region is given in Table 1. Once again Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots made up the majority of the birds counted, but the order of abundance of the top 5 migratory species changed slightly from previous years with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers replacing Red-necked Stints in 5th place. The order of the top 4 species i.e. Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot, Turnstone, and Golden Plover remained unchanged.

This summer there were record numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots counted, with totals of 87,432 and 57,868 birds respectively. The previous highest total of Bar-tailed Godwits was 82,829 in 1985 and of Lesser Knots was 51,935 in 1984. It was also a good year for Sharp-tailed Sandpipers because the 1987 total of 173 was well up on the previous highest count of 132 in 1985. The totals for Turnstones, Golden Plovers and Red-necked Stints all fell within the ranges of counts obtained in the previous 4 years.

Most NZ-breeding species would still be on their breeding grounds during the period of this count and so only a proportion of the total population of these would have been included in this survey. However, it is interesting to note the number of Wrybills remaining in the North Island during the summer.

**Distribution:** Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted are listed in Table 2, and the general distribution of waders is shown on the accompanying map. As found in all previous counts the general pattern in summer is that most migratory waders are concentrated in the north (Parengarenga to Kawhia and the Bay of Plenty), Nelson and Southland.

More than 10,000 birds were recorded again from Farewell Spit, Manukau Harbour, Kaipara Harbour, and the Firth of Thames. Totals for Farewell Spit, Manukau Harbour and the Firth of Thames were up about 5,000 birds each on the summer 1986 totals, while the total for Kaipara was down about 4,000 birds.

**Species distribution:** As in previous years, Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots favoured the harbours of the Far North/Northland, Auckland/South Auckland, and the Bay of Plenty and Nelson regions. The record numbers of both these species were reflected in all parts of the country, with most regions reporting higher than usual totals. Turnstones were concentrated at Houhora - 276, Rangaunu - 300, Parengarenga - 610+, Kaipara - 425, Manukau - 501, Firth of Thames - 187, Farewell Spit - 995, Motueka Sandspit -

290, Invercargill Estuary - 332, and Awarua Bay - 313, Golden Plovers favoured Parengarenga - 200+, Kaipara - 75, Manukau - 80, Lake Wairarapa - 49, Invercargill Estuary - 87, and Awarua Bay - 36. The increase in the number of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers was due to counts of 48 at Lake Ellesmere and 41 at the Invercargill Estuary, with counts in other areas being comparable to previous years. Highest counts of Red-necked Stints came from Lake Ellesmere - 65, Awarua Bay - 31, and Manukau Harbour - 24.

There were some interesting records of rare waders, including single Large Sand Dotterels at Kaipara, Manukau, and the Ashley Estuary; single Mongolian Dotterels at Manukau Harbour and the Porangahau Estuary; a Hudsonian Godwit at Lake Ellesmere; a Greenshank/Marsh Sandpiper at Houhora; a Marsh Sandpiper at Kaipara; Lesser Yellowlegs at Manukau and Lake Ki-Wainono; and a Ruff at Lake Ki-Wainono.

TABLE 2 — Localities where more than 1,000 waders were counted in Nov/Dec 1987

Location	Number of birds
Farewell Spit	34,725
Manukau Harbour	30,951
Kaipara Harbour	24,062
Firth of Thames	16,692
Rangaunu	6,322
Tauranga Harbour	6,258
Whangarei Harbour	5,688
Houhora Harbour	4,687
Waimea Estuary	4,308
Ohope Spit & Ohiwa Harbour	4,192
Invercargill Estuary	4,004
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	3,377
Motueka Sandspit	2,720
Awarua Bay	2,237
Westhaven Inlet	2,189
Lake Ellesmere	1,851
Aotea Harbour	1,691
Parengarenga Harbour	1,583
Waitemata Harbour	1,149
Mangawhai Estuary & Spit	1,113
Lake Wairarapa	1,082
Lake Ki-Wainono	1,038

... and winter 1988

The fifth national winter wader count, completed during June/July 1988, resulted in a record total of 135,347 birds being counted.

As in previous years, members were asked to record the numbers of NZ-breeding species (most of which at that time of year are concentrated at coastal sites) and those of any overwintering migrants.

With another big effort made by members in the Far North/Northland regions it is pleasing to report that once again a good coverage of the country was achieved (see map).

The following is a preliminary report on the results of the count.

**Total numbers:** A summary of wader totals by region is given in Table 3. This

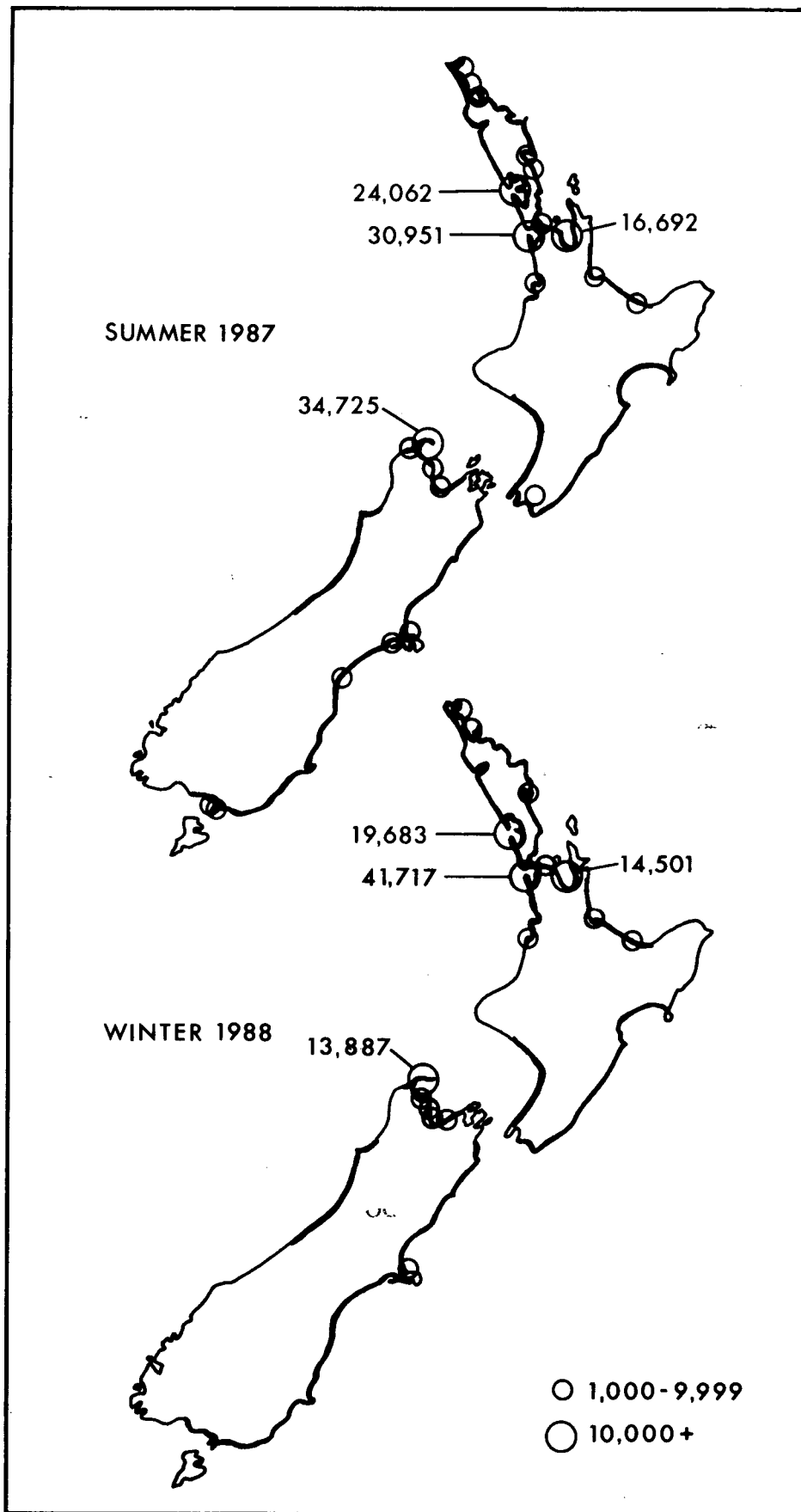


TABLE 1 — Waders counted in New Zealand, November-December 1987.

	Far North Auckland			BoP	Hawkes Manawatu				West					TOTAL		
	N'land	S.Auck	Waikato		Wairoa	Bay	Wanganui	Wairarapa	Wellington	Marlboro.	Nelson	Coast	Canterbury		Otago	Southland
Pied Oystercatcher	221	7 144	629	120	2	4	18	13	2	5	4 013	244	1 704	786	2 825	17 730
Variable Oystercatcher	258	254	12	203	4	8	43	15	51	6	129	38	9	21	5	1 056
Golden Plover	221	164	-	61	18	4	25	49	-	-	16	2	-	-	145	705
Spur-winged Plover	-	59	-	5	4	13	17	216	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	314
NZ Dotterel	55	199	4	87	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	347
Banded Dotterel	2	74	4	55	8	17	7	13	-	36	59	48	358	27	37	745
Large Sand Dotterel	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Mongolian Dotterel	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	15	3	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	21
Wrybill	1	177	-	3	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	138	3	1	332
Far Eastern Curlew	3	11	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	8	-	2	-	1	26
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	61
Whimbrel species	33	2	-	9	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Bar-tailed Godwit	8 083	36 270	1 487	10 689	445	552	814	283	-	1	21 137	505	2 488	1 773	2 905	87 432
Hudsonian Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Greenshank	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Marsh Sandpiper	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lesser Yellowlegs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Tattler species	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	7
Ruff	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Terek Sandpiper	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	5
Turnstone	1 192	1 133	1	282	-	1	6	-	-	84	1 285	6	15	5	830	4 840
Lesser Knot	8 490	28 656	34	137	1	34	256	13	-	-	19 630	1	22	2	592	57 868
Sharp-t Sandpiper	3	34	-	11	-	-	11	-	-	-	1	3	65	2	41	171
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Curlew Sandpiper	25	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	34	-	37	117
Red-necked Stint	-	40	-	-	-	7	4	-	-	-	7	-	67	-	32	157
Sanderling	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Pied Stilt	294	2 294	120	286	29	652	208	479	-	51	66	47	2 398	578	212	7 714
Hybrid Stilt	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18 883</b>	<b>76 610</b>	<b>2 291</b>	<b>11 950</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>1 311</b>	<b>1 420</b>	<b>1 082</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>46 352</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>7 308</b>	<b>3 197</b>	<b>7 664</b>	<b>179 713</b>

\* Spur-winged Plovers are numerous and widespread in the South Island, and so this species is not included in the South Island totals.

TABLE 3 — Waders counted in New Zealand, June-July 1988.

	Auckland			BoP	Hawke's Manawatu				West					TOTAL		
	Far North N'land	S.Auck	Waikato		Wairoa	Bay	Wanganui	Wairarapa	Nelson	Marlboro.	Coast	Canterbury	Otago		Southland	
Pied Oystercatcher	491	2 243	56 244	1 260	257	-	26	15	9	16 675	21	626	4 505	2 207	568	85 147
Variable Oystercatcher	51	147	222	8	157	11	10	73	25	215	9	55	5	65	40	1 093
Golden Plover	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Spur-winged Plover	37	1	114	-	106	14	30	28	120	*	*	*	*	*	*	450*
NZ Dotterel	125	69	238	4	103	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	541
Banded Dotterel	588	197	1 550	89	732	70	54	32	190	1 773	7	13	510	296	246	6 347
Mongolian Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	-	129	25	40	-	5	-	5	2	-	206
Wrybill	217	124	3 948	-	74	-	40	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 418
Far Eastern Curlew	-	-	9	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	14
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Whimbrel species	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	2 148	825	5 548	365	1 549	14	207	114	-	4 657	10	19	505	392	148	16 501
Hudsonian Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Greenshank	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Marsh Sandpiper	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Siberian Tattler	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Turnstone	-	-	193	-	4	-	-	-	-	171	23	-	-	-	67	458
Lesser Knot	496	-	4 030	-	14	-	-	-	-	388	-	-	-	-	-	4 928
Pectoral Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Curlew Sandpiper	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	11
Red-necked Stint	-	-	6	-	5	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	21	-	8	47
Pied Stilt	375	474	8 667	80	761	490	954	170	573	510	227	62	1 236	485	88	15 152
Black Stilt	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1+	-	-	3+
Hybrid Stilt	-	-	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4 530</b>	<b>4 082</b>	<b>80 785</b>	<b>1 812</b>	<b>3 763</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>1 452</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>24 400</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>6 800</b>	<b>3 448</b>	<b>1 166</b>	<b>135 347</b>

\* Spur-winged Plovers are numerous and widespread in the South Island, and so this species is not included in the South Island totals.

+ This figure does not include Black Stilts which winter in the MacKenzie Basin.

winter there were some changes in the relative abundance of species compared to previous winters. As in all previous counts Pied Oystercatchers made up most of the birds counted. However, a record count of overwintering Bar-tailed Godwits placed them second in order of abundance, followed by Pied Stilts, Banded Dotterels, overwintering Lesser Knots, Wrybills and Variable Oystercatchers.

This winter there was a record count of 85,147 Pied Oystercatchers, the four previous counts having varied between 77,705 and 80,307. However, the 15,152 Pied Stilts counted is a new low, previous counts having varied between 17,308 and 20,111. This low count may be explained by more food being available over a wider area for the stilts because of the relatively mild weather we experienced last winter. Therefore some birds may have moved from traditional sites to feed elsewhere and so have been missed during this count. The number of Banded Dotterels counted was slightly above average, but as with the Pied Stilts low counts were recorded at some traditional sites e.g. Lake Ellesmere, possibly because some birds were able to feed elsewhere.

It is pleasing to record 4,418 Wrybills this winter. This total is close to the estimated population of this species and indicates that all flocks were located during the count. In previous winters some counts could only be made over neap high tides, so some birds were missed because they were able to feed over an extensive area during the period of the count.

Of the remaining NZ-breeding species Variable Oystercatcher and NZ Dotterel numbers were similar to those recorded in previous years. Although the number of Spur-winged Plovers counted in the North Island was only about half that recorded last year, the species continues to expand its range northwards with good numbers now present in the Far North, Northland and Auckland/South Auckland.

The record numbers of overwintering Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots (16,501 & 4,928 respectively) follows the record numbers of these species counted the preceding summer (see above). The 458 Turnstones overwintering is about average for this species. These totals represent 18.9% (Bar-tailed Godwits), 8.5% (Lesser Knots), and 9.5% (Turnstones) of the numbers of these species recorded during the summer 1987 count. In previous winters the populations of these three species, have usually represented 7-9% of the numbers recorded during the previous summer. Assuming that the birds which overwinter are pre-breeders then the 1988 figures indicate that Bar-tailed Godwits had better than average breeding success during the preceding northern summer.

**Distribution:** Localities where more than 1,000 waders were counted are listed in Table 4, and the general distribution of waders is shown on the accompanying map. These show the same general pattern of distribution that occurred in previous winters i.e. that in winter the important areas for waders are in north, the Nelson region, and at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary.

Manukau Harbour once again topped the table, maintaining its position as easily the most important site for waders in winter. There has been relatively little variation in the national totals during winter, with counts over the past five years ranging from 122,078 (1985) to 135,347 (1988).

TABLE 4 — Localities where more than 1,000 waders were counted in June/July 1988.

Location	Number of birds
Manukau Harbour	41,717
Kaipara Harbour	19,683
Firth of Thames	14,501
Farewell Spit	13,887
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	4,590
Whangarei Harbour	3,511
Rangaunu	2,765
Ohope Spit & Ohiva Harbour	1,572
Parengarenga Harbour	1,426
Waimea Estuary	1,381
Motueka paddocks	1,377
Nelson Haven	1,287
Kawhia Harbour	1,275
Paton's	1,200
Tauranga Harbour	1,162
Whitford Inlet	1,092
Riwaka	1,035

The extent of the coverage nation-wide was consistent with previous years, which is gratifying in a country such as ours, which has many large areas of excellent habitat for waders. The substantial efforts from regions where there are few members but large distances to travel and survey are certainly appreciated.

**Species distribution:** As in all previous counts the harbours of the north, and the Nelson region were the most important wintering grounds for Pied Oystercatchers. Over 50% of the Pied Stilts counted were in the Auckland/South Auckland regions again. The highest count of stilts was recorded at Manukau Harbour - 3,635 birds, and other counts of over 1,000 came from Kaipara - 2,196 and the Firth of Thames - 2,044. Banded Dotterels favoured Farewell Spit - 1,332, Manukau Harbour - 939, Ohope Spit & Ohiva Harbour 676, Parengarenga Harbour - 450, Kaipara - 358, Lake Ellesmere - 232, Whangarei Harbour - 193, and Lake Wairarapa - 190. The main concentrations of Wrybills were at the Firth of Thames - 3,000 and Manukau Harbour - 850.

There will be another national winter wader count in June/July. Now is the time to contact your RR and register your interest in assisting.

PAUL SAGAR, *Coordinator National Wader Counts.*

## Decline in Southland's Fantail population

**Regional Roundup** in the previous issue reported a reduction in Fantail numbers in Southland, almost certainly related to high rainfall in all weeks from July to the first week of November. Further reports from Southland members and visiting birdwatchers indicate that the numbers of Fantails remain low in many parts of the region.

Those adults that remained after the winter began breeding in mid-November, the late start to breeding being due also no doubt to the almost daily occurrence of rain (see Blackburn, A. 1966. *Notornis* 13: 189-196). In January juveniles were seen in several bush areas sometimes in groups of up to 7. By early February single birds and sometimes 2, again mostly juveniles, appeared in riverside willows and scrub, bush, and some country gardens where in normal years they are resident and breeding.

In some localities, however, numbers were still very low even by late January. For example, on Stewart Island in early January Lloyd Esler saw only 3 birds in 4 days on the tramp from Halfmoon Bay to Mason's Bay (via North Arm) and return. On 25 January at Stewart Island 2 American visitors, Chuck & Lillian Almdale, saw 1 adult in 5 hours over the 8 km from Raroa Reserve to Ryan's Creek and return. The next day they saw 3 adults and 3 immatures in 5-6 hours on Ulva Island.

This report is based on actual counts in Kapuka, Waikawa, Centre Bush, Otatara, Forest Hill, Motu Bush, Dean Forest, Te Anau, Eglinton Valley and Stewart Island, and is supported by anecdotal evidence from other places. However, in only one of these localities was there any firm evidence of normal numbers of Fantails.

My experience in gathering the information has convinced me that there is great merit in the proposal, recently put forward by Peter Gaze, to encourage members to make regular counts of all birds in defined areas.

MAIDA BARLOW



## Recent Reports

Records for this report were received from Auckland, South Auckland, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa, Wellington, Nelson, Canterbury, West Coast, Otago, and Southland.

Please note that many of these records have yet to be assessed by the Rare Birds Committee.

We hope to include a few photographs or drawings in the future. Photographs are best submitted as black & white prints, but colour prints reproduce quite well too as long as there are not too many reds in the photo. A clean copy of any line drawings is all that is required for reproduction in this newsletter.

### Penguins, Petrels, Shearwaters . . . and Gannets

February was a good time to find moulting penguins ashore on the east coast of the South Island. Single Fiordland Crested Penguins were ashore for several days, if not weeks, at Tentburn (north of the Rakaia Rivermouth), Taylor's Mistake (near Christchurch), and the Kaikoura Peninsula. The latter bird was a 1-year old. A Snares Crested Penguin was also moulting on Kaikoura Peninsula.

The wreck of Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters on the Auckland west coast beaches continued into December and also included a Brown Booby, White-headed and Grey-faced Petrels, Flesh-footed Shearwater, and Salvin's Prion. The only other large wrecks were of Little Blue Penguins at Pakiri (East Auckland) in Jan. and over 100 Fairy Prions around Ruby Bay (Nelson) in early Feb. There were widespread reports of small numbers of the commoner beach-wrecked birds along with a White-chinned Petrel near New Plymouth on 17 Nov. (the first for that coast) and 2 Royal Albatrosses, one at Napier and one near Ward (Marlborough).

Otherwise it was almost as productive to look for seabirds elsewhere; either on roads - a Black Petrel was found in the Waitakere Ranges (Auckland) on 25 Dec. and a Diving petrel alive in the main street of Taumarānui (Taranaki) on 30 Dec.; or under parked trucks, where Otago's first Gould's Petrel was found in Dunedin on 19 Dec.; or even in synthetic fuel plants, where a Grey-faced Petrel, probably a local breeding bird, was found at Waitara (Taranaki) on 15 Dec.

A live Brown Booby was seen off Great Barrier Island on 16 Jan. and a Chatham Island Mollymawk was fed from a boat, 4 miles off Cape Palliser (Wellington) on 8-9 Jan. From the Cook Strait ferry a Shy Mollymawk and an unseasonal Cape Pigeon were seen in early Feb. and 107 adult Gannets were in Queen Charlotte Sound on 17 Feb. Westland Black Petrels, Salvin's Mollymawks, Buller's Shearwaters, Hutton's Shearwaters, and

Snares Cape Pigeons were the commonest seabirds just off Kaikoura Peninsula in mid-Feb. 20 Fluttering Shearwaters prospecting for nest sites on a stack at Urenui (Taranaki) are the first definite evidence of breeding in that area.

### Hérons, Spoonbills and Ibises

There were the usual summer records of Reef Herons in the Hauraki Gulf (Auckland), but breeding was not confirmed. There still seem to be a few birds on the east coast of the South Island; 1 at Katiki (N. Otago) on 13 Nov. and 1 at Sandfly Bay on the Otago Peninsula.

Apart from a spring report of 2 at the Invercargill Estuary on 6 Oct., there were no summer reports of White Herons, so presumably they have yet to disperse from their breeding grounds. The only report of Little Egrets was 2 at Lake Waiholā (Otago) from mid-Feb. and Cattle Egrets put in their usual intriguing mid-summer appearance with 2 near Gore (Southland) on 15 Dec.

Only 3 Royal Spoonbills were reported from the North Island over the summer. There were 2 at Kaipara (Auckland) on 14 Dec. and possibly the same birds were at Mangere (Auckland) in Jan., and 1 at Oneke Spit (Wairarapa) on 3 Dec. Spoonbills apparently bred at Okarito (West Coast) this year after several years absence and 30 nests were counted at Maukiekie I. (Otago) in Dec. The increase in breeding sites on the east coast of the South Island continues with 7 nests (4 chicks) on Green Island (at sea, off Dunedin) and, possibly associated with this were 12 birds that spent the summer at Lake Waiholā.

Bitterns continue to turn up in odd places (where they are easier to see?) with one at Naseby (Otago) on 4 Oct. and 2 on an open farm dam at Pirinoa (Wairarapa) in Jan. One was heard in a more typical habitat at Tapora (Auckland) on 9 Dec.

Up to 6 Glossy Ibises have been seen at Lake Wairarapa since April '88 and there was still one there on 1 Feb. and another at Upper Taieri (Otago) on 12 Dec. and 28 Jan. A White Ibis flew over Helensville (Auckland) on 10 Jan.

### Waders

As expected, a fair number of rarer waders were found during the summer wader counts last Nov. and these are included here, but I have omitted the totals for the commoner species, which will be published as usual.

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were reported as follows; 5 in the Auckland harbours on 10 Dec., 1 inland at Henley Ponds (Wairarapa) on 10-14 Dec., 26 at Lake Ellesmere (Canterbury) on 17 Jan., and 3 at Inchclutha (Otago) on 13 Jan. Sightings of Pectoral Sandpipers were 3 at Mangere on 15 Dec., 1 at Miranda (S. Auckland) on 26 Nov. and possibly 2 there on 18 Feb.,

1 at Manawatu Estuary during Jan-Feb., and 2 at Lake Wairarapa on 1 Feb. In the South Island, there were 2 at Lake Grassmere (Marlborough) in Jan-Feb. and 2 at Inchclutha on 13 Jan.

A Long-billed Curlew spent the summer at the Manawatu Estuary, but other records appeared to be of brief visits, with 2 at Tapora on 22 Dec. and one at Blaketown (West Coast) from 13-16 Jan. Whimbrels stayed around rather longer, with 2 at the Waimea Estuary (Nelson) in Jan-Feb. and 1 still present at Clevedon (S. Auckland) on 3 Jan. One appeared at Aramoana (Otago) on 17 Dec. and the maximum at Kaipara Harbour was 18 on 10 Dec.

One of the 75 Golden Plovers in the Auckland harbours over summer could well have been the American species. 39 at the Ahuriri Estuary (Hawkes Bay) was a high summer count (despite military manoeuvres), and 2 arrived at their usual spot near Greymouth Airfield on 17 Dec., staying until 5 Jan. Outside these usual locations, 1 was at the Waimea Estuary on 15 Feb.

The Marsh Sandpiper at Lake Grassmere on 21 Jan. could have been there all year and 1 that was first seen at Mangere on 10 Dec. was still there on 15 Feb. One was at Lake Wairarapa on 1 Feb. and 1 was at Lake Ellesmere from Nov. until 17 Jan.

Two tattlers in Otago Harbour on 28 Jan. were probably Siberian, as 3, an unprecedented number in this area, were identified as this species on 19 Feb. One Siberian Tattler was at Mangere on 10 Dec. and 4 tattlers were at a high tide roost on Kaikoura Peninsula in mid-Feb.

As usual a few Large Sand Dotterels were found in the north; 2 at South Kaipara Heads on 10 Dec. (there was a lot of wader watching going on in Auckland on this date) and 1 on 23 Jan. at Karaka, where there was also a Common Sandpiper. A Common Sandpiper was also seen at a small estuary in Hawkes Bay. A Grey Plover was at Miranda in Jan., 2 Sanderlings at Kaipara on 10 Dec., and further south a Terek Sandpiper at the Manawatu Estuary in Dec-Jan. An Oriental Dotterel was seen at Lake Ellesmere on 4 Jan., but despite intensive efforts, was not seen again until mid-Feb. and then only briefly.

A Black Stilt that spent the spring at Mangere was still there on 20 Dec. A Wrybill flying north past Okato (Taranaki) on 19 Dec. was a bit off course, but going in the right direction to join the flock at Miranda, which increased from c2,000 on 22 Jan. to c3,000 by 20 Feb. A NZ Dotterel at Pungaere Stream, near Rahotu (Taranaki), on 11 Dec. and 19 Feb. is the first Taranaki record of this species for many years.

## Gulls, Terns and Skuas

The distribution and number of Little Terns was very similar to spring, with 2 at the Manawatu Estuary in Jan-Feb. (an increase of 1), 12 at Miranda (and increase of 2) on 29 Jan., and the bird at Aramoana (Otago) on 19 Jan. The harsh weather destroyed the nests of the few pairs of Fairy Terns that attempted to breed in the north this year.

As Black-fronted Terns left their breeding grounds they were widely reported along the east coast of the South Island and over 160 gathered in a paddock near the Waiiau Bridge (Marlborough) on 17 Feb.

The White-winged Black Tern was still present at Lake Ellesmere on 6 Jan. and an immature was at Westport (West Coast) on 14-15 Dec.

Surprisingly few reports of skuas were received, but as this is only the second of these reports, it is difficult to know whether this is a reflection of low numbers or not. Arctic Skuas were present off Tauranga Bay (West Coast) on 15 Dec., a dark phase bird was seen off the Waima River Estuary (Marlborough) on 24 Jan., and 3 dark and 1 light phase were off the Whangaparaoa Peninsula (Auckland) on 4 Feb. Dark skuas, not specifically identified, were seen in Hawkes Bay on 24 Jan. and 4 Feb., and near Rahotu on 19 Feb.

## Ducks and Geese

No Blue Ducks were found in the DoC survey of the Catlins River (Otago) in Nov. and an extensive trip through the Kaimanawa and Kaiweka Forest Parks (Hawkes Bay & Volcanic Plateau) also failed to find any. West of Tongariro in the Manganui-a-te-ao River, things were better, with 6 birds recorded on 11-12 Feb. and a solitary bird in the eastern Tararua on the Mangatarere Stream (Wairarapa) is the first documented report from that area for over 60 years. First seen in Nov., this bird then moved into farmland where it alternatively fraternises and terrorises some domestic ducks.

After only 1 report in spring, Chestnut-breasted Shelducks reappeared (from where?) in the South Island at Lake Elterwater (Marlborough) with 3 on 18 Feb. and also at Hawkesbury Lagoon (Otago) with 4 on 4 Feb. and a pair on 5 Feb. In Southland, a male and a female were seen at Waimatuku Lagoon on 10 Dec., and a female was at Redcliff Wetland on 15 Jan.

Canada Geese at Waikanae Estuary (Wellington) from mid-Dec. on could have been released.

A solitary Brown Teal was found amongst c500 Grey Teal at Mangere on 26 Dec.

## ... and the rest

Black Shag and Little Shag numbers were greatly reduced and Spotted Shags completely disappeared from the Napier-East Clive area of Hawkes Bay during Oct-Jan. Little Black Shags remained in good numbers, with 219 counted on day. A Pied Shag at New Plymouth on 12 Feb. is the first Taranaki record.

A Nankeen Kestrel that has frequented Te Mata Peak (Hawkes Bay for 2 years was still there in Jan.

Kakas were recorded in reasonable numbers in the Kaimanawa-Kaiweka Forest Parks in Dec-Jan., but a survey in the Catlins in Nov. failed to find any. 30 feeding on flax at Speargrass (Nelson Lakes) must have been quite a sight. Several birds remained in the suburbs of Auckland for the summer while 1 was in a garden south of Manukau Head in Jan. and 1 flew over Clevedon on 13 Jan. 3 on Whangaparaoa Peninsula and 1 at Wenderholm (Auckland) with a Red-crowned Parakeet in Dec-Jan. may have been driven to the mainland by easterly storms. Red-crowned Parakeets were also recorded in the Kaimanawa-Kaiweka Forest Parks and an odd collection of parrots was reported near Invercargill Estuary on 22 Dec. It comprised an Eastern Rosella, a White Cockatiel and "a much larger parrot, red and green with a bit of yellow"! 6 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were at Korokoro Reservoir (Wellington) on 25 Jan. and 1 was also at Te Mata Peak in Jan. A flock of 12 in the Waitakere Ranges could be the source of single birds in west Auckland.

Also in Auckland, at Ponsonby, a suburban Weka has yet to be explained, although I notice there is an Atlas record from just the other side of the bridge!

Red-legged Partridges were seen subsequent to releases at Taporā and Clifton (Hawkes Bay).

A Spine-tailed Swift was found dead on the beach at Pekapeka (Wellington) on 27 Dec.

Welcome Swallow nests are few and far between in Southland, but this summer they bred at Thornbury and Round Hill and again at Te Anau.

Bellbirds have been reported from several areas on Waiheke Island (Auckland) after transfers last autumn, and a Black Fantail in New Plymouth in early Jan. was the 4th seen there in 18 years.

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

## Publications

It is some time since this feature has appeared in *OSNZ news*. In the past, however, it fulfilled an important function by keeping members informed of recent ornithological publications relevant to NZ.

Consequently it has been revived with the intention that it once again becomes a regular feature.

It is not the intention of this feature to provide exhaustive lists of recent publications (for those, members are directed to the Recent Ornithological Literature supplements published by the BOU, AOU & RAOU), but to concentrate on those which deal with birds in NZ and the SW Pacific or are particularly important papers about species which occur in our region. With this in mind, I would welcome any assistance from members in compiling this feature.

McLean, I.G. & Miskelly, C.M. 1988. Breeding biology of the Black Tit (*Petroica macrocephala dannefaerdi*) on the Snares Islands, New Zealand. *NZ Natural Sciences* 15: 51-59.

Creswell, P.D. 1988. Bird species, populations, and activities at Christchurch International Airport, New Zealand, between 1986 and 1988: implications for a preventative bird strike programme. *NZ Natural Sciences* 15: 61-70.

McLennan, J.A. 1988. Breeding biology of North Island Brown Kiwi, *Apteryx australis mantelli*, in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. *NZ Journal of Ecology* 11: 89-97

Colbourne, R. & Powlesland, R. G. 1988. Diet of the Stewart Island Brown Kiwi (*Apteryx australis lawreyi*) at Scollay's Flat, southern Stewart Island, *NZ Journal of Ecology* 11: 99-104.

Young, E.C.; Jenkins, P.F.; Douglas, M.E. & Lovegrove, T.G. 1988. Nocturnal foraging by Chatham Island skuas. *NZ Journal of Ecology* 11:113-117.

Gill, B.J. 1988. Records of birds and reptiles from Tonga. Records of the Auckland Institute & Museum 25: 87-94.

Warham, John. 1988. Responses of *Pterodroma* petrels to man-made sounds. *Emu* 88: 109-111.

McLean, I.G. & Gill, B.J. 1988. Breeding of an island-endemic bird: the New Zealand Whitehead *Mohoua albicilla*, Pachycephalinae. *Emu* 88: 177-182.

PAUL SAGAR

## Regional Roundup

**Northland:** Activities for 1988 finished with a well-attended barbecue at Jean Hawken's property at Maunu. This very much appreciated event gives members the opportunity to discuss a whole raft of subjects, cooking on field trips, skin protection preparations, the suitability and availability of optical aids such as binoculars and telescopes etc.

Despite the fact that many members were involved with David Crockett's Chatham Island Taiko research programme,

beach patrols on both the east and west coasts by enthusiastic and energetic members and supporters were a regular activity. Ninety Mile Beach yielded 30 species, Dargaville 41 species, and Northland east coast 24. An unusual find on the east coast was a Marsh Crake.

Cyclone Delilah came and left a trail of destruction, the worst affected seabirds appeared to be juvenile and runt Northern Blue Penguins. The record stands at over 400, with further returns still to come. One interesting corpse was a white Northern Blue Penguin. We should hear more about this latter from the finder. Another interesting find was a live juvenile White-tailed Tropicbird, which was cared for by a member of a bird minding group and when eventually released was seen to fly out to sea.

Juvenile or immature Grey-faced Petrels, Fluttering Shearwaters, and Little Shearwaters also perished.

Banding of juvenile Southern Black-backed Gulls was accomplished at colonies on both east and west coasts.

Events in the immediate future will be a Whangarei Harbour high tide roost survey and the Pouto Peninsula dune lake survey. (Alastair Gordon)

**Auckland:** The dreadful summer in these parts ruined the nesting chances of the 2 pairs of Fairy Terns at Mangawhai and the nearby colony of White-fronted Terns, as well as contributing to the large wreck of penguins on Pakiri Beach in Jan. Fortunately the Kaipara fared better and a new colony of White-fronted Terns and Caspian Terns at Tapara reared large numbers of chicks.

The survey of Tiritiri Island from 18-20 November was conducted in fine weather and will be repeated in April by a group organised by Mike Graham, who takes over from Sara Brouwer. We shall look closely at the numbers of Mynas, which appear to have been responsible for some losses among native species, particularly Saddlebacks.

The New Year opened with a lively members' evening ably conducted by Shane Dalton, with displays by Chris Jowett and Pat Crombie featuring West Coast and RAOU congress topics, and including accounts of summer birding travels by Sharon Graham, Sandra Morris, Bill Ormond and others. Coming in the new programme are talks by Simon Towle on the Antarctic environment, and Alan Hemmings and Alan Tennyson describing aspects of their studies of seabirds in the Chathams. (Michael Taylor)

**South Auckland:** The 'oil-skin summer' has meant fewer records than usual at this time of year, but we have continued Miranda 3-roost counts. Beach patrol finds have been fewer, a Shy Mollymawk being the most interesting find in Feb. Justin Penney has covered all the beaches from Kawakawa Bay to Miranda in the Firth of Thames. Pam &

Pes Agnew visited the Chathams in January and at our first evening meeting of the year they showed excellent slides from their trip. As well as this, we practiced identifying a mystery bird. (Anthea Goodwin)

**Waikato:** 1989 started well with a members' evening in which many members shared recent birdwatching experiences, ranging from NZ to the Galapagos, and a field weekend into Auckland territory to visit the Muriwai Gannet colony and Kaipara Harbour high tide roost at Jordan's Farm.

Not so good, however, is the news of the disastrous fire in the Whangamarino wetland, where half of the habitat for birds such as Fernbird and Bittern has been destroyed.

Some recent seabird sightings are a juvenile Wandering Albatross found on a farm at Manawaru, south of Te Aroha, about 6/2 and fed for some days before being released at Bowentown on 12/2; a Pied Shag noted by Mercia Barnes well inland, on Hamilton Lake on 3/1 & 8/1; a Grey-faced Petrel found dead at Rototuna, again well inland, in Jan. by B. Woolley; and on the coast on 10/12 John & Stella Rowe found a Fiordland Crested Penguin washed ashore, well north of its usual range. (Stella Rowe)

**Gisborne/Wairoa:** A trip through the Bay of Plenty, East Cape and on to Hawkes bay in Nov. gave Barrie Heather & Hugh Robertson the opportunity to survey waders. Two sightings are of particular interest - 2 NZ Dotterels at Hicks Bay may be the furthest east that this species has been recorded because usually they are only found as far as Cape Runaway; the other sighting was of 4 American Whimbrels at Oraka. Up to 6 whimbrels have been present at Oraka over the past 2 years and each one I have been able to identify positively has been Asiatic, with the white rump and distinctive brown barring quite clear. Barrie & Hugh obtained a positive sighting of uniform brown back and rump.

Royal Spoonbills continue to be seen at Wairoa with 5 there on 25/9, but these did not stay. 2 birds appeared on 4/12 and were still around on 11/12.

I had an interesting visit to the Tolaga Bay Gannet colony on 6/11. This colony is rarely checked, but from a high point on the rock I counted 413 occupied nests, many with eggs. Two Pied Shag colonies were noted. One of 4 nests is on top of a large rock near the Gannet colony, with the nests built on a mat of scrub about 30 cm high. The other colony of 18 occupied nests is in karaka trees overlooking the beach about 5 km south of Tolaga Bay. (Geoff Foreman)

**Hawkes Bay:** Our region started the year on a high note with 17 members travelling

to Marlborough for a week. The weather was kind and we observed a large variety of birds. On the Kaikoura Lakes were about 500 Paradise Shelducks, a few Canada Geese, 1 Crested Grebe, and 2 probable Australian Little Grebes. In nearby gorse and manuka Rifleman were seen and heard and a stand of conifers between the 2 lakes provided good views of 3 Brown Creepers.

Kaikoura Peninsula produced its expected large numbers of Red-billed Gulls, which appeared to have finished nesting. Turnstones and a tattler were the only waders of note there. Two Reef Herons were also seen on the peninsula, with 2 more further south.

The Vernon Lagoons were well worthwhile once we knew where the board walks were and some members had a close look at nesting Royal Spoonbills.

A boat trip up Pelorus Sound to Maud Island was a high point of the trip. Birds seen from the launch included Spotted and Pied Shags, Fluttering Shearwaters, and Gannets. On Maud we were fortunate to, see a Hamilton's frog. A bush walk on another island was an enjoyable end to the day. On farmland one member had a glimpse of a Little Owl and everyone had good views of Redpolls and Cirl Buntings. A dam produced Coot with young, Grey Duck, and Mallard. Another bush walk had Tomtit, Bellbirds, and a parakeet was heard. A stream nearby had a Black-fronted Tern fishing and Pipits were seen on the banks. The ferry crossing provided views of Fairy Prions, Cape Pigeons, Fluttering Shearwaters, and a mollymawk. A bonus was the sighting of 2 large whales, one of which did a magnificent dive for us with tail high in the air. (Wayne Twytle)

**Wairarapa:** The 5-module course *Birdwatching in New Zealand* was completed in December and thanks to our Wellington speakers and the enthusiastic help of local members proved a great success. Eight members of the course have since joined OSNZ and membership of the Wairarapa region now stands at 25.

Over the 2 weeks around 29/1 we carried out the first major survey of the Ruamahanga River and its tributaries since 1972. A total of 238 (plus 8 juveniles) Black-fronted Dotterels were counted. Comparable stretches of the Ruamahanga River had 3 times the number of Black-fronted Dotterels as in 1972 (93 now and 31 then). The Huangarua River, a small tributary of the Ruamahanga, which provides excellent Black-fronted Dotterel habitat now has 67 birds, compared with 43 in 1972. A total of 22 people were involved in the survey, including 6 members of Wellington - 3 of whom covered the lower 16 km of the Ruamahanga in a canoe.

A start has been made with colour banding Black-fronted Dotterels, with 21 banded to date, including 5 pairs.

Local members continue to monitor developing Henley Ponds Wetlands at Masterton. Currently 2 more ponds are being filled and these provide another 1-2 ha of shallow water.

Seven members from Wairarapa attended the passerine study weekend at Ward over the weekend of 17-19/2. (Tenick Dennison)

**Nelson:** The main summer activity has been banding Southern Black-backed Gull chicks on the Boulder Bank. This was organised by Gail Quayle, ably assisted by Henk Heinekamp, Peter Gaze, George Wilkinson, Kelly Quayle, and Sam & Zack Williams. Altogether, 296 chicks were banded blue over metal on the right leg. The previous year's birds were banded blue over metal on the left leg.

One of our younger members, Peter Cook, who was home on holiday from his job in Kakadu National Park, Australia, showed members his most interesting collection of slides at our end-of-year meeting.

The next Farewell Spit wader census will be 5-8 May. If members from other regions would like to assist, please contact Jenny Hawkins, 772 Atawhai Drive, Nelson. (Jenny Hawkins)

**Canterbury:** We ended 1988 with an informal meeting at Barry Armstrong's house, with members discussing a wide range of topics.

Several members attended the passerine banding weekend courses at Ward during Jan. & Feb. with more planning to attend in March, following the good reports presented at the first evening meeting of the year. This first meeting was the usual members' evening and a wide range of summer activities and some excellent slides were shown. In addition, Les McPherson teased our powers of identification by playing taped calls of 3 mystery birds.

In Feb. a group of members participated in a field day organised by the Outdoor Recreation Centre. The aim of the field day was to get the public involved in recreational activities based on water and a session on birdwatching was included in the programme. Participants were taken on a tour of the Bromley Sewage Ponds and Avon-Heathcote Estuary and shown some of the birds that inhabit these areas. A display about birds and the Societys activities was also erected. Hopefully involvement in promotional activities such as this will bring more members into the OSNZ. (Paul Sagar)

**Otago:** At our first indoor meeting for the year a very well attended evening had Derek Onley addressing members with his interesting talk on bird painters.

Members are still very enthusiastically involved in the Otago Harbour Survey. We will shortly be involved in a total coastal

search for breeding Sooty Shearwaters, a project never before undertaken.

Jenny Morrison came across several Riflemen on the Otago Peninsula on 17/1, a rare bird in the area.

More and more NZ Falcons turn up around Dunedin. On 19/12 1 was seen flying over Mosgiel and on 14/1 Alan Baker saw 1 in the Dunedin Botanical Gardens.

At present we are working on a Kingfisher project where sightings, habitat information, and observations of behaviour are to be collected. This is to be a project where the general public are invited to participate; this being part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the Society. (Peter Schweigman)

**Southland:** Fine weather graced all the summers organised field trips except on 6/11, when a small keen group checked the Awarua Bay waders in cold wind and some hail showers. The bay produced its usual tattlers, Greenshank, and small numbers of stints, but a Long-billed Curlew was a pleasant addition to the rarities.

Summer wader census on 10/12 was followed by a pot luck meal at Jill & Owen Linscott's Thornbury home; a relaxed and sociable evening after a long day in the field for most people. In between the home-grown lamb, quiches, and gateaux, Lloyd Esler talked about his experiences with a scout troop in Otago, making and erecting nest boxes for Riflemen. We tried to educate

ourselves to recognise Cirl Bunting calls, using a tape sent by Barrie Heather. This exercise had a low success rate, probably due to some highly successful Corbans and more exotic vintages.

12 members and friends spent Boxing Day wandering about the bush at Forest Hill, pleased to find Brown Creepers and juvenile Pied Tits.

On 15/1 13 people came from many points of the compass to Redcliff Wetland Reserve for a day among the waterfowl on the fine artificial wetland. A Chestnut-breasted Shelduck was seen among the many hundreds of Paradise Shelducks and other waterfowl. Mrs Olga Sansom, a foundation member of OSNZ, had donated funds to line the Society's observation hide at Redcliff, and earlier in January Roger Sutton and Charles & Maida Barlow had done this work, painted it, and fitted the carpets given by Peter & Wilma Muller. This hide is there for the use of all OSNZ members and interested people. The RR and most other Southland OSNZers will happily give information to visitors on access to the wetland and the hide.

On 4/2 we joined a Forest & Bird outing led by Roger Sutton to Motu Bush and Dean Forest in Southland, where focus was on the botanical richness and diversity of this fine forest. Pied Tits were seen and heard throughout and all other expected species were present. (Maida Barlow)

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