

OSNZ news

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for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No.51

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Note Deadline for the September issue
will be 20th August, 1989.



50th ANNIVERSARY
1939-1989

The 50th Anniversary celebrations at Whangaparaoa

Society members migrated from all parts of the country and gathered at the Whangaparaoa Camp during the weekend of 2-5 June for the Annual Conference and AGM, and to celebrate the Society's 50th anniversary. To mark the occasion the Auckland-based organising committee provided us with a memorable weekend of activities.

Members began to gather at the Camp on Friday evening and after registering at the Conference Desk were shown the general location of the buildings where dining, social events and talks were to take place. It wasn't long before "Tom's Bar" was well patronised and this proved an excellent venue to track down friends and make new acquaintances.

All the talks on Saturday morning were about waders. Adrian Riegen started, with a well-illustrated review of the activities of

the Miranda Banders and proposals for future banding studies of migratory waders. Then Paul Sagar presented some of the results from the first 5 years of the national wader counts, with specific reference to the abundance and distribution of the most common arctic and resident breeding species. This was followed by Dick Veitch's examination of count trends arising from the long-term censuses of waders at the Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour. By reference to the 3-roost counts at the Firth of Thames he also showed how the timing of counts is critical if they are to be comparable from year-to-year. Finally in this session, John Dowding reviewed the history of the endemic N.Z. Dotterel and reviewed the work done in previous studies before telling us about his current studies around Auckland and on Stewart Island.

Following lunch we reassembled for 2 further talks. Don Merton gave a brief review of events leading to the Society's 25th Anniversary Expeditions to the Kermadec Islands, then showed a movie of the 1966-67 expedition. Besides the volcanic events of 1964, most comment was excited by the appearances of the youthful Don Merton, David Crockett, and Dick Veitch! Following this Geoff Moon gave an illustrated account of how photography can be used in the study of birds. As we have come to expect, the slides were of a high standard.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting convened at 4.00 pm, with acting President David Crockett in the chair. First, he read a message from the President, Beth Brown (see below). The meeting sent a greeting to Beth in appreciation of her efforts on behalf of the Society. As the Society celebrates its 50th year, Dr Peter Bull was called upon to say a few words about Prof. B. J. Marples, one of the main movers in the formation of the Society. It was moved and carried that the meeting convey its greetings to Prof. Marples on this anniversary occasion.

Tim Lovegrove then paid tribute to John Jenkins, a long-standing and active member of the Society, who died earlier

this year. John is known to many for his seabird observations and for his detailed papers of their marine distribution in our region.

Annual Report

In his annual report, David Crockett paid tribute to the RRs and the work they do on the Society's behalf. He said the national network of ornithology is one of the great achievements of the Society and the high level of participation is evidenced by the large attendance at this weekend. However, David suggested that a further 500 members over the next 5 years were required to complete the coverage of the country. He made a plea for every member to promote OSNZ activities and ideals, so people will join out of interest.

Thanks were also extended to the convenors of the Society's schemes and a lot of others whose work contributed greatly to the betterment of OSNZ.

An outline of 2 new national projects to be initiated by the Society was given by Hugh Robertson (see below) - these are a census of the N.Z. Dotterel population and a study of the movements of Pied Stilts.

David Crockett praised the continuing high standard of *Notornis* and noted that the Society's journal has a high standing internationally. The meeting gave prolonged applause to Barrie Heather for his outstanding efforts as Editor of *Notornis*.

Next, Ben Bell reviewed developments in planning the 1990 IOC and the ICBP, TVNZ Film Festival, and the Birdpex Stamp Exhibition. Brian Gill also reported on progress with the 50th Anniversary Publication.

Finally, David Crockett noted that there were still tasks to be done within the Society, especially with respect to publicity.

FALLA MEMORIAL AWARD

The announcement that Mr E. G. Turbott was awarded the Falla Memorial Award for 1989 was greeted with exceptional applause. The obvious surprise and delight of Mr Turbott on receiving the award was appreciated by the meeting. In his response, Mr Turbott said he owed a great debt to R.A. Falla for the encouragement he received when he was a young school teacher in Auckland.

Financial Report

In his financial report the Hon. Treasurer, Bill Ormond, mentioned that the significant effects were an accumulated loss and the continuing loss of members. The decrease in interest rates had also contributed to the financial loss. In moving that the subscriptions for the next financial year be increased Bill said an increase in membership was also required. During the discussion of the motion there were many suggestions made as to ways of increasing revenue without increasing subs and these were noted by the Secretary and will be considered by Council. The final comments on the motion came from Derek Onley, who pointed out that the proposed subscription still only amounted to about 70 cents/week or three-quarters of the price of one Mars Bar.

The motion was then passed unanimously.

The AGM ended with a vote of thanks to Michael Taylor and his team for the organisation of the weekend.

The first 50 years of OSNZ

The anniversary feature was held after dinner and included reminiscences from 7 founding or early members of the Society – Dr Peter Bull, John Cunningham, Brian Ellis, Lou Gurr, Prof. Brian Marples, Dick Sibson, and Graham Turbott. Unfortunately, not all were able to attend the celebration in person.

The accounts were certainly interesting and at times humorous, especially when it came to overzealous 'spycatching' during World War 2.

After the final contribution, the lights went out and a specially prepared 50th Anniversary cake was carried in, resplendent with the Society's logo and the correct number of lighted candles!

Tiritiri Matangi Island

We got off to an early start on Sunday morning and were taken to Devonport by bus, where we embarked on the *Ngaroma*. Heading out in fine weather we obtained good views of Little Blue Penguins and Fluttering Shearwaters during the hour's journey to Tiritiri.

Stepping ashore on the island we headed for the information centre, where Ray Walter and John Craig told us about the revegetation programme and the birdlife on the island. Then we had about 4 hours to roam the well-marked tracks. When we reconvened at the pier in mid-afternoon there were talk of Saddlebacks, Bellbirds, Brown Quail, Parakeets, Grey-faced Petrels, Diving Petrels, and even a Morepork.

The wind had risen during the day, but the *Ngaroma* was very steady and the seawatchers were rewarded with sightings of many Fluttering Shearwaters and a few

Grey-faced Petrels during the return trip.

Back at the camp, Tom's Bar was soon doing a roaring trade again. After dinner, Geoff. Arnold gave an interesting account of the history of bird art. Then Brian Chudleigh showed slides of his latest trip to NW Australia, with particular reference to the waders in the Broome area. After the long day, many people then retired to bed, but a few stayed up all night.

Everyone packed up and dispersed on Monday morning, but there was time to hear and see Graeme Taylor's enthusiastic account of his recent trips to the Kermadecs. This was an excellent finale to a memorable weekend.

I cannot finish this account, however, without mentioning the poster displays. All these were well-worth perusing and covered such topics as Subantarctic Snipe on the Snares Island, the migrations and population size of Banded Dotterels, radio-tracking NZ Pigeons, and the survey of

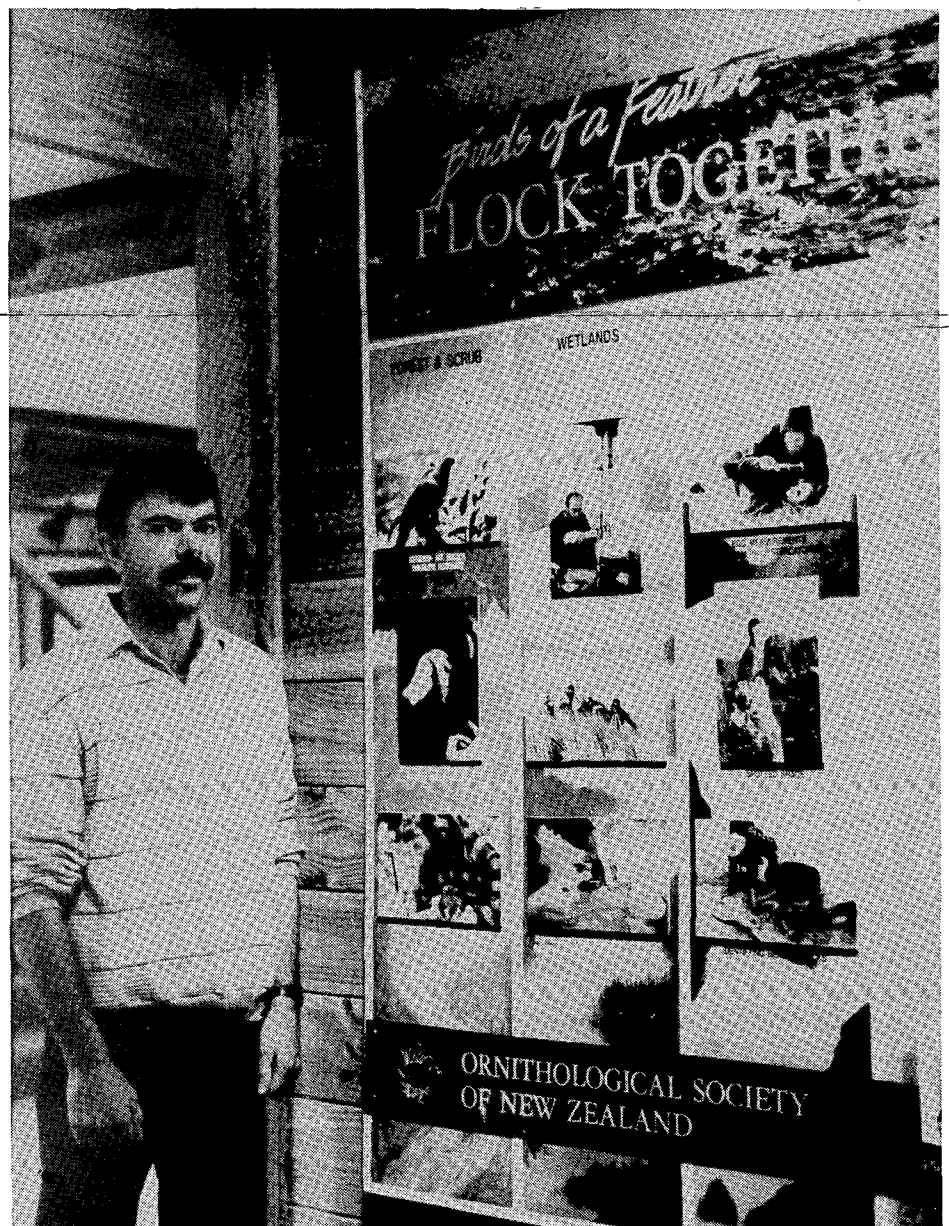
Kingfishers in Otago/Southland. There was also a quiz and Phil Battley announced the results on Sunday evening. It appears that no one identified all the species correctly, so the winner was drawn from all those who supplied 10 correct answers. Bev Woolley was the lucky winner and when last seen was being pursued by a person wearing a silly hat.

Thanks to Michael Taylor and his hard-working team for such an enjoyable 50th Anniversary.

PAUL SAGAR

OSNZ display installed at Mt Bruce

The Society's static display, designed and prepared by Kerry Oates, was installed in the Education Centre at Mt Bruce on 30 April. The display is most impressive and will make more people aware of the activities of OSNZ and promote the membership.



Kerry Oates and the Society's static display board; Mt Bruce (Photo Tenick Dennison)

More help wanted

We would like a volunteer to become a New members' Secretary. The position would involve close liaison with the Treasurer and RRs, to ensure that new members are welcomed to OSNZ and are informed about local contacts and activities.

Please reply to the Hon. Secretary, Sue Triggs, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.
SUE TRIGGS, *Hon. Secretary.*

New fund-raising scheme for OSNZ – sale of used bird stamps

There is considerable interest, both in N.Z. and overseas, in collecting postage stamps that feature birds. The OSNZ has decided to take advantage of the fact that N.Z. has many bird stamps in circulation at present, by asking members to collect ALL used postage stamps which feature birds. All used bird stamps, including the 40c ones, are worth money as long as they are not ripped or creased. We ask all members to collect bird stamps (overseas bird stamps are wanted too) by cutting the stamps off the envelopes, leaving a margin of at least 20 mm. Please store these stamps until we can advise you where to send them.

VOLUNTEER(S) WANTED to receive, sort, and prepare the bird stamps for future sale. Ray Pierce, who is bird stamp expert, is making contacts with overseas dealers to assess the demand and method of presenting bird stamps for sale and he is willing to advise the national collator(s) on procedures. Please write to the Hon. Secretary, Sue Triggs, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington if you can help.

P.S. If you are writing to fellow OSNZ members please use bird stamps, and try to use denominations other than 40c e.g. 10c + 30c or 20 + 20c, as they are worth more than 40c stamps.

OSNZ COUNCIL

CSN Collators

The deadline for material to be in the hands of the island collators is 31 August, anything received later will be held over until next year.

North Island material should be forwarded to: Graeme Taylor, c/o 25 Harrybrook Road, Greenbay, Auckland 7. While South Island material should go to: Colin O'Donnell, Department of Conservation, Private Bay, Christchurch.

Message from the President

As I end my second term as President I wish to convey to all my regret that illness prevented me from carrying out full duties during the past year. I want to thank Council for their help and David Crockett in particular for many kindnesses.

I have enjoyed my active years in the Society, and want to wish you all a happy 50th Year and hope that the years ahead will be fruitful and productive. I am grateful for all the Society has done for me and for the many wonderful friendships I have made through it.

Good luck to all.
BETH BROWN

RAOU Column



The following items introduce the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union's (RAOU) regular column in *OSNZ news*. It gives the RAOU great pleasure to contribute news and views from Australia – particularly in the area of trans-Tasman bird information.

The ABC of Australian Birds

The RAOU Australian Bird Count (ABC) is here! What is the aim of the ABC? Investigation of seasonal and year-to-year changes in the abundance of landbirds in a broad range of habitats throughout Australia.

The project will run for at least 5 years and will be co-ordinated by Stephen Ambrose. Observers will be asked to count birds regularly in defined areas, using identical procedures on each visit.

The ABC project is an exciting concept, the benefits will be far-reaching and the potential of its contribution to Australian ornithology is enormous.

Maybe a similar project can be mounted in New Zealand?

100,000 Banded Stilts at Lake Torrens!

The heavy rains in central Australia during mid-March motivated a 7-man team of RAOU wader watchers to mount aerial and ground surveys of salt lakes east of the Flinders Ranges in anticipation of finding breeding colonies of Banded Stilts. However, in intensive searches from 22-25 April *not one* Banded Stilt was sighted!

In the meantime, Ian May, the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Ranger at Leigh Creek, carried out unsuccessful aerial surveys to the north of the Lake Eyre region. However, on 24 April, after surveying an area west of the Flinders ranges he found Banded Stilts nesting on 3 islands in Lake Torrens. To suggest Ian was excited would be an understatement for after almost 20 years of searching - plus 65 hours of flying in April this year - he was rewarded by the sight of 100,000 nesting birds. He estimated that

there were 70,000 on a large island (0.5 km in diameter) with the rest on 2 smaller islands.

Clive Minton who visited the colony with Ian May on 6/5/89 said:

"It was one of the most thrilling moments of my life to step ashore, after a 30 km boat journey skimming over only 700mm of water, into myriads of excited chattering Banded Stilts. The density of nests was incredible - some were only 100 mm apart - and in one 4 square metre area we counted 50 nests! The chicks are a beautiful fluffy white, quite unlike the cryptic colourations of most wader chicks."

Although the Banded Stilt is Australia's most numerous resident wader, its only previous recorded breeding in the eastern half of Australia was at Lake Callabonna in 1930 (although a single chick was recorded at Lake Eyre in 1984).

Earlier this year Marilyn Hewish wrote (*The Stilt* 14: 14-20): "The history of our knowledge of the Banded Stilt in Australia has been one of unanswered questions. The first breeding record of the Banded Stilt was not confirmed until 114 years after the species' scientific naming (Serrenty & Whittnell 1976 - *Birds of Western Australia*). The feeling then was that a mystery had been solved: but Banded Stilts have not yet given up all their secrets, and that is what makes them so fascinating."

On returning to suburban Melbourne Clive Minton was moved to say: "Ian May and I have memories – and his video and my colour slides – to last us a lifetime."

Footnote

Clive Minton was a founding member of the Australasian Wader Studies Group and the Victorian Wader Study Group which are both affiliated groups of the RAOU. He is one of the most enthusiastic and active wader people in Australia.

GRAEME HYDE

Election of Officers

At the AGM it was announced that Brian D. Bell had been elected as President and that Folkert Nieuwland, Derek Onley, Hugh Robertson, and Paul Sagar were elected to Council.

S. J. TRIGGS, *Hon. Secretary*

Changes of RRS

At its June meeting Council confirmed the appointment of the following new Regional Representatives – Christine McCrae taking over from Wayne Twytle in Hawkes Bay, Graham Randle from Lindsay Davies in Wanganui, and Peter Reese from Enfy's Graham in Canterbury. The addresses and phone numbers of all RRs may be found on the inside back cover of *Notornis*

Council expresses its sincere thanks to Wayne, Lindsay and Enfy's for their services on the Society's behalf during their time as RR.

New Members

Welcome to the following new members.

Far North/Northland – Mrs I. M. May, Mr G. Grant, Mr J. Rotzel, Mrs A. Williams, Mr R. Hopkins.

Auckland/South Auckland – Mr A. Raymont, Mrs G. M. Shrubsall, Ms T. P. Redwood, Mrs J-M. Thomas, Mr I. McFadden, Mr M. Field, Ms L. Barrington, Mr E. K. Cameron, Mr & Mrs S. Marsh, Alice & Ian Jamieson.

Waikato – Mr B. Challinor.

Bay of Plenty – Mr J. Clark, Dr M. B. Mackereth, Matthew Barnacott.

Volcanic Plateau – Mrs M. Johnston.

Hawke's Bay – Brent Stephenson.

Taranaki – Mr G. Bremner, Mrs R. McLachlan.

Manawatu – Mrs N. R. Gear, Ft. Lt. I. Saville, Mr E. & Mrs P. Jamieson, Craig Jamieson, Cleland Wallace.

Wairarapa – E. R. N. Watt, Mr J. Doherty, Miss B. I. Loader, Mary Beauchamp, Judy Malone, Mr R. D. des Tombe, Shane Wilkinson, David Rooderkirk, C. Oliver.

Wellington – Mrs C. J. Tisdall, Mr J. A. van der Hoorn, Miss Pamela Betts, Mrs G. Suckling, Mr T. A. & Rev. J. L. Griffith.

Marlborough – Mrs D. M. Swain, Mrs K. M. Nicholson.

Nelson – Mr W. A. Cook.

West Coast – Nick Reedy, Mr N. Bradley.

Canterbury – Ms D. Watson, Mrs S. Petch, Mr A. Morris, Miss C. Donovan, Miss P. Barker, Ms C. Cassady, Johanna Pierre.

Otago – Dr M. P. Thompson, Department of Conservation.

Southland – Mr R. A. Dear, Ms B. M. Ocain.

Overseas – Mr K. Wood (Australia); Dr J. Diamond (USA); Mr & Mrs A. E. Winterton, Mr & Mrs M. Maule-Oatway (UK).

Beach Patrol Scheme 1988 – Preliminary Report

This report concerns the results of cards received to 31 March 1989. In 1988 2703 km were travelled during 618 patrols. This is 37% fewer kms than the average of 4314 km travelled per year from 1975-1986. The apparently lower than usual activity is not real since I received a bundle of cards in early April, which detailed results from patrols along Canterbury North and Canterbury South beaches. In addition, I expect to receive cards soon for some long patrols of Auckland West Beaches.

There were 5658 dead seabirds recorded during 1988. This compares with an average on 11 195 found per year for 1975-1986. Of the regions where greater than 100 km of beach were covered in 1988, Taranaki had the highest rate of recovery at 4.0 birds per km and East Coast North Island the lowest at 0.4 birds per km. Unusual finds were a Black-bellied Storm Petrel (6th record for the Scheme), a Black-fronted Tern (7th), and a White Tern (2). There were larger numbers than usual of only one species, the Short-tailed Shearwater with 624 birds recorded; usually 100-300 are found each year.

The following are provisional totals for each region of coast patrolled.

Coast	Birds	km
Auckland East	1288	424
Auckland West	1743	865
Bay of Plenty	113	82
Canterbury North	162	76
Canterbury South	86	33
East Coast N.I.	83	189
North Coast S.I.	56	53
Outlying Islands	27	21
Otago	38	62
Southland	143	24
Taranaki	672	167
Wairarapa	2	9
Westland	26	85
Wellington South	80	65
Wellington West	1139	547

The success of the Beach Patrol Scheme in 1988 was due to the efforts of many members and their friends who took part in patrols, and particularly to the dedicated and enthusiastic people who organised regular patrols. With \$2000 provided from the Society's Projects Assistance Reserve, Terry Greene was employed to assist with the data entry into the computer file. Now only the 1972-1975 cards remain to be entered and this should be completed by 31 May 1989. My thanks to the Department of Conservation for the use of computer facilities, and to Ross Pickard for computing assistance.

RALPH POWLESLAND, *Convenor*

Report on Moulting Recording Scheme 1988-1989

Over the last year a slightly increased number of contributors sent in records to the Moulting Recording Scheme. A total of 132 records were received. As usual records of birds actually in moult (47) were fewer (than those not in moult 85). Although both types of record are needed, it is to be hoped that more records of moulting birds can be obtained in future. R. Empson, B. J. Gill, R. G. Powlesland, H. A. Robertson, D. J. Onley, D. S. Melville, P. Langlands, and the Central Passerine Group contributed records.

A summary of the records for 1988-1989 follows. These are listed by species, followed by the number in moult,

and then the number not in moult is recorded in brackets.

Blue Penguin 0 (1), Shy Mollymawk 1 (0), Cape Pigeon 0 (1), Kerguelen Petrel 0 (1), Cook's Petrel 0 (1), Blue Petrel 0 (2), Short-tailed Shearwater 0 (1), Australasian Bittern 0 (1), Pheasant 1 (1), Banded Rail 0 (1), Black-backed Gull 0 (1), Red-billed Gull 0 (1), NZ Pigeon 1 (1), Kaka 0 (8), Eastern Rosella 0 (1), Shining Cuckoo 0 (4), Long-tailed Cuckoo 0 (3), Morepork 0 (4), Kingfisher 0 (4), Fantail 0 (1), Grey Warbler 0 (1), Blackbird 2 (2), Dunnock 1 (1), Bellbird 0 (1), Tui 0 (1), Silvereye 20 (13), Greenfinch 0 (4), Goldfinch 1 (1), Redpoll 2 (2), Chaffinch 9 (8), Yellowhammer 0 (1), Cirl Bunting 2 (2), House Sparrow 7 (9), Starling 0 (1).

The Central Passerine Group's banding activities and a moult workshop run by Tony Beauchamp and I in Wellington contributed usefully to the moult scheme in 1988-1989. It was good to see 'veteran' moulter David Melville again contributing this year.

Particular thanks to those who sent in records. I am aware that several observers still have moult information to send in for 1988-1989. Please try and submit these as soon as possible. I also encourage other members of the Society to contribute to the Scheme next year if they can – banding sessions, beach patrols, road kills, and museum collections all offer good opportunities for study.

BEN D. BELL, *Convenor*

Nest Record Scheme – Report for the year ending 30 April 1989

The computerisation of the Nest Record Scheme has come to an unfortunate halt because the Department of Conservation withdrew from the Government Computer network as costs were becoming prohibitively expensive. OSNZ Council has resolved to obtain our own microcomputer facilities so that the Nest Record Scheme data can be stored and analysed independently from any government department. The data that have been input or coded can be transferred easily to a microcomputer, as can the analysis package developed by Christine Reed and Ross Pickard.

I have brought the register of nest record cards up to date, and worked through the register to determine the number of cards submitted for each species. This information will be included in the OSNZ 50th Anniversary publication. I found 374 old cards had never been registered, and so these were added to the Scheme this year, but are not included in the annual figures given below. The grand total of cards was altered significantly because of this, and because a number of coding errors were detected in my analysis of the register.

A number of interesting statistics emerged from the analysis, such as that 581 members or friends have filed cards during the 39 years of the Scheme, almost 50% of the cards in the Scheme have been submitted by the 18 members who have recorded over 300 nests, and Don Hadden is the leading contributor with 753 cards. The number of cards submitted is not necessarily a good measure of the value of the contribution – this year, for instance, we received a very detailed card from Miss K. J. Twydie of Napier, for a Dunnock nest in which the clutch size, some laying times, incubation period, and fledging period were all recorded.

In 1988-1989, 43 members or friends contributed 669 Nest Record Cards covering 64 species. This brings the grand total to 20 086 cards of 136 species. A Black-winged Petrel nest found by Dr Ralph Powlesland on the Three Kings Islands was the first recorded in the Scheme. Dr Peter Bull contributed 146 cards of 8 species, mainly from a detailed examination of a horticultural block being developed by his family in the Horowhenua area – he is interested to see how the species composition changes with time. Members from the Canterbury region again contributed the bulk of the remaining cards: Peter Reese recorded 83 nests of 13 species, Don Hadden 74 nests of 25 species, Andrew Crossland 56 nests of 18 species, and also Paul Sagar (41), Peter Howden (24), Jack Cowie (21), Colin O'Donnell (19), Peter Dilks (13), and George Watola (10). Major contributors from other regions included Derek Onley (53), Ralph Powlesland (18), Michael & David Bell (14), Hugh Robertson (13, including 10 with Barrie Heather), Phil Garside (11), Bill Cash (10), and Stewart Lauder (10).

Twenty six colonial nest record cards were included in the 669 cards noted earlier; these covered 9 species: Royal Spoonbill, Canada Goose, Black Swan, Pied Stilt, Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Black-billed Gull, White-fronted Tern, and Caspian Tern.

This year I had requests from OSNZ members for information on nests of: NZ Falcon, Subantarctic Snipe, Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, and Goldfinch. The cards were either examined in situ for large databases, or photocopied where few cards existed for the species.

My thanks go to all of the contributors to the Nest Record Scheme this year, whether they contributed one or many cards.

List of contributors: A. J. Beauchamp, D. & M. Bell, Bell family, M. Bowron, P. C. Bull, W. F. Cash, C. R. B. Coleman, J. A. Cowie, A. Crossland, T. C. Dennison, P. Dilks, B. Elliott, P. Garside, G. A. Grant, R. & G. P. Guest, D. W. Hadden, B. D. Heather, P. J. Howden, P.

Langlands, S. Lauder, R. McAuliffe, C. F. J. O'Donnell, C. C., R. C. & R. D. Ogle, D. J. Onley, R. J. Pierce, R. G. Powlesland, P. J. Reese, W. Ringer, H. A. Robertson, P. M. Sagar, C. E. Scadden, P. Schweigman, C. Searle, M. J. Taylor, K. J., M. & P. W. Twydie, G. Watola, and R. Wheeler.

List of species recorded during 1988-89: Yellow-eyed Penguin 10, Little Blue Penguin 1, Crested Grebe 1, Black-winged Petrel 1, Pied Shag 1, Little Shag 1, White-faced Heron 1, Royal Spoonbill 1, Canada Goose 7, Black Swan 3, Paradise Shelduck 2, Mallard 6, Grey Duck 3, Banded Rail 1, Pukeko 2, Coot 2, S.I. Pied Oystercatcher 18, Variable Oystercatcher 17, Spur-winged Plover 19, N.Z. Dotterel 3, Banded Dotterel 20, Black-fronted Dotterel 3, Wrybill 1, Pied Stilt 20, Black-backed Gull 33, Red-billed Gull 2, Black-billed Gull 3, Black-fronted Tern 21, Caspian Tern 5, Antarctic Tern 34, Fairy Tern 1, White-fronted Tern 4, N.Z. Pigeon 9, Rock Dove 1, Kaka 1, Red-crowned Parakeet 1, Shining Cuckoo 2, Long-tailed Cuckoo 2, Morepork 1, Kingfisher 3, Rifleman 2, Skylark 7, Welcome Swallow 32, Pipit 1, Dunnock 11, Fernbird 1, Yellowhead 2, Grey Warbler 4, Fantail 4, Tomtit 2, Robin 1, Song Thrush 110, Blackbird 106, Silvereye 20, Tui 3, Yellowhammer 5, Cirl Bunting 1, Chaffinch 13, Greenfinch 23, Goldfinch 17, Redpoll 5, House Sparrow 15, Starling 16, Myna 1.

HUGH ROBERTSON, *Convenor*

Annual Report of the Rare Birds Committee 1988-89

Rob Guest took over the position of Secretary of the Rare Birds Committee in October 1988 from Brian Bell, who was acting in a temporary capacity following the resignation of Mike Imber.

The Committee consists of the Secretary, 6 members and the President of OSNZ (during this period these duties have been carried out by the acting President). All of the Committee have been circulated with records for review and although one member is currently in Britain for a year this has been no problem as replies to date have been received within a reasonable time.

In the past year 31 records were received. One of these is a series of sightings (*commic terns*). Of these records: * 2 have been referred back to the observers with requests for further information;

* 1 was not formally considered because of the likelihood of it being an escapee and not truly wild or feral (Cape Barren Goose);

* 4 were not accepted;

* 1 remains in suspense as a probable sighting;

* 1 not resolved the previous year was accepted (Bridled Tern);

* 15 were accepted (see below);

* 7 are still circulating.

The following records were accepted by the Committee.

Juan Fernandez Petrel – 2 birds seen and heard on South East Island, Chathams (J. A. West).

New Caledonian Petrel – 1 recovered alive under a truck in Dunedin (D. Hawke).

Tahiti Petrel – 3 sightings at sea off the Bay of Plenty coast (G. S. Clark).

White-tailed Tropic Bird – 1 found alive in a Ruakaka garden during Cyclone Delilah (R. Parrish).

Nankeen Night Heron – 1 in the upper Taieri (Monty Wright).

Chestnut-breasted Shelduck – 2 on the Hokitika riverbed at Arthurstown in January 1973. This now becomes the first N.Z. record of this species (Peter Grant).

Oriental Dotterel – sightings at the Invercargill Estuary and Waituna, Southland (Maida Barlow & Roger Sutton).

Snipe sp. (Gallinago) – 1 at the Cass River, Lake Tekapo (Peter Langlands).

Oriental Pratincole – 1 on Ruapuke Island, Foveaux Strait (Maida Barlow).

Long-tailed Skua – 1 found dead on Otaki Beach (Ralph Powlesland).

Common Tern – 1 at the mouth of the Tarawera River (P. Latham).

Bridled Tern – 1 found dead on Brighton Beach, Christchurch. A first record for N.Z. (Peter Langlands).

White Tern – 1 found dead at Pekapeka Beach, Wellington West Coast (Ralph Powlesland).

Spine-tailed Swift – 1 found dead on Te Horo Beach (Ralph Powlesland).

One record was placed on the Suspense List; that of a Bush Wren at the Sabine River, Nelson Lakes National Park (Christopher Bycroft). It is hoped that a field party can spend time in this area during early December this year.

Earlier this year a standard format for recording the comments of committee members was adopted and this has improved the ability to file reports.

There are some problems with local rarities. There is much variation throughout the country in procedures. This problem will be tackled in the coming year so as to maintain knowledge of these uncommon species and to encourage the further development of reporting skills among members.

ROB GUEST & BRIAN BELL

Report of the Banding Liason Officer

During the past year, at the invitation of the Banding Office, I have commented on 8 applications for new banding permits;

I understand all these applications were eventually approved, either in full or in part.

In August 1988, I accepted an invitation from the Science & Research Directorate of the Department of Conservation to participate in an in-house review of the functions and costs of the Banding Office. I sent a questionnaire to all OSNZ banders so that I could be better informed about OSNZ views on some of the issues being discussed by the review committee. The results of the questionnaire were summarised in the December 1988 issue of *OSNZ news*. Several of the views expressed in the questionnaire replies were supported by the committee and subsequently included in its recommendations. I understand these recommendations are still under consideration.

PETER BULL, *Banding Liaison Officer*

Checklist Committee Report – 1989

The preparation of the first drafts of the new checklist is now complete (except for one subfossil group). All have been circulated on completion to Committee members. My next task is to incorporate or refer back members' comments, and to recirculate these if required to the Committee. The final arrangement of the manuscript will require the assembling of the completed groups in systematic order and consecutive numbering of species.

Dr Brian Gill has been looking into preliminary ideas for publication of the completed Checklist.

E. G. TURBOTT, *Convenor*

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer: 1988- 1989

1. Overview of the Society's major national schemes.

Progress with the computerisation of the Beach Patrol and Nest Record schemes was hampered because the Department of Conservation has withdrawn from the Government Computing network as costs were becoming prohibitively expensive. The Beach Patrol data have been transferred to the internal DoC computer system, and Ralph Powlesland and Terry Greene (employed from funds from the Project Assistance Reserve) have been able to make good progress entering the backlog of data, so that only one year of data are still to be entered. This should be on the computer in time to allow an analysis for inclusion in the 50th Anniversary Publication. Interest in beach patrolling continues to be high, with several regions becoming significantly more active in recent years.

The register of Nest Record Cards has been brought up to date and total cards for

each species has been calculated for inclusion in an article for the 50th Anniversary Publication. It was rather disappointing to find that in the 39 year history of the Scheme, only 581 members and friends had contributed cards – that is less than half of the current membership of the Society. It is important that the data are computerised so that members can see how the information can be used.

Records for the Moulting Recording Scheme continue to come in, largely from the same small group of people. However, a good number of records were made by the Central Passerine Banding Group, especially during a weekend when David Melville joined the team at Ward.

On behalf of OSNZ, I have applied to Lottery Science Distribution Committee for two computers (worth \$15,000) to store and analyse the data held in the Beach Patrol and Nest Record Schemes. Results of this application will be known in September 1989.

2. Review of the Society's special national studies.

Cattle Egret movements

The annual Cattle Egret survey was again done in August 1988, despite confusion caused by press releases from an Australian source that cut across Barrie Heather's usual planning. Barrie was forced to write many letters to ensure that all regions did their counts as normal. There is now scope for much better co-operation between Australia and New Zealand in determining the patterns of Cattle Egret migration, and the factors that affect the timing and extent of the movement. The counts in 1988 were down on those of recent years in all regions, and early indications from 1989 are that few Cattle Egrets have arrived, or else they are extremely late in their migration. The heavy rainfall experienced throughout the eastern states of Australia this autumn may have created exceptional feeding conditions for Cattle Egrets close to their breeding sites.

Banded Dotterel movements

This study is into its last season of fieldwork, after a very good banding effort in a number of regions where coverage had been rather thin in previous years (Marlborough, East Cape, Bay of Plenty, and Northland). A major effort is now being made to locate as many colour-banded birds as possible in winter flocks, so that the study can be written up for *Notornis*. Approximately one bird in 60 is colour-banded in the Farewell Spit – Nelson area, and in the Auckland – Northland wintering flocks. It is disappointing to note that most of the effort of locating colour-banded birds in the Auckland-Northland area has fallen on Ray Pierce and Graeme Taylor – even the incentive of the Mars Bar for each colour-banded bird seen in the area has failed to

produce further sightings!

Overall, this scheme has been extremely successful and has given a very good picture of the movement patterns of this species, as well as good breeding information too. Ray Pierce should be congratulated for the way that he has co-ordinated this scheme by keeping the banding team members and RRs informed of the progress of the project. He has also spent a lot of his own time and money travelling the country in search of birds to be banded, and looking through flocks (often in long grass) for banded birds.

Black-fronted Dotterel movements

The new Black-fronted Dotterel project has got underway successfully, with a good banding effort in the Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay, in particular. Individual combinations are being used, rather than regional codes (as in the Banded Dotterel study), and so detailed information on how individuals move around should be obtained. Breeding information (e.g. mate retention, territoriality, number of nesting attempts per season) should also be obtained, especially where both birds of a pair are colour-banded. The Wairarapa branch of OSNZ organised a repeat of the 1963 river survey in their region to get an accurate assessment of the current population levels, which will help to interpret information on the ratios of banded to non-banded birds in their winter flocks.

Little Shag plumages

In the March issue of *OSNZ news*, Michael Taylor and John Dowding reported on the progress of the scheme. This project has been taken up well in some regions by some individuals, but largely ignored by others. This project officially ended in April 1989, but records are still being welcomed.

Movements of passerines

This study has again progressed well this season, with over 800 passerines being banded by over 90 members and friends from 12 OSNZ regions at: Ward and Maud Island, Marlborough; Pukepuke Lagoon, Manawatu; and at Farewell Spit, Nelson. Further banding sites are planned in the Wairarapa and the Wellington West coast. Particularly pleasing is the interest shown by junior and student OSNZ members in the banding courses run by Brian Bell, Ralph Powlesland, Hugh Robertson and Paul Sagar; however, it has been disappointing that few people who took part in the courses last summer returned for further tuition, and few have started their own banding stations. The success of the Ward banding schools has been largely due to the tremendous co-operation and hospitality of Jack Taylor, who has made his farm available for fortnightly invasions of banders.

Kereru display dives

This study has been launched successfully, with some very useful information being collected at a good variety of sites around the country. Data from the three Ecology Division, DSIR study sites (North Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Marlborough), where display dive frequencies are being related to known breeding activity, will be used to interpret the records made by OSNZ observers. Further observation sites are still required to extend the geographical coverage through the country, especially in the central North Island, and the southern South Island.

Annual cycle of calls/song of New Zealand birds

This scheme was adopted at the November OSNZ Council meeting, but it was too late to implement the project in the 1988/89 season. This project will be publicised before spring 1989, in time to get a small network of observers established through the country who will regularly note the presence of birds in a defined area, and whether or not they are calling or singing. This trial will run for about a year as a pilot study, before opening it up for wider input.

3. Register of OSNZ Projects

Although records continue to trickle in, it is probably necessary to begin the process of establishing a register of local and individual projects again. The main purpose of maintaining a register is to keep members informed nationally of projects that are being run in other regions, so that members can co-operate and collaborate where possible, and also it will help regions or individuals to plan future projects if they can learn from the experience gained by others.

4. Advice on projects

Apart from giving advice on the national projects listed above I have given some advice to the Otago region about the procedures involved in establishing a passerine banding study there. Paul Sagar sent information on the BTO "Constant effort sites" as a method (using mist-netting) of assessing the status of passerine populations that might be included in our passerine movement study; however, we decided that this would require too much effort for OSNZ at this stage.

5. New Studies

Two proposals for new studies by the OSNZ have been put forward:

a) New Zealand Dotterel census

John Dowding has proposed that the OSNZ should conduct a national census of the New Zealand Dotterel, possibly in conjunction with the Department of Conservation, who have expressed interest in determining population sizes in some regions. It is 20 years since Sandy Edgar published his carefully – researched estimate of the national population, and the OSNZ National wader censuses give an incomplete coverage of the places that NZ

Dotterels are found. A survey of NZ Dotterels would involve members from regions that tend not to have Black-fronted Dotterels, and so this study would not conflict with the ongoing OSNZ Project on Black-fronted Dotterels. It is proposed that two sets of counts are made: a breeding season count in mid-to late-October to determine the breeding distribution, and a late autumn count in mid-March to mid-April to determine the total population size. John Dowding has suggested that DoC could help with the logistics and access to remote sites, while OSNZ could help with expertise and manpower. John is prepared to co-ordinate these censuses for OSNZ.

b) Movement patterns of Pied Stilts

I feel that it is important that OSNZ celebrate its 50th Anniversary in some ornithological way, as it did by organising a 25th Anniversary Expedition to the Kermadec Islands. Most important is that the project should have the potential to involve ALL members, and hopefully involve co-operation between adjacent OSNZ regions. Original ideas of manning Farewell Spit Nature Reserve for a complete year have fallen by the way, and so I propose that the OSNZ undertake a colour-banding study to determine the movement patterns of Pied Stilts. Results of the OSNZ National Wader Counts have shown that there is a winter influx into areas which have only a small breeding population; however, we have no banding evidence to determine the origin of these birds.

The study would be run in a similar way to the very successful, and nearly completed, Banded Dotterel movement study. Pied Stilts would be individually colour-banded at breeding colonies in spring 1989, and then in late 1989 and in 1990 checks would be made throughout the country for colour-banded birds wherever non-breeding flocks occur. In spring 1990 checks would be made of breeding colonies to see if banded birds return to the same sites as where they were marked. Ray Pierce has offered to co-ordinate this project for OSNZ.

6. Contact with New Zealand organisations

Thanks to prompting by Paul Sagar, recent issues of *OSNZ news* have carried reports on ornithological research being carried out in five of the seven New Zealand Universities. I hope that the other two Universities will contribute articles soon, and the Ecology Division, DSIR, and the Department of Conservation will provide regular columns to *OSNZ news* in the future.

7. Contact with overseas organisations

Over the past year, I have had very useful contact with Australian organisations, and with the RAOU in particular. I had a very useful discussion with Dr Phil Moors about co-operation between OSNZ and RAOU, before he left

New Zealand to take up his post as Director of the RAOU. The areas that I identified for close co-operation from OSNZ's point of view were: Banded Dotterel movement study, migration of Cattle Egrets, the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, and related to that, the production of a New Zealand "Bander's Aid". I obtained recently some very useful information from Phil Moors about the concepts, funding arrangements and technical details involved in running Bird Observatories. I have also been in contact with Dr Kim Lowe of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes regarding colour-banding Royal Spoonbills, and banding data storage and analysis on personal computer systems.

8. Applications for funds from the Projects Assistance Reserve

Grants approved in 1988 were:

- \$ 500 – Miranda Banders, Auckland, for cannon-netting equipment
- \$ 200 – Maida Barlow, Southland, for Caspian Tern colour-bands
- \$ 350 – Sara Brouwer, Auckland, for Tiritiri Island bird surveys
- \$ 200 – Alan Tennyson, Auckland, for MSc study of petrel song
- \$1000 – Ray Pierce, for Banded & Blk fr. Dotterel movement study
- \$2000 – Ralph Powlesland, for Beach Patrol data input
- \$1000 – OSNZ Central Passerine Group, for banding equipment
- \$ 500 – Otago Region, for Yellow-eyed Penguin hide materials
- \$ 500 – John Darby, Otago, for Yellow-eyed Penguin study
- \$1000 – John Dowding, Otago, for study of southern NZ Dotterels
- \$ 200 – Paul Schofield, Auckland, for MSc on Black Petrels
- \$ 200 – Terry Greene, Auckland, for study of parakeets

Total allocation in 1988 = \$7650

HUGH ROBERTSON, *Field Investigation Officer*

Projects Assistance Fund Grants

At its June meeting Council considered 6 requests for assistance from the Projects Assistance Fund and funds were allocated as follows.

Kerry Oates – \$1350 to provide capital assistance for a fundraising project, the proceeds of which in turn will be used to support a population study of Blue Ducks on the Manganui-A-Te-Ao River, central North Island.

Chris Jowett – \$200 for travel associated with observations of feeding habits and the collection of pellets and droppings of avian predators of giant wetas.

Hugh Robertson – \$1000 towards the cost of offloading the Nest Record Card data from the DoC computer to the Society's microcomputer. This funding depends on the Society obtaining a grant from the Lottery Science Board to purchase the microcomputers in the first instance.

Ron Moorhouse – \$200 towards travel and equipment costs associated with a study of the ecology of an island population of Kaka free from most mammalian predators and competitors. The results of this study will be compared with those of a mainland population in the hope of understanding why mainland populations have declined.

Pied Stilt Study Group – \$2500 to cover the purchase of banding equipment required for a national study of the movements of Pied Stilts. Full details of this Society project will appear in a future issue of *OSNZ news*.

Colleen Cassady – \$200 towards the cost of travel to complete a study Fiordland Crested Penguins on the Open Bay Islands.

Profiles

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

David Crockett – Vice President & RR for Northland



David's interest in birds began in 1945 when he and a group of friends formed a Bird Club at Linwood North School, Christchurch. The Club was soon taken under the wing of Dr R.A. Falla, the curator of the Canterbury Museum.

A beach patrol on 9 September 1946 started a lifelong interest in this activity. The skeleton collection of beach-wrecked birds assembled during this period was used to isolate midden bones of the Chatham Island Taiko. From this beginning

David developed an intense interest in this enigmatic species. The rediscovery of the Taiko on 1 January 1978 was the culmination of over 30 years research.

David joined OSNZ in Christchurch during 1950 and was influenced by Elliot Dawson, George Guy and Ron Scarlett. He published his first note in *Notornis* in 1951. Whilst attending field studies and AGMs David was soon influenced by the ornithologists of the day – Sandy Edgar, Ross McKenzie, Dick Sibson, and his mentor Charles Fleming. In 1958 Fred Kinsky involved David in bird banding, an activity he continues to pursue on the Chathams and in N.Z., working mainly on petrels and gulls.

In 1959 he was appointed Nature Study Specialist for the Education Board in Wanganui. He and his wife, Ruth, have regularly attended OSNZ AGMs and field study courses since.

He enthusiastically shared his knowledge and skills with numerous young people during the meetings and field trips of the Wanganui Naturalist Club, begun in 1960. A regular radio programme, 'Nature Question Time', was another vehicle used for sharing expertise with the youth of the River City.

In 1964 David was selected for the OSNZ 25th Anniversary Expedition to the Kermadecs. After 3 days, Raoul Island was evacuated following a volcanic eruption. He returned as a member of the 1966-67 Kermadec Expedition and studied Wedge-tailed Shearwaters on Meyer Island.

In the summer of 1969-70 he led a combined Wanganui Museum/Dominion Museum expedition to the Chathams. This was the first of 17 expeditions to work on the Taiko. The conservation of Chatham Island birds and their habitats is one of his main concerns.

He received a Citation from the Nature Conservation Council for his significant contribution to the cause of conservation; namely the re-discovery of the Chatham Island Taiko.

When David and Ruth moved to Whangarei in 1971 he was promoted to the position of Senior Science Advisor. He was appointed RR for Northland in 1972, and in 1973 for the Far North as well. Since then he has initiated surveys of the Bay of Islands, the Far North, Cavalli Islands, Kaipara Harbour, and Pouto Dune Lakes.

On the national level he served as Nest Record Scheme convener from 1967-86. David was elected to Council in 1977 and became Vice President in 1985.

With Ruth, he attended the IOC in Canberra in 1974 and the ICBP World Conference and Seabird Workshop at Cambridge (UK) in 1982. They are both looking forward to participating in the 1990 IOC in Christchurch.

Brian Gill – Council Member



Photo Courtesy of N.Z. Herald

Brian Gill went to secondary school in Foxton, and while in the 7th form won a Royal Society of New Zealand award for a science project. Part of the prize was 3 years membership of a Royal Society member body. So in 1972, the same year he started as an undergraduate at Massey University, Brian joined OSNZ and began to participate in the activities of the Manawatu branch. During his years at Massey, Brian was fortunate to get holiday work as a student assistant at Ecology Division (DSIR) in Lower Hutt, and thereby experience the exciting atmosphere of scientists at work.

In 1976 he moved to Christchurch to begin a PH.D thesis on the breeding of Grey Warblers and Shining Cuckoos. The study area was Kowhai Bush at Kaikoura, so most of the summer months were spent in residence at the university field station with its million dollar view across the bay to the mountains where the Hutton's Shearwaters breed.

In 1980 a post-doctoral fellowship took Brian to Queensland where he spent a year working in a team that was studying communal breeding among the birds on a huge farm on the Darling Downs. After a few months in Europe, Brian returned to N.Z. and took up his present position of Curator of Birds at Auckland Museum. He has continued research on birds with a long-term study of Whiteheads on Little Barrier Island, and many smaller projects.

Brian was elected to the Council in 1985, and is currently organising a special publication to celebrate the Society's 50th year in 1990, and helping to prepare a revised checklist of New Zealand birds.

Campbell Island

Recently, Roger Moffat and I spent a year as the Department of Conservation's scientific team on Campbell Island. This subantarctic island lies about 660 km south of the mainland, and each year is the home for a crew of about six Meteorological Service (MoT) staff who monitor the southern weather patterns.

Transport to and from the subantarctic has often been a problem for scientists wishing to make short trips. Instead, we used the MoT's annual servicing of the Campbell Island station to give us a year from October 1987 to October 1988 to collect information on animals throughout their annual cycle.

We had a multitude of tasks set before us, but our principle job was to determine the status of Yellow-eyed Penguins on the island. They appeared to be doing well, with 76% of our study nests producing chicks, at an average of 1.4 chicks per nest. This compares to the more successful areas on the mainland where predation levels are low, however, chick fledgling weights of 5.1 kg were about 800 g lighter than found previously on the mainland.

Counts at 172 Yellow-eyed Penguin landing sites indicated a population of 1600-2000 birds. This is more than previously thought and assumes greater importance with the recent rapid decline of the mainland population to only 200-300 pairs.

We continued a study of Rockhopper Penguins, which have declined dramatically since the 1940s, from over a million birds to about 110,000. Our study nests produced about 0.5 chicks each on average.

The picture is also not bright for mollymawks. A photo-survey has allowed comparisons with photographs taken in the 1940s, and showed that some colonies have declined by up to 85%. Grey-headed Mollymawks in particular may be doing poorly, since only 16% of our study nests produced chicks, whereas chicks were produced in 52% of Black-browed Mollymawk nests.

Faring better is the Southern Royal Albatross which has apparently recovered to over 4000 pairs nesting per annum (they are biennial breeders) since the depredations of the sheep farming era earlier this century. During our study nesting success was high, with over 74% of pairs producing a chick.

A vagrant of note was a tattler (probably Siberian) which was seen several times from January to April 1988, and then again in September, posing a question about its whereabouts in the intervening five months. A few White-faced Herons were seen for short periods, as was a Spur-winged Plover after a period of strong northerlies. One wonders how many others never make a landfall.

For ornithologists Campbell Island is certainly well worth visiting. Although it has suffered from the effects of sheep and Norway rats it is still of major importance to wildlife.

PETER MOORE.

Breeding and migration of Black Stilts

The 1988/1989 breeding season for Black Stilts was over by January 1989. It was only an average season for the production of young, but overall it was good for the establishment of new pairs.

Twelve fledglings were produced (10 of which were colour banded) by a total of 12 pairs. Eight of these pairs were pure Black Stilts and the other four pairs were black x nearly black (node I on Ray Pierce's identification guide). All but 8 eggs were artificially incubated whilst the parents sat on dummy eggs. Some areas were also trapped for predators until the chicks fledged.

Two older established and normally productive pairs were not located this season and may have been lost from the population. Of the 12 pairs found nesting, 5 were newly established this season.

A further 7 pairs of pure Black Stilts were located this season, but none of these bred. Some of these "pairs" may have been in fact siblings, birds of the same sex, or young birds.

At the end of this breeding season there were 79 Black Stilts in the MacKenzie Basin, comprising 49 black adults, 9 node I hybrids, 9 pure black subadults, and this season's 12 fledglings. This compares with a population of 59 in the 1987/88 season, which included 7 pure black pairs, 3 black x node I pairs, and 13 juveniles.

Each year following the breeding season about 10-15% of the Black Stilt population migrate to the east coast of the South Island (particularly Lake Ellesmere and the Ashley Estuary) and the northwards. In May 1988 we located 2 pure black and 6 dark hybrids (nodes F-I) in South Kaipara. With the help of OSNZ members, a further 9 dark hybrids (2 of which were banded) and one almost pure Black Stilt juvenile (also banded) were located in Kawhia Harbour. From the total of 34 sites visited in the North and South Islands, 6 node E stilts (including 3 from Miranda) and 106 node D stilts were recorded. A paper reporting these results will be submitted to *Notornis*.

We are planning a further North Island survey this winter, but are reliant on reports from OSNZ members for sightings over many areas which we cannot visit. Therefore please would members watch coastal estuaries carefully for Black Stilts and their hybrids from now until at least August.

When reporting sightings, members should note:

1. The exact plumage of the stilt (nodes A-J in Ray Pierce's guide to Black Stilts and hybrids - available from DoC, Twizel;
2. any associated birds e.g. piers, blacks, juveniles;

3. the exact location e.g. Ashley Estuary, approx, 2 km below SH 1 bridge;
4. activity of the bird and the state of the tide;
5. time and date of first and subsequent sightings;
6. bands. Most are banded on the tarsus just above the ankle, but some are banded on the tibia just above the knee. Colour and metal bands have been used and may occur on either leg, but birds banded since 1985 do not have a metal band. Bands are small and difficult to see, so the birds should be out of the water for the best view.

All records should be sent to the Department of Conservation, Private Bag, Twizel.

Thanks to all those members who assisted with the survey in 1988, particularly Betty Seddon, Stella & John Rowe, Folkert Nieuwland, Beth Brown, Anthea Goodwin, Myk Davis, Andrew Crossland, Philip Battley, Bill Cash, and all DoC staff. We look forward to working with you again this year.

CHRISTINE REED & DAVE MURRAY

Recent Reports

I received records this time from Auckland, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wellington, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago, and Southland. Several contributors commented on the small number of records for the period March-May. I am not sure whether this means there were fewer reportable birds or fewer reporting birdwatchers. Perhaps both are feeling the onset of winter.

The success of this feature depends entirely on the co-operation of observers and regions representatives or recorders. I thank those who have regularly sent in records and hope that those who have yet to contribute will do so next time. The records need to be with me by 20 August for publication in the September *OSNZ news*.

Please note that some of the following records are subject to confirmation by the rare Birds Committee.

Mainly seabirds

The months March, April and May are often a poor time for beach patrollers (or a good time for seabirds) and there were few reports of beach-wrecked birds. Among the low numbers picked up at Muriwai (Auckland) in April and May were a Buller's Mollymawk and a possible Pycroft's Petrel. Most of the 50 or so birds found at Pakiri (Auckland) on 11 April were probably left over from the Jan. storms and among them were 2 Black and 2 Cook's Petrels, 10 Flesh-footed and 2 Buller's Shearwaters, and a fair number of Little Blue Penguins. 4 Cook's Petrels were also found near Wellington in late March

along with a Brown Booby. At the same time small numbers of Little Blue Penguins were washed ashore in South Otago, along with 1 Snares Crested Penguin. The usual autumn mortality of Sooty Shearwaters occurred on Stewart Island, where 612 dead or dying birds were found on 10 May along 7.5 km of shore near Mason's Bay.

A sick Giant Petrel picked up at Allan's Beach (Otago) in May and later released, bore an Australian band. It certainly pays to have a look at those scruffy bits of beach-wrecked birds, and not only for bands. A gull found at Waikanae (Wellington) over a year ago had museum curators of several nationalities puzzled until, with some help from the lice, they decided the bird was possibly a Common Gull of the eastern race!

Sea-watching off New Plymouth in mid-March produced large numbers of Flesh-footed and Buller's Shearwaters and a live Flesh-footed Shearwater was picked up in the city on 7 May and later released. In Otago, the Giant Petrels off Taieri mouth on 15 April were to be expected, but one in the inner Otago Harbour on 14 May was more unusual. Amongst tens of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters off the same coast during April were some Shy and Buller's Mollymawks, one of which was seen flying round Catlin's Lake (Otago) on 15 April. Hundreds were present off Stewart Island around 10 May along with a few Salvin's Mollymawks.

Of 150 Grey-faced Petrel burrows checked on the Auckland West Coast in April, about 30 were being cleaned out or were occupied. At least 20 birds were ashore at the Omata colony (Taranaki) on 14 May. Westland Black Petrels, another petrel which nests on the mainland, returned late to their colony at Punakaiki (West Coast). On 11 March only 5 were seen at sea and only 3 flew inland. These indications of a late and poor breeding season are perhaps caused by this year's warm seas.

Warm seas may also be the reason for the Sooty Tern in Wellington harbour in late March and several late records of skuas there and at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary (Canterbury), where there was an Arctic Skua on 28 April and 2 Pomarine Skuas (complete with "real" tail feathers) on 20 and 28 April. Earlier skua records included several light and dark phase birds at the Waitemata (Auckland) tern colonies (one of the few in the area to remain unaffected by the bad weather), 1 Arctic at the Waimakariri Est. on 27 February, 3 at Cooper's Lagoon in early March and another at the Waipara R. on 3 March (all Canterbury). A Southern Skua got as far north as Birdlings Flat (Canterbury) on 18 April.

Little Terns have been regular summer/autumn visitors to the Manawatu

Est. over the last few years and one was still there on 25 April. The bird that arrived at Aramoana (Otago) in December was seen on 14 May. The 2 Canterbury White-winged Black terns stayed until March at Cooper's Lagoon and Lake Ellesmere, and a Gull-billed Tern returned (is it the same one?) to the Ahuriri Lagoon (Hawke's Bay) on 7 May.

There seemed to be unusually large numbers of Black-fronted Terns in the east and north of the South Island this autumn. 238 at the Avon-Heathcote Est. on 28 April is a lot more than the usual 30-40, and about 90 at Motueka (Nelson) on 5 May is also a high number. One, on its way north, visited the Rangitikei R. (Manawatu) on 7 May and is the first record there for several years. The birds first arrived at the Tukituki/East Clive roost (Hawke's Bay) on 16 April and there were 13 there by 13 May.

Although it is not known if they bred this year, 6 adult Gannets were roosting at the Nuggets colony (Otago) on 19 April. 24 adults off Amberley Beach in March and 27 off Sumner on 4 April were large groups for the Canterbury coast. The second group included several juveniles and there were also 1 or 2 juveniles regularly off the S. Otago coast in April and about 6 young flew south past Toko Mouth (Otago) on 25 April.

The Pied Shag reported at New Plymouth last time was still there on 25 April and a juvenile at Porangahau (Hawke's Bay) on 11 March is one of several Hawke's Bay records this year. One bird reached as far south as Pilot's Beach (Otago) on 11 May and is only the 3rd Otago record and the first since the early 1970s.

Spotted Shags returned to East Clive on 13 May after being absent over the summer and flocks of Little Black Shags returned to the Auckland harbours in March with, for example, one flock of 60-70 at Hobson's Bay on 14 April. About 40 were at Waikanae Est. on 27 March and about 30 at Pauatahanui (Wellington) on 18 May. About 200 each Little and Black Shags were at the Bromley Sewage Ponds (Canterbury) in March. Stewart Island Shag numbers increased from about 20 on 1 March to about 90 by 19 April at the Nuggets.

Hérons, Spoonbills and Ibises

In the south, Royal Spoonbill numbers decreased at L. Waihola (Otago) to 6 on 22 March, 2 on 5 April, and 1 on 26 April although 5 were still present a little further north at Waikouaiti (Otago) on 16 May. Further north, numbers increased over the same period. The 14 at the Avon-Heathcote Est. increased to 35 by 28 April and 31 had returned to Motueka, and about the same number to Farewell Spit by mid-May. In the North Island, the flock at the

Manawatu Est. had increased to 39 by 25 April. One was seen at the Wanganui Est. in late May and 2 at the Kaituna Cut (Bay of Plenty) on 23 May; possibly on their way further north to the Mangere flock, which increased from 12 in mid April to 21 by 23 May.

The 3 Glossy Ibises near L. Waipori (Otago) were still present on 23 May. 2 Little Egrets at nearby L. Waihola on the same date have been there since summer, but 1 at the Grey River (West Coast) on 30 March and 1 (possibly 3) at the East Clive on 13 May were probably new arrivals in the country. The East Clive bird is the first Hawke's Bay record since 1982, when the last of up to 5 birds that frequented the Ahuriri Lagoon for several years was seen.

4 Cattle Egrets arrived early at Berwick (Otago) on 6 March and numbers there had increased to 16 by 12 May, with a lone bird a bit further south at Milton on the next day. A single bird arrived at Waitara (Taranaki) on 24 March and there were 10 there by 9 May. 145 had returned to Hamilton by 18 May and there were 60 in Kaipara (Auckland) by late April, but only 2 had reached Mangere by then and there were no sightings in the usual Hawke's Bay localities by mid May. 6 reached Travis Swamp (Canterbury) on 28 May.

3 Bitterns at the Tukituki Est. on 16 April were unusual.

Ducks & Geese etc.

The 3 Canada Geese reported last time from Waikanae Est. were in fact Cape Barren Geese, one of which remained there until the end of March.

Large flocks of Paradise Shelducks were seen at L. Kereta (Auckland) - 235; Otane (Hawke's Bay) - 600 on 26 April; and Totara Flat (West Coast) - about 250; but none of these numbers approach the 1517 at Bromley S.P. on 29 January. This is about twice the usual number and many had probably left their usual inland sites because of drought. High numbers of Grey Teal (1025 in February) and Shoveler (400+ on 25 April) occurred at Bromley and huge numbers of Grey Teal were present at L. Ellesmere, with 7800 in one flock on 7 March.

The isolated population of Scaup at Sinclair Wetlands (Otago) raised 7 broods this summer and Coot numbers are still increasing in the area, with 19 on L. Waihola on 26 April, the first record for the main lake.

Waders

Some of the more unusual waders recorded last summer were still present in March. There were 25 whimbrels and 4 Marsh Sandpipers at Kaipara; 10 Long-billed Curlews at Manukau (Auckland); and an Oriental Dotterel and Marsh Sandpiper at L. Ellesmere. Most of the summer flocks of godwits and Knots left

the Auckland harbours about 20 March, but several rarer waders remained in the country. Terek Sandpipers were still at the Manawatu Est. and the Ashley River (Canterbury) on 25 April where there were also 3 Long-billed Curlews late in the month. A Hudsonian Godwit stayed at the Avon-Heathcote until late May and an Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit was still at Mangere on 31 May. One of 3 Siberian Tattlers present in Otago Harbour over summer was still at Aramoana on 14 May.

Colour banded Pied Oystercatchers returning north to the Auckland harbours frequented the same roosts as last year. The Mangere flock of Wrybills had increased to 750-1000 birds by April and, as usual, there were several thousand at Miranda by late May. 28 returned to Porangahau by late March and 2 were at the Ahuriri Est. on 12 March.

The Hawke's Bay Black-fronted Dotterels had a successful breeding season and over the other side of the North Island at Turakina Est. (Wanganui), 38 were counted on 20 May; the highest count to date. The population at Outram (Otago) remains small. 8 were counted there on 11 March and a late breeding pair with a 3-week old chick was seen on 30 March. In Southland, 6 were at Thornbury on 6 May.

20 N.Z. Dotterels at Cow Is, Awarua Bay (Southland) on 12 May included 2 juveniles banded as chicks on Stewart Island. Some moved a lot further than this, although where from is uncertain. One was at Pauatahanui on 9 February and one arrived at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 7 March and was still there in late May. The latter is the first record at that locality since 1974.

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A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was seen at Clifton (Hawke's Bay) on 14 February, some 10 km from the usual locality, and 2 immature Crimson Rosellas at Wellington on 18 March show that the small population there is persisting. 3 Red-crowned Parakeets at Nga Manu Sanctuary (Wellington) on 23 February could have been aviary escapees, but there are no local aviaries near Mohi Bush (Hawke's Bay), where a single parakeet was seen on 15 March. Unfortunately it was killed by a cat the following day.

Also in Hawke's Bay, a Fernbird was found in a new area near Waipatiki Beach, but was not seen subsequently.

2 Spine-tailed Swifts flew over Mangere on 2 May. Birds that had wandered a little less far included a Rook at Lower Hutt (Wellington) on 13 April and several N.Z. Falcons: 1 near Dunedin on 24 March, 1 near Taieri Mouth on 13 May. A bird that stayed in the Port Hills, Christchurch, is almost becoming an annual occurrence.

Early morning "migration watches" at Christchurch on 5 & 19 April revealed northerly movements of Goldfinches (up to 127/hr), Greenfinches (up to 20/hr), Welcome Swallows (up to 59/hr), and Skylarks (up to 59/hr). This is the first visual record of Skylark movements in N.Z.

Kingfisher nesting in Auckland continued well into March, with a nest of 4 young on the 22nd. Goldfinches near Dunedin were feeding newly-fledged young in the first week of April. Recent records of Redpolls in the Havelock North/Hastings area suggest that numbers are increasing.

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

Northland: The final tally of casualties from Cyclone Delilah included 762 Northern Blue Penguins, 115 Fluttering Shearwaters, 62 Flesh-footed Shearwaters, 41 Grey-faced Petrels, 40 Diving Petrels, and 25 Gannets. A total of 17 species was recorded.

Over the Auckland Anniversary Weekend of 28-29/1 a party of 9 members from Northland and the Far North were based at the Rangiahia Outdoor Education centre on the Karikari Peninsula. The weekend was organised by Ina May and activities included counting waders, surveying the birds in swamps and lakes, and beach patrolling. An exciting observation was a colour-banded Banded Dotterel at the Waimango Swamp.

Over 24-26/2 a combined team of 24 OSNZ and Forest & Bird members based at Pouto Pt made a comprehensive survey of the dune lakes on the Pouto Peninsula and along the Dargaville coast. Of the 27 species recorded the most abundant were Paradise Shelduck - 1125, Black Swan - 618, Grey Duck - 600, Scaup - 344, Grey Teal - 164, Dabchick - 93, Shoveler - 57, and Mallard - 50. At the lower end of the scale were Kingfisher - 6, Black-fronted Dotterel - 2, Bittern - 2, Fernbird - 2, Caspian Tern - 2, White-fronted Tern - 2, and Coot - 1.

At our evening meeting on 13/4 an attentive and appreciative audience heard a fascinating talk by John Kendrick about bird song recording. His endeavours obviously demanded meticulous preparation, infinite patience, and unwavering determination.

On the evening of 21/4 19 members gathered at Lonsdale Park Camp to prepare for a continuing survey of Motukawanui Island in the Cavalli Group. The following morning everyone crossed Matauni Bay to the island where they spent the whole day in glorious weather while recording the birdlife. (Alastair Gordon).

Auckland: Arrangements for the 1989 Conference are the current focus of the region and we recall that it was 8 years ago, when Sylvia Reed was RR, that we last hosted the national meeting.

Our May monthly meeting enjoyed a well-illustrated talk by Ewen Cameron, who described his extensive travels and birdwatching in India and Nepal. We were treated to a host of birds, carefully presented in checklist order, so that we were able to learn as well as admire. With a good attendance, the evening provoked wide discussion, the audience included 4 RRs (Northland, Auckland, South Auckland, and Waikato) - a record flock.

The northern harbours lost most of the arctic migrant waders about 20/3. About this time a tally of the NZ Dotterel flocks located 130 birds which comprise most of John Dowding's east coast study population. A beach patrol of Whatipu at the Manukau north head by Graeme Taylor yielded 48 birds in March. That month the Muriwai stretch, which is covered regularly, produced only 18 with Black-backed Gulls being 11 of these. The May patrol was more interesting with 35 birds of 17 species, and the chance to share the beach approaches through Woodhill Forest with 10 000 fun-runners! Tiritiri Island in April was much more peaceful; on 12-14/4 Mike Graham led a group of 15 who conducted our regular autumn counts in fine weather and with satisfactory results. (Michael Taylor)

South Auckland: In February some of us sharpened our eyes by competing in the Miranda Naturalists Trust tally hunt, and resolved to do better next year. A small group are continuing the 3-roost counts at the Firth of Thames, with Dick Veitch analysing the results. The Curlew Sandpipers only departed in late May and there were over 7000 Pied Oystercatchers and 108 Caspian Terns counted that month.

In April we walked part of the Kaitarakihi Track in search of Whiteheads, which were possibly seen there 10 years ago. With a strong SW wind conditions were difficult, but the bush seems good and Bellbirds were present throughout. We shall certainly try again. The Tuakau Oxidation Ponds in May contained the usual mixed bag of waterfowl, but surprisingly only 2 Welcome Swallows were seen.

At our most recent evening meetings we have been lucky to have Brian Ellis describe how he records birds in his Howick garden, David Lawrie talk of his travels in Britain and Denmark (including a graphic description of how he beat the crowds of locals to the Dotterel on the summit of the Cairngorms), and Simon Towle give us an insight into the problems of caring for Antarctica in general and Ross Island and the Dry Valleys in particular. (Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato: At the March meeting members enjoyed a slide talk of a trip from Brisbane to Cairns. Shirley Nieuwland and Ralph Skinner talked about travel aspects of the trip while Betty Seddon and Folkert Nieuwland focussed on the abundant birdlife and habitats, with some excellent slides of waders. The 7th Pan African Congress of Ornithology, held in Nairobi in 1988, was the subject of the April meeting. Mercia Barnes spoke about some of the lectures she attended and recounted some of the experiences on the Congress field trips. The Waikato AGM in May was well attended and followed by a most interesting and informative talk by Alan Tennyson on the history of seabirds breeding on Mangere Island.

Cattle Egret numbers are building up. On Clune's Farm at Rangiriri 3 birds remained over the summer and numbers had risen to 145 by 18/5. On Ward's Farm several kms away small numbers have been seen: 4 on 12/4, 34 on 18/4, 50 on 13/5, 9 on 16/5 (G. Ward). At Lake Ngaroto there were 4 on 20/4 and 16 on 6/5 (R. Dench).

There have been several sightings of NZ Falcon. 2 at Waingaro on 15/4 (D. Riddell), 1 seen catching sparrows at Pukekawa by a local farmer (M. Taylor), and 1 at Ruhuhia on 8 & 11/5 (R. Dench). These birds were seen in relatively open country. Anthea Goodwin reported that Galahs had been seen at Rotowaro in April.

Good numbers of Grey Teal have been seen. 35 during the survey of Lake Waahi on 22/4 (B. Zuur *et al*) and 150 on Lake Hakanoa on 18/5 (B. Seddon, A. Tennyson, S. & J. Rowe). On the same day, a total of 208 Pukekos were seen in 4 adjacent fields next to the Whangamarino Swamp. (Stella Rowe)

Gisborne/Wairoa: Most interesting this autumn has been the buildup of birds at the Wairoa coastal lagoons and estuary. Whakaki had its usual concentration of birds. A count on 27/3 included 2700 Mallards, 500 Shovelers, 225 Paradise Shelducks, 1000 Canada Geese, 1050 Black Swans, 11 Royal Spoonbills, 14 Caspian Terns, 600 Pied Stilts, 4 Dabchicks, 88 Little Black Shags, and 380 Black Shags.

Royal Spoonbills have held the spotlight. 2 were present at Wairoa on 4/12/88, increasing to 6 on 21/1/89 when the birds were moving between Whakaki and the Wairoa Estuary. Numbers increased to 11 on 27/3, 14 on 22/4, and the latest sighting was of 25 on 7/5 at the Wairoa Estuary.

Dabchick numbers are also the highest on record, with 29 at Whakaki Lagoon on 22/4.

Little Black Shags are prominent this year, with a regular flock of 88 birds catching eels and carp at Whakaki, and up to 60 birds on the Wairoa River.

3 White Herons flew in with the southerly to Awamate Lagoon on 10/5, but there was no sign of any Cattle Egrets by 15/5. (Geoff Foreman)

Manawatu: A successful bird banding training weekend was held at Puke Puke Lagoon, where more than 150 passerines were banded on the first day. With 3 mist nets in use the team was kept busy and the enthusiasm and energy of the juniors, 2 of whom were able to stay for the weekend, was very welcome. The level of the lagoon was low and there was no time to make an accurate count, but species seen included Shoveler, Grey Teal, Banded Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterel, Wrybill, Cattle Egret, Bittern, and Fernbird. A Spotless Crake was heard. (Lindsay Davies)

Wairarapa: On 3/3 a group of local OSNZ members spent a morning on a crayfishing boat some 4-5 miles off the east coast from Pahaoa. It was a beautiful sunny day with just enough breeze to make it interesting. By tossing out food scraps we attracted a large collection of birds and at times had them within a few metres of the boat. We had excellent close-up views of Salvin's, Buller's and Black-browed Mollymawks together with Giant Petrels, Flesh-footed Shearwaters and a juvenile Wandering Albatross. Occasional Sooty Shearwaters, a solitary Buller's Shearwater and a great raft of Fluttering Shearwaters completed the morning. The trip was one of the highlights of our year.

Ten Wairarapa members spent the weekend of 11-12/3 at Porangahau where Hugh Robertson showed us the estuary and a lot of waders. On 11/3 Wayne Twyde brought a group of Hawke's Bay OSNZers and together we walked the estuary. Notable sightings were 28 Wrybills and 20 Red-necked Stilts. In the evening Hugh gave us a slide show on his work with the RAOU at Broome last year, when he was involved with a cannon-netting project. Beach patrols on the following day completed a very interesting weekend.

A Dabchick survey carried out over the weekend of 15-16/4 located 117 birds in the Wairarapa. We have no other figures to compare this result, but hope to repeat the survey every 2 or 3 years.

A mist netting session on 16/5, under the supervision of Ralph Powlesland, helped 14 of our members improve their skills in handling and banding birds. 147 birds of 12 species were caught and processed. (Tenick Dennison)

Canterbury: On 8/4 6 members attended a field trip with a difference to the Bromley Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of the trip was to assist TVNZ's Natural History Unit with the filming of OSNZ members observing birds. This footage will be used in a documentary about the oxidation pond complex and how a man-made environment acts as an important wildlife

habitat. This documentary will be screened later this year as part of a new "Wild South" series.

Whilst flocks of finches and buntings studiously avoided our mist net at Lake Ellesmere on 20/5, at least we could enjoy the perfect weather. Fortunately for the birds, natural food was still plentiful, but unfortunately for us this meant that the birds were able to move to another patch of seeds whenever we erected our nets over the area they had been feeding on. Only 9 Redpolls were banded this time, however, we will be trying again this winter. (Peter Langlands & Paul Sagar)

Otago: At our last indoor meeting Alan Wright gave an interesting talk on the captive breeding of Takahe at Te Anau.

The fringes of Lakes Waiholo and Waipori have over the years attracted a number of herons and their allies. This trend seems to be continuing with Glossy Ibis, Little Egrets, White Herons, White-faced Herons, Royal Spoonbills, and Cattle Egrets recorded in the past 3 months.

The Kaikorai Estuary, the closest known estuary within the greater Dunedin City, is the least known bird-wise. Otago OSNZers are going to change that. Monthly counts will be carried out as from August this year.

The Kingfisher project is taking shape and will commence in September. (Peter Schweigman)

Southland: Local members have responded positively to Peter Schweigman's suggestion that Otago and Southland OSNZers celebrate the Society's 50th Anniversary with a study of Kingfishers. Peter & Wilma Muller will co-ordinate the work in Southland.

In April the organised field activity was a beach patrol of Oreti Beach. The east side of Jacobs River and the 31 kms of Oreti beach were covered in sections by 12 people, including 4 new members. In all 35 birds were found - 10 shags, 8 gulls, 9 petrels and prions, 3 penguins, 3 mollymawks, 1 Pied Oystercatcher, and an immature Gannet. The latter was the first of this species found on Oreti Beach in 20+ years of beach patrolling. Oreti Beach is equidistant (about 120 kms) from the 2 small southern gannetries - Little Solander Island to the southwest and the Nuggets to the east. A good day extended into a good evening, when the beach patrollers and others gathered at Roger & Christina Sutton's home for bird tally and identification, good food and talk.

The beach patrol produced only 3 Sooty Shearwaters and other random coastal checks by Eric Black and Bev O'Cain in April and early May indicate that the early stages of the outward migration of this species may have been trouble-free. (Maida Barlow)