

# OSNZ news

No. 53 December, 1989

Note Deadline for the March issue will be  
21 February 1990.

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.



## MAJOR ORNITHOLOGICAL EVENTS LESS THAN ONE YEAR AWAY

By this time next year, many of you will have enjoyed meeting overseas birdwatchers from far and wide, hearing many talks on interesting ornithological topics, or helped to guide or provide local expertise on the many birdwatching tours that are associated with "The World of Birds - a Southern Perspective". In late 1990, New Zealand will be the "bird restaurant of the world" with the following feast on the menu:

- 19-27 November 1990  
20th World Conference of ICBP  
Hamilton
- 27 November-1 December 1990  
Pacific Festival of International Nature  
Films  
Dunedin
- 2-9 December 1990  
20th International Ornithological  
Congress  
Christchurch
- 9-22 December 1990  
Southern Ocean Cruise  
NZ Subantarctic

The OSNZ was instrumental in bringing these exciting ornithological events to New Zealand (and to the Southern Hemisphere for only the second time), by joining forces with the Royal Society of New Zealand to mount a bid to host the 20th IOC, way back in 1986.

The 20th IOC will be held at the campus of the University of Canterbury, with most attendees staying in the University hostels. A wide variety of topics of interest to birdwatchers,

conservationists, and scientists will be covered in a week of varied activities. A programme of seven principal lectures and 48 symposia (a 2-hour set of lectures on the one topic) will take up about half the week, with contributed papers (15 minute spoken presentations on any bird topic), poster papers, round-table discussions, special-interest groups, and informal chats taking up the remainder of the programme. In addition, a continuous programme of bird films will be shown, including many shown the week before at the Dunedin festival, and many birdwatching and sight-seeing trips around Canterbury have been arranged. A midweek field trip to Mount Hutt Station will let everyone relax, and sample a slice of rural life in New Zealand - wind up those gumboot-throwing arms!

An exciting programme of guided tours has been organised to show off New Zealand's magnificent natural heritage. The real gem being offered is the Subantarctic cruise to our pristine southern islands to see albatrosses and penguins nesting, and an abundance of seabirds in their natural element.

Why not join in this magnificent ornithological feast? This will be your only real opportunity to share your interest in New Zealand birds with so many like-minded people from overseas. If you are interested in joining in with these events, and have not received your 88-page Final Circular to "The World of Birds", please write immediately to:

Dr Ben D. Bell,  
"World of Birds",  
School of Biological Sciences,  
Victoria University,  
P.O. Box 600,  
WELLINGTON

### Help needed

The committee organising the 20th IOC requires a number of OSNZ member VOLUNTEERS to assist at the venues, to help guide some of the local tours, and to meet and greet "World of Birds" attendees at AUCKLAND and CHRISTCHURCH airports. These assistants will have the opportunity to join the conference events at a SPECIAL CONCESSION RATE. If you can help in this way, please contact Dr Ian McLean, Zoology Department, University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch, as soon as possible. HUGH ROBERTSON

### Duties of the Banding Liaison Officer

Over the past year several OSNZ members have written to me in my capacity as Banding Liaison Officer and reported the sighting of banded birds and asked when the birds were banded. All this information is stored in the Banding Office (Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington) and observers can get the required facts more quickly by writing direct to the Banding Office rather than me.

The position of Banding Liaison Officer was established mainly to have a non-departmental person available in Wellington to help resolve any arguments or misunderstandings that might arise between OSNZ bird banders and the Banding Office. Happily, there has been very little work of this kind for me to do during recent months and, apart from contributing to a review of Banding Office

activities (see *OSNZ news 49*), my main involvement has been to provide an independent view when applications for new banding permits are considered by departmental officers.

PETER BULL,  
*OSNZ Banding Liaison Officer*

### Council news

A meeting of Council was held in Wellington during the weekend of 28-29 October. Major topics for discussion included funding of three special Society publications next year - the 50th Anniversary Publication, Checklist and 50-year Index of Notornis.

Council welcomed the news that the Lottery Board has granted \$10,000 towards publication of the 50-year Index. Council also welcomed news of another grant from the Lottery Board - \$10,000 towards the cost of purchasing computer equipment. This grant will enable the Society to manage its own databases, such as the Nest Record and Beach Patrol Schemes, instead of relying on the generosity of Government Departments. With the IOC now only a year away it was agreed to market OSNZ goods at a stall during the Congress and to have a new static display prepared for exhibition at the Congress. Council also agreed to pay for the IOC registration of up to 4 student members, who will be giving papers at the Congress (see below for further details).

Applications for grants from the Projects Assistance Reserve were considered and the following were approved:

\$200 - David Crockett, Whangarei, for Black-backed Gull colour bands; \$350 - Kerry Oates, Wellington, for Blue Duck Study; \$250 - Barrie Heather, Silverstream, for Black-fronted Dotterel study; \$200 - Richard Maloney, Christchurch, for study of Robins; \$200 - Sarah Stokes, Christchurch, for Scaup study; \$200 - Andrew Cummings, Auckland, for NZ Dotterel study.

In addition, a loan of \$2,500 was made to David Butler, Jenny Hawkins and Peter Gaze of Nelson towards the publication of a book on the birds of the Nelson region.

Publicity for the Society was also a major topic on the agenda. With the IOC and 3 special Society publications due next year Council was well aware of the need to publicise the Society and its activities. Consequently, several measures were taken to achieve this and include advertising in appropriate magazines, and the production of new car stickers and membership brochures.

PAUL SAGAR

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

### NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following three Council members retire in May 1990 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

W.L. Ormond (Treasurer)

Mr B.D. Heather (Editor)

Dr S.J. Triggs (Secretary)

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28th February 1990, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election.

### NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1990 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1990 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1990 OSNZ Annual Conference & A.G.M. will be held in Wellington on Saturday 12 May.

S.J. Triggs  
*Hon. Secretary*

P.O. Box 12397  
Wellington

### Election of Officers

#### Treasurer

The Society's Treasurer since 1987, Bill Ormond, has indicated that a change of vocation means that he no longer has the spare time to carry out this important task, and so there will be a vacancy for Treasurer when officers are elected in May 1990.

Members with experience of accounting practices, and the spare time to take on this vital job, are asked to consider putting their names forward when nominations are called for.

The Treasurer is responsible for keeping detailed records of the Society's financial transactions, managing our meagre investments, making all payments, preparing tax returns and biennial summaries of the financial position. Handling subscriptions, corresponding with new members and maintaining the Society's membership list will be the responsibility of our new Membership Secretary (Hazel Harty).

#### Secretary

The Society's Secretary since 1987, Sue Triggs, is off on an extended overseas trip next year, and so is not standing for re-election.

The duties of the Secretary include answering all correspondence; circulating all Councilors and RRs with agenda items before the twice-yearly Council and annual RRs meetings; taking Minutes at AGM, Council meetings and RRs meeting;

compiling annual RR reports and reports from scheme organisers.

Members with an interest and the spare time to maintain the everyday affairs of the Society are asked to consider putting their names forward for this vital job when nominations are called for.

### Help needed

We need a person to manage the Society's greetings cards. You will need somewhere dry to store the cards (about 3-4 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space) and a few spare hours occasionally to receive and distribute orders to regions. Contact Sue Triggs, Secretary, PO Box 12397, Wellington, for more details.

### OSNZ assistance to student members attending the IOC

The Society has sufficient funds set aside to pay the registration of four student OSNZ members giving papers at the IOC. Applications close on 31 January 1990. Full details of the application process are available from Dr Ben D. Bell, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University, P.O. Box 600, Wellington. Applications must be marked 'Fleming Memorial Applicant'.

## AGM & Conference 1990

Here is the tentative programme for the conference weekend, 11-13 May 1990, at Samuel Marsden Collegiate, Marsden Avenue, Karori, Wellington. Transport from the airport, ferry terminal and railway station will be available if prior arrangements have been made.

Friday evening – arrival and social time.

Saturday morning – launch trip on the harbour/RRs meeting; Saturday afternoon – talks on OSNZ and individual members projects; Saturday evening – social hour, dinner, AGM, more social time.

Sunday morning – talks and workshops; Sunday afternoon – forum, films, talks and social time.

Monday – possibly a day-trip to Kapiti Island (limited to 40 people). Please note that accommodation will not be available on Sunday evening at the Collegiate and members wishing to stay on for the Kapiti trip must make their own arrangements.

The approximate cost for the weekend is \$120 (includes meals, accommodation, and launch trip).

This AGM aims at members participation. If you have involvement in a national, local or private project and would like to talk about it, please inform me by 31 March 1990. Kerry Oates, 12 Jackson Terrace, Porirua. Phone (04)379-126.

KERRY OATES

## Profiles

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

### Christine McRae – RR for Hawke's Bay



Christine joined the Society in 1982 and since then has been involved with wader counts and many field trips.

A librarian with the School Library Service – National Library of NZ she was brought up on a farm in central Hawke's Bay with plenty of opportunity for

pursuing an interest in birds. A small lake on the farm was a continuing source of interest, as was the close proximity of Lake Purimu with its variety of waterbirds. Bush birds are a particular source of enjoyment. Grey Warblers are just as interesting and enchanting to her as the Whiteheads and Rifleman. However, she is fostering a growing interest in waders. This is not surprising, with the Ahuriri Estuary virtually on her doorstep and her participation in the monthly counts at the Porangahau Estuary.

Christine says that her main claim to fame in ornithology is enthusiasm – and no-one can beat that.

### Graham Randle – RR for Wanganui



The study of our native flora and fauna has been a life-long interest for Graham. His early childhood in Picton set him up and the hills and waterways of the Marlborough Sounds were his stamping grounds. He still visits these areas and his quest for birds and plants has taken him to most National Parks, including some offshore islands. His introduction to OSNZ came during a stay on The Brothers in the early 1960s. Alan Wright was the lighthouse keeper then and he nominated Graham for membership. During that stay on The Brothers he observed a Welcome Swallow flying around the buildings. This was a rare sight in those days, the only area close-by where these birds could be seen was Lake Grassmere. On returning to Blenheim after that trip he made contact with local OSNZers and soon was away most weekends banding birds on the Nelson Boulder Bank and the Kaikoura coast.

About 12 months after joining he moved to Trentham and attended several meetings of Wellington members and pursued his interests in tramping, photography, ornithology, and botany with the Hutt Valley Tramping Club. His job then took him and his family to Waiouru in the early 1970s and he lost contact with the Society but continued interests in conservation.

On arriving in Wanganui about 10

years ago Graham joined Forest & Bird and it was at one of their meetings that he made contact with OSNZ again, when Lindsay Davies gave a talk. Graham is interested in all aspects of conservation with a special interest in seabirds.

### Beverley North – RR for Marlborough



A very keen trumper who has always had an interest in birdwatching, Beverley's interest was heightened on a banding trip with her husband some years ago. Beverley joined OSNZ in 1980 and has been RR for Marlborough since 1986. Among her main interests are Cattle Egrets, Banded Dotterels, and Farewell Spit. Trekking in Nepal, India, Thailand, Fiji and Alaska have provided many pleasureable hours of birdwatching. Marlborough has a very small group of OSNZ members, but Beverley is always ready to 'capture' anybody interested in ornithology.

### Cattle Egret survey

I thank the many members who made a special effort to record the arrival times of egrets up to late May. The chart at the AGM in Auckland was thoroughly covered by figures from all regions, a tribute to everyone's effort in a non-spectacular year. The figures and dates of arrival and early build-up have been sent to Max Maddock in Australia, who has obtained a special grant with which to examine whether meteorological factors, in all years in which we have been recording arrivals, are involved in the trans-Tasman movements of Cattle Egrets. A paper by Max Maddock, which will I hope appear in the March issue of *Notornis*, will be of much interest to the many members who have followed CE events since the 1970s.

Here are the results of the August 1989 count, together with last year's "low" for comparison. The national total fell to that we had in 1980 (771 birds), although a few may have been missed in the Manawatu and the Bay of Plenty birds near the Awaiti Reserve were not checked in the absence overseas of Paddy Latham. For 1986 to 1988 figures, see *OSNZ news* 49 (December 1988).

	1988	1989
<b>North Island</b>		
Far North/Northland	82	52
Auckland	53	92
South Auckland	64	52
Waikato	297	165
Bay of Plenty	74	?
Gisborne/Wairoa	31	4
Taranaki	7	9
Hawke's Bay	21	8
Wanganui/Manawatu	158	70
Wairarapa	29	0
Wellington	0	1
North Island totals	816	453+
<b>South Island</b>		
Nelson	45	28
Marlborough	50	33
West Coast	20	c.52
Canterbury	61	56
Otago	12	59
Southland	127	110+
Chatham I.	11	?
South Island totals	326	338+
New Zealand totals	1142	791+

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

**Far North/Northland:** Awanui 52; none in the usual haunts elsewhere. (M. Hows, D. Crockett)

**Auckland:** Parakai 92 (C. Exley)

**South Auckland:** Otatau (Aka Aka) 52; once again the Piako flock (15 in April) could not be found. (A. Goodwin)

**Waikato:** Rangiriri district, three neighbouring flocks of 74, 21 and 70 on both sides of the Waikato River. (S. & J. Rowe, M. Barnes, R. Dench, A. Loman, S. & F. Nieuwland, I. Reid, B. Seddon, H. Stewart, B. Woolley)

**Gisborne:** 4. (J. Henley, M. Williams) Hawke's Bay: Puketapu (west of Napier) 1, Lake Hatuma, Waipukurau, 7. (C. McRae)

**Wanganui/Manawatu:** Whangaehu 17 (G. Randle); Whirokino (Manawatu River) 26+ after 78 in July. (M. Olsen, J. Moore)

**Taranaki:** Barrett Road, New Plymouth, 9. (D. Medway)

**Wairarapa:** None all season at regular places. (H. Cook, B. Heather)

**Wellington:** 1 at St Pats Farm, Silverstream, the first since 1 in 1986. This, of course, is an incredible result. (B. Heather)

**Nelson:** Takaka 19, Appleby 9. (G. Quayle, J. Hawkins)

**Marlborough:** Grovetown 23, Kaikoura 10. (B. North, B. Elliott) West Coast: Westport 16, Arahura 6, Kokatahi up to 30, Barrytown 1; no report from usual Karamea site. (S. Lauder, N. Bradley, F. Overmars, N. Reedy, K. Scollay, R. Stocker, U. Walthert)

**Canterbury:** Waikuku 8, Ellesmere 35 + 1, Clandeboye 12; possibly 4 at Burwood. (K. Harrison, P. Sagar, A. Crossland)

**Otago:** Henley 18, Inchclutha 2, Stirling 39. (P. Schweigman) Southland: Thornbury 60+, Wyndham 50+. (M. Barlow, J. Carmichael, O. & J. Linscott, J. Lobb, R. Morgan, N. & R. Stuart, R. Sutton)

Perhaps the anecdote of the year comes from near Melbourne, where an avid CE watcher finally pinned down an elusive CE flock of 122 and the line of sight from a side road across the farm meant that binoculars directed to look for colour bands and wing tags were aimed at the local police station; results can be imagined (from Nov. newsletter of Hunter Wetlands Trust).

BARRIE HEATHER

### Classified Summarised Notes – Yet Again

Classified Summarised Notes (CSN) have caused the compilers and Editor a few headaches over the past few years. You may have noticed that they have appeared very late in *Notornis*, and apart from criticism of this delay, doubts have also been expressed about the coverage, accuracy and accessibility of the information. Council and the Regional Representatives discussed these problems at the last AGM and decided to publish some guidelines for contributors.

Which records to send in to CSN and in what form has always been something of a problem. The compilers receive an enormous variety of records, from summaries of the status of a species, through a list of all regional observations, and a collation of material about rare species only and, of course, nothing. Before dealing with the thorny problem of just what you do with all your Pukeko records, there are some simple practical points that need clearing up.

1. All records must be with your Regional Representative or recorder by 31 July; a month after the end of the CSN year, which runs from 1 July to 30 June. This will help ensure that CSN is published regularly in the March issue of *Notornis*.
2. Standardise your place names and use only those that occur on Lands & Survey 1:250,000 maps (now all easily available in the Heinemann N.Z. Atlas). Locally used names can be used but they should be qualified by, near . . . ., the qualifying name occurring on the 1:250,000 series maps. Care must also be taken to qualify names that refer to more than one locality e.g., the last but one CSN included a record of Cirl Buntings from Mt Victoria. There are at least 4 Mt Victorias in N.Z. Which one was it? If there is no convenient named locality nearby, use latitude and longitude rather than a map reference as these are readily found on most maps.

Not only will all this help you on your holiday, but in 50 years, when someone is studying the demise of the Tui or the increase of the House Crow, the distributional information will be readily accessible. Also, they won't have to delve into the dusty archives of the Society or examine the log of the good ship *Acheron*.

3. Submit your records in the style adopted by CSN. Basically this is: Locality, number or observations, date e.g. L. Ki-Wainono, 1 on 28/6. Ensure that any abbreviations you use are explained and are unambiguous. Please check your records before sending them in. Many mistakes creep into CSN. This is the first step towards eliminating them.

### Which observations are worth sending to CSN?

As a general rule records are suitable if they are not part of another OSNZ scheme or will not be published in a paper or short note in *Notornis* or other journal.

Records of dead seabirds picked up on beach patrols are not required for CSN because summaries appear regularly in *Notornis*. However, note that the Beach Patrol Scheme does not often include patrols under trucks in central Dunedin or other out-of-the-way places. Likewise, details of nesting birds should be submitted to the Nest Record Scheme. Inclusion of records from the National Wader Count are somewhat more of a problem. Later in this article there is list of species for which all observations are required for CSN. Many of the rarer waders recorded during the wader counts appear on this list and observations should also go to CSN. Records of the commoner species should only be included if they form a part of a series of counts for a particular site. A similar rule can be applied to the Cattle Egret counts and to any future OSNZ projects.

Please note that records published in *OSNZ news* should also be sent to CSN. In the first issue, Barrie Heather pointed out that *OSNZ news* is informal, "...and cannot be quoted elsewhere, as official reporting. It does not replace publication of work and short notes in *Notornis* or the sending of proper records to the Society's various schemes." Therefore observations you publish in *OSNZ news* (e.g. an account of a visit to the Marlborough Sounds) should also go to CSN. Similarly, anything that is accepted by the Rare Birds Committee should also be submitted to CSN. The main advantage of this is that all the information ends up in the same place and CSN will better reflect the year's ornithological events. Members of the Checklist Committee and other researchers will undoubtedly appreciate this approach!

Well over half the NZ avifauna, the rarer birds, can be dealt with relatively easily. (The problem Pukekos will be dealt with eventually).

1. All information is required for those species new to New Zealand or listed as National or Local "rarities" by the Rare Birds Committee (see *OSNZ news* 38, March 1986, for these lists). If you have not been a member that long or have relegated it to your own dusty archives, your Regional Representative should have a copy.
2. All information is also required for the following species:
  - Brown Kiwi
  - Great Spotted Kiwi
  - Southern Crested Grebe
  - Antarctic Petrel
  - White Heron
  - Little Egret
  - Reef Heron
  - Cattle Egret
  - Bittern
  - Glossy Ibis
  - Royal Spoonbill
  - Blue Duck
  - NZ Falcon
  - Red-legged Partridge
  - Chukor
  - Banded Rail
  - Marsh Crake
  - Spotless Crake
  - Far-Eastern Curlew
  - Greenshank
  - Terek Sandpiper
  - Pectoral Sandpiper
  - Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
  - Curlew sandpiper
  - Red-necked Stint
  - Sanderling
  - Black Stilt (and hybrids)
  - Arctic Skua
  - Eastern Little Tern
  - Kaka
  - Kea
  - Yellow-crowned Parakeet
  - Red-crowned parakeet
  - Rock wren
  - Fernbird
  - Yellowhead
  - Clirl Bunting

The rare endemics e.g. Blue Duck, Black Stilt, are on the list because any information about them could prove useful. The commoner endemics e.g. Fernbird and Kaka, are included because they may well be declining in number. Some of the less rare species e.g. White Heron, are included because they are relatively easy to count and a good overall picture of their numbers and distribution can be built up. Others, such as kiwis and crakes, are on the list because they are difficult to see and are rarely recorded.

In the next *OSNZ news* I will deal with the commoner species e.g. Pukekos and the sort of information that can usefully be submitted to CSN. We also plan a series

of articles on the various groups of birds e.g. herons or finches, pointing out useful observations that can be made in the course of a day's birdwatching. Anyone willing to write such an article is urged to contact me as soon as possible.

Finally, please remember that the more good observations you send to CSN, the better it will be. Keep noting down observations of Kakapos, skuas, sparrows . . . and Pukekos. Barrie Heather, Hugh Robertson, Bruce Keeley, Graeme Taylor, Alan Tennyson and Colin O'Donnell provided considerable assistance and comment on the preparation of this note.

DEREK ONLEY,  
c/o Waihola P.O., Otago



## RAOU COLUMN

### RAOU's 1989 Twitchathon

This year, the RAOU's ever-popular Twitchathon, a 24-hour birdwatching race, reached exciting new heights when it raised \$15,000 for the Union's new Mallee Research Programme. The organisers "flew high" and brought Bill Oddie, birdwatcher and star of the BBC television comedy series *The Goodies*, to Australia to publicize and participate in the Twitchathon. This joint venture by the RAOU and Oxford University Press was incredibly successful.

During his 12-day visit, Bill managed to fit in the following:

The launch of the forthcoming *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* at the Museum of Victoria.

Travelling to Turquoise Parrot country in the Chiltern State Forest in the north-east of Victoria.

An appearance on country television in Albury, New South Wales.

Featuring on two popular Australian television shows.

Being interviewed on a variety of radio programmes and by several newspapers. Going on a wader expedition to Corner Inlet (Victoria) and visiting the world-famous Sherbrooke Forest, near Melbourne.

Visiting Healesville Sanctuary, where he

saw the juvenile Lyrebird hatched only a few months earlier.

There were 13 teams in this year's Great Bird Chase, including 'Oddie's Oddballs', featuring the effervescent Bill Oddie. Some highlights of the event were sightings of Striated Grass-Wren, Inland Dotterel, White-browed Treecreeper, and even a Mitchell's Hopping Mouse! Further publicity was gained for the RAOU by the Twitchathon being featured on the ABC's national television programme *Countryside* – a crew accompanied Bill Oddie's team throughout the event.

After the Twitchathon, the 52 competitors, plus a further 80 guests, met for a dinner where the results were announced and the prizes awarded; first prize being five volumes of the *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, donated by Oxford University Press, for each member of the winning team. The ecstatic (but very tired!)

'Bristle-faced Scrub-thrashers', led by Richard Loyn, collected their prize from Bill Oddie to a round of applause. The winning team managed a new Australian 24-hour record, with 205 species seen.

As well as being a weekend of fun, birds, long-distance traveling and incredible tests of endurance, the Twitchathon will benefit the birds of the Mallee region through the research programme currently being planned.

### Broome Bird Observatory – RAOU's frontier development

The RAOU's newest bird observatory, located near the 'frontier' town of Broome in the far northwest of Western Australia, has developed from a dream in 1982 to a reality today.

Due to a donation from Lord Alistair McAlpine (developer/owner of the Pearl Coast Zoo, Broome) of two chalets, and the initiative and drive of Doug Watkins (a Perth-based RAOU member) in getting them on site, Broome has been established as the Union's fourth bird observatory. Its ornithological attractions centre on the hundreds of thousands of migratory waders which pass through the area in spring and autumn.

The arrival of Brice Wells and Gail Hooper as the first wardens confirmed that the reality was no longer a dream! The lack of fresh water on site, no electricity, no shower or toilet block and no telephone made Brice and Gail – previously wardens at the Eyre Bird Observatory on the Nullabor Plain – realise they were an integral part of this 'frontier' development. As with all such developments, however, the challenges are met and overcome. A camping site, botany trail and bird walk are under construction. A shed has been turned into a community centre and classroom, a 90 000-litre water tank is

operational, but there is still no telephone! Telecom Australia haven't yet connected this vital link. The Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia has given the money for a 4-WD vehicle, an essential item for this ornithological outpost.

However, a bird observatory cannot function unless it has accommodation for visitors. In a wonderfully generous donation, Woodside Petroleum Ltd has recently given the observatory an accommodation unit with 20 single bedrooms and BHP Petroleum has undertaken to install the building!

We will keep our Kiwi birding friends informed of the developments at Australia's premier wader-watching site. We look forward to welcoming you when you come to stay and see the amazing congregations of over 30 species of waders.

### Enthusiasm for ABC project running high

The RAOU's latest national project, the Australian Bird Count, has been received with tremendous enthusiasm. More than 400 have registered as participants already. Stephen Ambrose, co-ordinator of the project says "Not only is the Australian Bird Count an exciting project for birdwatchers to take part in, but its benefits will be far-reaching and the potential of its contribution to Australian ornithology is enormous."

### Second sighting of Grey Phalarope in Australia

On 7/7/89 Marilyn Hewish, a member of RAOU's Melbourne-based staff, saw a Grey Phalarope at Magrath Flat, opposite the Coorong National Park, South Australia.

The bird was in breeding plumage, which makes the sighting even more unusual. Grey Phalaropes nest in the high arctic in Europe, Asia and North America. They spend the non-breeding season at sea off South Africa and South America.

This is the first record for South Australia. The only other published record for Australia is of a bird seen near Swan Hill in north-western Victoria in 1976.

GRAEME HYDE,  
Editor, RAOU Newsletter

### A visit to Broome

The Broome Bird Observatory on the coast of north-west Australia is a wader watchers paradise. Over the past few years several OSNZ members have joined the Australasian Wader Study Group expeditions during the autumn and spring migrations in this area. In fact, Hugh Robertson is still remembered for his ditch digging!

Last year the RAOU began setting up an observatory in the middle of this fantastic wader country (see the RAOU column elsewhere in this issue) and recently I had the opportunity to spend 10

days there just watching the birds.

One of the last NZ entries in my notebook when I arrived at Broome was for a 'good' day on Farewell Spit when, apart from the usual godwits, knots, Pied Oystercatchers and Banded Dotterels, I had seen 1 Terek Sandpiper, 4 whimbrels, 13 Red-necked Stints, 1 Large Sand Dotterel, 5 Curlew Sandpipers and 1 tattler. My first entry for Broome read, 60¢ tattlers, 40 Greenshanks, 4 Marsh Sandpipers, 9 dowitchers, 9 Redshanks, and Bar-tailed Godwits, Black-tailed Godwits, Great Knots and Curlew Sandpipers literally in their thousands. When I arrived at Broome Brice Wells, one of the wardens, had said that being winter there weren't many waders about. It is all a matter of standards I suppose!

The high tide roosts are ideally placed along the beach for excellent viewing, though being public beaches the birds are subject to considerable human disturbance. The whole area is used by the locals and visitors for fishing and no-one walks if they can get there on wheels. I watched one flock of several thousand birds put up 3 times by the one motorbike rider going backwards and forwards along the beach. Even if you do manage to find a flock away from the fishing parties the waders are put up by every passing raptor and you can guarantee a kite every 20 minutes or so. However, on the bright side the birds are often moved a little closer and it does shuffle the flock around.

For me the waders and gulls were the biggest attraction, but the land birds are equally interesting. It doesn't take long to make a real brag list, though this can be a little expensive as there is a twitchers tax on all new species seen!

It can also be hot and sticky with dust and flies which tickle just as a strange bird appears in view of the telescope, but all these slight discomforts are than compensated by the warm welcome, knowledge and interest of the observatory wardens, Gail Hooper and Brice Wells.

P.S. it was really good to come home and see a real Black-backed Gull flying overhead.

JENNY HAWKINS

### Westland Black Petrels – a long-term study

My research project on the Westland Black Petrel colony at Punakaiki is now in its 21st year. More than 50 separate visits to the colony have been made from Wellington over this period. Summaries of research results have appeared in several publications, and a full preliminary account is now close to completion.

About half of the male birds originally banded with stainless steel bands in 1970 are alive and still active in the colony.

Several burrows occupied by pairs of birds have been under constant study each year since 1976. Birds banded as chicks from that year are now returning to the colony and beginning to breed, though they face stiff competition for burrow sites from established pairs. It is a remarkable feature of the species that individuals choose to breed as close as possible to their natal burrow, rather than digging one in a new site on the periphery of the colony, where competition is less fierce. It has become clear, however, that nesting success in the denser parts of the colony is lower than elsewhere, apparently because of fighting. Thus self-limiting social factors seem to play a part in regulating Westland Black Petrel populations.

Of 424 birds banded as chicks on the study colony during 1976–1984, 100 have been recaptured after their return. These birds had been at sea for 5 to 10 years without coming ashore. This indicates a very high survival rate, at least in males. Only 5 females, banded as chicks have been recaptured so far. Therefore, if the sex ratio is 50:50 at fledging, then at least 50% of male fledglings survive to breeding age – an exceptional result for any seabird!

The situation with females is more complex, as:

- \*studies of shearwaters show that returning females banded as chicks are less faithful than males to their natal subcolony though there is no evidence for this in Westland Black Petrels;
- \*females are, anyway, much more difficult to catch on the colony; and
- \*the annual mortality rate of adult females is certainly several times higher than that of males.

Several milestones were passed in April 1989, the 20th anniversary of the start of this study. The 3000th petrel was banded although, when recaptures and repeats are taken into account, the number of birds handled is very much higher than this (some birds have been caught up to 30 times during the study). This work has been done largely by voluntary teams working from about 2.00 a.m. until dawn, on a total of 250 nights. The information gathered will allow accurate measurement of year-to-year fluctuations in mortality, and comparisons between adult males and females, and subadults can be made. Analysis of mortality patterns within a population enables the factors limiting abundance to be identified.

The capture-recapture information for the years 1976–1989 are adequate and complete this aspect of the study, and so no further mass banding and recapture of adults is planned. Fieldwork will now concentrate on breeding success and the behaviour of individuals, especially known-age birds. This should mean shorter visits to Punakaiki.



This year is also the last in which I will attempt to band high numbers of chicks, as these will not return to the colony until 1994–1998 and not breed until the year 2001 or thereafter!

SANDY BARTLE

## The spring drought in Southland and effect on birds

The effects of extremes of climate on birdlife are reasonably well understood. As we well know from local experience, excessive rainfall in late winter and spring can devastate our Fantail population. It can also greatly enhance waterfowl breeding, in the spring of 1962 we had high rainfall on 52 consecutive days and that season was the most prolific for nesting Mallards. The effects of low rainfall, however, are less dramatic and indeed somewhat insidious. This spring there was virtually no rainfall from 27 July to the end of September and the rainfall in October was 21% below average.

Pied Stilt banding was planned this spring, but extensive searches of all usual nesting areas showed them to be dry and very few stilts attempted to breed. With the exception of Banded Dotterels breeding in riverbeds, wader breeding has been very poor. Spur-winged Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers appear to have had very little breeding success. The main breeding season for Spur-winged Plovers is past and very few chicks have been seen, while we have the unusual sight of inland flocks of non-breeding oystercatchers.

The breeding of waterfowl has also been very poor. The sizes of clutches and broods are well down, in fact broods are few and far between.

There is some evidence of a late effort by passerines, but it is unlikely that this will approach the normal level. Our migratory waders arrived about on time, but they did not pitch as usual on the Jennings' deer farm at Awarua. These normally wet paddocks have been almost devoid of local and wintering-over waders to which the new arrivals are prone to decay.

While the mayflies hatch in abundance and trout rises gladden the hearts of anglers the most positive thing that ornithologists can say about the nesting season is that it is definitely atypical.

ROGER SUTTON

## Royal Spoonbills at Napier

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of Royal Spoonbills wintering at the Ahuriri Estuary, Napier. A few birds usually arrive by the end of March/early April, with peak numbers in June and often some present in October. Peak counts since 1982 are as follows:

1982–2; 1983–2; 1984–3; 1985–8; 1986–9; 1987–15 (of 13, 8 were immature); 1988–22 (of 19, 7 were immature); 1989–20 (6 of which were immature). Immatures were identified as those birds with a smooth bill, lack of yellow eyebrow, and in some cases dark primaries.

WAYNE TWYDLE

## Pied Stilts turn tables

In Southland our customary dilemma is that we have too few people for so many birds. Now, with 10 members willing and eager to work on the Pied Stilt project, we have hardly any breeding birds to work with, due to the spring drought in the region (see Roger Sutton's report elsewhere in this issue). The few nests that have been found have been ousted by stoat predation (4), a helicopter landing right beside them (3), and habitat interference through bulldozing (4). There may still be time for the situation to change.

On 7/11 I found a colony of 34+ birds on a shellbank at the Invercargill Estuary, with at least 7 nests and all birds in breeding mode. The shellbank may just escape the forthcoming big tides and the gales that is crashing around me as I write. In 30 years of regular observations, I have not before seen colonial Pied Stilt breeding on the estuary, so it is almost certainly related to the drought. Also on 7/11 there were 21 non-breeding Pied Stilts on the section of estuary traversed. A further 72 non-breeders have been feeding, preening and loafing in a flock on a different part of the estuary since 30/9. They were still there on 3/11, but the area was not checked on 7/11.

It seems therefore that Pied Stilt breeding in Southland is exceptionally poor this year. However, despite the drought we have 6 adults banded so far, but despite much time and effort the quota of 25 is unlikely to be reached.

MAIDA BARLOW

## Mynas attack hedgehog

Just after dawn on 24/5/89 I saw a flock of 7 Indian Mynas gathered around what appeared to be a small brown ball on our lawn. They were quite close together, all on a patch about half a metre across, which was unusual as normally they keep spread out when feeding. However, the ball started to move. It was a hedgehog and one of the Mynas, always the same bird, did all the attacking, stabbing at the hedgehog's head. After the hedgehog had moved a few metres I could see that the Myna was pecking at its face and snout. The other 6 Mynas stayed close to the hedgehog throughout these attacks. Eventually the hedgehog escaped into a clump of bamboo about 20m downhill from where I first saw it.

Several times during the attacks the hedgehog appeared to tuck its head between its front legs, but it never rolled into a ball. This attack by Mynas could explain the condition of a dead hedgehog we found a few weeks previously in our orchard. This had small puncture wounds on its face and snout and its eyeballs were broken. Nature is harsh.

ALASTAIR GORDON

## The ornithological freedom of the Wairarapa

In recognition of the continuing interest and enthusiastic support shown in the activities of the Wairarapa branch of OSNZ by:

Barrie D. Heather and Hugh A. Robertson the Executive has decided to award them the ORNITHOLOGICAL FREEDOM of the WAIRARAPA.

This exclusive order (never previously conferred) entitles the holders to participate in any Wairarapa OSNZ activity and indeed allows them to carry out any ornithological study of their choosing within the boundaries of the region. The letters OFW may be appended to the holders name in association with any academic or other distinctions they may possess.

TENICK DENNISON

## Gatherings of birds

1. Here are more terms to add to those presented by Judith Beirne in the last issue. Most received their first official recognition in the so-called *Books of Courtesy*, dating from the medieval and 15th century and all are terms of the gentlemanly art of hunting. A covey of partridges; a wedge of swans; a rafter of turkeys; a dule of doves; a charm of finches; a tiding of magpies; an ostentation of peacocks; a congregation of plovers; a spring of teal; a parliament of owls; an unkindness of ravens; a descent of woodpeckers; a mustering of storks; a siege of herons. These terms give some insight into the birdlife of the largely rural England of those times.

KATHLEEN C. HARRISON

2. The phraseology of collective terms was first set out in a book entitled *The Book of St Albans* printed in 1486 and purported to have been written by Dame Juliana Berners, perhaps a relation of Judith Beirne!

All collective terms are set out in a book entitled *The Language of Sport*, published by Country Life in 1939. There are various lists featured besides Birds, Animals and Insects. Two items which I like are "A want of whisky" and "An erudition of editors"!

ROY WESTON

## Maud Island work party

Maud Island, which is controlled by the Department of Conservation, is designated a reserve for the management of endangered species. It is particularly suitable as it is free of rodents, mustelids, possums, and goats and mostly free of wekas. Endangered species currently on the island include Takahe, Kakapo, Hamilton's Frog, giant weta, and the snail *Powelliphanta*. Constant work is required to maintain the island and although DoC maintain a full-time officer there, on occasion extra help is required. The main jobs are to keep the island free from pests, including wekas and deer, that occasionally "import" themselves, to keep sufficient area of pasture open for the Takahe to graze, and to continue the revegetation programme.

Brian Bell organised a work party for the May holidays with the prime job of cutting scrub to keep areas of pasture open. A party of 14, from all over NZ, spent up to 9 days on the island. We worked hard at times on the steep faces but enjoyed the novel environment. Limited areas of the island can be mowed, but scrub on most of the areas kept open must be pulled by hand, grubbed or slashed. Left unmanaged (or even grazed by sheep), Spanish heath and manuaka would quickly take over the pasture.

When we weren't cutting scrub we worked a mist net behind the old house, carried out a count of *Powelliphanta*, looked for wetas, skinks, geckos, and frogs, and explored the island. The highlight for many of us was finding a Stephen's Island gecko in the mature forest behind the old house. This is the only record of this gecko away from Stephen's Island. During our stay 135 birds were netted including Bellbird, Song Thrush, Tui, Kingfisher, Dunnock, Fantail, and many Silvereyes. Nine of the latter had been banded on the island in January.

The trip involved hard work, but this was amply rewarded by the experience of a new place.

RICHARD STOCKER &  
PATSY GARRETT

## HELP WANTED

### New Zealand Dotterels on Stewart Island

As part of a study on the southern population of NZ Dotterel, I am gathering records of the species on Stewart Island. The main purpose of this exercise is to try and make a rough estimate of the size of the population, something that has not been attempted previously. Estimating numbers of a widely dispersed species in such difficult terrain is not easy, but we need to know the status of the southern population.

This note is a plea for sightings of NZ

Dotterels on Stewart Island to help us in this task. I have already collected records from some of the more obvious sources (including DoC Internal report No. 11 and all CSN), but I suspect there are quite a few sightings made on trips to the island that are hidden away in notebooks around the country. Please dig them out.

Information required is location, date, number of dotterels, and observer. Any other notes on nests, chicks, distraction displays, etc would be a welcome bonus. Please send records to John Dowding, 34 Marion Street, Macandrew Bay, Dunedin.  
JOHN DOWDING

### National survey of Blue Duck distribution

In an effort to fill the gaps in the national survey of Blue Duck distribution (now an ongoing scheme), keep the National Blue Duck Database as up to date as possible, and get it somewhat closer to publication, I'd like to get hold of details of sightings from OSNZ members who have contributed to CSN throughout the 1980s. I would be extremely grateful if members would check their copies of *Notornis* as far back as 1981 for sightings they may have made. Sightings will be entered on the Blue Duck database, acknowledging the observers. The information on the database is already proving to be an effective tool for the management and research of Blue Ducks, so every sighting is a valuable contribution to the conservation of the species.

The information given in CSN is, by necessity, brief, but lacks the kind of detail needed to make the database useful. The additional details required are: Map reference or accurate geographic description (please remember I don't have local knowledge of every part of NZ, nor do I know how fast you walk); date (to the nearest month is fine); number of birds (include any juveniles); interesting information e.g., sex of lone birds, fighting, feeding etc.

Records should be sent to: Duncan Cunningham, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

DUNCAN CUNNINGHAM

### Falcon & Scaup

The Science Directorate of the Department of Conservation is setting up a number of long term schemes to determine the status and distribution of several native bird species. Two of these schemes are for NZ Falcon and Scaup.

OSNZ members are invited to contribute to these schemes now and over future years. Observations should include: Location; altitude; date & time; number of birds seen; repeat sightings e.g., observer in the same place at same locality each year). In the long term, trends in

population size and distribution should become evident.

Please write to me for further information Nina Swift, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

NINA SWIFT

### Kakas & Keas

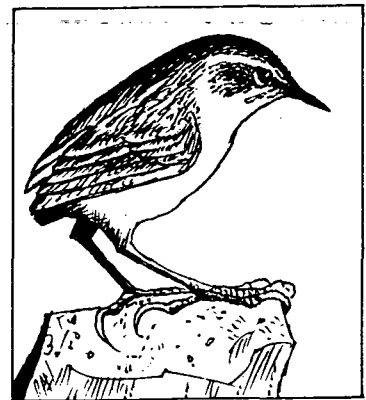
Members are invited to contribute to more long term schemes established by the Department of Conservation. Information on sightings of Kakas and Keas is required and should include: Location (a map reference is preferable but not necessary); altitude; date & time; number of birds.

Please note that some birds may be banded with either a metal band and/or a combination of colour bands. Any accurate observation of these combinations would be most useful. Repeat sightings will of course be the most important element of the scheme.

Questions and information about the schemes should be sent to Michael Wakelin, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

MICHAEL WAKELIN

### Rock Wrens



Ecology Division, DSIR, has been studying Rock Wrens since 1986. Our study, which is partly funded by the Department of Conservation, has two main parts.

On a local scale we are looking at a small isolated population of Rock Wrens near the Cobb Valley in northwest Nelson. This population is at the northern end of the range of Rock Wrens in the South Island mountains and the information we collect on the home range, breeding and biology of this tiny bird will complement Sue Heath's pioneering work, which was based at Mt Cook and in Fiordland. We are also interested in finding out how a small population of Rock Wrens copes with fluctuating numbers of predators.

On a South Island scale Ecology Division and Sue Heath are collaborating



in a survey of Rock Wren distribution. We hope that OSNZ members and trampers will take part in the survey, and send us information about any Rock Wrens they see or hear. We need details of the Rock Wren's location (a map number and grid reference would be helpful), date and time seen, habitat and vegetation type, and your name and address.

If you would like copies of the survey form, or if you have Rock Wren sightings to send, please contact Alison Ballance or Rod Hay, Ecology Division, DSIR, P.O. Box 30379, Lower Hutt.

ALISON BALLANCE

## New Zealand Birds — A Sound Guide

Volumes 2 & 3 in this series are now available at \$15.00 each, which includes postage by surface mail. Volume 2 covers species in checklist order from Broad-billed Prion to Pitt Island Shag and Volume 3 covers species from Darter to the Brolga.

Volume 1, which covers species from the North Island Brown Kiwi to Blue Petrel, is still available. Each tape runs for an hour and comes complete with a booklet that gives brief details of each of the recordings featured on the tape. For a review of Volume 1 readers should consult *Notornis* 36, March 1989, pages 79-80.

Tapes may be ordered from: McPherson Natural History Sounds, P.O. Box 21083, Edgeware, Christchurch.

## Recent Reports

This report covers the period late August to late November and is compiled from records sent in from South Auckland, Waikato, Gisborne/Wairoa, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Nelson, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. The large gaps were partly filled by several "roving reporters". Many thanks to all contributors. Anyone else out there who feels they could help improve the coverage is encouraged to send their observations to me by 24 February for inclusion in the March issue of *OSNZ News*. Any photos or sketches would also be welcome.

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

## Mainly seabirds

A healthy King Penguin spent a day ashore at Caroline Bay, Timaru (Canterbury), in late October.

A Yellow-nosed Mollmawk and a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross found at

Whitianga (S. Auckland), and a Blue Petrel at New Brighton (Canterbury) were the only unusual seabirds picked up dead in the last 3 months, when numbers of wrecked birds were generally low. The exceptions were the 300+ birds on the Mangawhai and Pakiri Beaches (Auckland) on 1 Oct. Included among these were 145 Diving Petrels (one of which had been banded 5 weeks earlier on Mercury Is), 86 Little Blue Penguins, 39 Fluttering Shearwaters, small numbers of Buller's, Little and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, and 3 White-faced Storm Petrels. About 300 Buller's Shearwaters per minute rounded Cape Maria Van Dieman (Northland), going east on 2 Nov. along with a few Fleshfooted and Fluttering Shearwaters and Diving Petrels. The last 2 species along with Little Blue Penguins were much in evidence on a trip from Tauranga to Motiti Is (Bay Of Plenty) on 17 Sept, when 3 White-faced Storm Petrels were also seen.

Another trip c10 km out from Oaro off the Kaikoura coast (Marlborough) on 5 Sept, found much the same collection of seabirds as in July; c.200 Cape Pigeons, 45 Westland Black Petrels and c.50 Hutton's Shearwaters were the commonest species. Also seen were about 10 Shy and 15 Salvin's Mollmawks, 6 Royal Albatrosses, and a few White-chinned and Grey Petrels, an Antarctic Fulmar and a Black-browed Mollmawk. By 12 Nov. Cape Pigeon numbers were down to c.30 and Westland Black Petrels had increased to 110. Mollmawk species and numbers were similar, but only one albatross, a Wanderer, was seen. A few Sooty and Fluttering Shearwaters had arrived in the area. Further south at the Nuggets (Otago) on 12 Nov. the most numerous mollymawks were Shy and Buller's and there were, of course, 10s of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters.

Seawatching at Kaitorete Spit (Canterbury) in Aug. produced over 12 600 Spotted Shags in 2 hrs, heading east from the Canterbury Bight. There was a large-scale southerly movement of thousands of Spotted Shags at the Nuggets on 12 Nov.

Spotted Shags were also seen at L. Taupo (central North Island) on 2 Nov. and a Pied Shag was also well inland at Hamilton Lakes (Waikato) in early Nov. The species also bred for the first time at Bromley S.P. (Canterbury). There were 3-4 pairs among nesting Black Shags in Oct. As Pied Shags moved south, a couple of Stewart Island Shags were found dead at L. Ki-Wainono (Canterbury), well north of their usual range, a movement perhaps associated with an increase in the numbers breeding at Maikiekie Is (Otago).

Also on the increase are the Caspian Terns nesting at Invercargill Estuary. There were 45-50 pairs from 1964 to 1987, c.65 pairs in 1988, and 82 pairs this spring. One of the colour banded birds from this

study area was seen at the Avon-Heathcote Est. (Canterbury) in July, 14.5 years after banding.

Like last year Little Terns appeared in the country during Nov., with 26 at Ranganu Harbour (Northland) on 6 Nov., 3 at the Manawatu Est. on 16 Nov. (a regular site), and 1 in Hawke's Bay at the Tukituki Est. from late Oct. One at the Invercargill Est. on 25 Sept. may well have overwintered there. The only report of Fairy Terns was of 2 at the Waipu Est. (Auckland) on 1 Nov.

The 2 White-winged Black Terns at Spider Lagoon, near Temuka (Canterbury) on 30 Aug. may have come from L. Ellesmere, as the birds there have not been reported for a while. A juvenile at L. Waiholo (Otago) on 13 Nov. would have been a new arrival from the northern hemisphere.

## Hérons, Spoonbills and Ibis

The movement of Royal Spoonbills south from their wintering areas seems to occur in late Oct. The Wairoa (Gisborne) flock reached a maximum of 25 last winter and 21 were still present when they were last on on 14 Oct. In Hawke's Bay, the Ahuriri Est. flock had declined to 15 by 17 Sept. and 2 by the end of Oct. The Farewell Spit (Nelson) birds were still there on 14 Oct., but the nearby Waimea Est. flock had declined to 4 by 5 Nov.

At the Moeraki (Otago) breeding site, there were 50 adults and c.22 nests by 12 Nov., with 14 other birds further south along the Otago coast on the same day. At least 21 arrived at L. Waiholo by 14 Nov., but only 2 remained, the others possibly returning to the offshore Green Island colony, where they were seen on 16 Nov. 3 birds got as far south as Little Waituna (Southland) by 3 Nov.

3 Glossy Ibises that had wintered near Berwick (Otago) were last seen at the end of July, but were "replaced" by 4 birds at nearby L. Waiholo on 16 Nov. It is tempting to suggest a connection between these birds and the 3 at Awarua (Southland) which were present from the end of July to 9 Sept., when the marshy area they had frequented became dry.

The 2 Little Egrets at L. Waiholo and the one at the Ahuriri Est. stayed throughout the spring and there was another at the Ashley Est. (Canterbury) on 3 Oct.

The Stirling (Otago) flock of Cattle Egrets was last seen on 22 Sept. and the Hawke's Bay birds at Fernhill-Puketapu were last seen on 31 Oct. Four birds were in breeding plumage at l. Ngaroto (Waikato) on 28 Sept. and several of the dozen or so birds on the Taieri Plain (Otago) were yellowish by 5 Nov.

Bitterns were reported from way up north at Ranganu Harbour on 6 Nov., at L. Mokeno (S. Auckland), with up to 7 on 26 Oct., at L. Oinga, East Clive and Taradale in Hawke's Bay. In the South Island there was evidence of breeding at Harts Creek, L. Ellesmere, and at L. Waiholo.

## Waders

The first migrant Bar-tailed Godwits arrived at Nelson Haven on 19 Sept., but the major arrival at Invercargill Est. wasn't until 29 Sept. (between 07:15 and 13:30 hours). Like last year, they reached the Ahuriri Est. in Hawke's Bay a few weeks later. There were 128 there on 9 Oct. and 390 by 20 Oct. Is this later arrival at the less important sites widespread? It would also be interesting to look more closely at the ratio of adults to juveniles in flocks of godwits. Reports from Northland indicate that up to one third of the birds are juveniles, but the proportion declines to as low as 30% juveniles in Canterbury. The Terek Sandpiper at Jordan's (Kaipara harbour) on 2 Sept. probably wintered, along with the 7 whimbrels. A Hudsonian and Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits at Mangere (Auckland) in late Sept. could also have been the same birds seen on and off throughout the winter. The small number of Curlew Sandpipers at Ellesmere in late Aug. were considered to be early migrants.

Whimbrel numbers had increased to 20 on the Kaipara by 7 Nov. and were widely, if thinly, spread throughout the country by then, with the majority in the north: 9 at Kawhia (Waikato) on 25 Oct., 11 at Parengarenga on 4 Nov., 1 at Ranganu on 6 Nov. There were 2-3 at the Ahuriri Est. on 20 Oct., 1 at the Manawatu Est. on 16 Nov., and 1 at Invercargill on 15 Oct. Curlews were recorded in smaller numbers but equally widely spread, with 1 at Parengarenga on 4 Nov., 1 at the manawatu on 16 Nov., and an early bird at the Ashley Est. in the first week of Sept., with 2 there by 3 Oct., and another single at Invercargill on 7 Nov.

Considering that the estuaries were well covered in the National Wader Counts during November, there were few reports of the rarer waders. Two more Terek Sandpipers were seen at Karaka on 29 Oct. and the Manawatu on 16 Nov. A Greenshank was at Parengarenga on 4 Nov. Hudsonian Godwits were seen at Farewell Spit on 17 Sept. and 8 Oct. and one was at the Avon-Heathcote Est. on 14 Nov. (possibly the same bird that wintered there). Three Marsh Sandpipers probably stayed through the winter in the Auckland area but there were only 2 reports in spring - 1 at Miranda in Oct. and 1 at Ellesmere in Nov. Pectoral Sandpipers were reported from L. Ki-Wainono on 6

Nov. and the Ahuriri Est., where up to 3 stayed from 16-20 Oct.

Tattlers were widely reported with 2 at Parengarenga on 4 Nov. and 1 at Kaipara on 7 Nov. A third bird at Parengarenga was identified as the Siberian species, as were the single birds at Karikari Peninsula (Northland) on 6 Nov., Avon-Heathcote Est. on 14 Nov., Catlins Lake (Otago) on 12 Nov., and the 2 on the Otago Peninsula on 12 Oct. Tattlers also occupy non-estuarine coastal habitats less frequently covered by birdwatchers and the total number in NZ may well be quite high.

Several endemic waders wandered away from their usual breeding and wintering areas. Two single NZ Dotterels were found in the Gisborne/Wairoa area - at Hick's Bay on 22 Oct. and the Oraka Est. on 5 Nov. The bird that wintered at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary was gone by early Oct., but the usual intriguing bird was seen at Farewell Spit, in partial breeding plumage on 17 Sept. Five Wrybills were still present at Wairoa on 11 Nov., with another further south along the east coast of the North Island, at East Clive (Hawke's Bay) from 7-15 Oct. A Black Stilt reached Matura Is (Southland) on 13 Oct.

Black-fronted Dotterels in Hawke's Bay had their usual problems with floods and breeding was delayed until mid Oct. The first bird for the Avon-Heathcote Estuary was recorded on 24 Sept. and there were 10 at Spider Lagoon, near Temuka, on 30 August. Only one breeding pair has been found (and banded) so far on the Taieri River at Outram (Otago) and there were only 3 birds on the Manukerika River (Central Otago) in Nov. On the other hand, a pair was found breeding at Dipton (Southland), 60 km upstream from the previously known sites on the Oreti River.

## Others

L. Waitaki (Canterbury) held its first Crested Grebes on 12 Oct., when 3 were seen. Last spring several Chestnut-breasted Shelducks 'reappeared' in the South Island, but this spring only 1 was reported, from the Holyford Rivermouth (Fiordland).

Several spring records of NZ Falcons from Hawke's Bay and Nelson suggest an increase in numbers. The recent Christchurch Port Hills sightings have been traced to a breeding pair on Mt Evans, across Lyttelton Harbour. Sightings from more usual habitat included 1 in Hurakia Forest (central North Island) and one eating a Morepork at Mapara (King Country).

Chukors are now reappearing in the Herbertville-Waipara R. areas of Hawke's Bay and Australian Brown Quail have been reported from the district, at Fernhill.

A wintering Kaka was still present at Taylor's Mistake (Canterbury) in late Sept.

and there were 2 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos at Port Levy (Canterbury) on 18 Sept., with further reports of the latter species from Taradale (Hawke's Bay) on 26 Sept.

Shining Cuckoos arrived exceptionally early in Otago. The first was reported on Otago Peninsula on 16 Sept. and they were also reported from the West Coast about the same time; all perhaps helped along by the persistent NE winds? Dates for N.I. arrivals were more usual; 21 Sept. at Mohi Bush (Hawke's Bay) and 24 Sept. at Glen Massey (Waikato).

Rooks continue to persist in the Clutha Valley (Otago) with 35 at Clydevale on 27 Aug. and 50 at the main rookery at Middlemarch on 23 Sept., although they were not nesting at that time. And in the contrast, though exhibiting the same persistence in the face of adversity, a third Kokako was located at Mt Pirongia (Waikato) in Sept.

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

## Regional Roundup

**Northland:** Black-backed Gulls are being colour-banded in the region. David Crockett banded the first gulls at Ocean Beach in 1972 and colour banding commenced in the mid-1980s when Alastair Gordon and Stephen Walker placed bands on fledglings at Ruakaka, Uretiti and Waipu. In 1988, Derek Bettesworth and several local members again banded fledglings.

So far two recoveries have been reported, from birds banded at the Waipu Oxidation Ponds. One was hit by a car at Arkles bay, Whangaparaoa, on 26/5/89 and the other was hit by a fishing sinker at Uretiti Beach (Waipu).

It is planned to band at further colonies this breeding season.

In future years members will be encouraged to observe the gulls because after this season a good number should be banded. (Audrey Williams)

**South Auckland:** October was a busy month. Members turned out to count NZ Dotterels and some battled the elements through Labour Weekend. Also, thanks to much time and effort by Ray Pierce and helpers, and to Pam & Des Agnew for locating the breeding colony, we have got off to a good start with banding Pied Stilts. (Anthea Goodwin)

**Waikato:** Blue Ducks were the focus for our activities in September. Members heard from Eric Fox on the recent establishment of the Blue Duck Captive Breeding Group and the Blue Duck Management Liaison Group. "Operation Whio" is now under way, one of its objectives being to assist with the release of captive-reared Blue Ducks into suitable wild areas.

A field weekend was then undertaken in the upper Ongarue River area, Hurakia State Forest, for members to see Blue Ducks in their natural habitat. A pair was seen in a narrow bouldery stream with overhanging banks and very early next morning they were heard calling as they flew up and down their river territory. It is the male which makes the whistling 'whio', the female calls less frequently a harsher, low-pitched 'cra-a-a-k'.

Another seabird trip to the Bay of Plenty in September added 3 new species to our records from the first 2 trips - 3 Buller's Shearwaters, a Giant Petrel and 3 White-faced Storm Petrels. This was followed by a stimulating talk and video on marine reserves and their potential value to New Zealand by Rick Thorpe. Otherwise, Society schemes have kept members busy; the Cattle Egret count in August; The NZ Dotterel survey in October; the Pied Stilt banding scheme; and the summer wader counts at Kawhia and Aotea Harbours.

The year ended on a high note in November, when Geoff. Arnold brought to life for us a more unusual aspect of ornithology with his talk on "Bird illustration: An historical perspective". (Stella Rowe)

**Hawke's Bay:** Recent field trips include a visit to L. Purimu/Wanstead Lagoon-L. Hatimu on 30/9, where sightings included nesting Black Shags on the island in L. Purimu and c.50 Little Shags nesting in the gully nearby.

Although the weather was not good, the walk to Shines Falls was enjoyable. Tuis were feeding on kowhai flowers, Whiteheads came down to the squeaker, and Shining Cuckoos were flying from one side of the gorge to the other whilst hawking insects. A small group of members spent a long weekend at L. Waikaremoana. Although the weather wasn't always on our side highlights included a Blue Duck, Robin, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Riflemen, Tomtits, and Whiteheads. Now we look forward to a week at Whirinaki Forest Park in January. Monthly counts at Porangahau Estuary continue, with the assistance of a grant from the Ministry of the Environment. (Christine McRae)

**Canterbury:** Our September meeting was treated to a review of the animals which live on birds. Professor Pilgrim had a captive audience as he gave a fascinating insight into the lice, ticks and fleas which almost all birds carry. After discussing the lifestyles of each of these groups of animals Professor Pilgrim showed a practical application of such studies. Most species of birds have species of lice which are peculiar to them i.e. they do not occur on other species of birds. Therefore it is possible to identify birds by the

ectoparasites they carry. A recent NZ example being a beach-wrecked gull found in the NI which could not be positively identified from its remains, but may be labelled a Common Gull from its ectoparasites!

In October Barbara Spurr told us about the studies and conservation work undertaken on the Ashley River by her pupils from Rangiora High School. It really is encouraging to know that such studies are fostered in our schools.

At our last formal meeting of the year, Colin O'Donnell told us about the study of Yellowheads in the Arthurs Pass area. This year the population is down to just 3 pairs, the result of predation by mustelids over the past couple of years. Hopefully the management undertaken during this study will stop further predation and assist the Yellowheads to recover their numbers somewhat. (Paul Sagar)

**Otago:** The NZ Kingfisher project is well underway. Thanks to good media coverage over 25 members of the public have shown an interest in participating in the project.

Up to 11 keen members and friends are carrying out the monthly survey of the Kaikorai Estuary, a 5 km<sup>2</sup> estuarine area within the Dunedin metropolis, never properly surveyed for birds. An average of over 5000 birds have been counted during the first 5 months of the survey, with Black-backed Gulls comprising 60% of the tally.

Next in abundance are the Black Swans with a mere 6. Up to November 38 species had been recorded at the estuary.

The dry conditions in Central and to a lesser extent in coastal Otago keeps down breeding by Pied Stilts. However, despite these conditions banding of adult stilts at least has been reasonably successful, with 12 in Central Otago and 9 in coastal Otago. Margaret Child has been able to band the total population of Black-fronted Dotterels in the Taieri River downstream of Oturam; both birds being banded in one afternoon. (Peter Schweigman)

**Southland:** 22 people attended the August meeting at Roger & Christina Sutton's home, where the usual warm hospitality was appreciated. OSNZ car stickers sold well. Progress reports were given on Kingfishers (Peter Muller), Cattle Egrets (Owen Linscott) and NZ Dotterels. Wilma Muller gave a well-prepared talk defining the penguin species, with slide illustrations prepared and shown by husband Peter. This instructional presentation was received with enthusiasm. Jeanne & Lionel Lobb talked about aviary releases and what to do about them. The occasional aviary escapees were unlikely to be a problem, but intentional releases were occurring more frequently and were a potential threat to some other bird species and some plants.

Lionel pointed out, that present legislation provided no penalty against this practice. It was agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society for possible action.

Michael Criglington co-ordinated this year's migratory wader watch. Rostered watchers visited the usual arrival area twice daily from 15 to 29 September, when the birds eventually arrived.

A leg-noose trapping method for Caspian Terns is being tried. It is based on a system used on this species at Lake Michigan, and promises to be less off-putting for the birds and more efficient than the drop-trap method used previously. (Maida Barlow)

## Bird numbers on Atiu, Cook Islands

It is 15 years since Holyoak (*Guide to Cook Island Birds*, 1980) surveyed the birds of the Cook Islands, and some government officers on Rarotonga have questions about the population status of some of the endemic species on the smaller islands such as Atiu. I was on Atiu from 7/12/87 to 16/1/88 to study the Atiu Swiftlet. While there I assessed the populations of the other bird species and noted any particular dangers to their survival. Numbers seen may have been reduced slightly because a group had been there two months previous collecting birds for American museums.

The notes below cover all the landbirds known to be on the island, except the Long-tailed Cuckoo. In January-February most cuckoos would have been in New Zealand. I heard two cuckoos calling on Rarotonga early in December.

### White-tailed Tropicbird

After hearing a pair calling high over Cook's Landing on 5/1 and seeing one go inland, I watched next day near the Kue Cliffs in the centre of the island. I saw two pairs in aerial displays at between 1445 and 1532 h though at times they were hard to see through 12x binoculars and only their calls told me they were still there. Tropicbirds over land in January are normally breeding birds prospecting for nests. On both 3 and 4 December I saw three birds land at Maungatea Bluff close to Red-tailed Tropicbird nests.

### Red-footed Booby

Up to seven birds were seen close to shore. Sometimes they were feeding and sometimes they were just passing the island. Both white and intermediate forms were observed, with three times more intermediate than white.

### Brown Booby

One only seen on 19 & 23/12.

### Great Frigatebird

Two adult males seen at least twice. On the second occasion they were drinking from Lake Tiroto.

### Lesser Frigatebird

Small groups or single birds were seen often over the island or just offshore. On 5/1 four females and an immature male were drinking from the lake.

### Reef Heron

There were at least eight birds on the island in the following colour forms: six grey, one white and one white with some grey flecks.

### Grey Duck

Single birds and small groups rested in the pineapple patches during the day. Occasionally flocks used the lake and the largest number seen comprised 14 adults and two immatures, on 8/1. I was told that this species has declined markedly and young are rarely seen. They used to breed in the *Casurina* trees that were cleared for the pineapple plantations.

### Spotless Crake

I walked through at least one taro swamp early each morning but never located this secretive bird in any of them. However, Sam Koronui located one in his taro swamp while I was on the island. The most likely place to find them appears to be the two uncleared swamps below the power house, where I saw three on 5/1.

### Lesser Golden Plover

I estimated that there were at least 18 birds on the island. These birds mostly used the reef and gardens where pineapples and cassava grew. On repeated visits I generally found the same number of birds in the same locations even when examined at night by torchlight. One bird frequented the bare floor of a small plantation of mature coconuts. Sometimes during the high tide up to six birds (probably those that used the reefs, as the others were still in the gardens) gathered on the airstrip.

### Wandering Tattler

I counted nine birds by visiting as much of the coast as possible, though a few could have been missed. They were only seen on the reef or the adjacent cliffs (at high tide).

### Brown Noddy

The most seen was 37 feeding off Takauroa Beach on 5/1. Only once was one seen over land and this was over Teenui on 15/1. If they breed at Atiu then the numbers doing so must be small as this was the time that I found two nests in *Barringtonia* trees on Rarotonga where I did much less searching. One was seen resting on Oneroa Beach.

### Black Noddy

Several times flocks of 15 to 37 birds were seen feeding offshore.

### White Tern

These birds were seen over much of the island every day and probably occurred

at a greater density than they did on Rarotonga. Chicks were found in chestnut, mang, breadfruit and kapok trees at heights of from four to eight metres. Most chicks had hatched in December but one egg was laid on 23/12. On 5/1 a feeding flock of 62 White Terns was off Takauroa Beach.

### Cook Islands Fruit Dove

This was still a common bird on Atiu, where pairs are frequently seen in the villages, gardens and forests.

### Pacific Pigeon

One or two birds were seen frequently in the forest.

### Atiu Swiftlet

These birds feed over the whole island but they roost and breed in only two caves - Waitupuranga and Anatakitaki. The former had 116 nests in use and the latter 74. This gives an estimated adult population of 380 birds for this endemic species.

### Chattering Kingfisher

A widespread species but not as common as the fruit dove. Single birds usually seen.

### Indian Myna

This is the most common bird on the island, though fortunately for the native birds that prefer quiet nesting sites, it

rarely enters the forest. A flock of 66 was seen on a freshly ploughed cassava patch.

Unless the forest on the makutea is removed (there is some talk of this for use as fuel) most species have enough protection in what remains. If the last two small vegetated swamps are cleared for gardens then the crake might be endangered. Cats and rats which must always be considered a danger to ground nesting birds were seen in all habitats but the two uncleared swamps appear to be large enough to prevent these two predators from finding all crake nests. While I saw many crabs (another potential predator) in the makatea I never saw any in the swamps used by the crakes.

Two other species are in some danger because they use localised nest sites. The White-tailed Tropicbird does not have large areas on this island in which to nest and the cliffs are becoming too overgrown to give them clear access. The Atiu Swiftlet could become vulnerable if large scale spraying of insecticide was started or if there was undue disturbance to both its breeding caves. However, I think there is now enough local knowledge and feeling against allowing either of these situations to develop and so the future of these birds is reasonably assured.

MIKE K. TARBURTON

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