

OSNZ news

Edited by PAUL SAGAR, 38A Yardley Street, Christchurch 4,
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No. 54 **March, 1990**
Note Deadline for the June issue will be 20th May.

FANTASTIC PRIZES: FUN FOR ALL – ENTER NOW!

A \$50 book token will be awarded for the correct entry, or the nearest to correct entry, in each of two contests:

1. Who are the 10 people who have contributed the most articles between 1939 and 1989 to *Notornis* (and its predecessors, the *Reports and Bulletins 1939-1942* and *NZ Bird Notes*)?
2. Who are the 10 people **still living** (at 31 December 1989) who have contributed the most articles to *Notornis* and its predecessors?

To be eligible, send your entries, together with entry fee, to B.D. Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream, in time to be received by 1 May 1990. Here are the fees:

- Two entries for \$5
- Six entries for \$10
- Twenty entries for \$20

Please make cheques payable to OSNZ.

Results will be announced at the Wellington AGM and published in the June *OSNZ news*. If more than one correct entry are received, the winner will be drawn at the AGM.

The judges' decision, which will be based on the author index mentioned below, will be final. (Correspondence may be entered into, and bribes will be welcome, and treated as donations to the index publishing costs.)

What is this all about?

In the next few months, OSNZ is publishing, free to members, a 50-year index to *Notornis*, 1939-1989. It has been prepared, at no cost to the Society, by Barrie Heather of OSNZ and Tricia Sheehan of Ecology Division, DSIR. The

printing costs are being largely met by a sizable grant from the Lottery Grants Board, and Te Rau Press, Gisborne, is generously sponsoring a full-colour cover in recognition of OSNZ's 50th anniversary year and of Te Rau's long association as printer of *Notornis* since 1958 (volume 8). In addition, several members specified the index for their donations with their 1989 subscriptions.

The index consists of two parts: an author index and a subject index. The two contests are about the author index and the correct answers will come from there; you can check with your own copy when you get it in the mail.

How to work out a person's number of articles

An article (including Short Notes) is credited to a person when that person:

1. Is the author of the article
2. Is one of two or more authors of the article
3. Is the compiler of, say, Classified Summarised Notes, Beach Patrols for the year
4. Is the author or contributing author for an obituary.

Do not count:

- a. Reviews of books, tapes etc.
- b. Letters to the editor
- c. Routine annual reports given as part of the AGM
- d. *Contributions* to Classified Summarised Notes
- e. Material written by the journal editor or anyone else on in-house OSNZ topics such as the Constitution

We have set the entry fees (a) to discourage thousands of ridiculously frivolous entries, (b) to pay for the book token prizes, and (c) to draw in some donations to help pay for the postage and packing to send a \$30 book free to members. This is meant to be fun. Join in; have a go. Please regard the fee as a donation (and any bribes also). Start counting or guessing.

BARRIE HEATHER

From the President's desk

Members will be aware that things have not been going smoothly in the Society, the most obvious effect being the recent delays in the appearance of *Notornis*. As President I have to accept the responsibility for the inconsistencies in some of the Society's operations. I apologise to all members for the delays in the arrival of your journal and any other business matters which may have caused you inconvenience, such as late subscriptions. Fortunately, I can now report that things are coming right. You will have received your December *Notornis* and the March issue is out on time. Accounts have now been sent out for this year's subscriptions. A special thanks to the Auckland team, which worked so hard to put things right again.

One of the changes made to make the Society more efficient is to split the job done by the Treasurer. The Treasurer's role from this year will be strictly related to keeping the books, managing the investments, receiving major income, paying accounts, preparing and presenting financial reports and budgets etc. A new position to which Hazel Harty has been appointed – membership secretary – will

deal with all membership inquiries and subscriptions. By dividing the workload the burden on any one person will be much less.

You will see the programme for the Annual Conference enclosed with this *Notornis*. This year we are concentrating on the amateur contribution to the Society. There will be a number of talks about personal studies being made by members from throughout New Zealand. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn what is happening throughout the country and to get ideas which could be used in your own areas. We would like to see you at the Annual Conference.

BRIAN BELL,
President

New checklist

A new checklist of New Zealand birds is to be published for the Society by Century Hutchinson NZ Ltd. This completely revised checklist has been produced by the OSNZ Checklist Committee convened by Graham Turbott. It contains much more information than the 1970 checklist, including full treatment of fossil and subfossil species, literature lists, and subfossil distributions. It will be available in bookshops for around \$30, but there will be a special pre-publication offer to members; details of this offer will be in the June OSNZ news.

50th Anniversary Publication



A contract has been signed with Century Hutchinson NZ Ltd for publication of the Society's 50th anniversary book later in 1990. This book will review the OSNZ's 50 years and also celebrate New Zealand ornithology in general. It will comprise 69 written contributions from 39 contributors and will have black & white illustrations and a coloured cover. It will be available in bookshops for \$25-30, but will be provided free to all members in place of one or two *Notornis* parts for 1990. Contributors will also receive a free copy. The Council rejected the possibility of selling the book to members, and was unsuccessful in two applications to granting bodies. Cutting into *Notornis* production is the only option to provide copies free to members. The book is a Recognised Official Project of the New Zealand 1990 Commission.

B.J. GILL & B.D. HEATHER,
Editors

Nest Record Cards

A reminder to send your completed Nest Record Cards to me (30 Deller Grove, Silverstream) by 30 April. Blank cards should be available from your RR, but can be obtained from me at the above address.

Please note the change in my address.

HUGH ROBERTSON,
Nest Record Scheme Convenor

Projects Assistance Fund

The Council welcomes applications from OSNZ members, study groups and regions for assistance with projects on birds in New Zealand. Each year about \$8,000 is distributed from the interest earned by the Projects Assistance Reserve.

Council tends to give assistance to purchase equipment (e.g. Pesola balances, calipers) that can be used by other OSNZ members when a project is finished, or for travel costs, rather than for wages, food and accommodation.

In less than 500 words you should describe the purpose and methods of the project and include details of the number of OSNZ members involved, and what other sources of funding you have applied for.

Please send applications to be considered at the May Council meeting to Hugh Robertson, Field Investigation officer, 30 Deller Grove, Silverstream, by 15 April, and for the October Council meeting by 15 September.

HUGH ROBERTSON,
Field Investigation Officer

Back numbers of *Notornis*

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

TOM HARTY
OSNZ Back Numbers



International Ornithological Congress tours

As registrations flow in we are in a better position to work out how many people are likely to take official tours. These tours look as though they will have heavy patronage. This means we will be pushed to have sufficient tour guides. At present we have enough guides to do the

scheduled tours, but we have a very limited number of spares to cover any contingencies or extra tours which may have to be provided. If any further members would like to offer their services as guides, then please contact me (P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) as soon as possible.

BRIAN BELL



Staff & volunteers needed for IOC

The smooth functioning of the IOC, to be held in Christchurch from 2-9 December 1990, will require a large corps (up to 180) of assistants and workers. It is anticipated that while many of these people will be members of OSNZ, the RF&B and the academic community throughout NZ, all NZers are eligible.

The benefits to the individual of events such as the Congress are not only the opportunity to hear, see and discuss important and current research papers and films about birds, but to meet and mix with a vast international gathering of people with a common interest in birds, bird study and conservation. It is essential that as hosts, all NZers at the Congress provide a warm welcome and assistance to our overseas members and guests. Some people even say that greeting old friends and making new ones is the most important part of any such international event.

Those who wish to volunteer a guaranteed proportion of their time as workers for the Congress will be reimbursed in various ways according to the work and time provided. While it is essential that some staff have a good working knowledge of Christchurch and its environs, other tasks are suited to those from outside the district, or who can assist in other areas of the country. For example, assistants are required before the Congress and ICBP in the Auckland area, to staff the Auckland airport greeting desk.

Types of staff

Full-time staff member - these will work full-time at the Congress. They will be required to work a **minimum** of 2 full days before the Congress and 6 half days from 2-9 December inclusive. At all other times during the Congress they will be on call as required. Some rostered night work may be necessary according to the duties allocated. Training will be included. You

will be required to sign an agreement covering working arrangements and benefits.

Benefits will be free registration and all benefits set out on p.61 of the Final Circular but **not** including the Proceedings (a concession rate will be available in 1991 for those who wish to obtain copies). Guaranteed leave to attend scientific or film programme sessions for **one** full morning or afternoon session of your choice on **each** day. Lunch, morning and afternoon teas each day. All full-time staff will be expected to participate in and work for a half day at the Field Day & Fair. Staff Congress T-shirts will be provided. Priority on available staff concessional accommodation (see below).

Staff assistants – those persons who intend to register as full members, student members or accompanying persons at the Congress, but do not wish to be on call as full-time staff or wish to provide their volunteer time outside of the Congress week. Though your time preferences for assistance outside the Congress dates will be accommodated if possible, the organisers reserve the right to accept, vary, or reject your offer of assistance. A **minimum** of 8 hours work will be required, plus some training. You will be required to sign an agreement covering working arrangements and benefits.

Benefits will be all those associated with your registration fee, with a NZ\$5.00/worked-hour credit towards the Registration fee up to a maximum of NZ\$250, depending on other credits already obtained at pre-registration. NOTE. Credit notes will be issued later in 1990 and any refunds due will be paid after completion of the Congress. Staff Congress T-shirts will be provided. Scheduled work requirements at the Congress will be around the person's own wishes for programme attendance. Eligible for staff accommodation if available.

Volunteers – those who do not intend to attend the Congress (or who are attending, but wish to donate their time), and wish to assist in some way towards the organisation. Assistance may be provided throughout 1990 in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch). Volunteers providing more than 20 hours service will be entitled to a complementary Staff Congress T-shirt and a copy of the Programme Volume (contains the abstracts of all papers given at the Congress). If in Christchurch at the time of the Congress, all volunteers not already registered will have the right to purchase tickets to any part of the alternative programme and social events.

Concessional staff accommodation

Up to 96 beds of concessional staff accommodation in 6 single-bedroom flats are available at one of the university hostels. Priority will be for full-time staff

from outside Christchurch. Any surplus beds will be allocated, in order of application, to staff assistants from outside Christchurch. Each flat will be equipped with standard bedding, stove, electric jug, toaster, crockery and cutlery.

Accommodation only concessional staff rate NZ\$25.00/person/night + GST.

If you are interested in being a Congress Volunteer, please apply as soon as possible to:

Dr Ian G. McLean,
Department of Zoology,
University of Canterbury,
Private Bag,
Christchurch;

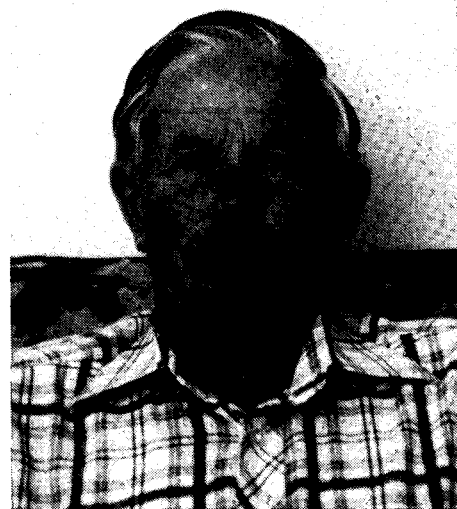
or

C.J.R. Robertson,
Business Manager,
IOC,
P.O. Box 12397,
Wellington.

Profile

This issue we profile our recently-elected President.

Brian D. Bell, President



Brian joined the Society in the late 1940s when in Marlborough and later became RR for the region. He has always had a strong interest in field activities and member involvement. Since moving to Wellington in 1957 he has taken an active role in the region and the Society generally, being responsible for beginning field study weekends and courses and for initiating *OSNZ news*.

He has been a member of Council for years and has already served as President (8 years) in the 1970s. He brings a wealth of experience and background to the Society's affairs, but continues to infuse ideas and enthusiasm. In this he acknowledges the help given him by other members throughout his association with OSNZ and considers this one of the very worthwhile aspects of the Society's

membership.

Brian worked in the Wildlife Service for 30 years, primarily on protected species. His experience was sought by other countries and this has taken him to islands such as Christmas, Norfolk and the Galapagos. His contributions to endangered species were recognised by the award of the Queens Service Medal in 1984 and his appointment as regional member of the Species Survival Commission, IUCN, in 1987.

He has attended two International Ornithological Congresses, the last in Ottawa, where he was the Society's representative in the successful bid for the 1990 Congress. Now he is on the organising committee for this and also for the World Congress of the International Council for Bird Preservation, being held in Hamilton during November 1990. This involvement along with his other responsibilities will keep him busy this year, but he has two major objectives for his term as President (1) increase membership (especially juniors) and their involvement in the Society, and (2) forward planning to take the Society into the 21st century. Meanwhile, Brian maintains his strong interest in seabirds, waders and banding.



RAOU COLUMN

Red Goshawk news

Field work on the Red Goshawk recently concluded with the exciting news that four active nests had been discovered in the Kimberley area of north-western Australia – the last nest discovered in Western Australia was in 1910.

The Red Goshawk, Australia's rarest bird of prey, has been the subject of a RAOU-World Wildlife Fund study for the past three years. It has apparently never been a common bird, but its numbers have declined since settlement over much of its range – particularly near densely populated regions.

A powerful bird-killing hawk, it is found in tropical and subtropical woodland of the eastern and northern coasts and nests in riverine woodland. Subject to funding, it is expected that further monitoring of known territories will take place in future breeding seasons.

Mallee birds update

A follow-up survey on Australia's rarest bird, the Black-eared Miner, has been conducted by the RAOU in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. A survey conducted in 1986 revealed that possibly as few as eight individual birds remained.

The Black-eared Miner is restricted to stands of dense, unburnt Mallee in north-western Victoria. Mallee is a species of *Eucalyptus* adapted to semi-arid conditions in southern Australia and is home to many unique animals and plants. However, widespread clearing for farming has led to fragmentation of Black-eared Miner habitat, and the bird is apparently being displaced from its range by the common and more aggressive Yellow-throated Miner. The Yellow-throated Miner is a closely-related species that seems to thrive in the modified habitat and, to complicate matters, is genetically 'swamping' the Black-eared species. The follow-up study has concluded that the Black-eared Miner is still endangered, although additional colonies were discovered.

DAVID ANDREW

Classified Summarised Notes – guidelines for contributing records of the commoner species

In the last *OSNZ news*, I dealt with the rarer birds; about two thirds of the New Zealand avifauna. The remaining 100 or so commoner species are those that form the bulk of members' observations and notes, and are also the ones that cause the problems when it comes to deciding what to contribute to CSN. It is not easy to decide which records should be published, as we have no way of knowing what observations might be significant in the future. For example, it would have been useful to know a lot more about the distribution of the Yellowhead in the 1950s. However, even if observers did take copious notes on the present distribution of the Grey Warbler, for example, we obviously cannot publish every observation.

Hopefully the following suggestions will help you select useful records for CSN; help ensure that the records are suitable for future reference, and provide some ideas about the sort of thing it is worth recording.

Most contributions to CSN consist of a locality, a count and a date. This information is fine for the rarer species, but for the commoner birds, such a record is only suitable for inclusion in CSN if it adds to our knowledge of the distribution or abundance of a species.

Distribution

In many cases you can use the maps in the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* to assess the worth of a record. As a general rule do not submit observations that simply record the occurrence of a commoner species within its known range. For example, a record of 2 NZ Pigeons to the west of the Southern Alps would not contribute much to our knowledge of distribution, but 2 birds seen in many parts of inland Canterbury and Otago would. On the other hand, a lack of records from a West Coast locality may indicate a contraction of range and is worth recording. Therefore continue to record the commoner birds and you may eventually be able to comment on a change in distribution for CSN.

Some of the less obvious species such as owls, Brown Creepers, and even Dunnocks are probably under-recorded in the *Atlas*. You may find that a surprising number of your records of such species add to our knowledge of their distribution.

The *Atlas* maps are based on presence or absence of a species in a 10 000 yard square and may obscure local details of distribution and abundance. Local assessments of distribution and numbers are often suitable for CSN. For example, keep a look out for local changes in the roosting sites of waders or the breeding sites of shags.

Unfortunately, the *Atlas* does not include maps for all species; the main omissions are seabirds. Almost any series of observations of birds at sea is worth a note in CSN, and all records at sea away from their known breeding grounds are required for the following species:

Rockhopper Penguin
Snares Crested Penguin
Erect Crested Penguin
Chatham Is Mollymawk
Grey-headed Mollymawk
Black-browed Mollymawk
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross
Antarctic Fulmar
White-headed Petrel
White-naped Petrel
Mottled Petrel
Kermadec Petrel
Pycroft's Petrel
Kerguelen Petrel
Blue Petrel
Thin-billed Prion
Antarctic Prion
Salvin's Prion
Broad-billed Prion
Fulmar Prion
Grey Petrel
Black Petrel
Westland Black Petrel
White-chinned Petrel
Wedge-tailed Shearwater
Little Shearwater
Red-tailed Tropicbird
Masked Booby

Bounty Is Shag
Chatham Is Shag
Campbell Is Shag
Auckland Is Shag
Pitt Is Shag
Sooty Tern
White-capped Noddy

In addition, any records from rarely visited or poorly covered areas are always useful – hence the long list of seabirds! The *Atlas* includes a map showing coverage, which will help identify these areas. The more obvious ones are Fiordland, inland East Cape, offshore islands and stacks, and more surprisingly many of the larger areas of native forest. Notes on even the commonest species from such localities are worthy of inclusion in CSN.

Counts

Counts of the commoner birds are suitable for CSN, where a precise count or good estimate is possible for a specific locality.

Waders and ducks lend themselves to this approach, as do surveys of rivers, but please ensure that you define the area counted e.g. 20km of riverbed above a bridge or settlement. Do not just record the name of the river. Counts presented in this way give future researchers a basis for comparison and allow the survey to be repeated.

Counts of most other birds benefit from some indication of density e.g. 20 pipits at the Tiropahi is not very helpful, but 20 pipits on 5km of roadside or in 3ha is much better. Counts of seabirds, passing wader flocks, or Starlings going to roost etc should include the length of time the observations were carried out e.g. not 20 000 Sooty Shearwaters off the Nuggets, but 20 000 in 10 minutes or, better still, between 0600 and 0610 hours. There may be many reasons, however, for contributing a single simple count of a common bird well within its usual range. These could include, for example, an exceptionally high/low figure; the first record in your garden for 15 years etc. If so, clearly state why you have submitted the record.

Qualitative assessments of numbers e.g. a noticeable decline in Fantails this year, can also be helpful. A series of counts in one locality is often more useful than a single count. In many cases you can summarise these series for CSN e.g. 1-2 from Jan. to Mar. increasing to a maximum of 50 by June.

CSN is more than just a list of sightings and traditionally has included short observations on breeding behaviour, food etc. An observation of a common bird within its known range may be suitable for CSN, if it includes information of this sort. Below are some suggestions of the kind of information that may be usefully submitted.

Breeding

Breeding records from poorly covered areas e.g. seabirds on small islands or stacks, Black-backed Gull colonies in the mountains. Records of breeding in new or unusual areas e.g. Welcome Swallows in Southland; SIPO in the North Island.

Counts of nests and birds at breeding colonies e.g. shags, Gannets, terns. Note the stage of the breeding cycle (nest building, burrow excavation, eggs, etc). Our knowledge of the variable breeding seasons of shags, for instance, is far from complete. Counts of non-colonial breeding birds benefit from some idea of density e.g. 26 Banded Dotterel nests in 20km of riverbed or even the number of Blackbird nests in a length of hedge. Often the number of territories can be counted instead of nests e.g. Variable Oystercatchers on a length of beach.

General comments as well as accurate counts can be useful e.g. an early breeding season; good or bad years etc. The dates of return or departure from nesting sites e.g. terns on a beach, petrels over a colony, swallows under a bridge.

Behaviour

Very little is known about the behaviour of most New Zealand birds and almost any observations are useful. Concentrate on the commonplace rather than the unusual e.g. flocking, roosting, reactions to predators, dominance hierarchies at feeding sites etc.

Food & feeding

Like behaviour, very little is known. Again, concentrate on the common rather than the exceptional. Notes on the foods of Harriers, Kingfishers and terns and the food plants of finches and pigeons would be relatively easy to gather, for example.

Movements & migration

Arrival and departure dates of the well-known migrants e.g. godwits, cuckoos, Sooty Shearwater.

Evidence of migratory flights e.g. flocks of SIPO along a coast at night, cuckoos and Silvereyes calling at night, finches and Silvereyes moving in autumn or in response to cold weather. Changes in numbers of birds at one site e.g. godwits stopping briefly at an estuary, increases in duck numbers on lakes in autumn.

Flocks or single birds in odd places e.g. landbirds at sea, seabirds on land, waders well away from their usual sites. Changes in numbers of birds from one season to the next e.g. Redpolls in the Wairarapa.

Plumages

Rather than descriptions of unusual plumages e.g. pink gulls and white Rooks, concentrate more on aspects like the ratios and locations of birds with several plumage

phases e.g. Fantails and magpies; the ratio of adults to immatures in flocks of Gannets and terns; the proportion of Spotted Shags or even perhaps House Sparrows in breeding plumage. Basic plumage details are also sparse for several species e.g. immature albatrosses and mollymawks, and all ages of skuas.

We cannot expect the regional recorders or compilers of CSN to have a complete and thorough knowledge of all our birds. Unless it is immediately obvious from the record it is a good policy to explain why you consider it warrants inclusion in CSN. *Not only will this assist the recorders, but also it is perhaps the best way to decide for yourself whether a record is suitable for CSN or not.*

On the other hand, if you are unfamiliar with an area or bird, it is much better to send in all your records, explaining why you have done so, than to send in none at all.

Finally, yet another reminder that the more good observations you send to CSN, the better it will be. Keep recording the Pukekos and House Sparrows.

My thanks again to all those who assisted with the preparation of these guidelines.

DEREK ONLEY

Blue Ducks reared in captivity

A new national conservation programme, which aims to save the rare Blue Duck from possible extinction, is off to a great start with the Otorohanga Zoo successfully rearing 2 Blue Ducks during the projects first season.

The conservation programme is called Operation Whio and one of the major parts of the programme comprises a captive breeding project. This part of the programme is being run by the national waterfowl and wetlands conservation group Ducks Unlimited. The Otorohanga Zoo is one of only 7 members initially involved in the recovery programme. These members hold one pair of adult birds each, in specially designed aviaries, and hopes are high that with this seasons production, the pairs held in captivity can be increased. The National Wildlife Centre is also heavily involved in the captive breeding programme and it is pairs from the Centre that have ensured a positive start to the project.

The Blue Duck is only found in NZ and like many other endemic species its numbers have been drastically reduced by introduced predators and changing habitat. However, a trial release of 3 pairs of captive reared birds onto the slopes of Mt Egmont in 1987 clearly showed that captive reared birds can adapt to the wild, as 2 years after the release at least 4 birds were surviving, and one pair had reared offspring. Blue

Ducks have not been known to exist previously in Taranaki, but there are a number of fast-flowing mountain streams available and these appear to be prime Blue Duck habitat.

A comprehensive release programme for captive reared birds will be drawn up by the Department of Conservation once 20 captive pairs have been established and a healthy number of Blue Ducks are being reared annually.

NEIL HAYES

More gatherings of birds

With regard to **Gatherings of birds** by Judith Beirne, Kathleen Harrison & Roy Weston (see *OSNZ news 52 & 53*) the following list, taken from *The Field* for 28 February 1925, may be of interest. A herd of swans; a herd of cranes; a herd of curlew; a herd of wrens; a rye of pheasants; a bevy of quail; a sedge of herons (cf. siege of herons in *OSNZ news 53*); a sedge of bitterns; a sword of Mallard; a muster of peacocks; a walk of snipe; an exalting of larks; a charm of Goldfinch; a flight of doves; an unkindness of Ravens; a clattering of choughs; a dissimulation of birds; a gaggle of geese; a brood of hens; a paddling of ducks; a covey of partridge; a spring of teal; a desert of Lapwings; a fall of Woodcocks; a congregation of plover; a covert of coots; a flight of swallows; a building of Rooks; a murmuration of Starlings; a skein of geese (when on the wing); a team of duck (on the wing); a company of Widgeon; a dropping of sheldrakes; a fling of ox-birds; a hill of ruffs; a trip of ducks/geese (in small numbers).

W.H. SLOAN

Seabirds off the Kaikoura Peninsula

Kaikoura offers ample opportunity for the avid seabird watcher to observe from selected headlands, especially Kaikoura Peninsula. Over the past 5 years I have noted 24 species of seabirds within 10 nautical miles of the coast, of which 15 have been observed from the peninsula. Upwellings and commercial fishing activities combine to create this accessible diversity of seabirds. Hutton's Shearwater is the most numerous petrel and numbers fluctuate seasonally, from groups of tens of birds to occasional flocks of many thousands. This shearwater is always present. Fluttering Shearwaters appear to predominate off Kaikoura during winter months, but confusion with Hutton's Shearwaters obscures the status of this species. Buller's Shearwaters are frequently seen from January to March, in streams containing tens of birds (e.g. 170 over 30 minutes on 19/3/88 and 37 over 10 minutes on 20/2/89). Low numbers of Sooty Shearwaters occur from spring to autumn,

although thousands were seen during a southerly storm in October 1985. Flesh-footed Shearwaters are rare off Kaikoura, with individuals occurring during summer (this species usually congregates around fishing boats further offshore e.g. c50 on 5/1/90, 10 miles off Oaro). The presence of Little Shearwaters needs further investigation after a possible sighting in July 1989.

The mollymawks soaring off the peninsula are predominantly Salvin's or Shy. However, occasionally Wandering Albatrosses are seen.

Cape Pigeons occur throughout the year, but numbers fluctuate seasonally with highest totals recorded during winter and spring. This bird habitually follows fishing boats, with c310 congregating in South Bay on 11/7/87. Only occasional birds are seen from the peninsula when there are no fishing vessels. Low numbers of Giant Petrels are seen and their occurrence is erratic, although scanning the wake of fishing vessels is the best way to observe these. Another dark petrel frequently behind fishing vessels is the Westland Black Petrel, which is the most frequently seen *Procellaria* off Kaikoura. The best way to see Westland Blacks is from the commercial whale watching trips now operating from Kaikoura.

An influx of Diving Petrels during June-July 1989 was easily viewed from the peninsula, although larger numbers were seen further offshore. Another erratically occurring group of birds is the prions, with influxes of several hundreds streaming off the peninsula (e.g. during December 1984).

In addition, seawatching can produce records of movements of flocks of up to 400 Spotted Shags, and patrolling Gannets and flocks of White-fronted Terns. Adding diversity are the large herds of Dusky Dolphins, which provide spectacular entertainment in summer.

I strongly recommend that when in Kaikoura, take a brief detour to the Seal Colony carpark and make a 5-minute stroll onto the peninsula, as this location provides prolific seawatching. A telescope is essential. Finally, I would be grateful to receive any records of seabird observations off the Kaikoura Peninsula.

PETER LANGLANDS

OSNZ goes Wildtracking

On 4/10/89 a group of junior OSNZ members (Sam & Zack Williams, Kelly & Tessa Quayle, Michael & David Bell), accompanied by a group of not-so-junior members (Jenny Hawkins, Hugh Robertson, Barrie Heather, Henk Heinekamp, Gail & Tony Quayle), met the TVNZ Natural History Film Unit at the base of Farewell Spit. The following morning we headed out the lighthouse,



Photos — Gail Quayle

where we began filming for a short excerpt about wader identification for the TVNZ Wildtrack series. The rest of the day was spent filming people looking at waders through telescopes before we headed back to the lighthouse for some final footage before the film crew departed.

We then spent the rest of the 4-day stay on the Spit beach patrolling, watching Gannet and Caspian Tern colonies, and looking at waders.

MICHAEL BELL

Carbo cargo

One pleasant mid-November evening, Christine McRae and I went to Lake Oinga at Fernhill, Hawkes Bay. The purpose of the visit was to listen for Bitterns booming. However, the Bitterns were disappointing,

with only a few half-hearted booms in the distance.

Lake Oinga is shallow, fringed with raupo, and quite steep hills rise from the waters edge. While sitting on the side of a hill listening for Bitterns we saw a Black Shag land on the water in front of us. It dived and a short time later surfaced with a 40 cm-long eel which, after a quick struggle, it swallowed. It promptly dived again to emerge with a 25 cm carp, which it also swallowed. Its third dive produced another eel, smaller than the first, and its fourth dive another 25 cm carp. These 4 dives covered a period of less than 10 minutes. No dive was unsuccessful.

This last carp took a lot of swallowing, with the shag wriggling its whole body and lifting itself out of the water ; while this

was going on it was moving out into the lake. It became obvious that the fish-swallowing was over and that the shags wing and body shaking were now intended to dry the plumage before flight. A light breeze was blowing from behind us and out across the lake. When about 100m from the edge of the raupo, the shag turned towards us, paddled into the breeze and lifted off the water. Approaching the raupo, it banked left, lost momentum, and made a forced landing into the lake. The shag swam back out into the lake, going through the same drying procedures. When about the same position as previously it paddled into the wind, banked left at the raupo, just managed to stay airborne and headed off down the lake with what I presume was dinner for the kids.

JIM HAMILTON

Help wanted – banded Kea sightings

Keas have been banded, most with unique colour combinations, in the Mount Cook, Arthurs Pass and Westland National Parks and Craigieburn Forest Park. Sightings of these birds will provide information on range, movements, flock structure, and allow us to estimate population size. If you see banded Keas anywhere, please record: location (grid reference if possible), date, habitat and the band numbers or colour combinations. If you see groups of Keas at Mount Cook, Arthurs Pass and Craigieburn please also record the total number of birds and the number that are banded. Please report your sightings to Kerry Wilson, Entomology Department, Lincoln University, Canterbury.

KERRY WILSON

Recent Publications

Beauchamp, A.J. 1989. Panbiogeography and rails of the genus *Gallirallus*. *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 16: 763-772.

Davis, L.S. & McCaffrey, F.T. 1989. Recognition and parental investment in Adelie Penguins. *Emu* 89: 155-158.

Johnstone, R.M. & Davis, L.S. 1990. Incubation routines and foraging-trip regulation in the Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera gouldi*. *Ibis* 132: 14-20.

Jolly, J.N. 1989. A field study of the breeding biology of the Little Spotted Kiwi (*Apteryx owenii*) with emphasis on the causes of nest failures. *Journal of the Royal Society of NZ* 19: 433-448.

Miskelly, C.M. 1989. Flexible incubation system and prolonged incubation in New Zealand Snipe. *Wilson Bulletin* 101:127-132.

Schmidt, G.D. & Allison, F.R. 1989. New records of cestodes from NZ birds. *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 16: 465.

Seddon, P. 1989. Patterns of nest relief during incubation, and incubation period variability in the Yellow-eyed Penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*). *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 16: 393-400.

Triggs, S.J., Powlesland, R.G., Daugherty, C.H. 1989. Genetic variation and conservation of Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*: Psittaciformes). *Conserv. Biol.* 3: 92-96.

Veltman, C.J. 1989. Flock, pair and group living lifestyles without co-operative breeding by Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*. *Ibis* 131: 601-608.

Wingham, E.J. 1989. Energy requirements of Australasian Gannets *Morus serrator* (Gray) at a breeding colony. *Emu* 89: 65-70.

Worthy, T.H. 1989. An analysis of moa bones (Aves: Dinornithiformes) from three lowland North Island swamp sites: Makirikiri, Riverlands and Takapau Road. *Journal of the Royal Society of NZ* 19: 419-432.

New journal

Bioacoustics – the international journal of animal sound and its recording.

This new journal (volume 1, part 1 was published in 1988) dealing with acoustical matters is a most welcome addition to the literature devoted to this wide-ranging subject. Since the demise of *Recorded Sound & Biophon*, little information has come out of Europe in a single publication accessible to most interested parties.

Papers of particular interest in this first issue include a listing of regional field guides to bird sounds, a technical paper on digital recording in field conditions, and a list of new wildlife sound libraries. Also included are several reviews dealing with new tape recording equipment, microphones and reflectors. Patrick Sellars reviews of several compact discs dealing with natural history sounds are most persuasive. A considerable number of papers which detail research from eastern Europe are presented. Many of these papers and reviews are authored by people well-respected in the field of natural history sounds.

All in all this is a most useful new journal. May it have a long and healthy life.

Subscription enquiries regarding Bioacoustics should be sent to A B Academic Publishers, PO Box 97, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2PX, England.

L.B. McPHERSON

Special offer

By special arrangement we offer members of OSNZ reduced rates for Geological Society of NZ guidebooks, including the latest guide to the Queenstown area, *Queenstown – a geological guide* by I.M. Turnbull & P.J. Forsyth, Geological Society of New Zealand Guidebook No. 9.

This latest addition to the Geological Society of NZ's guidebook series is now available. The Queenstown guide is divided into 2 parts; an introduction to geology, and tour guides. The geology of the Queenstown area is described in a readable, easily understood fashion, and main rock types are described and illustrated. Five tours cover important aspects of the geology that can be visited in the Queenstown area.

The special offer single copy price is only \$5.00, making the guidebook very good value for money.

Guidebooks available

No. 3 *Ancient undersea volcanoes, a guide to the geological formations at Muriwai, West Auckland* by B.W. Hayward, 1979 (32 p.). Usual price \$4.95, special price \$3.00.

No. 4 *Geysersland, a guide to the volcanoes and geothermal areas of Rotorua* by B.F. Houghton, 1982 (48 p.). Usual price \$5.95, special price \$3.00.

No. 6 *Cobb Valley, a geological guide* by R.A. Cooper, 1984 (48 p.). Usual price \$6.95, special price \$4.00.

No. 7 *Extinct volcanoes, a guide to the geology of Banks Peninsula* by S.D. Weaver & R.J. Sewell, 1985 (48 p.). Usual price \$6.95, special price \$4.00.

No. 8 *Granite & Marble, a guide to building stones in New Zealand* by B.W. Hayward, 1988 (56 p.). Usual price \$9.90, special price \$6.00.

No. 9 *Queenstown, a guide to the geology of the Queenstown area* by I.M. Turnbull & P.J. Forsyth, 1989 (48 p.). Usual price \$8.80, special price \$5.00.

The set of six guidebooks is available at the special price of \$23.00 (usual price \$43.50).

Send order with cheques to Geological Society of New Zealand, Publications, c/o PO Box 30368, Lower Hutt.

Birdwatchers revisit Thailand

Between 1960 and 1970 birdwatching in Thailand was rewarding. As soon as we moved into the countryside we saw myriads of bee eaters, kingfishers, wagtails, rollers, drongos, pipits, shrikes, chats, jungle crow, and an assortment of egrets and herons, mynas and raptors. Dr Boonsong's *Bird Guide of Thailand* well indicated where various birds resided.

During a recent survey from south to north we noted the drongos and Cattle Egrets to be still there; the others may still be there, but we did not see them as we were accustomed to. From what we saw and heard, Dr Boonsong's habitat descriptions no longer apply and his information now seems to belong to history books.

Rather than recording bird population remnants during our recent roaming through the countryside and visits to National Parks and Wildlife Reserves, we have tried to figure out what has happened during the past 20 years that could explain the drastic decline in bird populations.

In the early 1960s there were few roads in Thailand. At that time we criss-crossed the country over corrugated, pot-holed dirt roads. Today, there is an excellent and extensive network of hard-topped roads, even to small and remote villages.

Settlers followed the new roads. They had no title deed or lease agreement; they just occupied a piece of land, clearing and burning the vegetation in order to plant crops. No permit was required to settle and build a house, a strictly enforced requirement in Australia and New Zealand.

Initial forest clearance was by loggers; the settlers completed the clearance. The extensive road network, even though laudable, caused settlements to be so widespread that today few forest pockets are left below about 800 m elevation, except along the eastern border and some places in the south of the country. The pockets of forest that remain are generally too small to sustain resident wildlife populations.

In addition to the lower slope deforestation is the forest and watershed destruction at even more sensitive higher elevations by hilltribes. Few of these hilltribes are native to the country; many, if not most, are illegal immigrants that invaded the country mainly after 1945.

One sad part of the watershed invasions is that the lateritic and skeletal forest soils cannot produce more than a few crops before being exhausted. Only in some isolated, low-lying pockets can rain-fed rice overcome the inherent lack of phosphorous that is available to plants in these soils, a deficiency that can hardly be overcome by topdressing.

There are several consequences of this deforestation. First, millions of hectares of watershed are now inadequately vegetated wastelands. The outcome of this is readily observed in the heavy sediment loads carried by downstream creeks and rivers. This indicates massive erosion, lack of water retention in the watersheds, flood flows, and a greatly reduced capacity for storing water downstream after the 4-month wet season. Second, grasses and ferns that have replaced forests are highly inflammable during the dry months. Many natural and man-made fires add further devastation to the watersheds.

Third, the lack of opportunity to grow crops in the invaded watersheds causes severe poverty among the settlers. To supplement their diet, they kill and eat any bird or other wildlife within their reach. Moreover, to supplement their income they act as guides to wildlife shooters from towns or collect live animals for sale.

Unless forests, soils, water, air and wildlife are utilised in a sustainable manner, generations to come will have few resources handed to them. Birds and animals will be known to them from history books only.

BESSEL &
THONGTHAVEE VAN'T WOUTD

Bird banding in Western Australia, 1990

CSIRO Division of Wildlife & Ecology is studying bird populations in remnants of vegetation and roadside verges in the wheatbelt of Western Australia.

Dr Denis Saunders is in charge of the research programme, while Perry de Rebeira is the Senior Technical Officer running the bird banding project within the major programme.

Qualified banders, trainees or interested birdwatchers are invited to join Perry on banding trips to the study area near Kellerberrin. Field trip dates for 1990 are: 19-23 March, 21-25 May, 18-22 June, 23-27 July, 17-21 September, and 5-9 November. Transport an accommodation on field trips is provided free of charge. A Field Allowance of A\$10/day will be paid to volunteers. The maximum number of volunteers per trip is three.

Enquiries can be directed to Peery de Rebeira, CSIRO, LMB 4, P.O., Midland, Western Australia 6056, Australia.

PERRY DE REBEIRA

Terns and Skuas

During a visit to the Ashley Estuary on 18/1/90 we observed an unusually large number of White-fronted Terns. They were in the area where Saltwater Creek enters the estuary at high tide and were plunge diving into the water. Relentlessly attacking them from underneath were at least 6 Arctic Skuas, which appeared at a distance to be dark-phase birds. We decided to make haste to Saltwater Creek to obtain a closer look at the melee, but by the time we had struggled over the mudflats, many of the terns had departed. There was still plenty of activity, however, as the terns were being harassed by 3 dark-phase skuas and one with light underparts.

We assumed that as a consequence of the north-westerly storm the previous day, shoals of small fish had become trapped in the estuary, hence the terns relatively short-lived bonanza. In all our many visits to the area, we had never before seen such a large number of terns feeding - estimated at many hundreds - nor seen a multiple skua attack.

KATHLEEN HARRISON
& SHEILA PETCH

Regional recorders

For the information of members who travel outside their home region, the following is the list of regional recorders to whom records should be sent for inclusion in CSN.

Far North/Northland: T.E. Toohill, 4/35 Kamo Road, Kamo, Whangarei.

Auckland: Mike Graham, 9 Grendon Road, Titirangi.

South Auckland: Barbara Burch, 27 Berhlens Road, Weymouth, Manurewa.

Waikato: David Riddell, Gordonton Road, R.D. 1, Taupiri.

Gisborne/Wairoa: Geof. Foreman, 6 Rimu Drive, Wairoa.

Hawkes Bay: Mary Craven, cnr Havelock & Norton Road, Hastings.

Manawatu: S.E. Cresswell, 98 Manawatu Street, Palmerston North.

Wairarapa: Tenick Dennison, 129 Renall Street, Masterton.

Wellington: Kerry Oates, 12 Jackson Terrace, Ranui Heights, Porirua.

Nelson: Gail Quayle, 6 Tresillian Avenue, Nelson.

Marlborough: Barbara North, P.O. Box 341, Blenheim.

West Coast: Richard Stocker, Inveagh Bay Road, R.D. 1, Kumara.

Canterbury: Andrew Crossland, 46 Frensham Crescent, Christchurch.

Otago: A.G. Hocken, c/o Public Hospital, Oamaru.

Southland: Maida Barlow, 38 Filleul Street Invercargill.

The white Spotted Shag

I can confirm the sighting of the white Spotted Shag, reported by Pat & Karen Miller (*OSNZ news* 52). On a recent visit to Auckland I was taken around the Firth of Thames and on 27/8/89 saw the shag 11 km north of Kaiaua, roosting with Spotted Shags of normal colouration. In this area I also recorded 3 Little Shags - 2 pied phase and 1 white-throated.

JOHANNA PIERRE

REMINDER

Subscriptions for 1990 are now due.
Please help the OSNZ
by paying promptly.

Another reminder

Don't forget to send in your completed Nest Record and Beach Patrol cards to the appropriate convenors *as soon as possible* and preferably by 30 April. Then they may be included in the reports to be presented at the May Council meeting.

Accommodation at South Kaipara Head

Cabin-type accommodation is available at South Kaipara Head. Sleeps 10. All electric, sunny position and great harbour views. A good base for exploring the varied bird habitats of South Head. 40 kms from Parakai Hot Springs.

Daily rate \$10 per person, \$30 minimum.

For further information phone South Kaipara Head 502, or write Zara Holdings Ltd, c/o N.H. Waller, South Head, R.D. 1, Helensville.

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE IS 20 MAY

Seabirds at Doughboy Bay, Stewart Island

From 9-11 December 1988, we were camped at Doughboy Bay on the west coast of Stewart Island. There had been strong winds from the westerly quarter for about a week prior to our visit and it was clear that a beach patrol was in order.

The 2.5 km of beach yielded 70 dead seabirds. Most of these were Sooty Shearwaters and prions, with fewer Short-tailed Shearwaters. However, there were also 12 Mottled Petrels (3 of them fresh) and 6 very fresh Shy Mollmawks. One of the mollmawks was in the process of being washed ashore as we patrolled and a Black-backed Gull was feeding on it. Although these gulls often inspect beach wrecked seabirds, this is the first time we have seen one clearly feeding in this way; perhaps the freshness of the mollmawk had something to do with it.

One other incident is worthy of mention. Just after dark on the evening of 10 December, 2 small petrels flew very low over our tent, making 'kek-kek-kek' calls not unlike those of Cook's Petrel. We could not help thinking that there might be a few pairs of petrels (perhaps Mottled?) prospecting or even attempting to breed on the steep, wooded slope behind us on the NE side of the bay, above the cave.

JOHN DOWDING &
ELAINE MURPHY

For sale

Cleveland Duval (c/o DSIR Plant Protection, Mt Albert Research Centre, Private Bag, Auckland; phone 893-660) has for sale 42 back issues of *Notornis*, from volume 20 part 1 to volume 30 part 2, with indexes. Price \$25 for the lot (includes postage and packing).

Three elderly oystercatchers

On 22/1/89 I saw 3 colour banded Pied Oystercatchers among a flock of some 6700 waders which were roosting at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary. These were later identified as some of the birds banded by Alan Baker in 1969 and 1970, during his study of oystercatchers in NZ.

The oldest bird was banded as an adult female on the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 16/8/69. Assuming that it takes an oystercatcher 3 years to reach maturity, then this bird would now be at least 23 years old. The second oldest bird, banded at the Makarora River near Lake Wanaka as an adult female on 26/10/70, was at least 22 years old. The third bird was banded as a juvenile at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 26/8/69, which makes it just 20 years old.

At the Avon-Heathcote Estuary about one in every 150 oystercatcher is banded. Most birds wear a metal band only and I suspect that some of these were originally colour-banded, but over the years these bands have worn and fallen off.

ANDREW CROSSLAND

Recent reports

Contributions for December-February were received from South Auckland, Taranaki, Manawatu, Hawkes Bay, Wellington, Wairarapa, Nelson, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago, and Southland. Several keen holidaymakers and seafarers contributed as well, but more would be welcome to fill the gaps. Please send your records to me by 26 May for inclusion in the June OSNZ news. Please note that some of these records have yet to be assessed by the Rare Birds Committee.

Seabirds

The plight of the Yellow-eyed Penguins on Otago Peninsula has been well documented in the press, but the less dramatic decline continues elsewhere. The Bluff Hill (Southland) breeding site was deserted for the third year in a row. Fiordland Crested Penguins may also be having a difficult time on the West Coast. One was found dead at Barrytown and 4 that came ashore near Greymouth were cared for and returned to the sea. Other seabirds appeared to fare better, for there were no reports of large numbers of beach-wrecked birds. However, as usual a few Fairy and young Broad-billed Prions were found alive on land in Dec., with 5 Fairys and 2 Broad-bills in the Nelson area and another Broad-bill at Mercer (South Auckland).

Observations from the Cook Strait ferry on 26 Dec. and 2 Jan. gave a maximum of 5000+ Fairy Prions, 10+ Westland Black Petrels, 6 Northern Giant Petrels, 3 Shy Mollmawks and at least one

each Cape Pigeon, Buller's Mollmawk, Wandering Albatross and Grey-faced Petrel. The species seen off Kaikoura on 31 Dec. and 1 Jan. were similar - minus the Fairy Prions and with the addition of 50+ Salvin's Mollmawks and up to 40 or so Westland Black Petrels. This seems to be a typical assortment for the area, but further out, in rough seas, on 5 Jan. c200 Buller's Shearwaters, 50 Flesh-footed Shearwaters, 10-15 White-chinned Petrels and single White-faced and Grey-backed Storm Petrels were added to the list. Buller's (91), Fluttering (86), and Flesh-footed (42) Shearwaters, a single White-faced Storm Petrel, and 4 Little Blue Penguins were seen off New Plymouth on 27 Jan.

On what may be the first "ornithological" landing on the Steeples near Westport (West Coast), large numbers of small unoccupied burrows were found on 15 Feb. The remains of a Fairy Prion suggested breeding, but large numbers of brown feather indicated some other species was also involved.

6 Gannets were flying around the stacks and a little further south, at Punakaiki, on 18 Feb. c40 were seen circling at c130m. Both records indicate the species is still extending its range, but on the other hand, the remaining 6 or so birds at the Nuggets (Otago) failed to breed again this year. Less intrepid observers reported c30 Hutton's Shearwaters off the Waipara Rivermouth (Canterbury) on 4 Jan. and over 200 Cape Pigeons in Otago Harbour on 8 Dec., a large number for that time of year.

Unseasonal also, was a Southern Skua, 3km off Cape Palliser (Wairarapa) in Jan. Arctic Skuas were reported widely from 12 Nov. onwards, from Opotere Est. (Coromandel) to as far south as Aramoana (Otago), with a maximum of 10+ at Kakarengo (Kaikoura) on 27 Dec. A Pomarine Skua was also seen there on 27 Dec. and another turned up at the Waipara Rivermouth on 4 Jan.

Hawkes Bay was a good region to see the rarer terns this summer. A Gull-billed Tern at Porangahau on 4 Nov. was possibly the same bird that has been in the district for several years. There were 2 White-winged Black Terns at the Ahuriri Estuary on 7 Jan., one of which probably moved to the Tukituki Est. by 28 Jan. Also at the Ahuriri, on 5 Jan., was one of the many Little Terns reported in the country from 2 Nov. onwards. Apart from the bird that stayed at Invercargill after overwintering all of these reports were from the North Island or Nelson, with 4 at Kawhia (Waikato) on 18 Nov., 11 at Miranda from early Dec., 11 at Karaka (Auckland) in Feb., 2 at L. Wairarapa from Nov., 5 at the Manawatu Est. from 5 Nov., 2 at Motueka in early Feb., and 1 at Pahara (Golden Bay) on 6 Feb.

The Caspian Terns at Invercargill managed to produce only 2 chicks, but 19 adults and one nest at a new site at Waituna promised better things. 7 colour-banded birds from Southland have now been sighted at the Avon-Heathcote Est. (Canterbury). 2 adults and 1 juvenile at L. Ohau suggested successful breeding in the vicinity.

Herons, spoonbills & ibis

2 of the winter flock of Royal Spoonbills at the Ahuriri Est. stayed until early Dec. In Taranaki, 5 were at the Waitotara River on 26 Nov. and 1 was still at the Waitara on 7 Dec. 10 at L. Wairarapa on 25 Nov. was an unprecedented number and 1 or 2 birds stayed in the district until Feb., with another at Homewood on the Wairarapa coast. Up to 37 birds spent the summer at Bromley Sewage Ponds (Canterbury), but did not nest. Further south, there were 2 adults at Washdyke Lagoon (Tamaru) over New Year and a census of the Otago coastal sites on 4 Feb. gave a total of 85, with possibly another 20 or so hanging around L. Waiholo (Also not nesting). Last year's breeding on Green Island was not repeated.

The 4 Glossy Ibis at L. Waiholo from Nov. on were joined by another by 5 Feb. 3 were seen at L. Ki-Wainono (Canterbury) in late Dec. and 1 at L. Wairarapa in Feb. The Little Egret at E. Clive (Hawkes Bay) has now been there for 10 months and a bird at Waiholo on 4 Feb. may well be one of a pair that arrived well over a year ago. A "new" bird was seen at Motueka Est. on 19 Feb. Cattle Egrets made their usual mid-summer appearance - many in breeding plumage - with 1 at Miranda in early Dec., 2 at Waitara on 20 Nov. and 4 in the Taieri Plain (Otago) on 19 Dec. where there were 10, probably different birds, on 17 Jan. and 11 on 20 Jan.

Single Bitterns were seen near New Plymouth, at the Waitotara Rivermouth on 26 Nov., near Charleston (West Coast), and most encouraging was an estimate of 8 pairs at L. Oinga in Hawkes Bay.

Ducks, geese & rails

Bromley Sewage Ponds held 17 500 waterfowl over the summer with 8000+ Mallards and 5000+ Shovelers on 3 Jan., and 1343 Paradise Shelducks on 28 Jan. Other high counts of Paradise Shelducks included 256 in moult at Waitara on 8 Jan., 100+ at Masterton Sewage Pond on 21 Dec., and 120 that returned to moult at a lagoon near Havelock North (Hawkes Bay) after a 2-year absence due to drought.

1820 Canada Geese at the Bromley S.P. on 28 Jan. was the highest number reported by far, but 646 at L. Wairarapa on 27 Jan. was 300 more than the previous highest total there. A mere scattering of

records at Henley, 1 on 8/2; L. Waiholo, 5 on 8/2 and Papanui Inlet, 1 on 4/2 indicate an increase, of a lower order, in coastal Otago.

There was only one record of Chestnut-breasted Shelducks over the summer, at L. Elterwater on 21 Jan., the rare duck record was of 3 Whistling Ducks near Ada Pass, on the St James Walkway (Nelson); which species, unfortunately, remains unknown. Coots continue to increase. They bred successfully at Masterton and were present at St. Annes Lagoon (Canterbury) on 24 Jan. Marsh Crakes bred at Riverslea in the Te Anau Basin, and 4 Spotless Crakes were found at Pukepuke Lagoon (Manawatu) on 1 Feb. Banded Rails obligingly walked into the open at Opoutere Est. (Coromandel) in Jan. and at Marahau (Nelson) on 5 Feb.

Waders

This account is confined to the more unusual wadery events. NZ Dotterels continue to wander, with 2 briefly at the Ahuriri Est. on 20 Nov.; the first record for many years in Hawkes Bay. Single Grey Plovers and Mongolian Dotterels arrived at Miranda in late Dec., the Grey Plovers staying into Feb. A Large Sand Dotterel was seen at Motueka sandspit (Nelson) in early Feb. The 2 Far Eastern Curlews stayed at the Ashley Est. over summer, as did the single bird at the Manawatu, with another joining it on 17 Dec. 4 at Miranda in Jan. and 2 at Fortrose Est. (Southland) were new records for the summer.

The 9 Asiatic Whimbrels at Kawhia (Auckland) were joined by the American subspecies in Nov. The bird at the Manawatu Est. stayed into Feb. and 1 bird arrived at Nelson Haven in early Dec., with 3 more at the Avon-Heathcote Est. from 16 Dec. Also at the Avon-Heathcote, the "resident" Hudsonian Godwit assumed breeding plumage and was joined on 9 Feb. by another bird from nearby Brooklands Lagoon. The only reports of Greenshanks came from Southland, with 1 at Awarua Bay and 2 at Waituna Lagoon in Nov. A Marsh Sandpiper was still present at Miranda and 1 was seen at L. Grassmere (Marlborough), another regular site, on 19 Jan. There were 2 Curlew Sandpipers at Miranda in Jan., 1 at L. Wairarapa on 30 Dec. and 8 at Awarua Bay in Nov. 2 of the 3 Pectoral Sandpipers at the Ahuriri Est. stayed throughout the summer, as did the one at the Ashley Est. 3 birds were at Miranda in Jan. and 1 at L. Wairarapa on 10 Feb. The Terek Sandpiper that arrived at the Manawatu Est. stayed into Feb. and 1 was at Miranda in Dec. and Jan.

I received only one report of a Wandering Tattler, from Oakura (Taranaki), on 8 Dec., whereas Siberian Tattlers were identified at Miranda and the Manawatu Est. over summer, at the Kaikoura Peninsula on 31 Dec., and at the Avon-Heathcote Est. from 17 Dec. on.

The rest

NZ Falcons were reported from Ngutunui (Waikato) on 18 Nov. Knight's Point and L. Moeraki (Westland), in Wanaka and Hawea townships (Otago) in Jan. and Dec. respectively, and in even more suburban surroundings in Dunedin on 30 Dec. and 22 Jan. Breeding was confirmed near Te Anau, the Matukituki River (Otago), and at the Pinnacles (Wairarapa) where 3 chicks fledged.

37 Kakas, a large number by today's standards, were reported from Mt Deelaw (Westland) in Dec. and, also in Westland, 2 were seen at Mt Kerr (Wainihinihi Stream) on 3 Dec. and Rahu Saddle on 7 Jan. Odd reports of Eastern Rosellas have come from Puketitiri (Hawkes Bay) over the past few years. Even odder are the goings on at Sandy Point, Invercargill, where an acceptable Sulphur-crested Cockatoo has been joined by an Australian King Parrot and an albino NZ Pigeon. A small "colony" of Barbary Doves near Havelock North has apparently been free-flying for several years. Rock Wrens were reported from Lathrop's Saddle, Styx River (Westland) - 3 on 17 Jan. - and at Dore Pass, Homer and Gertrude Saddles (Fiordland). They are apparently still present at the Homer Tunnel.

Riflemen were confirmed breeding on Otago Peninsula - in the walls of Lanarch Castle, and a Tomtit there, on 7 Jan., had wandered a few kms eastward.

Redpolls in the Wairarapa apparently return to the Masterton area in August and depart (where to?) in March. A Gull Bunting report from Mangakuri Beach, is the first from Hawkes Bay for several years; if confirmed. Also in Hawkes Bay, Rooks have almost been eliminated from the Heretaunga Plains by DSIR, although a flock of c110 remained at Fernhill until at least Nov. c60 Rooks near Clinton (Otago) on 11 Nov. remained unpersecuted. Finally, 2 rarities. A Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike in the Rotorua district in late Oct. and a Pallid Cuckoo at Omarama (Otago) in Jan.

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

Auckland: Michael Taylor left on study leave to England, and returns in May 1990. Apart from his chemistry work, he has been busy recording Lapland Buntings, Shore Larks, and other interesting European species.

In September, members were treated to a presentation on the birds of the southern Kermadec Islands by Graeme Taylor. Graeme has a superb all-round knowledge of ornithology and botany, which with his great talent for using a

camera, brings to life these more remote parts of NZ. Field outings in September included the final Tomtit study in the Waitakeres and a visit to the expanding Muriwai Gannet colony, with Chris Robertson a special guest providing commentary.

The October meeting featured Jay Graham, a visiting American entomologist and environmentalist. Our field trips involved various groups assisting DoC with the NZ Dotterel survey. November was even busier, with Manukau and Kaipara wader counts, both hampered by low tides, then a group of 15 visited Tiritiri Island for the spring survey. The Saddlebacks on Tiritiri are faring well. Five chicks have so far fledged from 2 natural nest sites and there were another 11 chicks developing well in nest boxes. Ten eggs in nest boxes were also being incubated at the time of our visit. Predation by Mynas continues to be a problem, with 5 eggs taken from 3 nests, and 2 chicks each taken from 2 nests. Kakariki were found breeding in a hole amongst the roots of a large pohutukawa, and the recently released Whiteheads had started breeding.

The November evening meeting featured Diana Brunton, whose presentation on Least Terns and Piping Plovers in a densely populated area of the eastern USA was excellent. It illustrated how birds can be successful under such pressure, so long as one has dedicated, lateral-thinking conservationists, prepared to put nearly as much time into organising the public, as into for caring for the birds themselves. (Mike Graham)

South Auckland: Our trip to Little Barrier in late November was the usual treat. Saddlebacks were much more in evidence and those who went up early in the morning to the junction of the Valley & Hamilton tracks not only heard a distant Kokako, but saw a Kiwi beating a retreat before us.

At our November meeting we compared notes and slides on our recent visits to Tiritiri Island. Some members were able to go and see the release of the first Whiteheads in early October and others have joined day-trips throughout the summer. After completing the wader counts, the year ended happily with our usual barbecue.

The January beach patrol produced 32 seabirds of 15 species. The first colour-banded Pied Stilts were seen at Miranda on 3/12/89, and since then at least 3 more have been recorded, all from Kopuku. (Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato: In the past few months several members have put aside their binoculars temporarily, sat themselves down in front of a computer, and brought out some books on birds and other topics. The first, which came out in June, was a modest publication

by the RR & Adrian Plant – *Beach Patrollers Guide to Stormcast Seabirds (Procellariiformes) found in New Zealand*. Next came Ross Galbreath's scholarly book on the life of Sir Walter Buller. Two further books were launched within 2 days of one another in December. Stuart Chambers fills a gap on ornithological shelves with *Birds of New Zealand: Locality Guide*. This includes not only where to find most NZ birds, but also has a comprehensive description of each, with its habitat, range, characteristics in the field, and conspicuous features. The photographs of each species are of a high standard, many being taken by Bay of Plenty member Brian Chudleigh. Stuart not only wrote the book but published it as well. Finally, Pam Bovill has written a history of the Glen Massey district and amongst chapters dealing with the school, early days of farming, coal mining etc, she has included one on birds. Who will be next into print? (Stella Rowe)

Bay of Plenty: On 30/9/89 we held a "special" meeting at the home of Ailsa McCutcheon, in Arataki, Mt Maunganui. It was a combined social occasion and talk & slide show by the RR of recent travels and birdwatching in Europe. There were 20 attendees, 13 of whom were members. As far as I could tell everyone enjoyed the evening very much. I would like to thank our hostess' Ailsa McCutcheon and Lois Wilson for the idea and for putting it on. On 2/12/89 we had our Christmas barbecue at the RRs home. Again this was well attended (12 members and 8 non-members), so I presume people enjoy it as they keep turning up year after year. Brian & Cushla Chudleigh showed a video of their autumn visit to NW Australia.

On both occasions people took the trouble to travel from as far afield as Katikati, Kawerau and Whakatane – which was much appreciated. (Paddy Latham)

Hawkes Bay: A group of 12 members recently returned from a week-long stay at the Whirinaki Recreation Camp at Manganui. We managed to cover most of the short walks in the area and were rewarded with sightings of many different bush birds. Around the camp Long-tailed Cuckoos, Morepork, Falcon, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Kaka, Tui, Tomtit, and California Quail were but a few of the species seen. A walk to Whirinaki waterfall was rewarded by the sighting of 3 Blue Ducks. Other areas visited during our stay included Arahaki Lagoon, Ohope Spit, Ohiwa Harbour, and Matata Lagoon. (Christine McRae)

Wairarapa: It has been a poor banding season for Black-fronted Dotterels, with only 7 birds banded. However, we have some enthusiastic ideas for winter trapping of birds along the sewage pond margins. A lot of passerine banding has been done

since May 1989, however. Some 1425 birds have been banded, mostly by Dave Sim. Dave has also banded 36 Black Shags at Matthews and Deep Lagoon and his latest venture is banding Flesh-footed Shearwaters from Andrew Sims fishing boat about 3km off Cape Palliser. These are caught in a scoop net as they come close to the boat. He finds them somewhat rough on his fingers but has banded 26 to date.

The first evening meeting for 1990 was held at the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre. Brian McNab (Florida) gave an interesting account of his studies of the metabolism of flightless birds; Paula Bell described the walkways DoC have developed in the region and illustrated these with slides; and Rob Wheeldon showed an excellent video demonstrating the behaviour of his Falcons with their 3 chicks. He brought one of these young birds with him and it sat quietly on his wrist while he described it.

On 19/2/90, 25 members and friends gathered some 80km from Masterton at the end of Ruakokuputuna Road, where Shane Wilkinson took us some 3kms into the Haurangi Forest Park. We didn't see any of the hoped for Kakas (Shane has seen up to 12 in this area), but it was a very hot day and Kakas are most active when it is cool. However, there was a lot of birdlife in the park.

Rifleman were plentiful and Fantail, Tomtit and Grey Warbler were easily seen. Tuis abounded and several Bellbirds were seen, which is unusual in the Wairarapa. Pigeons were seen occasionally and heard frequently. The day concluded with Shane showing us his Red- and Yellow-crowned Parakeets which he has bred for several years. (Tenick Dennison)

Nelson: The end of the year saw Nelson members doing the usual Black-backed Gull nest count and chick banding on the Boulder Bank. With most of the large-scale sources of mad-made food, such as rubbish tips and sewage outfalls, being controlled the number of nests appears to be decreasing. Once again the indefatigable help of our junior members Sam & Zack Williams, with the assistance of friends Gillian & Mathew Gaze and Emily & Hayden Thomas, made the chick banding a relatively easy task – at least for the banders.

Peter Cook, who began as a junior in Nelson some years ago, is now working as a guide in Kakadu National Park, near Darwin. When he comes home he always offers to give local members a slide evening, showing his latest Australian collection. This year he showed some beautiful slides of the national parks and general landscape and fauna & flora on a trip from Sydney to Kakadu. Peter has recently published a book of his photographs of Kakadu, called *The Yellow Waters Experience*. (Jenny Hawkins)

West Coast: A pair of Spur-winged Plovers nested on Bob McAuliffes property in 1987. Their 1988 nest was right beside the previous one and in 1989 their second nest was in the same spot; an earlier unsuccessful nest was about 50m away. Each year they lay a 3-egg clutch and raise 2 chicks. (Stewart Lauder)

Canterbury: In October 3 carloads of members headed off to the Craigieburn Range to look for nesting birds. Under the guidance of Don Hadden, a Tomtit nest was found and Grey Warblers were seen building. Riflemen were in the area and a very friendly Kea made this a great trip.

The end of the year function in December was another enjoyable evening. Thanks to Paul & Joy Sagar for their hospitality.

The first formal event of the year was the usual members' evening where activities and sightings made during the summer are discussed. During the meeting we were treated to some excellent slides from Don Hadden and Peter Reese. Don showed slides of seabirds he had photographed off the Kaikoura coast and around Stewart Island and Peter illustrated recent trips to Tiritiri and Little Barrier Islands and showed some of the birds nesting within Christchurch. (Barry Armstrong).

Otago: Through the media you will have heard, read or seen of the disaster that struck the Yellow-eyed Penguins of Otago Peninsula. John Darby reports that about 140, mainly adults, have died. This represents over 30% of the population on the Peninsula; 40% of the 140 birds had been banded. All in all it is a very grim picture. What makes it worse is the mystery around the deaths; so far the cause has not been ascertained.

The Kaikorai Estuary survey is continuing and over 7000 birds (25 species) were present during the February count. Black-backed Gulls accounted for 52% of these, but all ducks and swans represented only about 25% of the total.

The dry conditions in coastal Otago have affected Pied Stilt breeding; the January count of Pied Stilts at the Kaikorai Estuary was 379 birds, of which only 23 (6%) were juveniles. No doubt Central Otago and Southland have similar figures. It is sad to report that the Royal Spoonbills are not breeding on Green Island, despite early promises. The first birds arrived in mid November, but by December had only used this ideal breeding site as a roost. The high winds around the coast in December may have a bearing on it.

The Kingfisher project is continuing. Very few reports came in over the summer, but we expect an increase from now until the end of the project in August. (Peter Schweigman)

Southland: True to form, the summer wader census on 25/11/89 showed that, while Invercargill Estuary's shellbanks attracted the biggest number of waders (3064, 10 species), the east end of Awarua Bay had more rarities (1225 birds, 12 species). It was unusual to find no Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and only 19 Golden Plovers. 19 people covered 10 coastal areas between Fortrose Estuary and the Waiou Rivermouth.

A good walk from Awarua Bay to Waituna and back on 16/12 was notable for the bog-plants on the Waituna Wetland Reserve, all in full bloom. Birds at Waituna were disappointing, and the plan to look at Awarua Bay's rare migrants on the return leg was scotched by deteriorating

weather. Poor weather also forced the cancellation of the Boxing Day trip to Forest Hill Bush. February's activity is a survey of the Oreti River's 115km, looking especially for Black-fronted Dotterels; one of which was banded at Dipton on 7/11/89 and was found with spouse and offspring 32km downstream on 9/2/90.

An evening of bird- and holiday-slides on 7/2/90 also included a "What, how and where to look for" session on Black-fronted Dotterels, preparatory to an all-out effort on 24-25/2 to cover the 60km still untramped. Unusually low river levels are a real bonus and old-time Oreti-plodders, like Barrie Heather, will be surprised to hear that it is easily fordable as far down as Oporo. (Maida Barlow)

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