



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. 55 June, 1990

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

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM 1990

The Society's Annual Conference & AGM was held at Marsden Collegiate, Wellington, during the weekend of 11-13 May. Friday evening got us off to a relaxed start, with early arrivals gathering in the vicinity of the bar to renew acquaintances and catch up on happenings and sightings of the past 12 months.

The theme of the short talks on Saturday Afternoon was member's projects. Jenny Hawkins told us about the banding study of Black-backed Gulls on the Nelson Boulder bank. Despite Jenny's assurances about the beauty of the gulls I think a lot of members remained unconvinced, particularly after learning how the nesting materials used by the gulls varied with the rubbish being generated by the citizens of the nearby urban area. Paul Sagar then spoke about the study he and Donald Geddes are undertaking on the breeding of oystercatchers on farmland in mid Canterbury. While they have obtained some interesting results these weren't obtained easily because they soon found that oystercatchers are intelligent; some field trips were very frustrating because the birds outwitted the observers!

Michael & David Bell then gave an excellent account of their backyard bird banding study. After experimenting with a cardboard box trap they graduated to a mist net and during the past 3 years have banded about 2200 birds - Greenfinches and Silvereyes being the most common species. Their slides showed their well set up banding hut and detailed note taking; an example of just what can be achieved without leaving home.

The Avon-Heathcote Estuary is close to home for Andrew Crossland, who is about half way through a 10-year project of regular counts. The numbers and variety of birds recorded at the estuary show just how important it is for waterbirds and how

their numbers vary with time of year and between years. The possibility that there is a regular migration of Welcome Swallows in the New Zealand region was discussed by Derek Onley. Using his counts of swallows and their nests on the West Coast, references to swallows in CSN, and reports of swallows at sea Derek certainly provided us with something which warrants further investigation.

Interesting comparisons of bird numbers in Otago and Wellington Harbours during surveys conducted 11 years apart were presented by Peter Schweigman and Hugh Robertson. Peter reviewed the results of Otago Harbour counts conducted in 1977 & 1988, showing how there had been significant decreases between count periods in the numbers of Black-backed Gulls, Black-billed Gulls, and Red-billed Gulls; while numbers of Little Shags and Mallards had increased. Hugh reviewed the results of Wellington Harbour surveys conducted in 1975/77 and 1986/87. Between these count periods there were significant increases in the numbers of Little Shags, Little Black Shags, and Spotted Shags; the numbers of Mallards and Variable Oystercatchers also increased. There had been a slight decrease in the numbers of Black-backed Gulls and while the numbers of Giant Petrels had also decreased the distribution of this species showed a remarkable change with the birds favouring a particular effluent outfall.

A novel way of obtaining recoveries of banded birds was explained by Peter Reese. His study at the University of Canterbury involves banding nestlings, with Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, and Redpolls the commonest accessible species. Most of his recoveries came from birds which were killed by flying into glass-walled walkways on the campus. Local cats had also

discovered this source of a free lunch and Peter had to institute prompt and regular checks below the walkways; otherwise all he found were a few feathers.

Finally, Kerry Oates described a study of territories and breeding success of Blue Ducks on a section of the Maunganui-A-Te-Ao River.

All these talks illustrated what a valuable and interesting contribution to NZ ornithology can be made by individual and small groups of OSNZ members.

The afternoon session finished with Lou Gurr presenting an entertaining account of his reminiscences of personalities and events associated with the early days of the Society. Alan Wright then gave an illustrated account of the new Black Stilt enclosure and observation hide at Twizel.

We were treated to a fine meal that evening and after the AGM the bar ensured that discussions went on into the small hours.

We reconvened on Sunday morning to hear Sandy Bartle present a stimulating review of the transequatorial migrations of gadfly petrels in the Pacific. Facts and figures flowed freely as Sandy demonstrated the fragile situation of some populations and highlighted gaps in our knowledge.

The rest of the morning was spent in workshops where Brian Bell showed us banding procedures, Ralph Powlesland explained beach patrolling and provided tips on identification of beach-washed seabirds, Ben Bell explained moult, Rob Guest explained the procedures for reporting rare birds, and Hugh Robertson promoted the Nest Record Scheme. These workshops were very informative and just

the right length, so we didn't suffer from information overload.

Of course I've only covered the main events of the weekend in this review. Other features were videos of the recent wader banding expedition to NW Australia and seabirds observed from a fishing boat off Kaikoura. Michael & David Bell won the prize for the most correct answers (10 out of 12) in the mystery bird photo competition (I still reckon the supposed Pipit wasn't one at all!). And it wouldn't do to finish without mentioning Hugh Robertson's great (and successful) efforts at selling copies of the *Atlas of Bird Distribution in NZ* and packets of the Society's greetings cards.

I found it a most relaxing, informative and enjoyable weekend. Thanks to Kerry Oates and his team for all their efforts in organising such a successful event.

P.S. Don't just read about it next year. Plan to attend yourself. See you in Marlborough.

PAUL SAGAR

From the President's desk

Our Annual Meeting has passed and despite not being able to deal with the main business – no audited accounts were available and the notices of motion could not be put because insufficient notice was given – most members who attended felt there was a very positive attitude at the gathering. The accounts and notices of motion will be discussed at a Special General Meeting in early August.

Members will realise that the finances of the Society had drifted for a few months and it is taking time (all given voluntarily) to get things back on the rails. Council will be meeting again in July to put the final touches to this and to get more direction into our financial affairs. This will mean bringing in new systems, which will make it possible to see what our financial position is from day to day, rather than wait for our six-monthly Council meetings. The senior administrative members of Council (President, Secretary, Treasurer) will report on a regular basis to Council to make sure there are no further breakdowns in our administration.

On the positive side it was most encouraging to note the number of members who have great confidence in the Society and have made donations to our special funds and the general running of the Society. One member even pre-empted the notices of motion by paying a "supporting members" subscription.

This year we see three substantial publications of the Society – the 50-year index, 50th anniversary publication, and a new checklist.

The AGM featured the studies being carried out primarily by our amateur members. The work being done by these members was an inspiration to us all and

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.) SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

In accordance with the Constitution, notice is hereby given that a Special General Meeting will be held on Monday 6 August 1990 at the Conference Room, Conservation Sciences Centre, Department of Conservation, 58 Tory Street, Wellington, at 7.45 p.m.

Business: Adoption of 1989 Financial Statement.

Notices of Motion

The following notices of motion duly moved and seconded have been received for the Special General Meeting.

1. That the Constitution be amended to change the subscription rate for junior membership from 75% to 50% of the rate fixed for ordinary membership.

New Section 5(b) will read:

"Junior members being members up to twenty years of age who shall pay a subscription rate at 50% of that fixed for the ordinary members and shall be entitled to full rights of ordinary members."

2. That two new classes of membership be adopted and added to Section 5 of the Constitution:

5(h) **Supporting members** who have all the rights of ordinary membership but who elect to pay at least twice the normal subscription to support the Society.

5(i) **Corporate members** who shall pay a subscription five times that fixed for ordinary membership and who shall be entitled to all privileges of one ordinary member but shall also be entitled to some free recognition in the Society's publications as determined from time to time by the Council of the Society."

3. That the rates of subscription for 1991 be set at \$40 for ordinary membership and all other subscriptions be adjusted proportionately so that membership rates for husband/wife, family, institution and life members are corrected according to the Constitution.

Moved: B.D. Bell

Seconded: S.J. Triggs

Note: These motions were formally endorsed by the AGM, but have to be passed at a Special General Meeting to comply with the requirements of the Constitution.

R. EMPSON
Hon. Secretary

index, 50th anniversary publication, and a new checklist.

The AGM featured the studies being carried out primarily by our amateur members. The work being done by these members was an inspiration to us all and showed what could be done without any special programmes or major financial input, the sort of thing available to us all. It is this grass-roots bird study which is the Society's life blood. Let's see more of it.

This year will be one of the most notable in the Society's history. As co-sponsor (with the Royal Society) of the 20th International Ornithological Congress we will be hosts to over 1000 ornithologists from all over the world. While some may consider the papers to be presented at the Congress to be "too scientific" I suggest they think again – remember there will be six paper sessions running concurrently, so you will have a wide choice. There will be something for everyone. Apart from the scientific content of the Congress, remember there is a social side. It is your chance to meet birdwatchers

(even the most professional ornithologist enjoys watching birds) from all over the world. They want to meet New Zealand bird people and to talk about your birds. And this is your "patch", you know where the birds are. Yes, perhaps registration is a little costly (but not necessarily so when you look at your golf club sub.), but there are ways of participating cheaply as a staff member or volunteer.

For those who cannot attend because of business or personal reasons you need not miss out completely. Many of the visitors will be traveling about the country looking at our scenery and birds. They will be looking for advice and guidance as they move from region to region. Let your RR know that you will be able to help locally as they are establishing a network of local guides and helpers.

The Society and New Zealand will be judged on the hospitality we give to our fellow birdwatchers.

One important resolution for regions from Council was that where at all possible

there should be a local annual meeting (preferably about March/April) at which the RR is elected or re-elected for ratification by Council. This is move to give the average member that little bit more say in the affairs of their Society.

BRIAN D. BELL
President

Robert Falla Memorial Award

At the Society's AGM in Wellington on 12 May the Presidents announcement that the 1990 Falla Memorial Award went to Barrie Heather was received with enthusiastic and warm applause. (Barrie was so surprised by the announcement that he did not have time to don any of his unusual hats or boots before being presented with the award!)



Barrie has been a member of the Society since 1949. He was elected Editor of *Notornis* and Member of Council in 1978 and continues in these roles today. His contribution as Editor of *Notornis* has been especially significant, both in maintaining the high quality of the journal and encouraging amateur members to contribute and helping them to meet the standard required – often a thankless task.

Barrie has been a regular contributor to *Notornis*, with a total of some 30 articles, plus contributions to almost every issue of Classified Summarised Notes since 1949. His more important papers include those about the Black-fronted Dotterel in the Wairarapa (1973), the Vanua Levu Silktail (1977), Dabchick (1978, 1988), Cattle Egret in New Zealand (1978, 1982, 1986), and the Black-fronted Tern (with C. Lalas – 1980).

In addition, he was the author of the ornithological section of *Biology for Sixth Forms* (1963) which, because of its emphasis on NZ examples, has been important in promoting ornithology in schools. The section on birds, republished in 1966 as *A Biology of Birds, with particular reference to NZ Birds* (102 pp.), has been invaluable to private students of ornithology in NZ and WEA tutors in this subject over many years.

More recently, Barrie has been the major contributor to the production of the 50-year index of *Notornis*.

Obviously, Barrie's outstanding contribution to the study of birds in NZ and his sustained service to OSNZ make him a worthy recipient of the Falla Memorial Award.

PETER BULL & JOHN FLUX

CSN – a reminder

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

In the first instance members should send their material to the appropriate Regional Recorder, who is responsible for collating the region's contribution. In order to have time to complete this task, Regional Recorders need to receive members' contributions by 31 July.

The CSN year runs from 1 July to 30 June, so now is the time to extract all those observations from your notebooks.

Donations to the Society

Council is grateful to the following members who made donations to the Society during the past year.

Mrs M. Aubrey, Mrs T.R. Aitken, Mr Nils Ake Andersson, Mr R.J. Atkins, Mr R.A.L. Battley, Phil Battley, Mary Beauchamp, Judith Beirne, Jan Beer, Dr M.J. Bycroft, Mr Don Binney, Mr W.F. Bowden, Alvin Brett, Mrs M. Bishop, Mr J.R.M. Chorlton, Dr R.F. Colbert, Mr G. Clark, Mr W.F. Cash, Duncan Cunningham, Mr A.R. Carey, John & Elaine Dowding, Mr A.P. Druce, Dr Michael Fitzgerald, Mrs F.K. Furlong, C.J. Foreman, Mrs D.M. Graham, Mr P. Grant, Miss G.R. Gamble, Mr A.G. Gorbey, Mr P. Harrison, Tom & Haze Harty, A.R. Howarth, Dr A. & Mrs M. King, Miss B.I. Loader, Miss M.H. Logan, J.W. Lock, Mr C.S. Lauder, Mrs A.E. Moffat, Mr Jock Morrison, Dr P.L. Munns, Mr G. Moon, Professor J.A.R. Miles, Dr G.I. Nicholson, Mr Malcolm & the late Margaret Olsen, Mr & Mrs M.J. Peers, P.F. Penny, Dr Dieter Rinke, Mr P. Rowley, Mrs J.H. Seddon, Mr & Mrs D.M. Stracy, Mark Smale, Mrs L. Simpkin, Paul & Joy Sagar, Ian Southey, Alan Tennyson, Miss K.V. Todd, Michael G. Turner, Nancy Tanner, Spencer Unthank, Mr G.A. Woodward, Mr R.M. Weston, Ms Patricia Wood, Mr W.W. Webb.

Missing Members

We would like to keep our records correct and up-to-date, so would anyone knowing the whereabouts of the following members please contact Hazel Harty, OSNZ Membership

Secretary, P.O. Box 316, Drury, South Auckland.

Mrs C.E. Armstrong, Clova, 3 Titiraupepa St., Taupo; L. Barea, 42 Mansel Ave, Hamilton; Roger G. Collin, 25 Charlemont St., Hamilton; Paul Cumin, 5 Carlson St., Hillcrest; Bryan Douglas, c/o 32 Mill St., Nelson; Dr Ross Lawrenson, 23 Williams St., Cambridge; O.J. Linscott, Thornbury, R.D. 8, Invercargill; Mrs H. S. Newton, Te Kohanga, Weka Road, South Bay, Kaikoura; Brian Reid, C/o Department of Conservation, Wellington; Mrs E.M. Tiller, 41 Ararino St., Trentham; Mr & Mrs L. Walker, 5/2 King St., Taradale, Napier; Alicia Warren, 367 Cashel St., Christchurch.

Fantastic prizes still to be won!

Because of the delay in receipt of the March newsletter, the competition deadline has been extended to 3 weeks after you receive this (June) issue. The rules remain as advised on the front page of the March OSNZ news.

Entries to Barrie Heather, 10 Jocelyn Crescent, Silverstream. And don't forget to include your cheque!

Banding for 1991

It is proposed to hold two long weekend banding schools at Ward, Marlborough, in 1991. Tentative dates are 19–21 January (this coincides with Wellington Anniversary weekend) and 2–6 February (includes Waitangi Day).

These weekends will give all an opportunity to become competent at handling, banding, and measuring birds. Other studies will be undertaken during these weekends – counts on local lakes etc. These weekends also provide an opportunity for members from various regions to get together and discuss co-operative study plans and other filed outings.

Don't miss these opportunities – plan to include these sessions in with your holidays.

For further information, contact Brian Bell P.O. Box 12397, Wellington.

Greetings cards still available

OSNZ greetings cards are available from RRs, or directly from me, at \$4.00 for a pack of 10 cards plus envelopes. Cards available with no message inside are: Red-crowned Parakeet, Antipodes Parakeet, Tui, Welcome Swallow, Shining Cuckoo, and Fantail. Cards with "Best Wishes" inside are Fantail, Pied Stilt, Bellbird, Antipodes Parakeet, Red-crowned Parakeet, and Tomtit. Send money with orders to: Hugh Robertson, OSNZ Greetings Cards, 30 Deller Grove, Silverstream, North Island.

OSNZ Sweatshirts & T-Shirts

To date 72 sweatshirts and 44 T-shirts have been purchased by members. This has resulted in over \$500 profit being available to help fund the computing of the Society's nest record, beach patrol, and moult schemes. Sweatshirts and T-shirts with the OSNZ design on them are still available. The design, a Takahe with "Ornithological Society, New Zealand" in black about and below it, now comes in two sizes. The *original* size takes up the complete front of the shirt and the Takahe is coloured green, blue and red. The *new* size is 7 cm across and is printed at the upper left of the shirt; this design is in black.

The shirt colours available are jade (dark green), sky (light blue), dark blue (royal blue), seaspray (pastel blue), lilac, red, pink, tango (bright lemon), and white. Notice that there are a few more colours in the range now. Costs per shirt, whether original or new design, which includes postage and a contribution to OSNZ funds are:



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

If you would like a sweatshirt or T-shirt, please send your order with payment to R.G. Powlesland, 64 Roseneath Terrace, Wellington 1. Please make cheques payable to OSNZ and crossed "Not negotiable". Don't forget to include your name, address, phone number, the size of the shirt, design size (original or new), colour, and an alternative colour.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Beach Patrol Scheme in 1989 – preliminary report

This report concerns the results for cards received to March 1990. In 1989, 3729 kms were traveled during 844 patrols. The distance patrolled is close to the average of 4079 kms per year travelled during 1971–1987.

7541 dead seabirds were found in 1989. This is much fewer than the average of 10 694 birds found per year for 1971–1987. Of the regions where greater

than 100 kms were traveled in 1989, Auckland East had the highest rate of recovery with 4.4 birds per km and Otago the lowest at 0.6.

Unusual finds were a Snares Crested Penguin (third for the scheme), a Stejneger's Petrel (seventh), and 2 Brown Boobies (third & fourth). There were larger numbers than usual of 3 species:

- * 2305 Little Blue Penguins – usually about 1000;
- * 164 Grey-faced Petrels – usually 50 to 100;
- * 47 Pied Shags – usually 20–30.

Most of the Grey-faced Petrels were found in January on Auckland East (37) and Bay of Plenty (79) beaches. The presence of lots of fairly fresh seabirds on Bay of Plenty beaches stimulated much patrolling by members of this region. Consequently, instead of the usual 0 to 35 kms patrolled in January over the previous 6 years, 158 kms were traveled in 1989 with 794 birds being found!

The following are provisional totals for each region of coast patrolled in 1989.

	Birds	Kms
Auckland East	2578	585
Auckland West	1138	1231
Bay of Plenty	1402	487
Canterbury North	317	213
Canterbury South	87	26
East Coast N.I.	89	134
North Coast S.I.	70	101
Otago	82	141
Southland	695	62
Taranaki	129	78
Wairarapa	40	41
Westland	2	6
Wellington South	111	97
Wellington West	801	528
TOTAL	7541	3729

The continued success of the Beach Patrol Scheme in 1989 was due, to a large extent, to the dedicated patrollers who carried out regular patrols. As a result of funds made available from the Society's Projects Assistance Reserve, Terry Greene was employed and he assisted in completing the entry of the Beach Patrol data into a computer file. I now look forward to the purchase of a computer with funds provided by the Lottery Board for the Scheme's large amount of data. My thanks to the Department of Conservation for the use of computer facilities, and to Ross Pickard for computing assistance.

RALPH POWLESLAND
Convener

Nest Record Scheme – report for the year ending 30 April 1990

This has been a very important year for the Nest Record Scheme: the Lottery Science Committee of the New Zealand Lottery Board have very generously granted OSNZ \$10,000 for the purchase of

micro-computers and software to store and analyse Nest Record Scheme and Beach Patrol Scheme data. This will allow the Society to become less dependent upon the generosity of government departments, which have previously held the scheme data on their computers. In future, scheme conveners will not have to have any affiliation, or close contact with government departments either. We are in the process of evaluating the best system, within the budget, of storing and analysing the data on 2 separate computers. In the next year we will have to modify some of our existing packages of computer programmes to store and analyse the mountain of data already on cards.

This year, 33 members or friends contributed 462 cards covering 53 species and one hybrid mating, bringing the grand total of cards in the Nest Record Scheme to 20 548. A Kookaburra nest was recorded for the first time in the Scheme, bringing the total species recorded to 137. There were many important contributions this year, again particularly from Canterbury members: Peter Reese recorded 96 nests of 18 species, Peter Howden 43 nests of 6 species, and Don Hadden 25 nests of 16 species. Other major contributions from the rest of the country were: 48 cards of 6 species from Peter Bull, 45 cards of 8 species from Margaret Child (including some very detailed Black-fronted Dotterel records), 32 cards of 13 species from Bill Cash, 28 cards of 6 species from Brian Chudleigh, and also Ralph Powlesland (23) and Hugh Robertson (16). A very interesting card which described the hatching of a Little Blue Penguin chick, was sent in by Eleanor & Richard Guest.

There were 36 Colonial Nest Record Cards in this year's total, covering the following 11 species: Black Shag, Pied Shag, Little Shag, Spotted Shag, Canada Goose, Black Swan, Pied Stilt, Black-backed Gull, Black-billed Gull, Black-fronted Tern, and Caspian Tern.

My thanks go to all of the contributors to the Scheme and to those who have encouraged members to take part.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS: Peter Bull, Bill Cash, Margaret Child, Brian Chudleigh, Tenick Dennison, J. Dyer, Bev Elliott, Terry Greene, Eleanor, Richard and Rob Guest, Don Hadden, Mike Harding, Hazel & Tom Harty, Peter Howden, Malcolm Hutton, Marion Lane, Peter Langlands, Folkert Nieuwland, Ray Pierce, Mary & Ralph Powlesland, Graeme Randle, Peter Reese, Hugh Robertson, Stella Rowe, Paul Sagar, Colin Scadden, Bill Sloan, Alan Tennyson, Sue Triggs, and Erika Woodger.

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING 1989/90: Little Blue Penguin 2, Crested Grebe 3, Black Shag 5, Pied Shag 7, Little Shag 2, Spotted Shag 1, Royal Spoonbill 1, Black Swan 7, Canada Goose 6, Paradise Shelduck 1, Mallard 11, Grey

Duck 2, Mallard × Grey Duck hybrid 1, Shoveler 1, Blue Duck 1, Pukeko 2, Pied Oystercatcher 22, Variable Oystercatcher 15, Spur-winged Plover 34, Banded Dotterel 13, NZ Dotterel 8, Black-fronted Dotterel 4, Wrybill 1, Pied Stilt 52, Black-backed Gull 5, Black-billed Gull 7, Black-fronted Tern 1, White-fronted Tern 3, Caspian Tern 4, NZ Pigeon 8, Kaka 1, Red-crowned Parakeet 1, Kookaburra 1, Rifleman 1, Skylark 4, Welcome Swallow 15, Dunnock 10, Fernbird 2, Grey Warbler 1, Fantail 3, Tomtit 2, Song Thrush 52, Blackbird 79, Silvereye 9, Bellbird 3, Tui 3, Chaffinch 4, Greenfinch 13, Goldfinch 11, Redpoll 6, House Sparrow 1, Starling 6, Saddleback 1, White-backed Magpie 2.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Convener

Report on the Moulting Recording Scheme 1989/90

Records of bird moulting continue to be received, though at a slow rate and still from relatively few observers.

Three years ago most of the records were transferred to the mainframe computer at Victoria University by Christine Reed, under a grant from the NZ Lottery Board's Scientific Research Distribution Committee. Over 1990/91 the University is replacing its computer, so that the Moulting Recording Scheme database will have to be transferred to a new home. This will be either one of the new mainframes at Victoria University or a suitably configured desk-top computer system.

Moulting information from 54 species has now been received, comprising over 1100 records – most of them from birds in active moulting.

If you are recording moulting, please endeavour to obtain a complete record where possible, and especially on endemic species. A tendency to simply record the primary moulting is evident in some recent returns. This provides only partial information and I urge contributors to fully document moulting where possible – including records on non-moulting as well as active moulting.

Will those who still have moulting information to send to the Scheme, please do so as soon as possible so that the main database can be brought up to date prior to the anticipated transfer to a new computer system.

Please write to me if you require more moulting cards and/or record sheets, or if you are interested in general information about the Moulting Recording Scheme. Thanks again to all those who have contributed. I look forward to an increased return of records over the 1990/91 season.

BEN BELL
Convener

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer: 1989-1990

1. Overview of the Society's major national schemes

The Nest Record and Beach Patrol Schemes received a considerable boost this year with the Lottery Science Committee of the New Zealand Lottery Board very generously granting OSNZ \$10,000 plus GST for the purchase of its own micro computers and software to store and analyse the data. This will allow the OSNZ to become less dependent upon Government departments, who have previously held the scheme data on their computers. In future, scheme conveners will have to be familiar with the operation of PCs, but will not have to have an affiliation or close contact with the relevant Government departments.

The Moulting Recording Scheme continues to run at a low level and development has not been possible this year. A need has been recognised for a data sheet to handle moulting records of a single species caught at a single site (e.g., House Sparrows at Ward).

2. Review of the Society's special national studies

Cattle Egrets

The annual Cattle Egret survey was completed in August 1989. For the second year in a row the totals were well down on those for 1987, but were similar to earlier years. The very wet conditions in the eastern states of Australia may have provided good local feeding conditions and hence no need to fly to New Zealand. With recent flooding in eastern Australia, 1990 should be another poor year, if this hypothesis is correct.

Banded Dotterel movements

Winter 1989 marked the end of the official data collection phase of this study. Ray Pierce was extremely pleased with the number of colour-banded birds found last winter. Now he is analysing the data and starting to prepare a paper that will unravel the mysteries of Banded Dotterel movement patterns. Further sightings of colour-banded birds are always welcome (as long as they don't conflict with the pattern established!).

Black-fronted Dotterel movements

The first winter of this study was interesting because none of the birds colour-banded in 1988/89 were found far from their breeding site. This was despite 145 birds being checked at Lake Wairarapa in early July 1989; a region where 22 (9%) of the 238 birds counted during February 1989 were colour-banded. Many of the Lake Wairarapa birds may come from the South Island, where only 2 birds were banded in 1988/89.

In 1989/90, a further 30 birds were individually colour-banded, 10 of which were in the South Island.

Passerine movements

A series of banding instruction days or weekends were conducted in central New Zealand by Brian Bell, Rod Cossee, Barrie Heather, Ralph Powlesland, Hugh Robertson, and Paul Sagar. Many OSNZ members participated in these sessions at Ward (Marlborough), Greytown (Wairarapa), Nga Manu (Wellington), and Pukepuke Lagoon (Manawatu).

The number of birds banded by the Central Passerine Group (2400) was a record, mainly thanks to Dave Sim banding 1200 birds in Greytown. In addition to the CPG's efforts, 1000+ passerines were banded by the Bell boys (Paul, Michael, David & Richard) at Seatoun, Wellington, and 200+ by other operators in the Wellington area.

We are still waiting for a recovery on the opposite side of Cook Strait (or even greater than 5 km from the banding site), but with 3500 birds banded, the chances must be improving. Further training workshops are planned for winter 1990 and autumn 1991 – these will be advertised in *OSNZ news*.

Keruru display dives

A good geographical spread of observers has now been achieved. These people are recording the frequency of display dives, breeding behaviour, and foods of Keruru at set locations every month. About 25 OSNZ members are involved in this study, with about a third being in the Auckland area. Interesting national patterns and differences have emerged, but also some intriguing differences on a local scale – Keruru were seen display diving in the Hunua and Waitakere Ranges right through winter, whereas 50–60 km away at Wenderholm (where there were up to 300 Keruru feeding on taraire fruit) none was seen to display dive in winter.

This display dive study will end at most study sites in June 1990 and then be written up for publication in *Notornis*.

NZ Dotterel census

OSNZ combined with Department of Conservation staff and Forest & Bird members to survey NZ Dotterel numbers last spring/summer, and again in autumn. Coverage was very good and results will appear in *OSNZ news* shortly.

Pied Stilt

The OSNZ 50th Anniversary study, organised by Ray Pierce, got off to a good start in 1989. A team of Wairarapa members, led by Brian Fitzwater, made 20 traps for catching adult Pied Stilts on their nests. Banders from 13 geographic regions (mainly OSNZ) found Pied Stilts to be more difficult to trap than Banded

Dotterels; however, after a lot of hard work (and waiting) 126 adults were caught and 78 chicks were also colour-banded. Compared with Banded Dotterels, colour bands on stilts have proved much easier to see, and with the regional colour coding system it is easy to work out where the birds have come from.

Eight long-distance movements (500 + km) have been reported already, but much checking of flocks still has to be done this winter.

The plan is to continue colour-banding in spring 1990 and to see if the few pairs that were colour-banded remain together in the same place, and to see if juveniles return to their natal colony at one year of age.

3. Register of OSNZ projects

No progress has been made with this, but it will be taken up with RRs again.

4. Advice on projects

On behalf of the Nelson & Marlborough regions, I successfully applied for a group permit to colour band Royal Spoonbills at Vernon Lagoons, Marlborough, for the next 2 seasons. The regions had unsuccessfully sought a banding permit last year. In my application I had to include considerable details about band sizes, age at banding, and handling of birds that I had obtained from Dr Kim Lowe (Director of the Australian Bird & Bat Banding Scheme).

I also provided some statistical advice to Dr Peter Bull about his analysis of Nest Record cards for finch nests.

5. New studies

Reports from around the country over the past year suggest that the numbers of Royal Spoonbills have increased markedly, with record numbers being recorded at many localities. Whether this increase is due to an invasion from Australia, or due to a good breeding season at the Otago, Marlborough, and Okarito colonies is not clear.

Following a very successful census of Royal Spoonbills in the Otago region, Peter Schweigman has suggested that OSNZ undertakes nationwide counts to determine the population and breeding productivity of Royal Spoonbills. RRs decided to conduct a winter count in conjunction with the national wader census and a summer count on 6 February, Waitangi Day. Peter Schweigman will coordinate these counts.

OSNZ undertook a national count of Royal Spoonbills 10 years ago and although the results were not published, they will make an interesting comparison with the current series of counts.

6. Contact with overseas organisations

A recent visit to NW Australia allowed me to have discussions with Dr Phil Moors (Director, RAOU) about the New Zealand content of species accounts in the

Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. I re-issued my invitation to make available data from the OSNZ Nest Record Scheme. The presence of 4 New Zealanders on the recent RAOU NW Australia Wader Expedition should serve to further increase trans-Tasman cooperation in wader studies.

7. Applications for funds from the Projects Assistance Reserve

Grants approved in 1989 were:
\$ 350 – Kerry Oates, Blue Duck study (plus \$1000 loan).
\$ 200 – Chris Jowett, bird predator study (MSc).
\$1000 – Nest Record Scheme.
\$ 200 – Ron Moorhouse, Kaka study (PhD). \$2500 – Pied Stilt Study Group.
\$ 200 – Colleen Cassady, Fiordland Crested Penguin study (MSc).
\$ 200 – Andrew Cummins, NZ Dotterel study (MSc).
\$2500 – David Butler et al., Nelson bird book (loan).
\$ 200 – David Crockett, Black-backed Gull study.
\$ 200 – Richard Maloney, Robin study (MSc).
\$ 200 – Sarah Stokes, Scaup study (MSc).
\$ 250 – Barrie Heather, Black-fronted Dotterel study. One request for funds was received by Council at its May meeting.
\$ 700 – Gabor Lovei, for passerine study in the Manawatu. Council decided to buy \$500 worth of equipment to loan to the study, and to grant \$200 for travel and other costs.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Field Investigation Officer

Annual Report of the Rare Birds Committee 1989–90

There have been some changes in the composition of the Committee this year, prompted by the election of Brian Bell to President. The Committee was augmented by Ray Pierce and Paddy Latham – both extremely experienced and capable field observers. Ray also brings specialist knowledge of the waders, whilst Paddy has valuable experience with the rarer terns. Fourteen records were received in the past 12 months. Of these, 11 have been accepted by the Committee (see below).

Two records were not formally circulated as they were sightings of escaped waterfowl and partly albino Blackbird. Two records were regrettably not able to be accepted by the Committee. The first was a sighting of an American Golden Plover. Whilst the report was detailed, and most members of the Committee instinctively felt the identification by the observers was correct, the reliable feature for separation of this species from Pacific Golden Plover was not noted. American authorities who were consulted advised against acceptance without this vital information. As this would have been a first

sighting for NZ, the Committee exercised caution and the report has been recorded as a probable sighting. The other record was of a vagrant goshawk in the Horowhenua. The various sightings were sufficient to indicate the bird was in fact a goshawk, but were not satisfactory to determine the species. Unfortunately the presence of the bird was not widely known at the time.

A series of sightings of "Commic" Terns is still circulating the Committee.

The following records were accepted by the Committee in the year to 31 March 1990.

Soft-plumaged Petrel – 2 sightings at sea east of North Cape (33° 12'S 177° 22'E, 34° 41'S 176° 50'E) on 13/11/89 (A. Tennyson & G. Taylor).

Christmas Island Shearwater – 1 ashore on Curtis Island, Kermadecs, on 10/11/89 (A. Tennyson & G. Taylor).

Brown Booby – an adult at Whitianga Bay, East Cape, on 29/7/89 (M. Draper & W. King).

Reef Heron (white phase) – 1 at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 7 & 8/6/87. With re-evaluation of an earlier record, this is now assumed to be the first NZ sighting (A. Crossland).

Yellow-billed Spoonbill – 1 at Te Whiti on 12/12/80. The second record for NZ (T. Dennison & C. Scadden).

Northern Shoveler – a pair at Pauri Lake, Wanganui, 19–23/8/89 (P. Battley & I. Saville).

Oriental Dotterel – 1 at Lake Ellesmere between 9/2/89 and 14/3/89 (K. Harrison).

Common Tern – 1 on 28/11/87, 2 on 28/11/87 at Bowentown Shellbanks, Bay of Plenty (B. Chudleigh).

Brown Noddy – about 25 pairs breeding on Curtis Island, Kermadecs, in October–November 1989. The first record for NZ (A. Tennyson & G. Taylor).

Barn Owl – 1 on South Kaipara Head in February 1986 (S. Nicholls).

Satin Flycatcher – a male, dead on the beach at Motueka Sandspit, 26/12/88 (A. Crossland).

ROB GUEST
Secretary Rare Birds Committee

Report of the Banding Liaison Officer

During the past year I commented to the Banding Officer (Department of Conservation) on nine application for new banding permits or extensions to existing ones. I understand all these applications were eventually approved, either in full or in part. The Scheme seems to be running well and the only complaint I received concerned the Banding Office policy of not providing bands for birds being released after rehabilitation from injury. The main

problem was concern that the time required to process such one-off applications for very small numbers of bands, sometimes by people with limited banding experience, would be disproportionately large in relation to the likely value of the returns. There was also the need to ensure that recoveries of rehabilitated birds were kept separate from those of birds that had never been in captivity. Possible ways of reducing these problems were discussed with the *Banding Officer*, who eventually agreed (subject to certain safeguards) to relax the previous ruling, at least for a trial period.

Last May, Dr R. Sadleir (Director, Science & Research, Department of Conservation), wrote that "... broadly speaking..." he accepted five of the six recommendations of the report of the Banding Review Committee (see *OSNZ news* 51:5-6), but he could not agree with the re-establishment of the deputy banding officer position. In accordance with the Committee's recommendations, metal bands have continued to be supplied free to OSNZ private banders, and progress has been made with loading banding data onto microcomputer. All the records are now accessible, but further checking is required before the database can be guaranteed free of errors introduced in the past. Progress has also been made with establishing a Banding Advisory Group which, it is understood, will have an OSNZ representative as its convenor. Banding operations during 1988/89 are tabulated in a report prepared by the banding officer (R.O. Cossee) and summarised as follows:

"During the 1988/89 banding year 26 920 birds of 117 species were banded and 1117 previously banded birds were rebanded, bringing the grand total of individual birds banded in New Zealand over all years to 1 040 018. One species previously not banded, Kermadec Storm Petrel, was added during the year. Banding was regulated by 52 permits." Mr Cossee has one or two spare copies of this report available for any active banders who may have a particular need; other copies are available for purchase at \$8.00 each from the Publications manager, Science & Research Directorate, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

Finally, I have to report that the President has accepted my request to be relieved of my position as Banding Liaison Officer. Mrs Jenny Hawkins will be new Banding Liaison Officer and also convenor of the Banding Advisory Group being set up by the Department of Conservation.

In leaving what was always intended to be a temporary position for me, I wish to thank Mr Cossee for the co-operation and general helpfulness I have invariably received from the Banding Office over the past two and a half years and which I am sure will also be extended to my successor.

PETER BULL
Banding Liaison Officer

Library Report for 1989/90

The library continues to be in demand for journals and interloan requests. Most of the journals are circulated and the number of members receiving these ranges from 1 to 24. During the next 12 months we hope to add at least six new journals to our list, if these will be exchanged for *Notornis*.

Every week there are interloan requests from universities, libraries, and OSNZ members. 90% of these are photocopied, and up to now the Auckland Institute & Museum has kindly allowed us to do this free of charge.

Thank you to E.G. Turbott for *The Birds of Sumatra* by S.G. Van Harle & K. Voous, *The Birds of the Southern Bahamas* by D.W. Boden, and *The Birds of Ghana* by L.G. Grimes. Also to Paul Sagar for *Bioacoustics*, a publication of the British Library of Natural Sound Archives.

KATHY BARROW
Hon. Librarian

Society Archives

In the past few years, much of the Society's archival material has come to be gathered at the Auckland Museum library where it has been stored, unsorted, in large cardboard boxes. In August 1989 I began to sort through two large boxes containing most of the Society's correspondence and administrative papers. Other boxes, apparently containing accounting records, have not been sorted.

The material sorted covers the period 1939 to 1976, tailing off after 1973. Files on (1) the Kermadec Expedition and (2) the branches and RRs have not been examined so far. The larger section of correspondence has been filed chronologically because authorship is not always clear and topics are often confused and/or mixed; except letters in reply to circulars to Council members. These were sometimes attached to relevant circulars and have been retained there. Only one copy of printed papers has been filed.

In the months ahead I hope to sort the other boxes and integrate all the archival material. Gaps may than be clear and an effort can be made to obtain outstanding documents from members.

NANCY SMITH
Hon. Archivist

Ornithological verse

With winter here the following verse by Dick Sibson should stimulate memories in the minds of those who plod the beaches looking for wrecks.

Strange Harvest of the Sea

Your dyed-in-the-wool ornithologist is a creature of curious culture,
Who may rejoice in a Skylark's song; yet

acts like a drooling vulture
When day after day fierce storms have cast
on Auckland's bleak west coast,
From the hosts of far-based ocean-birds,
the weak the tired and the lost.

So out go the keen beachcombers; for they
are a hardy breed,

To seek 'mid flotsam and jetsam, all
tangled with cordage and weed

Pathetic bundles of feathers, once masters
of every wave,

Shearwaters, petrels, prions, now trapped
on a leeshore grave.

Then comes the sorting of trophies, tipped
out from plastic bags.

Here is a nice fresh specimen; but many
are bones and rags

What a rich sample today's is! Fifteen
species at least.

Mollymawks; even a stormy; and a nelly
to spice up the feast.

Now from some lips fall Latin names. How
learned do they sound!

"Look at the bill of this albatross;
melanophrys I'll be bound"

"Do I detect *halobaena*?" says a rather
superior type,

As he counters the pong of penguins with
a very malodorous pipe.

And so we come to the prions. No doubt
about this *vittata*.

But we ponder over a medium bill, "How's
salvini for a starter?"

"Lamellae hardly visible. Shape points to
desolata

"Never again will its eyes behold the ice of
its Alma Mater.

Now someone cries exultantly. "Just look
what I can see,

Mixed up with some sand and sodden flesh
and general debris,

This skeletal molly has a leg which bears
a band!

Wonder where it has come from? In time
we'll understand.

Salvaged specimens may find a niche in a
known collection

Measured, labelled and numbered, a
reward for their perfection.

Even bones or skulls or feathers gain a fame
which will endure.

When odd or puzzling features are
described in the literature.

What was the point of the exercise? Could
it be judged worthwhile!

Apart from the fun of being there and
trudging many a mile?

Something new has perhaps been learnt of
Nature's bounty and waste;

For some a new aspect of studying birds.
Everyman to his taste!

R.B. SIBSON
winter 1989

Wader Expedition to NW Australia 1990

Once again a Kiwi contingent was
represented on the 8th major NW Australia
expedition, held from 23/3-15/4 1990.



Lesser Knot (upper) and Great Knot (lower)

(Photo B. Brown)

Only Hugh Robertson flew the Kiwi flag until the end of the expedition because the others – Jenny Hawkins, Ray Pierce and Adrian Riegen, had to leave early, for various reasons, from 90 Mile Beach. With 7 expeditions behind them, Clive Minton and the Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG) have gathered much valuable data on wader migration to and from NW Australia as part of a much larger project – the study of wader migration along the East Asia Flyway, which extends from New Zealand in the south east via Australia, South East Asia, China, and the Orient to Siberia in the north.

Once again the expedition was very successful and was greatly helped by the W.A. Department of Conservation and Land Management (C.A.L.M.). The aims of the 1990 expedition were to catch reasonable samples (50–100 birds) of as many species as possible from which full weight and measurement data could be recorded. With the co-operation of the Leslie Salt Works Co. we were able to start at their lagoons, 35 km north of Port Headland. The salt works consist of 8 lagoons, with an area of 7000 ha. Sea water is pumped into pond #1 and then flows on through the other 7, gradually becoming more saline before flowing 35 km down a canal to the crystallising ponds at Port Headland, where no birds are found as the ponds are too salty.

We mist-netted over the shallow water of pond #1 on 2 nights as this area attracts the greatest variety of waders, in particular, Broad-billed Sandpipers and Asiatic

Dowitchers. We had 2 moonless nights, ideal for catching waders as the nets are very difficult to see and even more difficult for the poor souls who are sent out into the vastness of pond #1 to extract the birds. Anyway, we caught 126 birds of 14 species, the most exciting being 6 Asiatic Dowitchers and a Far Eastern Curlew with a bill 205 mm long, possibly the longest bill ever recorded for a curlew.

At least 28 000 birds, including 8000 Red-necked Stints, 7500 Curlew Sandpipers, 2500 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 1900 Red-necked Avocets, 1200 Banded Stilts, 1000 Broad-billed Sandpipers, and 600 Little Whimbrels. A total of 28 species of wader were seen on the ponds. The area also held a variety of egrets, terns, and birds of prey – the most notable of which were Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, and White-bellied Sea Eagle.

With temperatures in the mid 30s (°C), the salt works were a gentle introduction to the heat we would encounter further north. We moved the 600 km to Broome and set up camp at the new RAOU Broome Bird Observatory, which is situated 18 km east of Broome township, on Roebuck Bay. During our stay the observatory was officially opened by the Deputy Premier of Western Australia, with speeches by Phil Moors (RAOU), Clive Minton (AWSG), and Jenny Hawkins (OSNZ). (Unfortunately, Jenny's voice was drowned out by the rain of the only rain to fall in the first two weeks of the expedition; this heavy tropical shower started with the first speech and

ended with the last – there has to be a message to all speakers there!)

Gail and Brice, the 2 wardens, have done a wonderful job getting the observatory established. They should be very proud of their efforts. Now it is up to us to go up there and use it. The observatory area has a bird species list of 213+ and is without doubt one of the finest places in the world to see waders at close range and in perfect light. Mixed flocks of around 1000 birds may contain 16 or more species, and if this wader list doesn't get you packing your bags, then nothing will: Beach Thick-Knee, Pied & Sooty Oystercatchers, Masked Lapwing, Grey Plover, Red-kneed Dotterel, Mongolian & Large Sandpipers, Oriental Plover, Red-capped Plover, Black-fronted Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Red-necked Avocet, Turnstone, Far Eastern Curlew, Asiatic Whimbrel, Little Whimbrel, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Swinhoes Snipe, Black-tailed & Bar-tailed Godwits, Red and Great Knots, Sharp-tailed & Pectoral Sandpipers, Red-necked & Long-toed Stints, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling Broad-billed Sandpiper, Oriental & Australian Pratincoles. All seen within the space of 2 days in Roebuck Bay and at Lake Eda. For more details about the Broome Observatory, write to Broome Bird Observatory, PO Box 1313, Broome, West Australia 6725. Phone (091) 935-600.

Our work at Broome was mainly cannon-netting on the beaches of Roebuck Bay close to the Observatory. With tidal ranges up to 9.4 m huge areas of mud are exposed at low tide, but at high tide only narrow strips of beach remain and make ideal sites for cannon-netting. Catches ranged from 150–900+ birds with many retraps, including at least 2 banded in Hong Kong, 2 in Taiwan, and 1 in Victoria. Of special interest was that a Great Knot we banded on 27/3/90 was mist-netted in China 7 days and some 5000 km later!. We are still waiting for final details, but this is very exciting news.

We also worked at Lake Eda, 50 km east of Broome on the edge of Roebuck Plain: a series of shallow lakes which attract a vast range of birds including Little Whimbrel, Oriental Pratincole, Brolga, Ibis, herons, egrets, spoonbills, whistling ducks, Pink-eared Duck, birds of prey, bustards, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, and other gems like Long-toed Stint, Swinhoes Snipe, and Wood Sandpiper.

Our aim at Lake Eda was catch Oriental Pratincoles, which we did with 84 of them cannon-netted. This was the first catch of this species in Australia and possibly the largest anywhere other than in Indonesia, where large numbers are caught for food. We mist-netted on several nights, in spite of the millions of insects, some of which were almost as large as stints and

difficult to extract from the nets! 4 Long-toed Stints, 1 Swinhoe's Snipe, 1 Spotted Crake and 2 types of bat were the most interesting species caught this way.

The Meteorological Office in Broome kindly allowed us to use the weather radar each evening, which enabled us to track birds as they set off on migration. The tracking was done by taking a time-lapse photo on Polaroid film of the radar screen. Specks then show up as thin streaks and with a new photo every 10 minutes or so one can follow the progress of the migrating birds. Interestingly, on several occasions birds were seen migrating when the wind direction at ground level was from the NW (i.e. a headwind for migrating birds), but at 600-1000 m the winds were from the SE—ideal for migration. Birds are often seen to leave the roost and fly very high while circling, they then either return to the roost or set off on migration, presumably having checked the conditions.

The other site that we worked was 80 Mile Beach at Anna Plains Station, about 220 km south of Broome. Here the temperatures climbed and climbed to around 44°C each day. Marram grass was the tallest plant along the dunes and so offered little shade even for the smallest members of the expedition. However, the appearance of several 4-wheel drive vehicles on the beach was welcomed by Cockatiels, Budgerigars, pipits, Crimson Chats, Pictarella Manakins, White-winged Trillers, and Willie Wagtails which, in spite of the human presence, flew into the shade of our vehicles to shelter from the searing midday sun.

Like Broome, the tides at Anna Plains are huge and expose vast mudflats at low tide. The long, white, sandy beach, low sand dunes, and clear blue sky makes a very stark landscape, but as the tide comes in the beach comes alive with birds; waders and terns in flocks of 500–1000 every 200 m or so for as far as the eyes can see, enough to make even the most seasoned cannon-netter drool.

Despite the numbers of birds, they proved to be an equal match for us. However, the sight of four 4-wheel drive vehicles doing the tango and waltz up and down the beach and Hugh acting out a sketch from the Ministry of Silly Walks in order to get the birds into the catching area kept our spirits up in the heat of the day and we made reasonable catches. Cooling off in the sea isn't for the faint-hearted; many sharks, rays, and the odd sea snake, not to mention the "Minton's Biting Crabs" tend to put most people off. One night we set mist-nets across the beach just above the tide line and made a catch of about 100 Common, Roseate, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns.

During the expedition 42 species of wader were seen. Those not mentioned earlier include Spotted Redshank (in almost complete breeding plumage, only



Mongolian Sandplover (upper) and Large Sandplover (lower). (Photos B. Brown)



the 2nd and 3rd Australian records), Redshank, and Lesser Golden Plover.

With the help of 30+ people from Australia, NZ, UK, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, and USA the expedition caught and banded 5446 waders of 30 species. A great deal of valuable data was gathered which will help us understand

these birds and their needs in order that they might survive and flourish. Finally, I am sure all those involved would like to thank Clive, Doug and Ros for the great job they did in running the expedition and I am sure we all look forward to returning to the "North West".

ADRIAN RIEGEN

P.S. A 64-minute video of the expedition (as shown at the 1990 OSNZ AGM) is available from Adrian Riegen, at \$20.



Royal Spoonbills in Otago

On 4/3/90 members from Otago carried out an extensive survey of coastal Otago to ascertain the total numbers of Royal Spoonbills present at the end of the breeding season. As is well known, Maukiekie Island has a well-established breeding colony, with an estimated 22 nests. (Maukiekie is a Maori burial ground and access is very limited. Observations of the island are carried out from the south, on the beach, which is not ideal since one looks up onto the island. A better vantage point is from a hill on the northern side, where, although the distance is greater, the overall view is better.)

Royal Spoonbills are spectacular birds, easily recognised, and consequently easily counted. However, when the birds are roosting in a tight group it becomes difficult to distinguish adults from juveniles. And counting a tight bunch of sleeping spoonbills can become a time-consuming exercise; some birds seem to have 3 or 4 legs!

Anyhow, the count was completed in calm, overcast conditions. To ensure that no movement of birds took place counting was restricted to the period 10:00 to 13:00 hours, with the following surprising result.

Maukiekie Island, with about 22 nests, had 84 Royal Spoonbills – this total included breeders, fledglings, and possibly non-breeders. In addition, there were 7 at the Kakanui River Estuary, 5 at the Shag River Estuary, 16 at Stony Creek (which is blocked off by the beach for most of the year, hence its alternative name of “Anderson’s Lagoon”), 33 adults and non-breeders at Hawkesbury Lagoon (at Waikouaiti township), and 12 at Lake Waihola. This gives a total of 157.

The question arises – where did they all come from? Maukiekie Island is the only breeding site in the area, with no breeding this season at Green Island. This leaves the question unanswered, but the forthcoming national survey may provide it.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

Recent Reports

Many thanks, yet again, to all who have sent in records to make this report

possible. However, there are still some areas from which more observations would be welcome – Northland, Auckland, Bay of Plenty, central North Island, Wellington, Nelson, and Marlborough. Observations can be sent through the Regional Representatives or Recorders, or direct to me at my NEW ADDRESS: Titiri Road, R.D. Outram, Otago.

The last date for inclusion in the September OSNZ news is 26 August. I would also like to repeat the call for photographs and sketches, especially any that might help with identification problems.

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

Seabirds

The regular Muriwai beach patrols (Auckland) for May produced a juvenile Red-tailed Tropicbird and a White Tern, as well as the more usual autumn wreck of young Sooty & Short-tailed Shearwaters. 4 dead Flesh-footed Shearwaters on Canterbury beaches in late February doubled the number found on that coast.

A large feeding flock of ca130 Flesh-footed Shearwaters, ca200 Gannets and ca20 Buller’s Shearwaters was present ca50 km off Tolaga Bay (East Cape) on 16 April. Smaller numbers of Little & Fluttering Shearwaters were passing by. Flesh-footed (ca15) and Buller’s (ca50) Shearwaters were also present off Oaro (Marlborough) 2 days earlier, along with the usual Westland Black Petrels (ca10) and Shy Mollymawks (ca20). Other birds recorded there included ca20 Diving Petrels and small numbers of Buller’s & Black-browed Mollymawks, White-chinned Petrels, and Northern Giant Petrels. More unusual, or at least more difficult to see, were 4 Wilson’s Storm Petrels in the outer Hauraki Gulf in early April and one ca40 km off Tolaga Bay on 14 April.

Also off Tolaga Bay on 16 Apr., a Pomarine Skua harassed the only 2 young Black-backed Gulls to venture 50 km offshore. A Southern Skua off Oaro in Feb. was a long way north for that time of year. Arctic Skuas were recorded widely in small numbers during Feb. & Mar. from Kawhia (Waikato south to Allan’s Beach (Otago), with a maximum of 6 at Waianakarua (Otago) on 24 Feb. April records were 4 at Kaikoura on the 4th, 3 in Wellington Harbour on the 5th, and the last as one in Hawkes Bay on the 18th.

Sixty-two Pied Shags at Bromley (Canterbury) on 22 Apr. included juveniles from the first successful breeding colony. A single Pied Shag at Manakuri Beach (Hawkes Bay) on 15 Apr. is probably the same bird that has been wandering around the area for a year. ca4200 Spotted Shags off Birdlings Flat on 16 Apr. is yet another high count from the Canterbury coast.

The last Black-fronted Tern at Tarras (Central Otago) was seen on 1 Feb. and birds were numerous on the east coast of the South Island throughout Feb. & Mar., with a maximum of 325 in a paddock near Oamaru (Otago) on 10 Mar. One reached Foxton (Manawatu) on the unusually early date of 21 Feb., but the birds were late moving north to Hawkes Bay with only one recorded by 23 Apr. Many of the Little Terns that arrived in the country last Nov. were still around in late Apr., with 5 at Foxton, 7 at Miranda (S. Auckland), 1 at Wairoa (East Cape), and 1 at Tukituki Est. (Hawkes Bay). 3–4 were still at Foxton on 12 May and 2 of these had acquired breeding plumage, confirming a northern hemisphere origin.

The Gull-billed Tern seen at the Ahuriri Est. (Hawkes Bay) on 24 Feb. and 15 May is probably the same bird that has been in the area for well over a year. A White-winged Black Tern also spent the summer in Hawkes Bay and was last seen at the Tukituki Est. on 25 Apr. 4 more were present on the North Kaipara Lakes (Auckland) on 24 Feb. and a probable Common Tern was seen on the same day at L. Rotokawa. 14 Grey Ternlets were seen at Cathedral Rocks, Mokohinau Is in April.

Herons, ibis, spoonbills etc

A survey of the Otago coast on 4 Mar. revealed 157 Royal Spoonbills, suggesting the area is now the major stronghold for the species in the country. The flock that summered at Bromley increased to 44 by 22 Apr. Movement to the wintering areas in the North Island seems to take place in April and early May. The Ahuriri Est. had 14 by 8 Apr., increasing to a record 31 by 6 May. 6 spoonbills even roosted with Gannets at Cape Kidnappers in mid Apr. 12 had returned to Wairoa by 21 Apr., with 15 there by the 28th. On the west coast, 26 reached Foxton by 12 May and a further 10 joined them by 16 May. In Taranaki, where Royal Spoonbills are still unusual, there was one at Okato on 22 Apr. and 8 at New Plymouth on 7 May.

The first autumn reports of Cattle Egrets came from the West Coast of the South Island, where 10 were seen at Arahura as early as 1 Apr. Small numbers appeared in widely separated places of Southland from 7–9 Apr. and were widespread throughout the country in the usual sites by mid-April, except for the east coast of the South Island, where first reports came from L. Ellesmere (Canterbury) on 26 Apr. and Taieri (Otago) on 2 May. Maximum numbers were 35 at Aka Aka (S. Auckland) by 5 May and 35 at Ngaroto (Waikato) by 20 May.

As usual, Bitterns were reported widely in small numbers from the Ahuriri Est., 4 on 25 Apr.; Foxton, 1 on 21 Feb.; Greymouth, 1 on 14 Apr.; Ruatapu (West Coast), 1 on 4 May; and from Otago at the

Kaikorai Est., Feb–May; Anderson's Lagoon, 25 Apr.; and flying over Wingatui on 15 May. 3 Reef Herons at Kairakau Beach (Hawkes Bay) in Feb–early Mar. could have been a pair and a juvenile. There were few "rarer" herons compared with during the summer with only 1 Little Egret at the Ashley Est. (Canterbury) on 15 May and a Glossy Ibis in the Taieri Plain (Otago) on 25 May, where they have become a regular occurrence over the past 2 years. Rarest of all was a report of an Intermediate Egret from Greymouth (West Coast) in late March to 5 Apr.

Ducks, swans and geese

The autumn build-up of wildfowl flocks was well illustrated by the numbers at Whakaki Lagoon (East Cape), where there were ca2000 Black Swans, ca5000 Mallards, ca350 Paradise Shelducks, and 7 Grey Ducks (as well as ca60 Little Black Shags, 55 Banded Dotterels, and 1300 Pied Stilts!) on 21 April. Other high numbers of ducks included 260 Grey Teal at Karaka (Auckland) on 11 Mar., ca200 Grey Teal at the Ahuriri Est. on 29 Apr., and ca200 Shovelers and 326 Scaup at Bromley on 8 May.

Liberations of Canada Geese in Hawkes Bay help explain the recent increases, although they appear to be increasing naturally as well, with 270 at Barrett Lagoon (New Plymouth) the highest number to date. 27 at All Day Bay also indicates an increase in coastal Otago. 1783 were at Bromley on 8 May. 7 Mute Swans at Waikuku (Canterbury) is the largest number there for some time. Lake Elterwater (Marlborough) appears to be a regular site for Chestnut-breasted Shelducks. 4 were present on 23 Jan. and a female on 5 Mar.

6 Grass Whistling Ducks photographed at Haast Beach (West Coast) stayed there for 3 weeks from the end of Feb. and are the second record of whistling duck in NZ this year.

Waders

A Far Eastern Curlew was still at Foxton on 17 May. The Asiatic Whimbrel there was last seen on 11 Mar., but the 3 at the Avon-Heathcote Est. (Canterbury) appear to be overwintering along with 2 Hudsonian Godwits. 2 of the 3 black-tailed godwits at Mangere (Auckland) in April were Hudsonians and there were 2 Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits at Miranda on 13 Mar.

Other rarer waders were 4 Greenshanks at Aotea Harbour (Waikato) on 14 Mar.; a Pectoral Sandpiper still at the Ahuriri Est. on 4 Mar.; a Marsh Sandpiper, acquiring breeding plumage, at Miranda on 31 Mar.; a Terek Sandpiper also at Miranda on 31 Mar. and one that stayed at Foxton until 17 May.

Siberian tattlers were recorded from Kaikoura, 1 on 4 Mar., and Spirits Bay in

Mar. 2 of 3 tattlers were still at Otago Harbour on 28 Apr., when one was identified as a Siberian species in breeding plumage. A bird at Foxton on 12 May was also in breeding plumage.

Pacific Golden Plovers were reported from Foxton until 18 Mar., with a maximum of 36 on 11 Mar. There were still 52 at L. Ellesmere (Canterbury) on 29 Mar. The numbers of Golden Plovers at the Ahuriri Est. have increased by about 6 a year over recent years and ca50 were there on 3 Mar. Bar-tailed Godwits and Turnstones in full breeding plumage at Awarua Bay (Southland) on 9 Apr. had left by 11 Apr.

The numbers of NZ Dotterels in a survey of the Far North during March were higher than the Oct. counts, reaching 130. However, at Cow I. (Southland), a traditional wintering site, only one was present from 7–April.

A Feb. survey of the Oreti R. (Southland) revealed 14 or 15 Black-fronted Dotterels and 314 Pied Stilts on 70 km of riverbed. Two node F hybrid stilts visited Coopers Lagoon (Canterbury) on 13 May. SIPO at the Avon-Heathcote Est. reached an autumn peak of 4909 on 26 Mar.

And the rest . . .

A pair of Australian Little Grebes were seen on Kereta Lake (Muriwai, Auckland) in Feb. and a NZ Dabchick turned up on a farm dam near Cambridge (Waikato) during May.

Three records of Nankeen Kestrels on the West Coast raise the question of how many birds were present. The first sighting, a female at Barrytown on 28 Apr., and the next 30 km south at Paroa on 11 May may have been the same bird. One 40 km inland at L. Haupiri from the first week in May onwards could well be a different bird. Nearby at Mt Turiwhate, 2 Rock Wrens on 5 May were well west of their documented distribution in the Southern Alps.

"Dozens" of Kakas were seen in the Middle Cascade and Upper Gorge Rivers (S. Westland) in Feb. and Mar., in contrast to small numbers in the Pyke Valley. 2 Kakas were present at a school at Hautapu (Wanganui) in early May. Robins were confirmed at Kuripapango Lakes (Kaweka S.F., Hawkes Bay) in Apr. and the first for many years was seen at Blowhard Bush to the east. Also in Hawkes Bay, the report of Barbary Doves in the last issue has been tracked down to 150 or so birds that are regularly fed at a Mangateretere farm.

Finally 3 rarer passerines, each of a very different status. Cirl Buntings at Tarras (Otago) started singing on 10 Apr. and not far away, at Omarama, a Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike obligingly perched in a garden on 4 Mar., while from Kennedy's Bay, Coromandel, comes a report of a

Stitchbird, which if confirmed, will be the first for many years on the mainland.

Compiled by
DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

South Auckland: In April we returned to the Kaiterakihi area to check out a 10-year old report of Whiteheads probably being heard. In spite of camping and having perfect listening conditions, none was heard. However, the large numbers of Bellbirds & Pied Tits amply repaid our efforts, as did the satisfaction of the climb to the summit. Large numbers of Silvereyes were on the move too, but only in the early morning. Were they on migration?

We have continued our monthly counts at Miranda. With the changes caused by fast-growing mangroves, and the effects of storms at Access Bay, more birds are now using the old limeworks site.

In May a party visited Lake Pockerua, on the Walton's beautiful property on the Awhito Peninsula. There was no response to Fernbird and Spotless Crake tapes, though both these species have been known in the area. We were told that escaped fitches have killed all the Pukekos. Later, at Awhito Farm Park, Fernbirds were seen and heard along the shore.

Pam Agnew gave us a very well-presented talk at our March meeting. Her photos were a delight and she & Des were lucky in being able to visit Philip Island as well. In April, Nan Rothwell & Gill Eller shared their experiences on a safari to Kakadu National Park. To their acute observations and sense of fun were added good photos and some slides kindly loaned by Betty Seddon. traveling on, they went up Cape York Peninsula, where they were joined by Pat Crombie, whose comprehensive collection of bird photos helped whet our appetites for travel to this different area. In May, Folkert Nieuwland tested our listening skills with 24 technically superb tapes of bird calls we all should have known (but many, including those who thought themselves pretty good, didn't). A slide of each bird provided the answers. It was a good evening. (Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato: A members' evening in February covered birds and wildlife around the world; Peggie Jenner spoke about Africa, Australia and New Zealand trips; Bev Woolley on a month spent in the Chatham Islands; and Folkert Nieuwland on birds he photographed during a recent trip to Europe.

In March, Brian Chudleigh talked about his campervan trip to West Australia. As usual, his talk was accompanied by excellent slides of waders and other wildlife.

Terry Greene gave a fascinating talk entitled 'Parakeets Plus on Little Barrier' in April. It dealt with their feeding and

breeding biology, as well as the current programme being carried out with Kakapo on the island.

Phil Bradfield spoke about another endangered species in May when he told us about Kokako in Mapara Forest. The talk, which included aspects of Kokako monitoring and predator control, was a good lead up to the field trip the following weekend, when Phil (who is resident manager) took us around the northern block. Though none of the 60-70 Kokako was seen due to adverse weather, one was heard briefly. Tuis in particular were abundant, singing and feeding from a massed flowering of rata.

Another weekend was spent exploring the Rangitoto Station. The new owners of this important catchment block in the rangitoto ranges have acquired it so that it can revert to native bush. With high winds, few birds were seen, but a NZ Falcon, Whitehead and Rifleman were among other more common bush birds to be observed. (Stella Rowe)

Hawkes Bay: The counts at Porangahau Est. are continuing, with only 2 months to go. Most of the migrant waders have gone, though there were about 60 Bar-tailed Godwits at the May count. 12 Red-necked Stints recorded during April were gone by May. 7 Black-fronted Terns were also seen during the May count.

A field trip to Balls Clearing on 21 April recorded Fantails, NZ Pigeons, Bellbirds, Tuis, Grey Warblers, and Whiteheads. A good variety of fungi was also noted. (Christine McRae)

Wairarapa: During the weekend of 10-11 March we held a combined field trip with members from Wellington, Wairarapa and Manawatu. The Wellington contingent met up with Wairarapa members at the Masterton Sewage Ponds on the Saturday morning. The three ponds (approx. 35 ha.) had a good selection of Paradise Shelducks, Shovelers, Mallards, Grey Teal, a solitary Scaup, Dabchicks, Black Swans, and Canada Geese. Lunch at the Henley Ponds, Masterton, gave good views of Black-fronted Dotterels and the Black & Little Shags which were feeding actively on small perch in the south pond. We traveled to Palmerston North in the afternoon and settled into motor camp cabins.

Manawatu members wined and dined us magnificently and this was followed by a very interesting slide evening by Lindsay Davies, on Hutton's Shearwaters and then waders at the Manawatu Estuary. Excellent wader watching at the Manawatu Estuary the following morning gave us Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Far Eastern Curlew, whimbrel, Turnstone, Golden Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Wrybill, Pied Stilt, White-faced Heron, Little Tern, and Caspian Tern. All in all a very good birdwatching and social weekend.

On 8 April an early morning bird walk in the Tararua State Forest revealed

surprisingly few birds, but Tomtits, Fantails, Grey Warblers, Silvereyes, Whiteheads, Tuis, and Bellbirds were all seen. We next visited an almost mature pine forest and in contrast saw large numbers of Fantails and Silvereyes, with some Grey Warblers. Our polystyrene squeaking attracted 2 Harriers. OSNZ Wairarapa had a display as part of Earth Day 1990. This was a lot of fun, provided good public relations, and hopefully some new junior members.

6 May provided a quiet but very pleasant passerine mist-netting session in Greytown, with 37 birds banded.

Two gravel islands proposed last year as part of the development of the Henley Ponds at Masterton have now been completed. We await the next breeding season with interest to see if Pied Stilts and/or Black-fronted Dotterels use them. (Tenick Dennison)

Nelson: During the weekend of 24 March Nelson members sent a flock to Ward, which included a covey of Quayles, Henk Heinekamp, Willie Cook, and Zack Williams. It was slow work catching and banding the finches, but the weekend was redeemed by the thousands of ducks on Lake Elterwater (including 7 Chestnut-breasted Shelducks) and good views of 8 Black-fronted Dotterels. (Jenny Hawkins)

Canterbury: At our April meeting Brian Bell gave an account of the birds of Norfolk Island and a review of his recent work on the island. In May, Richard de Hamel gave us an interesting insight into the foods given to nestling Grey Warblers, Shining Cuckoos, Fantails, and Rifleman. In completing this study he certainly had to employ a variety of ingenious techniques; the tolerance of the birds to artificial nests and mobile nests was amazing.

With winter here finches are flocking and a start has been made on banding. Perhaps this year we will get a recovery across Cook Strait? (Paul Sagar)

Otago: At our April meeting John Dowding gave a very interesting talk about seabird identification.

The Kaikorai Estuary survey continues, with a few obvious changes since early May. The April count gave a total of 2126 ducks and swans, however, on 20 May, 2 weeks after the opening of the duck shooting season, the number had dropped to 254. The total number of birds on the estuary declined from 8229 in April to 4505 in May.

The Kingfisher project has had some renewed exposure in the local paper, with a very good response from the public.

Jim Wilson has taken Hawkesbury Lagoon under observation for 18 months. His three monthly counts have already given him a very good picture of birdlife in that area—a major feeding place for Royal Spoonbills and all ducks hiding away from the eager duckshooters. (Peter Schweigman)

Southland: a survey of 70 km of the Oreti River in February produced 14 or 15 Black-fronted Dotterels, proof that the species is established and increasing on this river. There were at least 33 juveniles among the 314 Pied Stilts found, showing some late breeding success had occurred. Pied Stilts were one of the many species of waders, passerines, and waterfowl which had a poor, breeding season in Southland associated with the 1989 spring drought.

Repeated searches for NZ Dotterels at Awarua Bay in early April, timed to coincide with John Dowding's patrols of Mason's Bay on Stewart Island, produced the dismal total of one. The bright spot was finding large numbers of godwits and Turnstones in breeding plumage at both Cow Island and the head of the bay as late as 9/4. By 11/4 only a few pale birds remained at Cow Island, although the head of the bay was not visited that day. The arrival of migratory waders is well documented in the south, but not so the departure dates.

Owen & Jill Linscott, the region's Cattle Egret co-ordinators, report the first sightings for the year on 7/4, with a later influx on 25-28/4. (Maida Barlow)

Atlas available

The *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* by P.C. Bull, P.D. Gaze, and C.J.R. Robertson presents results of OSNZ's bird mapping scheme, conducted from 1969-1979. The basis for this mapping scheme were the NZMS 1 10,000 yard square grid and the fieldwork of several hundred OSNZ members. Along with the *Checklist* and *Field Guide*, the *Atlas* is an essential reference for anyone interested in NZ birds.

Copies of the *Atlas* are available for \$40.00 (includes GST, postage & packing) from: OSNZ Atlas Sales, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington. Cheques should be made payable to OSNZ.

Southland Region obtains commission from Timberlands Ltd

National funds will benefit from a commission made by Timberlands Ltd for an ornithological assessment of 300 ha of the Longwood Forest in Southland. The commission was received and fieldwork completed in April, too late for any assessment of the breeding birds in the area.

This commission was a result of OSNZ's reputation for making unbiased assessments.

MAIDA BARLOW

DEADLINE FOR THE
SEPTEMBER ISSUE IS 20 AUGUST