

# 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. 57**      **December, 1990**

Note Deadline for the March issue will be 20th  
February.

## Young Ornithologists Camp Boggy pond, Lake Wairarapa

The junior members' course which ran over the weekend of 31 August to 2 September at Boggy Pond, on the eastern side of Lake Wairarapa, sounded like a great chance to learn new skills and get in some good birding at the same time. So if you didn't get lost trying to find the Eric Kilmore Lodge you were in for a great time.

The weekend was organised by the Wairarapa branch of OSNZ with help from some well-known and experienced members—Brian Bell, Barrie Heather, Christine McRae, Hugh Robertson, and Dave Sim. 12 junior members participated in the weekend—David & Mark Allen, Julia Harrild, Helen King, Carl Oliver, Shane Wilkinson, Matthew Wong (Wairarapa); Brent Stephenson (Hawkes Bay); Malcolm Falkner (Manawatu); Paul, Michael & David Bell (Wellington).

The first night there was a talk on the identification of mainland NZ shags, given by Dave Sim. This presentation, together with mounted specimens, proved very helpful as some members knew very little about our shags. After this session we were all keen to try and identify the shags we would see the following day on Matthews Lagoon and Boggy Pond.

After a rather sleepless night due to some people snoring and Barrie Heather's famous talking alarm clock, people started to get ready for a day of birdwatching and learning. The morning was spent in boats on Matthews Lagoon, looking at nesting Black and Little Shags. We counted 48 occupied Black Shag nests from our dinghies and canoe.

In the afternoon we all went to check out Boggy Pond. Here we only had one dinghy and the canoe, so there were only

5 juniors on the water while the rest did the stopbank walk. This worked out quite well, with the land party doing better with their bird count than the team on the water—they saw 10 Dabchicks while the water team saw only 3. Also, there was a hide overlooking a Spur-winged Plover's nest where some members spent 2 hours each observing, recording and photographing the movements and behaviour of the birds.

In the evening there was a talk about the waders and waterfowl of Lake Wairarapa. This humorous and educational talk by Hugh Robertson took us through to supper.

The next day we went down to Palliser Bay for a beach patrol. We covered 3 kms and found only 1 Fluttering Shearwater. However, at the end of the patrol we found a Banded Dotterel's nest with 3 eggs. On the way back we looked in on Oporua Floodway to check the Black-fronted Dotterels and saw a banded bird.

There were many highlights over the weekend: 2 Black Swan nests with 4 and 6 eggs on Matthews Lagoon; 48 Black Shag nests on Matthews Lagoon; 7 Black Shag nests on Boggy Pond; 2 Black Swan nests with 5 and 0 eggs on Boggy Pond; 3 Spur-winged Plover nests, 2 with 4 eggs and one with 3 chicks; a Banded Dotterel nest with 3 eggs at Palliser Bay; a total species list of 36.

I would like to thank the Wairarapa branch and all the organisers for an enjoyable and educational weekend.

PAUL BELL

### From the President's Desk

1990 is drawing to a close and we look forward to 1991. Most will be aware that many of the senior members of the Society

have been very busy with the planning and organisation of the International Ornithological Congress and the World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation. Although there will be some tidying up work to follow, most are looking forward to putting their energies and expertise back into the local scene. I personally am hoping to get around the regions to meet you and to spend some time in the field with you where possible.

Despite the additional pressure of these conferences the senior members have continued to work energetically for the Society. It is with pleasure that I can report considerable success in obtaining grant money towards various projects. The passerine banding scheme has benefited from grants in Wellington (national request), Nelson and Christchurch. Two grants were received for a shearwater transfer programme in the Marlborough Sounds which is designed to be a junior members' project. Details of further grants appear below.

This financial backing to various projects will provide the necessary equipment to get them all operating effectively, providing there is support from members.

There are also plans to hold 3 workshops at different sites around the country during Labour Weekend next year. It is hoped these will provide the opportunity for members to increase their skills and perhaps help in a local project. Remember too, the annual conference at Blenheim over Queen's Birthday Weekend.

You will have received a copy of *Interested in Birds* with your last newsletter. Have you passed this on to someone who could join the Society? Some 20 000 leaflets are being distributed

through various channels and if we get only a 1% return from them we could have an extra 200 members. It is in every members interest that the Society continues to grow.

It is encouraging to see some of the information gathered by members regular studies being used to assist conservation and management programmes. This basic information is not available from anywhere else and with an increase in our membership and activities we can provide a very valuable contribution. The Department of Conservation is starting to see the Society as a valuable avenue of support and in some areas is working in collaboration with us. There is scope for this to be extended.

I wish you all a happy festive season and good birding for 1991.

BRIAN BELL,  
*President*

### Ward Banding School

Dates: 19-21 January and 2-6 February 1991

Come and join in this "hands on" training in mist netting and of handling birds—measuring, ageing, sexing, and recording moult.

The training programme is open to all members. Costs are about \$10 per day for food, plus transport costs (share in hire and fuel charges). Those interested please contact Brian Bell, PO Box 12397, Wellington.

### Announcement: Dabchick survey—Easter 1991

The Department of Conservation and OSNZ plan to combine forces next Easter to survey Dabchicks in the dune lakes of the Foxton Ecological District, from Paekakariki to north of Wanganui. This area is one of the strongholds of this threatened species and the survey should give good information on its current status in these wetlands. Provisional bookings of accommodation at Pukepuke Lagoon have been made for the period Thursday 28 March to Monday 2 April. Bed numbers will be limited, but there is plenty of floor space and room to pitch tents.

Pukepuke will be the base of operations, and we will probably run mist netting and beach patrol workshops during various stages of the long weekend.

If you are interested in taking part in these activities, please contact Dr Hugh Robertson, 30 Deller Grove, Silverstream. (Phone (04) 282-211)

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

### NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following four Council members retire in June 1991 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mr D. E. Crockett	(Vice President)
Dr Ben D. Bell	(Member of Council)
Dr B. J. Gill	(Member of Council)
Mrs J. M. Hawkins	(Member of Council)

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28th February 1991, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee.

Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election, however, the President will not be seeking re-election.

### NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1991 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1991 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

The 1991 OSNZ A.G.M. will be held in Blenheim on Saturday, 1st June.

P.O. Box 12397  
Wellington

R. EMPSON  
Hon. Secretary, OSNZ

### New Members

Welcome to the following new members who have joined the Society in the first 6 months of the year.

John Adams, Daniel Allen, Christopher K. Attewell, Elizabeth Bell, R.W. Bishop, Denise Bricknell, John A. Brierly, Julia Brooke-White, K.P. Brown, Ray Clough, Christine Cross, DOC Newton, DOC Hamilton, DOC Nelson, DOC Wellington, Jo Ewing, Malcolm Falkner, Mark Fennell, C.B. Frith, Susan Gaskin, Angela Gates, Andrew Given, Brenda Green, David Hare, Mark Harrewijn, Julia Harrild, Virginia Hill, Hocken Library, Janet Houston, Gavin R. Hunt, Jonathan Ingerson, Elizabeth Jackson, Gerry Kessels, Sue Mitchell, Jill McDonald, Angus McKintosh, Shirley McQueen, E.O. Minot, A.J. Norman, Len Oakes, Simon O'Rourke, P.F. Penny, Lyndon Perriman, John Peter, John Robertshaw, Rowena Roper, W. Rozing, Mrs M. Rutherford, Annette Salowsky, Patricia Sheehan, Sarah Stokes, C. Street, Kathryn Taylor, David Tennyson, W.S. Thompson, University of Minnesota, Katrina Whitbread Edwards, David L. Wilson, David Woodcock, W.M. & A.J.M. Zee.

HAZEL HARTY,  
*Membership Secretary*

### A Comprehensive NZ Bird Slide Library

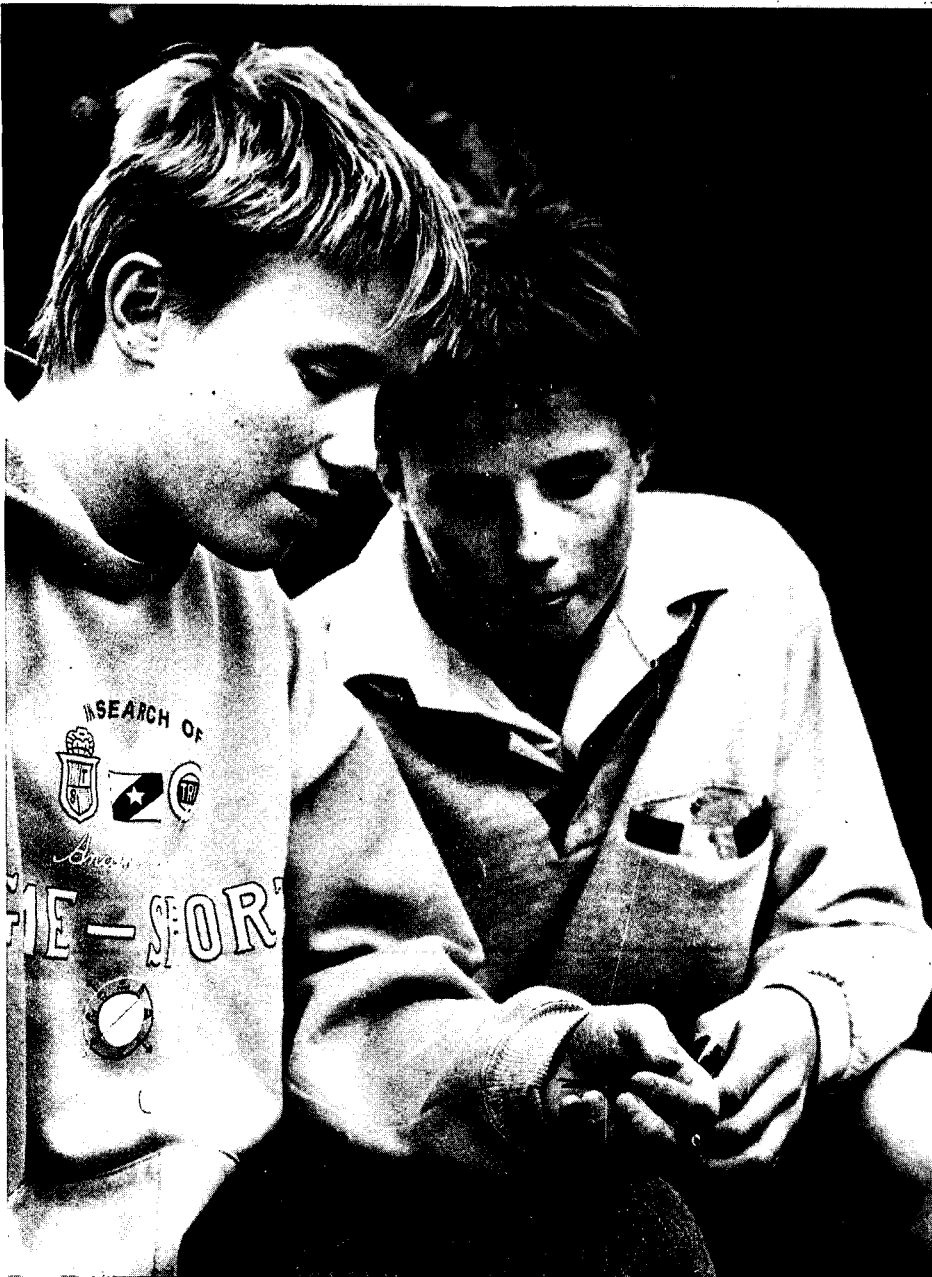
At the RRs meeting at the 1990 AGM it was proposed that a NZ bird slide collection be put together and be available for loan to regions throughout the country. I was asked to explore the feasibility of this and here report progress to date.

It is hoped that we will eventually obtain copies of slides of some 300 species. Currently I have been promised the loan of slides from 5 sources covering 195 species. Three duplicates of each slide will be made and the originals returned to their owners.

Applications were made to 2 grant-giving bodies to cover the estimated \$1150 required. We were successful with one of these applications and received \$600 from the Environmental Grants Scheme. OSNZ Council has generously agreed to underwrite the shortfall, so finance for the project is available.

We still require slides of at least another 100 species if our collection is to be anywhere near complete. I hope to publish a list of the species required in the next OSNZ news and would be grateful if members could help by loaning these.

TENICK DENNISON



Michael (left) and David (right) Bell banding a Silvereye. Reproduced with permission from *The Dominion*

### A.T. Edgar Junior Award for 1990—Michael & David Bell

At the Society's AGM in Wellington on 12 May the A.T. Edgar Junior Award was presented to Michael & David Bell.

Both have shown a keen active interest in a wide range of ornithological activities. These include:

- \* Nest box construction and installation for the Kapiti Island Saddleback breeding programme.

- \* Beach patrolling—they regularly cover their own area and often do other areas with the monthly Society patrol.

- \* Regular contributions to the regional newsletter, including items of unusual bird sightings from various parts of the country.

- \* Regular verbal reports at OSNZ meetings of their discoveries and projects,

including nest recording, and the trapping and mist netting of passerines in their backyard.

- \* They are keen helpers with the day-to-day running of OSNZ meetings.

- \* At field activities such as Ward and Nga Manu mist netting sites they are expert enough to teach others.

David & Michael take an active interest in most Society trips and projects and are an asset to the Wellington Region.

When announcing the award the Vice President, David Crockett, had intended to itemise their achievements, but he said that their joint presentation of some of the results of their passerine banding had already amply shown them to be worthy recipients of the award.

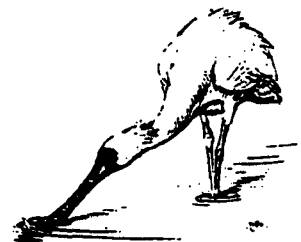
KERRY OATES

### Telescopes & tripods

OSNZ will be making a bulk order of telescopes and tripods in early 1991 as a result of obtaining a Lottery Science Research Grant for such equipment. OSNZ members who want to buy their own telescope and/or tripod, and are interested in taking advantage of the price reductions available on this bulk order, should contact me no later than 1 March 1991. I am currently investigating the best deals available and will be able to let you know the brands under consideration and prices about then. Interested members should contact Dr Hugh Robertson, 30 Deller Grove, Silverstream. (Phone (04) 282-211)

### OSNZ receives Lottery Science grants

The Lottery Science Research Committee of the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board announced its 1990 grants recently. OSNZ was successful in obtaining funding for both projects presented: \$4,300 for a microcomputer for the editor of *Notornis*, and \$14,000 for telescopes, tripods, vernier calipers, and Pesola balances for use on a variety of OSNZ studies. The OSNZ is very grateful to have received these grants as a form of recognition of the value of the scientific information on New Zealand birds that the Society gathers and publishes.



### National Survey of Royal Spoonbills — Waitangi Day 1991

An accurate count should be made of the birds at their breeding grounds, but roosting and feeding areas should also be covered. Since the birds can move from one roosting/feeding area to another in a matter of hours, it pays to know where these areas are. With enough members covering these areas, the Waitangi Day survey should give a pretty accurate figure of the total population of Royal Spoonbills in the various regions.

Can I please have your cooperation and set Waitangi Day aside to ascertain the numbers of breeding and non-breeding Royal Spoonbills in the country.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

## Wanted – Review Editor

The Society needs a new Review Editor. The role involves soliciting relevant books from publishers, receiving all books, distributing books to appropriate reviewers, and ensuring that reviews are forwarded to the Editor for inclusion in *Notornis*.

Members interested in filling this role or requiring further information should contact the Secretary, PO Box 12397, Wellington.



### Profile – Hazel Harty, Membership Secretary

Hazel joined OSNZ in 1967 after being on holiday in Fiordland and enquiries on returning home led her to Ross McKenzie, who became friend and mentor to her and husband Tom. After joining, both Tom and Hazel did beach patrols once a month for 6 years along South Auckland's west coast. She has been to several outlying islands and has helped with bird banding, mist netting, cannon netting, and counts.

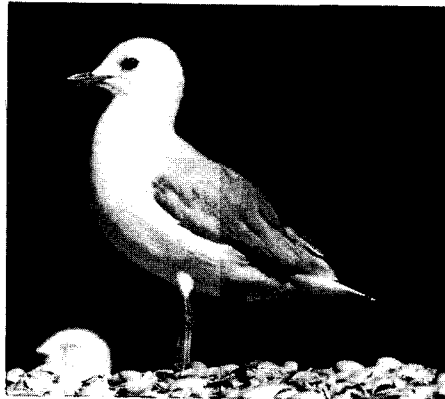
During the past 7 years she has spent the majority of fine weekends out on their yacht around the different islands of the Hauraki Gulf, getting a closer look at seabirds. Also a member of the RAOU, she has been to several of their campouts.

As Membership Secretary, Hazel first and foremost welcomes new members to the Society and makes sure they are looked after. The position also involves sending out invoices for renewals; collecting and analysing the cheques for banking, making sure labels are sent out in time for the despatch of *Notornis*; updating RRs on current financial & unfinancial members, deletions etc; and passing relevant information to Council.

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT  
ISSUE 20 FEBRUARY**

## Mystery Bird # 1

Hopefully, most people should have recognised last issue's mystery bird (repeated below) as either a Red-billed or Black billed Gull. As the photo is printed in black & white, we are unable to gauge the colour of the bill and legs. The legs, however, appear rather pale, and the bill is distinctly bi coloured. This combination is not found on any adult gulls, so we must be looking at an immature bird.



1st year Black-billed Gull.

(Photo: Brian Chudleigh)

With that ascertained we need to have a closer look at the bird. Its bill is fairly long and sharply pointed, pale up to its dark tip. These features all point towards Black-billed Gull. An immature Red-billed Gull would show a dark brown bill (shorter and stouter than that of a Black-billed Gull), eye-ring and legs (see photo 2). In colour, the bill of our Black-billed Gull would be pink with a grey-black tip and the legs would be flesh pink with a black tinge on the webs and toes.

So, rather confusingly, an adult Red-billed Gull has red legs and bill, an immature Red-billed Gull has dark brown legs and bill, an adult Black-billed Gull has black legs and bill, and an immature Black-billed Gull has pink legs and bill. Clear?

## Mystery Bird # 2: identify this bird

Answer next OSNZ news.

PHIL BATTLE



Juvenile Red-billed Gull.

(Photo: Brian Chudleigh)

Perhaps the clearest way of distinguishing juvenile small gulls is to see them in flight. Black-billed Gulls have a clear white leading edge to most of the outer wing, caused by the two outermost primaries being white with black edges and a subterminal black bar and white tip. Red-billed Gulls have the outer primaries black with a white 'mirror' near the tip, which is prominent in flight.

As with all birds there will be much variation in immature plumages, so not all birds will fit easily into either species.

Then it will be necessary to have a close look at the structure of the bird, especially the bill and wings. So, if you are bored some winters day why not have a good look at your nearest flock of gulls.

Both the gulls pictured here were privileged to pose for Brian Chudleigh, who took the photos.

## Movements of Pied Oystercatchers after breeding

In August 1987 we began a long-term study of a population of 30-40 pairs of Pied Oystercatchers which breed on farmland in the Valetta/Lismore area of Mid Canterbury. These birds are in the area from about late June until mid January; for the rest of the year they congregate at coastal sites. The original aims of our project were to determine details of breeding biology, survival, pair-bond and nesting site retention, and age of first breeding. A prime requirement, therefore, is for us to be able to recognise individual birds, so we attempt to catch and colour band all Pied Oystercatchers breeding in our study area. In addition, large chicks are fitted with a single metal and a single colour band, to indicate the year they hatched.

The OSNZ national wader counts show that there are over 90 000 Pied Oystercatchers in New Zealand, so we assumed few, if any, of 'our' colour banded birds would be seen outside the study area between breeding seasons. However, 4 adults were reported during the autumn and winter of 1988 and now a few dedicated observers, from the far south to the far north of the country, search oystercatcher flocks for colour banded birds. This sustained effort has enabled us to expand our initial aims to include a study of the dispersal of the oystercatchers from their breeding grounds.

In the 3 breeding seasons to January 1990, a total of 86 adult Pied Oystercatchers were each fitted with a unique colour band combination (comprising 3 colour bands, plus the metal band), and 58 chicks had a year-class combination fitted. Of these, 21 adults and at least 8 juveniles have been reported outside the study area, from 14 and 5 sites respectively. These represent a reporting rate of 24% for adults and at least 14% for juveniles, a remarkable achievement. And remember that because juveniles cannot be identified individually, only the minimum number seen at a site is reported here. Several birds (adults and juveniles) have been reported more than once during an autumn/winter period, and 5 adults have been reported in successive years.

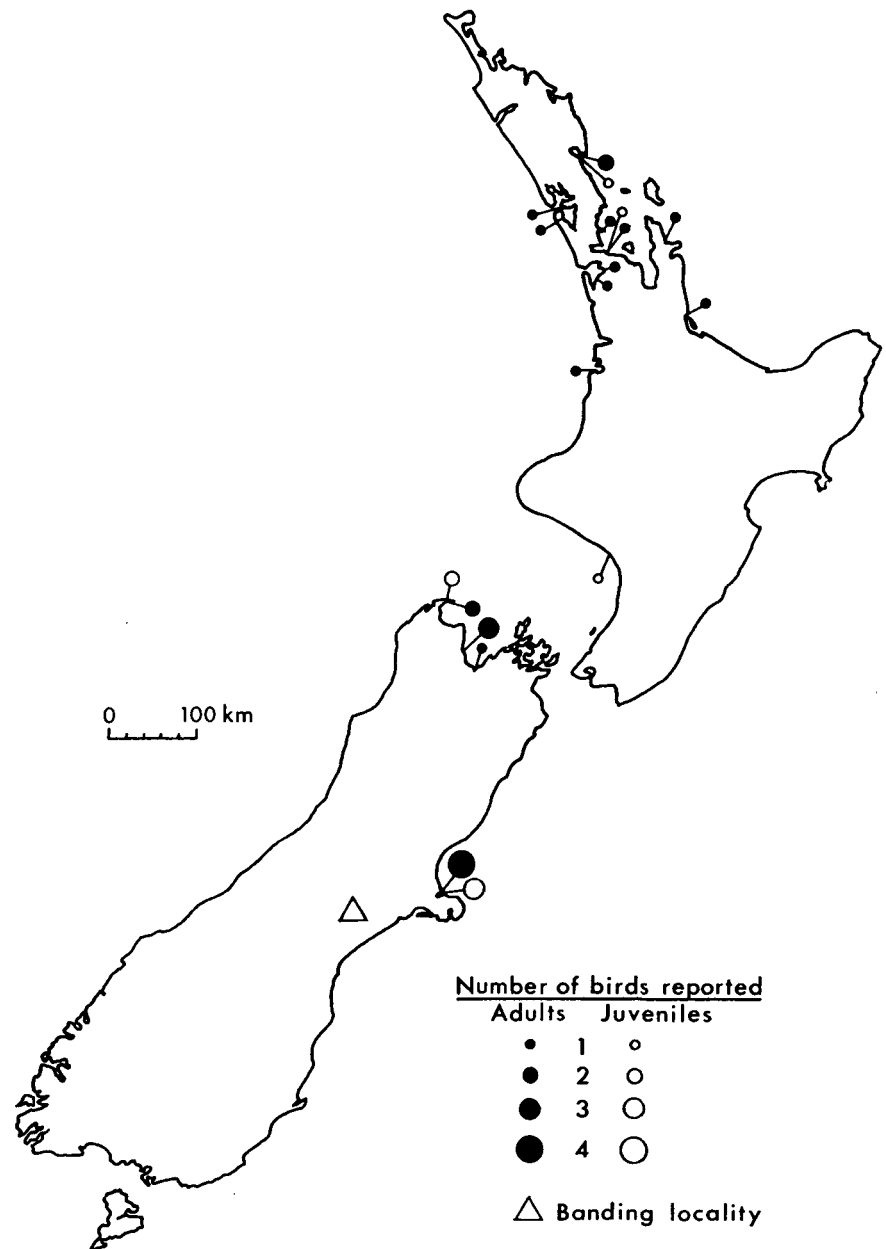
So, what have we learned from these reports? It is obvious that adults and juveniles disperse widely to sites north of the breeding area, with about half the birds remaining in the South Island and the rest moving to the northern half of the North Island (see map). The greatest straight-line distance between breeding and post-breeding sites is about 930 km, but then 7 birds traveled just 90 km to the Avon-Heathcote Estuary.

Adults appear to travel directly to and from their wintering grounds because none has been reported from more than one site e.g. an adult recorded was recorded 5 times at the same high-tide roost between February and June 1989. Also, adults appear to return to the same coastal sites in successive years.

If the reporting rate is maintained, in a few years we may have information about the relative dispersal of juveniles and adults, and adult males and adult females.

Our thanks to Jan Chisnall, Brian Chudleigh, Andrew Crossland, John Dowding, Gillian Eller, Jenny Hawkins, Colin Miskelly, Ray Pierce, Emmie Pratt, Graham Randle, Peter Reese, Hugh Robertson, Michael Taylor, and George Watola for finding 'our' birds, and to those whose negative reports also contribute valuable information to this study. We look forward to receiving more reports next year.

PAUL SAGAR & DONALD GEDDES



Location of the study area and sites from which colour-banded Pied Oystercatchers have been reported

## National Wader Counts— Summer 1988

A record total of 196 730 waders was counted during the sixth national summer wader count, completed during November and December 1988. Once again there was good coverage of coastal areas throughout the country, with counts being completed at all major sites. This was only possible because of the sometimes considerable efforts of a large number of members and friends.

As for previous summer counts, participants were asked to pay particular attention to migratory waders from the Northern Hemisphere and, whenever possible, also to count NZ-breeding species. The following is a preliminary report of the results of the count.

### Distribution:

Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted are listed in Table 1, and the general distribution of waders is shown on the accompanying map. As found in all previous counts the general pattern in summer is that most migratory waders are concentrated in the north (Parengarenga to Kawhia and the Bay of Plenty), Nelson and Southland.

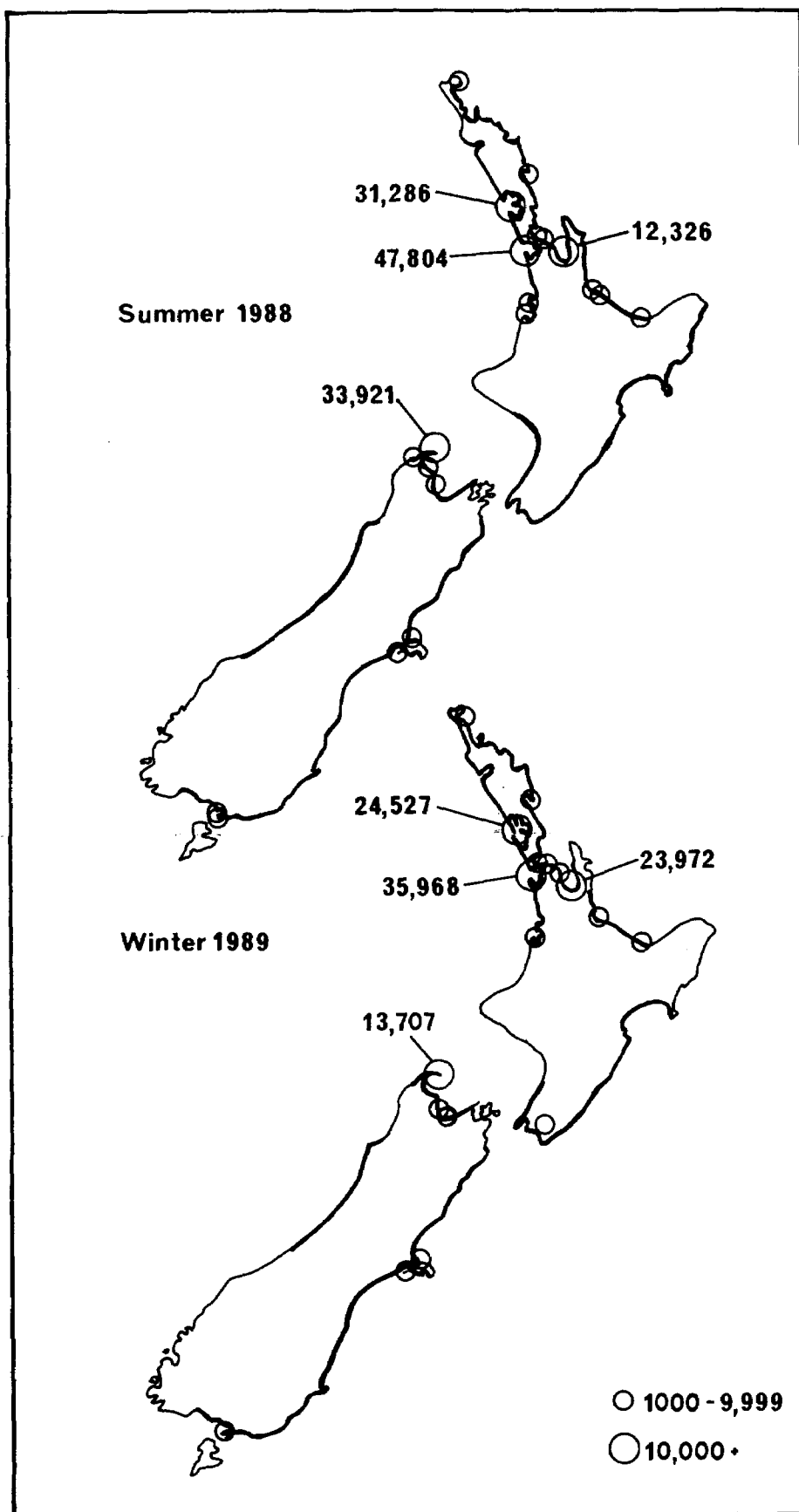
TABLE 1 Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted in Nov/Dec 1988

Location	
Manukau Harbour	47 804
Farewell Spit	33 921
Kaipara Harbour	31 286
Firth of Thames	12 326
Tauranga Harbour	5 519
Parengarenga	5 370
Ohope/Ohiwa	5 108
Kawhia Harbour	4 620
Whangarei Harbour	4 326
Invercargill Estuary	4 122
Westhaven	3 445
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	3 396
Motueka Estuary	3 113
Golden Bay	2 790
Waitemata Harbour	1 791
Awarua Bay	1 630
Lake Ellesmere	1 287
Maketu Estuary/Kaituna Cut	1 183
Aotea Harbour	1 172
Tamaki Estuary	1 125
Mangawhai Estuary	1 021

More than 10 000 birds were recorded again from Manukau Harbour Farewell Spit, Kaipara Harbour and the Firth of Thames; these remain the only areas from which 10 000 waders have been counted since the inaugural count in 1983.

### Total numbers

A summary of wader totals by region is given in Table 2. Once again, Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots made up the majority of the birds counted and the order



Summer 1988 and winter 1989 national counts. Thickened outline indicates areas covered during each count.

TABLE 2 - Waders counted in New Zealand, November-December 1988.

	Far North Auckland			Gisborne Hawkes Manawatu Wairar-					West					TOTAL	
	N'land	S.Auck	Waikato	BoP	Wairoa	Bay	Wanganui	apa	Marlboro.	Nelson	Coast	Canterbury	Otago		Southland
Pied Oystercatcher	317	6 909	730	23	4	1	25	1	10	2 885	91	1 155	926	2 087	15 164
Variable Oystercatcher	343	452	8	226	7	6	47	10	11	170	23	6	40	34	1 383
Golden Plover	20	146	-	65	62	26	28	13	-	28	-	33	-	102	523
Grey Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Spur-winged Plover	-	59	-	22	19	11	30	254	*	*	*	*	*	*	395*
NZ Dotterel	145	288	7	111	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	554
Banded Dotterel	107	53	4	152	23	26	7	14	9	117	78	147	8	78	823
Large Sand Dotterel	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Mongolian Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	4	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Wrybill	7	111	-	2	1	8	4	-	-	-	119	-	-	-	252
Par Eastern Curlew	-	15	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	24
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	30
American Whimbrel	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	6
Whimbrel species	-	20	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	35
Bar-tailed Godwit	8 364	45 209	4 950	11 312	635	480	431	20	13	22 374	389	2 606	1 966	2 952	101 701
Hudsonian Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
Greenshank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3
Marsh Sandpiper	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Siberian Fattler	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	5
Fattler species	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	4
Terek Sandpiper	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Turnstone	397	1 506	-	363	3	28	1	1	66	885	-	17	3	946	4 216
Lesser Knot	3 158	42 196	6	254	32	49	171	1	-	18 271	74	11	7	872	65 102
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	-	16	-	5	-	-	2	4	-	4	-	-	-	11	42
Pectoral Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	-	5
Curlew Sandpiper	1	15	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	3	-	21	-	15	58
Red-necked Stint	-	23	-	7	-	14	-	-	10	21	3	63	-	30	171
Sanderling	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Pied Stilt	198	2 221	87	240	75	613	176	333	14	61	51	938	710	488	6 205
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13 057</b>	<b>99 273</b>	<b>5 792</b>	<b>12 793</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>1 266</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>44 843</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>5 120</b>	<b>3 663</b>	<b>7 623*</b>	<b>196 730</b>

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

TABLE 3 - Waders counted in New Zealand, June-July 1989.

	Far North Auckland			Gisborne Hawkes Manawatu					Wairar-	West			TOTAL			
	N'land	S.Auck	Waikato	BoP	Wairoa	Bay	Wanganui	Wellington	apa	Marlboro.	Nelson	Coast		Canterbury		
Pied Oystercatcher	1 898	60 143	2 656	507	-	16	15	29	18	53	12 771	447	5 141	2 036	2 138	87 868
Variable Oystercatcher	564	496	9	264	8	6	2	63	-	8	252	49	10	83	36	1 850
Golden Plover	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
Spur-winged Plover	92	72	23	19	98	79	44	15	114	*	*	*	*	*	*	556*
NZ Dotterel	169	204	14	155	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	-	23	572
Banded Dotterel	2 013	2 038	655	1 291	144	63	12	7	336	25	1 545	108	437	244	324	9 242
Large Sand Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Mongolian Dotterel	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	5	15	13	8	8	192	-	-	-	-	-	-	241
Wrybill	268	3 486	-	101	-	49	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3 906
Par Eastern Curlew	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	6
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
American Whimbrel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Whimbrel species	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	6
Bar-tailed Godwit	1 270	6 950	882	2 018	61	89	4	14	1	14	5 009	14	408	351	485	17 170
Hudsonian Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Black-tailed Godwit	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Greenshank	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Marsh Sandpiper	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
Fattler species	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
Turnstone	133	168	-	48	-	-	1	-	-	29	495	-	-	-	59	933
Lesser Knot	506	6 066	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	514	-	1	-	46	7 145
Curlew Sandpiper	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	11
Red-necked Stint	9	1	-	5	-	4	-	-	-	1	11	-	1	-	-	32
Pied Stilt	2 475	12 048	346	1 311	645	995	165	149	979	128	432	94	869	412	311	21 359
Black/hybrid Stilt	-	3	6	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	8	-	-	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9 407</b>	<b>91 284</b>	<b>4 593</b>	<b>5 738</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>1 314</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>1 640</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>21 056</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>6 877</b>	<b>3 128</b>	<b>3 422</b>	<b>150 939</b>

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

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

of abundance of the top 5 migratory species remained the same as in most previous years i.e. Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot, Turnstone, Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint.

This summer there were record numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser

Knots counted and the totals were substantially greater than the previous highs - 101 701 Bar-tailed Godwits compared to 87 432 in 1987 and 65 102 Lesser Knots compared to 57 868 also in 1987. The number of Turnstones, however, was the lowest recorded during this series of counts - the previous low

being 4 420 in 1986. The totals for Golden Plover and Red-necked Stint both fell within the ranges of counts obtained in the previous 5 years.

Most NZ-breeding species would still be widely dispersed over their breeding range during the period of this count, and so only a proportion of the total populations of these would have been included in the survey.

**Species distribution**

As in previous years, Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots favoured the harbours and estuaries of the Far North/Northland, Auckland/South Auckland, the Bay of Plenty and Nelson regions. Turnstones were concentrated at Parengarenga - 298, Kaipara Harbour - 544, Manukau Harbour - 803, Firth of Thames - 132, Tauranga Harbour - 330, Farewell Spit - 451, Motueka Estuary - 434, Riverton - 250, Invercargill Estuary - 276+, Awarua Bay - 230+ and Fortrose - 101. Golden Plovers favoured Kaipara Harbour - 76, Manukau Harbour - 64, Maketu Estuary - 40, Muriwai Lagoon - 29, Ahuriri Estuary - 25, Manawatu Estuary - 28, Farewell Spit - 28, Lake Ellesmere - 33, and Invercargill Estuary - 78. Highest counts of Red-necked Stints came from Kaipara Harbour - 11, Lake Grassmere - 10, Farewell Spit - 21, Lake Ellesmere - 63, and Awarua Bay - 30. Most Curlew Sandpipers were at the Firth of Thames - 10, Lake Ellesmere - 21, and Awarua Bay - 15. There were some interesting records of the rarer waders, including a Grey Plover at Waituna Lagoon; 2 Large Sand Dotterels at Kaipara Harbour; 2 Mongolian Dotterels at Farewell Spit; single Hudsonian Godwits at Lake Ellesmere and Catlins; Greenshanks at Awarua Bay (2) and Waituna Lagoon (1); single Marsh Sandpipers at Kaipara Harbour, Maketu Estuary and Lake Ellesmere; single Terek Sandpipers at the Firth of Thames and Manawatu Estuary; and 2 Sanderlings at Kaipara Harbour.

**... and winter 1989**

The sixth national winter wader count, completed during June and July 1989, resulted in a record total of 150 939 birds being counted. The previous highest count was 135 347 in 1988.

The extent of the nationwide coverage was better than previous years, particularly in the Far North and Auckland regions. The substantial efforts from regions where there are few members, but large distances and areas to cover was appreciated once again.

As in previous years members were asked to record the numbers of NZ-breeding species (most of which at that time of year are concentrated at coastal sites) and those of overwintering migrants. The following is a preliminary report on the results of these counts.

### Total numbers

A summary of wader totals by region is given in Table 3. This was a winter count of record totals! For the second consecutive winter there were record counts of Pied Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots. And there was a record count of Pied Stilts – following the record low count in June/July 1988.

As in all previous counts Pied Oystercatchers made up most of the birds counted, and in order of abundance they were followed by Pied Stilts, Bar-tailed Godwits, Banded Dotterels, Lesser Knots, Wrybills, and Variable Oystercatchers.

The 87 868 Pied Oystercatchers counted is a record count, the five previous counts range from 77 705 to 85 147. This winter's count of 21 359 Pied Stilts is substantially higher than the 15 152 recorded in winter 1988. However, this probably reflects something of the severity of the winter rather than a dramatic increase in stilt numbers. The winter of 1988 was relatively mild, and so food was probably available over a wider area. Therefore some stilts may have moved away from traditional sites to feed elsewhere, and so were missed during the 1988 count. The numbers of Banded Dotterels and Wrybills counted were above average.

Of the remaining NZ-breeding species the numbers of Variable Oystercatchers and NZ Dotterels were similar to those recorded in previous years. However, these should not be taken as an indication of the total populations because these species tend not to congregate at estuaries and harbours to the same extent as other species and some remain widely spaced on sandy beaches, which generally are not covered during this series of counts. Although the number of Spur-winged Plovers counted in the North Island was lower than that recorded in 1987, the species continues to expand its range northwards, with good numbers now present in the Far North, Northland and Auckland/South Auckland.

The record numbers of overwintering Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots (17 170 and 7145 respectively) follows the record numbers of these species counted the preceding summer (see above) and high counts during the summer of 1987 and winter of 1988. The 933 Turnstones overwintering is also close to a record (970 were counted in winter 1986). These totals represent 16.9% (Bar-tailed Godwits), 11.0% (Lesser Knots), and 22.1% (Turnstones) of the numbers of these species recorded during the summer 1988 count. In previous winters the populations of these species have usually represented 8-12% (Bar-tailed Godwits), 5-8% (Lesser Knots) and 5-10% (Turnstones) of the numbers recorded during the previous summer.

### Species distribution

As in all previous counts the harbours and estuaries of the Auckland/South Auckland and Nelson regions were the most important wintering grounds for Pied Oystercatchers; over 68% of the Pied Oystercatchers counted were in Auckland/South Auckland and 14% in Nelson. The highest counts of Pied Oystercatchers were 22 147 at Manukau Harbour, 17 657 at the Firth of Thames, 15 253 at Kaipara Harbour, and 7629 at Farewell Spit.

Over 56% of the Pied Stilts counted were also in the Auckland/South Auckland regions. The highest counts of stilts were 1345 at Parengarenga, 3867 at Kaipara Harbour, 4679 at Manukau Harbour, and 2831 at the Firth of Thames. Banded Dotterels favoured Parengarenga – 1380, Houhora – 212, Whangarei Harbour – 310, Manukau Harbour – 754, Kaipara Harbour – 928, Kawhia Harbour – 543, Tauranga Harbour – 720, Ohope/Ohiva – 430, Lake Wairarapa – 276, Farewell Spit – 1 237, Lake Ellesmere – 272, and Invercargill Estuary – 283. The main concentrations of Wrybills were at Parengarenga – 159, Firth of Thames – 2000, Manukau Harbour – 1252, Kawhia Harbour – 211, and Tauranga Harbour – 101.

TABLE 4—Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted in June/July 1989.

Location	Number of birds
Manukau Harbour	35 968
Kaipara Harbour	24 527
Firth of Thames	23 972
Farewell Spit	13 707
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	4 466
Parengarenga	4 176
Kawhia Harbour	4 157
Motueka Estuary	3 391
Tauranga Harbour	3 371
Whangarei Harbour	3 191
Waimea Estuary	2 506
Whitford Inlet	2 112
Invercargill Estuary	1 826
Lake Wairarapa	1 442
Waitemata Harbour	1 230
Ohope/Ohiva	1 091
Tamaki Estuary	1 089
Lake Ellesmere	1 003

### Distribution

Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted are listed in Table 4 and the general distribution of waders is shown on the accompanying map. These show the same general pattern of distribution that occurred in all previous winters. Manukau Harbour once again topped the table, easily maintaining its position as the most important site for waders in winter.

Manukau Harbour once again topped the table, easily maintaining its position as the most important site for waders in winter.

Kaipara Harbour, the Firth of Thames, and Farewell Spit remain the only other sites to support more than 10 000 waders in winter.

### Conclusion

A large amount of very useful information has been recorded during this series of counts – not only for the obvious major sites, but also for the many more sites which are at least of importance regionally. A detailed analysis of all the information from the six years of National Wader Counts (covering all species and all regions) is now well advanced, and a paper based on this will be submitted to *Notornis* next year.

PAUL SAGAR

Coordinator, National Wader Counts



### RAOU Column Night Parrot rediscovered

A recent expedition returning from the Kimberley in Western Australia has rediscovered the Night Parrot *Geopsittacus occidentalis*. Walter Boles, of the Australian Museum, Sydney, had stopped near the town of Boulia, in western Queensland, when he found a mummified specimen by the road in arid grassland. Last year Australian businessman Dick Smith posted a A\$50,000 reward for conclusive evidence that the species still exists. An independent panel of experts, including a representative from the RAOU, is being appointed to verify the authenticity of the specimen before the reward is handed over. It is hoped that the reward money will go towards research into the Night Parrot.

The Night Parrot is a nocturnal, cryptic species that is very rarely encountered; no population estimate is available. Its status is indeterminate, but it may well be endangered through predation by feral mammals, altered fire regimes, and loss of habitat from grazing by stock.

Although unconfirmed sightings occur regularly, the last authentic reports were during the RAOU Atlas project (1977-1981); a specimen was last collected in 1912. According to the recently published *Threatened Birds of Australia – an Annotated List*, no conservation measures have been directed specifically



towards the Night Parrot, but in light of the recent find, a survey in the area would be warranted immediately.

## Publications

The first volume of the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, published by Oxford University Press, will be launched at the IOC in Christchurch. The amount of material it contains has exceeded all expectations, and Volume one will now be published in two parts – both of over 700 pages – at no extra cost.

*Threatened Birds of Australia—an Annotated List* (RAOU Report No. 68) was published recently. The report uses internationally accepted criteria to classify Australia's 59 threatened bird species – extinct, endangered, vulnerable, rare, indeterminate or insufficiently known. Seven endemic species are regarded as extinct, and the book lists the distribution, population, habitat, threats, conservation measures taken and conservation measures proposed for the other 52 species. A second volume, listing taxa threatened in Australia but secure elsewhere, will be published in 1991. Southern Cassowary and Little Tern are two examples of this category.

DAVID ANDREW

## Cape Barren Geese at Waikanae

On 10/12/88 I saw 2 Cape Barren Geese standing in shallow water at the Waikanae River Estuary. The birds were standing together amid large numbers of Paradise Shelducks and Black Swans.



Cape Barren Goose at Waikanae, 10/12/88.  
(Photo: Colin Clunie)

After taking a series of photographs I moved across the north side of the sandspit; the Paradise Shelducks and Black swans moved away, but the Cape Barren Geese stayed quiet. I then moved closer to take more photographs. I was surprised to be able to approach them within touching distance and stayed there for 1.5 hours. Apart from being curious at my approach there was no sign of nervousness at my presence, they settled down and accepted me at such close quarters, even with the camera clicking. They were even too quiet for what you would expect of even tame

birds and I wondered if they were tired or mesmerised with new surroundings.

The feathers appeared rather tattered and the birds' condition appeared good, although the photos show hollowness on the flanks.

3 Cape Barren Geese were at Waikanae by a party of 7 OSNZ members on 11/12/88 and there were subsequent sightings until 27/3/89, when a single bird was present. It remains a mystery whether the birds were recent immigrants or merely escapees from a local aviary.

COLIN CLUNIE

## Bittern colouration

There appears to be little in the literature on the breeding colour changes of the soft parts of Australasian Bitterns. On 16/9/90 we observed a bittern 'freezing' in the open. The most notable feature was a pale blue bill base/lores area. NZ literature we have referred to does not mention a colour change at all. However, *The Herons Handbook* by Hancock et al (1984) refers to the Eurasian Bittern as follows – The breeding male has a powder-blue base to its bill, and the female has a light brown bill base.

The NZ Checklist considers the Australasian Bittern to be a subspecies of the Eurasian Bittern. Therefore it is feasible that this colour change may be applicable here. On p.147 of *NZ Birds in Focus* by G. Moon is a photo of a bittern with a pale blue bill base while the nesting bird on the opposite page does not (presumably a female).

We would be interested to hear of any further information that members may have.

WAYNE & MARGARET TWYDLE

## Colour-banded Black-fronted Terns

Some members, mostly from Wellington, would remember a field trip led by Brian Bell in November 1988 which included a visit to a colony of Black-fronted Terns nesting on the Waiau River upstream from Hamner. The chicks were being colour banded, but on later visits to the colony no well-grown chicks were seen and I thought that predation might have been heavy. However, at least one chick survived to be seen by Wayne Twydle on Napier's Marine Parade on 28/5/89. On 4/6/90 a bird with similar bands and in apparent second winter plumage was also seen by Wayne.

The Head and bill colouration were very similar to that described and illustrated by Paddy Latham in *Notornis* 28: 23.

Another colour – banded has been seen by Wayne each year since 1986 and it seems likely that this is the same bird returning each winter.

Any other sightings of colour banded

black – fronted Terns would be welcome and useful to improve our knowledge of plumage changes.

JACK COWIE

## SIPO-savers, predator control and habitat management

Bruce Newland farms in the Te Anau Basin at Riverslea, adjacent to the Mararoa River. With the exception of Wrybills and Black Stilts, all the South Island inland breeding waders nest there. Bruce passes on the following SIPO-saving tips which work well for him and have wider potential. The first is a nest-saver: 5-6 pigtail steel standards treaded into the ground around the nest, then bent in and the tops tied together with string, making a sort of cage. This works well on nests in sheepyards and close to woolsheds where sheep numbers are high. Bruce uses the same system to protect nests in paddocks against accidental trampling. Red tops to the standards make them easily seen. Another SIPO problem in a dry spring is the drowning of chicks in water troughs. To avoid this Bruce sets the trough in question to fill right to the brim, or puts some large rocks in the trough against one side to allow the chicks to climb out.

Bruce also runs an active predator-control programme. In 8 months this year he took 90 rabbits, 8 ferrets, 4 stoats, and 27 cats. Cat numbers are well up and stoat numbers down on previous years. The latter backs Bruce's theory that most of the stoats are driven out of the nearby national park by prolonged wet, cold weather. Such weather has not occurred so far this year.

Another idea Bruce is promoting is the temporary blocking of the odd small farm culvert where the ditch is spring-fed. This works well on his flats and has the added advantage of raising the water table when needed. It is great for the Pied Stilts and can be re-opened in the autumn or when it rains.

MAIDA BARLOW

## New Zealand Birds – A Sound Guide

Volumes 4 to 7 in this series are now available at \$15.00 each, which includes postage by surface mail. Volume 4 covers species in *Checklist* order from Banded Rail to Turnstone, Volume 5 covers species from Chatham Island Snipe to Kea, Volume 6 Crimson Rosella to Auckland Island Tit, and Volume 7 North Island Robin to Rook plus some species which have become available since previous volumes were produced. Volumes 1 to 3 are still available.

Each tape runs for an hour and comes complete with a booklet that gives brief details of each of the recordings featured. For a review of Volumes 1 & 2, consult *Notornis* 36: 79-80 and 37: 153-154 respectively.

Tapes in this 7-cassette series may be ordered from: McPherson Natural History Unit, P.O. Box 21083, Edgeware, Christchurch.

## For Sale

*Notornis* backnumbers volumes 9-35 (1960-1988 inclusive) plus indexes. Volumes 9-29 bound in 8 books bottle green, imitation leather, with gold lettering on spine. Volumes 30-35 unbound.

Price \$200 the lot, plus postage or freight. Contact S.C. Sparrow, 30 Gosset Street, Christchurch 1. Phone (03) 355 8557.

## Quail tale

In the late afternoon of 11/2/88 I heard California Quail calling and went outside to find young quail on the lawn and perched along the rails of the veranda. There was complete bedlam when I appeared and all the quail flew into a rhododendron and then into the paddock where I counted 4 adults and 22 half-grown young. It was an amazing sight to see this number feeding. One would find something, give a call, then the whole line of quail came running.

CHRISTINE MCRAE

## Curtis Island

Curtis Island is a small volcanic island in the southern Kermadec group. A large crater dominates the island and there are numerous other "hot spots". The island has no woody vegetation and lacks introduced mammalian predators. We were fortunate in being able to spend from 13/10 to 12/11/89 on the island to survey its flora and fauna. Prior to our trip, the island had rarely been visited and no scientific party had stayed overnight or spent more than a few hours ashore.

Although we recorded only 16 bird species onshore, the density of petrels is spectacular. As on Macauley Island, 40 km to the north, the avifauna of Curtis Island is dominated by Black-winged Petrels. We estimated that there were 300 000 pairs. This species was returning from its migration to the North Pacific during our visit; a few birds were present on the first night and numbers built up gradually during our stay until thousands were present by day and night.

Little Shearwaters were the next most abundant species, with about 100 000 pairs present. This is one of the largest colonies of this species in the world and certainly the biggest for the Kermadec race. Many burrows had large chicks and these began to fledge in late October.

Wedge-tailed Shearwaters also returned from migration during our stay. The first was seen on 19/10 and thereafter numbers rapidly increased. About 2500 pairs are present on Curtis.

We were particularly interested in the status of the storm petrels on the island. A

single White-bellied Storm Petrel chick was found here in 1982. Using spotlights, we caught 23 adult White-bellied Storm Petrels, but they did not seem to be nesting at the time of our visit. However, Curtis Island is undoubtedly one of the world's most important breeding sites for this species. The birds we caught were variable in colour and ranged from having white bellies and rumps to being streaked underneath and appearing mainly dark above. This variation seems typical of other White-bellied Storm Petrel populations and must make the at-sea identification of some storm petrels very confusing. No other species of petrel was found ashore, apart from a single Christmas Island Shearwater caught on 10/11. This is the first live record from the New Zealand region. The closest known breeding grounds are 2000 km away. We hoped to find the breeding grounds of the white-rumped Kermadec race of the White-faced Storm Petrel here. However, despite seeing several at sea, we found none ashore. Similarly, we suspected that White-naped Petrels may breed on Curtis, but we saw none ashore. Thus its only known breeding site is Macauley Island. On the return voyage, we saw several at sea off Curtis Island.

The dominant surface nesting birds are species of tropical tern. Grey Ternlets nest abundantly on the island, concentrated in rocky sites. Fledglings were seen from late October, while some eggs were still being incubated when we departed. About 5000 pairs are present. Sooty Terns nest on open ground over much of the island and our census on 10-12/11 produced 5500 eggs. Laying was still in progress and the first chick hatched on 10/11.

Much to our surprise, we found 2 species of "dark" noddy nesting.

Black Noddies had about 40 nests, mainly in small colonies. Eggs and small chicks were present when we left. We also found about 25 nesting pairs of the larger Brown Noddy. This is the first record of the species nesting in the New Zealand region, despite its wide nesting range throughout the Pacific. Most birds were on eggs, but a few chicks were also present.

Perhaps the most obvious species present is the Masked Booby. About 70 pairs are present. Nests contained eggs through to half-grown chicks. An immature Brown Booby was flying offshore on 16/10. We saw no live Red-tailed Tropic Birds, but found a single dead chick. A few pairs must be present.

We noted 3 species of wader - Golden Plover (max. of 5), 2 Turnstones, and a dead Asiatic Whimbrel. Only 2 landbird species were present - Welcome Swallow (max. of 7) and Starling (max. of 40).

On the outward and return journeys, we made regular counts of birds at sea. The most common birds seen off the continental shelf were Grey-faced Petrels and small numbers of Wandering Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, and Cookkileria petrels. On the return journey we also saw several Grey Petrels, a

few small skuas, Black Petrels, 2 Soft-plumaged Petrels, and a Westland Black Petrel.

Thanks to the Captain and crew of HMNZ *Wellington* for providing transport, and to the Department of Conservation and Tim Lovegrove for helping with organisation.

ALAN TENNYSON  
& GRAEME TAYLOR

## Recent Reports

A short report this time, covering only the two months from late Aug. to Oct. Many thanks to all those who sent in observations at such short notice.

Records for the next issue of *OSNZ* news are needed by 20 February and can be sent in through your regional recorder or direct to me at Titri Road, R.D., Outram, Otago.

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

## Seabirds

Apart from a number of prions on the Bay of Plenty beaches, few beach-wrecked seabirds were reported. As usual, there were late winter reports of White-headed Petrels, Antarctic Fulmars and Antarctic Prions, mainly from Wellington and Muriwai beaches. More unusual was a live Antarctic Petrel from the Rangitiki Rivermouth on 7 Oct. Several Kerguelen Petrels were found dead on Waikanae-Te Horo (Wellington) beaches during Sept.-Oct. and 2 were reported from Greenhills Back Beach and Ruapuke I. (Southland) in Aug. These were probably associated with the larger wreck in Northland during the winter. Juvenile Buller's Mollymawks "ran into some trouble" off Southland, where 3 live and several dead birds were found in mid-Sept. A weak Erect-crested Penguin was found at Papanui (Otago) on 24 Sept.

Thousands of live Fluttering Shearwaters were present off Boulder Bank (Nelson) during Aug.-Sept., and unusually large numbers were also seen at Pania Reef, Napier Harbour, on 30 Sept. White-faced Storm Petrels returned to the Hauraki Gulf during Sept., where 150+ were seen north of Waiheke I. on the 22nd. 4 Taiko were caught at the 3 main burrows on the Chathams in late Sept.-Oct., with the help of the low-tech. "war-whoop" method.

Reports of Little Black Shags from Southland are scanty and unconfirmed, but details of a thin bird picked up on Oreti Beach during August sound convincing. In contrast, c200 were present in Hawkes Bay at the Tukituki River on 6 Oct. and 15 at L. Waahi (Waikato) on 22 Oct. Little Shags did not return to the Hobson Bay (Auckland) colony this spring, which may indicate a local decline. However, Pied

Shags are nesting at Bromley S.P. (Canterbury) again this year – 16 nests.

The Mangawhai (Auckland) colony of Caspian Terns was doing well, with 100+ nests and some early chicks by 10 Oct. A White-capped Noddy was seen at Rangaunu Est. on 2 Sept., but even more unusual were several winter sightings of juvenile Gannets in Nelson, including 3 with 9 adults off the Boulder Bank in Aug.-Sept. 2 White-winged Black Terns were at the Ashley Est. in mid Sept.

## Hérons

Single Little Egrets reported from Manurewa (S. Auckland) in mid-Oct. and Mangere (Auckland) on 25 Aug. may have been the birds seen at Wattle Down Ponds in winter. The bird at Ahuriri Est. (Hawkes Bay) was still there on 8 Oct. and had assumed breeding plumage. There were still 2 in Canterbury during October – one each at the Ashley Est. and Lake Ellesmere.

11 of the 14+ Cattle Egrets in the Taieri Plain (Otago) were in full breeding plumage by 18 Oct. The Thornbury (Southland) flock (c43) was still present on 16 Oct., but the 4 at Awarua had left by 10 Oct.

Royal Spoonbill numbers at Mangere increased to 31 by 18 Oct.. 5 more than in June. Numbers at the Ahuriri Est. decreased from 25 at the end of Aug. to 13 by 17 Oct. 4 briefly at Awapuni (Gisborne/Wairoa) on 18-20 Sept. may have been moving southwards. The 30 on the Avon-Heathcote (Canterbury) in mid Aug. decreased to 24 by late Sept. and 4 by late Oct. First arrivals at the Maukiekie breeding site in Otago were 2 between 17 & 19 Sept. and 29 were there by 6 Oct. 2 reached the Invercargill Est. (Southland) on 1 Sept.

Apart from the 'resident' bird with the Cattle Egret flock at Rangiri (Waikato), Glossy Ibis continue their erratic ways. One reappeared at L. Wairarapa on 26 Sept. (its absence attributed to the shooting season?) and 4 returned to Jennings' Deer Farm (Southland) after an absence of several months. It would be interesting to know if these are the same birds or if there is a constant trickle of new arrivals from Australia.

## Waterfowl

L. Waahi (Waikato) held c150 Canada Geese on 22 Oct. and Hawkesbury Lagoon (Otago) had its first record of 2, also in Oct. Paradise Shelducks appear to be increasing in the Auckland area, occupying many bays on Waiheke I. and a pair took up residence in Waiatarua Reserve, Remuera, in Sept. Scaup have been doing well at Sinclair Wetlands (Otago), where 52 were counted on 3 Oct. Coot numbers were high at Lake Tutira (Hawkes Bay), with a maximum of 330 on 7 Oct. A single juvenile turned up in a flooded paddock on the Taieri Plain (Otago) on 28 Aug. An adult male

Northern Shoveler at the Kaikourai Est. (Otago) in late Oct. could be the second record for the country this year.

## Waders

Bar-tailed Godwits returned to the Avon-Heathcote Estuary between 20 & 23 Sept, when numbers reached 660. They arrived a few days later than usual at Invercargill – on 30 Sept. The 5 at Lake Wairarapa increased to 17 by 13 Oct. and the main arrival at the Ahuriri Est. (Hawkes Bay) was around 7 Oct., when 232 were present.

Golden Plover numbers at L. Wairarapa increased from 7 on 26 Sept. to 25 by 13 Oct., when 8 species of arctic waders were present. These included 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 1 Pectoral and 1 Curlew Sandpiper. Hudsonian Godwits were also recorded from the Ahuriri Est. on 28 Aug., Mangere on 8 Sept., Omaha (Auckland) on 7 Sept., Lake Ellesmere (Canterbury) on 20 Sept., and 1 remained at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, where it had been all winter. A tattler was seen at Omaha on 7 Sept. and a Marsh Sandpiper at Miranda in early Sept. – possibly the same bird that overwintered.

Large numbers of Spur-winged Plovers for the North Island were counted at L. Wairarapa – 465 on 13 Oct. – and the Ahuriri Est. – c70 on 16 Oct. 20 pairs of NZ Dotterels at Mangawhai Refuge (Auckland) show the importance of the reserve. A single bird occurred at the Ahuriri Est. on 28 Aug., well outside its usual range.

## and the rest

A Harrier over Maria I., Hauraki Gulf, on 22 Sept. was probably searching for petrels, but what was a Morepork doing on 23 Aug. at a large building site in central Hastings (Hawkes Bay)? Also unusual were a male Pheasant in the Taieri Plain on 11 Aug. and a Myna in Tawa (Wellington) in early Oct. – although there have been several records from that suburb over the last several years.

Kakas were present at the Makaroro and Wakatara River areas in Hawkes Bay on 6 Oct. and in less rural areas at Papa Aroha (Coromandel) in Sept. and Glenbrook (S. Auckland) for several months. A dozen Sulphur Crested Cockatoos were seen at Wainuiomata (Wellington) on 15 Oct.

Rook eradication programmes have yet to be completely successful. A flock of 32 was seen just north of Napier on 2 Sept. and 2 returned to Clevedon (S. Auckland) in late Aug.

The first spring records of Shining Cuckoos came from Clevedon on 14 Sept., Te Awanga (Hawkes Bay) on 23 Sept., and Otago Peninsula on 27 Sept.

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

## Regional Roundup

### Far North/Northland:

Congratulations to David Matheson, a 4th former at Whangarei Boys High School, for winning the OSNZ prize for the best bird exhibit in the regional science fair. David's exhibit was entitled Backyard Blues – a study of Mynas and House Sparrows at a backyard feeding station.

Recently, a regional rare birds committee was established in Whangarei. The purpose of the committee is to review local bird records and consider those of national importance before they are sent to the national committee. It is interesting just how many rare birds have been recorded in Northland during the past 20 years – Pat Miller, chairman of the committee, recently compiled a list which includes 33 records of species of national importance!  
(David E. Crockett)

### Auckland:

Travelers' tales continue to be the subject of our monthly meetings. In September, the RR spoke on birdwatching in Britain. His sabbatical provided the chance to see major RSPB reserves and to tally 150 species over the winter and spring months. Geoff. Arnold followed in October with an enthusiastic account of a visit to some of the subantarctic islands in board HMNZ Waikato.

25 members joined Forest & Birders on a Hauraki Gulf cruise on 22/9 during which we enjoyed god views of Fluttering Shearwaters and White-faced Storm Petrels and surveyed the nesting colonies of Gannets and Spotted Shags on islands beyond Waikeke. On Waikeke itself, a further release of Bellbirds recently took place. Nesting Gannets continue to increase on the cliffs and rock stack at Muriwai, where about 700 pairs provide excellent viewing and study opportunities.

Following the success of the restoration of Tiritiri Island, moves are afoot to plan something similar on Motuora, near Kawau, with a meeting in the offing at which the Department of Conservation will seek to coordinate the views of interested groups, including OSNZ. Cooperation with DOC in the protection of beach nesting terns, oystercatchers and NZ Dotterels is also high on the agenda for the summer months.

(Michael Taylor)

### South Auckland:

Pam Agnew's Auckland/South Auckland team have been busy banding Pied Stilts, with 16 adults and 5 chicks caught so far from Helensville, Brookby, and Kopuku. On our August field trip to Meremere/Kopuku we found the paddocks where they bred so successfully last year still deeply flooded and the only sitting birds were off Finlayson's Road. A Harrier destroyed a promising small colony at Whitford, another at Whakatiwai was

apparently abandoned because of the long dry spell during September, and human interference caused the loss of the first clutches on Pukututu Island.

In October, David Baker successfully demonstrated mist netting at Clevedon.

The speaker at our evening meeting in September was Jock Whitley of the Manukau Protection Society. We have tended to neglect manukau Harbour lately, but intend to spend more time on it in the coming year. Last month Pam & Des Agnew shared their experiences in Britain. This was a true birding holiday and we marveled, not only at Pam's superb slides and the number of species they managed to see, but also at the twitchers flocking to the Scilly Islands on the early morning boat to converge on a rarity.

Anthea Goodwin)

#### Waikato:

In September, Pam & Des Agnew gave a fascinating account of the birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands, many of which also occur in the New Zealand region, at the Kermadec Islands.

In October, Tim Lovegrove spoke to our biggest audience this year on his 10 years studying Saddlebacks and the results of the transfers to Kapiti Island. Tim's meticulous fieldwork was evident from his excellent talk.

Lake surveys have occupied us over the last 2 months at Hamilton Lake and Lake Waahi. The field trip to Lake Waahi, near Huntly, was notable for the sighting of 6 Bitterns as well as good numbers of waterfowl, including Shoveler and Grey Teal.

Pied Stilt nesting sites are proving elusive in the region this year, with few or no birds to be seen in several areas where they were banded last year.

At the time of writing (late October) ICBP is drawing closer and there has been a great response from members to help host our visitors and make them feel welcome. It should be a busy and stimulating occasion.

(Stella Rowe)

#### Hawkes Bay:

On 22/7 we walked around Lake Hurimoana and counted 26 Dabchicks, 60+ Spur-winged Plovers, 11 Pied Stilts, 16 Blackfronted Dotterels, 2 Paradise Shelducks, 1 Black Shag, 3 Southern Black-backed Gulls, 22 Black Swans, and c50 Welcome Swallows.

At the Holts Reserve, Waikoau, on 2/9 flowering banksias, grevilleas, and rhododendrons attracted Tuis and Bellbirds. Grey Warblers were common and Fantails and Pied Tits were also recorded.

At the Lawrence Hut (Taihape Road) on 13/10 flowering kowhais attracted Tuis and Shining Cuckoos, Fantails, Pied Tits and Grey Warblers were also seen. On the way home, Bellbirds, Grey Warblers, Tuis, Bellbirds and Whiteheads were seen at Blowhard Bush.

Pied Stilt banding is well underway,

with 14 adults and 2 chicks banded so far by Jim Hamilton and Christine McRae. Wayne & Margaret Twydlle have the Black-fronted Dotterel banding also underway again this season.

(Christine McRae)

#### Wairarapa:

On 11 July, Colin Scadden gave an interesting talk and showed a video he had made of his recent trip to Kakadu National Park. The birdlife and scenery were well illustrated and it has stimulated some other members to make a similar trip.

Waders and waterfowl of Lake Wairarapa was the subject of an illustrated talk given at Greytown by Hugh Robertson and Barrie Heather on 26 Sept. They reported on their results of some 7 years of monthly counts. These are already being used to help in the better management of the lake and its wetlands.

As the regional finances were low a garage sale was held on 28 July and with little effort over \$700 was raised in 3 hours. We were delighted with the result and recommend it as an easy way to raise money.

Our next spring project (financed by the garage sale) was the running of a weekend camp for young ornithologists at Boggy Pond, adjacent to Lake Wairarapa (see report on this elsewhere in this issue).

Pied Stilt banding has been carried out at 6 locations and by late October 14 adults had been banded.

(Tenick Dennison)

#### Nelson:

Recently several members went to Dublin Terrace in the Buller Gorge to investigate the Fernbird population. It is several years since our last visit to this area and we noticed a considerable increase in the growth of the manuka along the dirt track, but very little change in the undisturbed parts. We walked for several kms along the track, stopping every 100m or so and at every stop there was a pair of Fernbirds calling. With a little patience they would come very close - this enabled us to note the more rufous colouring of these birds compared to those in Golden Bay.

Willie Cook has been making weekly visits to the Waimea Estuary to keep note of Royal Spoonbill numbers. On 16 Sept. there were 42 birds, but by 15 Oct. there were only 23. We have Pied Stilt banding with lots of patience and no great success so far. (Jenny Hawkins)

#### West Coast:

A recent report of a sighting of a Nankeen Kestrel comes from a lady at Rapahoe. Her dog spotted the bird and set up a real noise, barking as the kestrel hovered above the canary cage! Apparently the dog barks at paper kites and at one time when NZ Falcons raided their pigeons it started barking at them. A good 'bird dog'.

(Stewart Lauder)

#### Canterbury:

We have been presented with a wide range of interesting and stimulating talks

since our last report. In June, Ron Nillson spoke about the South Island Kokako and the trials and tribulations of proving that the bird is not extinct. In July, Richard Maloney talked about teaching Robins what to be afraid of, with particular reference to mustelids. It appears that most birds have a short memory.

We had 2 talks in September. At the beginning of the month Colin Miskelly told us about his trip to Casey, with the Australian Antarctic Research Programme, and the study of the chick rearing capabilities of Adelie Penguins and Antarctic Skuas. His talk was illustrated with some excellent slides and video film. Later that month Roger Lavers presented a well-illustrated account of Takahe biology and the prospects for the species.

Finally, in October Sandy Middleton delighted us with a description and well-illustrated account of the birds of Ontario. He followed this with a short account of his work with goldfinches in Australia, North America and now New Zealand. There could be more to the breeding biology of the European Goldfinch than we first thought.

(Paul Sagar)

#### Southland:

1990 breeding by ground-nesters in Southland was early and prolific, despite a very dry and early spring. Conditions were similar last year, but breeding of these birds was poor and late, and we assumed that the winter/spring drought was the cause. You would think we had learned by now never to assume anything. Factors other than, or as well as, the rainfall and groundwater levels must have influenced the poor 1989 breeding.

Michael Criglington's roster of 7 trusty wader watchers had a long watch this year - twice-daily from 15 September. The migratory waders were late this year, arriving eventually on 30 Sept. The earliest recorded arrival is 16 Sept., in 1986. Since 1972, when monitoring began, the main flock has usually come in between 23 & 27 Sept., and usually coincided with equinoctial gales or south-westerly storms. The birds usually pitch on the wet, food-rich paddocks of a deer farm adjacent to the Invercargill Estuary, decoyed in perhaps by the Pied Oystercatchers and other waders feeding there. Our last 2 winters and springs have been exceptionally dry, and the waders have by - passed the deer farm to pitch directly on the estuary, at great inconvenience to Michael's team.

The paddocks can be checked from State Highway 1, just 12-13 kms from the city centre, but the trek to the shellbanks is a 2-hour tide-timed walk, requiring time, fitness, channel knowledge, and reasonable weather and visibility. Another difference this year was that the godwits *et al* were not accompanied by the usual great flocks of Pied Oystercatchers.

(Maida Barlow)