

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. 58 March, 1991
Note Deadline for the June issue will be 20th
May.

Labour Weekend Trip to Stephens Island

"This time I think we'll make it."

"Forecast's good."

"We'll be right—it's always third time lucky."

First attempted in October 1988 and again in October 1989, the OSNZ trip to Stephens Island finally succeeded in October 1990. Most of the 28 participants had tried earlier and as the weather forecasts were good there was guarded optimism that this time there would be no turning back because of high seas and strong winds, as had happened previously.

Departure time in the *Pelorus Explorer* was meant to be 2000 hours, but the Wellington contingent was held up and it was 2045 before we headed out into the dark for Maud Island where we were to stay overnight.

After arriving at Maud about 2330, most disembarked and with the aid of torches found the shearing shed, which had obviously been used quite recently. Soon bodies were strewn amongst the dags as bedrolls were laid out in all sorts of strange places. Brian Bell was very encouraging, assuring us we could all sleep in—the boat was only leaving at 0530! The few hours of sleep were punctuated by the noise of penguins beneath, and snores and the pleasant smell of dags from within. Peter Reese stayed on the boat, confident of a much better sleep and feeling sorry for those on the hard floor of the woolshed. However, he should have joined us. As the tide rose and fell, the boat grated its way up and down the wharf, right beside Peter's ear; he hardly slept.

However, lack of sleep was forgotten as day dawned and a variety of shearwaters came and went, and Diving Petrels raced past. As we arrived at Stephens Island, a whale was seen a short way off.

David Rees was on hand to help us onto the island and after negotiating the steep climb to the track we were able to put our packs and gear onto the tractor. The botanists amongst us were delighted to see considerable quantities of the endemic *Senecio sterquelinas* flowering along the track and around the cliffs. A Pipit was seen carrying food and a nest with three chicks was soon located. Tuataras were found everywhere and photographers began using remarkable quantities of film. Stuart & Angela Kennington unearthed some beetles and threw them to the Tuataras. They will never be able to crunch potato chips again without thinking of the feeding habits of Tuataras. Max Falconer and Reg Cotter were adept at locating snails and skinks of various sorts and Derek Brown produced a giant weta and a tiny Tuatara.

A visit was made to the gull colony. Far below, seals were easily seen in the clear water and the noise of two bulls disputing a resting place floated up to us. An orca was also clearly visible as it made its way around the point and headed for the seals.

However, it was the banding of the Fairy Prions that was the primary purpose of the trip and so many people rested at some stage during the afternoon, in preparation for the long night. About 2030 hours the first Sooty Shearwaters came rocketing in over the tops, but soon after it became completely dark the Fairy Prions started arriving en masse. For some of us this was quite new and the tens of thousands of birds and the noise they made was an amazing experience. Soon the banding began in earnest as about seven banders, each with a team of collectors, worked their way up the steep slopes. Care had to be taken to avoid standing on

Tuataras. That night 1200 birds were banded and the following night a further 2000 were added to the total. Five recaptures were made and these birds had been banded during 1968 by the Wildlife Service—that makes these small seabirds at least 22 years old.

Jenny Hawkins and helpers worked hard with the cooking, going out of their way to cater for individual tastes! Henk Heinekamp found a picture of a wonderful meal in a magazine in the house. "This," he said "is my order for tonight's meal." With the aid of wet newspaper, various leaves etc a convincing dish was presented to Henk. It was a work of art and Henk was watched with interest. However, he has been around for a long time and he graciously apologised for his lack of gullibility. David & Shona Rees and children joined us for the evening meals and Holly was a real favourite with her friendly chatter and hugs for everyone.

On Monday morning the wind had risen significantly and the pessimists were suggesting that as it had taken two years to get on the island, it may well take us two years to get off. However, there were no problems and a weary but pleased party headed home. The *Pelorus Explorer* approached Duffers Reef quite closely, giving good views of King Shags. An hour was spent on Maud and this enabled most people to see at least one Takahe. Brian, Vicki, Marie, Willie and Henk stayed on Maud, while the rest of us headed to Havelock and home.

The following is a list of the species recorded during our stay on Stephens Island. Little Blue Penguin, Sooty Shearwater, Fluttering Shearwater, Fairy Prion, Diving Petrel, Pied Shag, Spotted Shag, Black Swan, Paradise Shelduck,

Variable Oystercatcher, Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, White-fronted Tern, Harrier, Morepork, Feral Pigeon, Welcome Swallow, Shining Cuckoo, Pipit, Skylark, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer, Cirl Bunting, Fantail, Silvereve, Grey Warbler, Dunnoek, House Sparrow, Starling.

Participants in the October 1990 trip to Stephens Island were:

Wellington: Brian Bell, Ralph & Mary Powlesland, Reg Cotter, Max Falconer, Eileen Collins, Bice Tennyson, June Bullock, Meredith Smith, Carol Eddington. Auckland: Vicki Lowrie, Marie Neverman. Nelson: Jenny Hawkins, Henk Heinekamp, Willie Cook, Jon Jackson, Carol Jackson. Marlborough: Stuart & Angela Kennington, Bev & Nelson North, Derek Brown. Canterbury: Peter Reese, Don Hadden, Don Geddes, Sheila Petch. Otago: Andy Anderson. West Germany: Tommy Gruner.

DON HADDEN

From the President's Desk

No, I am not giving up before my term as President has ended. A small error in announcing the retirements from Council and calling for nominations slipped through the last issue (*Mea culpa* - Editor).

The International Ornithological Congress and World Conference of ICBP have come and gone. Many members took part, either attending or as staff, volunteers or local contacts. It is time to say thank you to all who helped in any way. OSNZ, as major sponsor, was responsible for seeing the conferences were a success. The Organising Committees were comprised mainly of OSNZ members and likewise the "helper" group.

From all quarters we received accolades on the organisation and hospitality. This is a reflection of the effort and dedication of all concerned. As President, I would like to thank you all for a magnificent effort, from business manager through to baggage handlers. No doubt some did more than others, but it was the collective contribution which counted towards making both conferences most memorable. It reflected well both on our Society and New Zealand.

Since the IOC we have had the holiday season and members will have had time to relax and do some birdwatching. With the New Year comes another 12 months of activity on both the local and national scene. Marlborough has been busy planning the Annual Conference and AGM, so an exciting and rewarding Queen's Birthday Weekend is in store for those who attend. Wellington and Northland have plans for waterbird surveys at Easter. Collective passerine banding continues in central NZ, on both sides of

Cook Strait. The colour banding programme for stilts continues, as well as the national counts of waders and spoonbills. In the latter case we now have some colour banded spoonbills to watch for, thanks to the efforts of Marlborough members—with some assistance from itinerant visitors from Waikato. Plans are in hand for study courses at Labour Weekend.

These are just a few of the activities available to members. They are the life blood of the Society, as they attract people who wish to take part, to the Society. I and a team of helpers have been developing some applied research, translocating shearwater chicks, which I hope will become primarily a junior members project under supervision. This year was a settling-in year to try and improve methods, but next year (and even during this year) I hope to involve most junior members in some capacity. A report on this work will appear in the next *OSNZ news* and juniors will receive a personal circular regarding the opportunities available and assistance that may be provided.

I still find there are many people who do not know about our Society and I can only stress that we all should be aware of potential members in the community. Leaflets about the Society are available from your RR or me. Remember that not every leaflet handed out will produce a member, but at least one more person will know the Society exists. Twenty thousand leaflets were printed, so if only 1% produces a member we could have 200 new members. Finding a new member should be an objective for all.

I would also like to ask members to give some thought to how they could help their RR and local organisation. Bird study is a collective activity and while some may like to work along privately, others like to share in the activities provided for them. Remember someone has to plan, organise and run such activities and a little help from others is always appreciated. Judging from the response for helpers at the IOC, there are many willing and skilled people in our membership. Just give a thought for those who are shouldering the burden as RR or scheme organisers etc and offer a helping hand.

BRIAN D. BELL
President

Fleming Memorial issue of *Notornis*

Many will have forgotten that one of the ways we were to remember the contribution of Sir Charles Fleming to ornithology and to the Society was to produce a special issue of *Notornis*, featuring the ornithology of the Chatham Islands. Sir Charles' work is still the basic text for ornithology in the Chathams and it is hoped to do a complete update of the ornithology using the recent research and observations of professional and amateur members.

Those persons who have been doing major projects have been asked to supply papers on their work. It is hoped that others who have visited the islands as members of the Taiko teams, DoC/Wildlife parties, or as private visitors will contribute by making their observations available. These will be collated into a general article on the birdlife. All contributions, large or small, will be acknowledged.

Please forward your contributions to me as I am acting as facilitator for the project.

BRIAN D. BELL
P.O. Box 12397, Wellington

Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award—1991

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 1991. Nominations should be on the standard form, which is obtainable from RRs.

All nominations will be considered by the Awards Committee and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting.

A full summary of OSNZ awards procedures is set out below.

RAEWYN EMPSON, *Secretary*

Procedures for the Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award

1. Each year the Secretary will call for nominations in the March issue of *OSNZ news*.

2. Nominations should be on a standard form obtainable from RRs.

3. People being nominated should not be told of this fact at this stage, but the person ultimately selected by Council may be told before it is publicly announced.

4. Nominations must reach the Secretary by 30 June.

5. The Secretary will forward the nomination to reach each member of the OSNZ Awards Committee by 31 July.

6. Each member of the Committee will advise the convenor by 31 August of his/her opinion as to which, if any, of the nominated people should receive the award. In reaching their decisions members of the Committee shall be free to consult any other member(s) of the Committee, as each sees fit and finds convenient.

7. In reaching their decisions, members of the Committee should bear in mind the prime importance of maintaining the high status of the award, and this must take precedence over any desire to make an award every year.

8. The convenor shall supply the Secretary with the recommendations of the Committee as to who, if anyone, should receive the award and whether this was a unanimous decision or a majority decision.

9. The Council will decide at its spring meeting who, if anyone, will receive the award and the value of the award, and in doing so, will not be bound to follow the recommendation of the Committee.

Wanted: Foxton Estuary sightings

Foxton Estuary, the mouth of the Manawatu River, has long been known as a rich area for birds and has probably been visited more regularly than any similar habitat in New Zealand. In the past much of this information has been scattered among various observers and as a consequence has not been of as much value as it could be. In an attempt to change this situation over the past summer I have been compiling a database of all observations I can find from the estuary. I currently have made over 1000 entries from 1959 to 1990, but I feel sure there are many observations made by OSNZ members over the years that I do not know of.

Therefore, could I put a plea out to all those who have visited the estuary at any time to unearth those dusty old notebooks and see if they can find those sightings. If you could let me have either copies of your counts, or the notebooks themselves for me to sift through, it would be most appreciated. Hopefully the results will be written up for *Notornis* later in the year.

Please send any information to me at: 108 Peakes Road, Wanganui.

PHIL BATTLETT

Now available—at discount to OSNZ members

Birds of the Nelson Region—and where to find them

This attractive 56-page booklet has been produced recently by Jenny Hawkins, David Butler and Peter Gaze of the Society's Nelson region, with the assistance of a loan from the Projects Assistance Fund.

It provides details of all the birds recorded in the Nelson region, with summaries of distributions and details of the best sites to view them, and is illustrated throughout with black & white photographs and detailed maps of key birdwatching areas. The guide should allow anyone interested in birds to make the most of a visit to this diverse region, which offers a range of habitats from estuaries of national importance to largely undisturbed mountainous National and Conservation Parks.

Price for OSNZ members: \$9.50 (including \$1.00 post/packing).

Normal mail order price: \$11.95. Available from David Butler Associates, 20 Muri Road, Pukerua Bay, Wellington.

OSNZ sweatshirts & T-shirts

The Society purchased sweatshirts and T-shirts for sale at the 20th IOC during December. Not all were sold and so the remainder are available for prompt delivery to members. Normally I do not have stocks available since only when 10 or more shirts have been ordered and paid for are they obtained from the supplier.

Sweatshirts with small logo (\$35.00) available are:

	SM	M	OS	XOS	XXOS
Jade	1	2	4	1	-
Sky	-	1	5	1	1
Lilac	-	1	2	1	-

T-shirts with large logo (\$19.50) available are:

	SM	M	OS	XOS	XXOS
Jade	-	3	2	-	-
Sky	2	1	9	-	-
Seaspray	1	1	1	1	-

plus one pink XXOS and two white M

If you would like one or more of these shirts, please send your order with payment to Ralph Powlesland, 64 Roseneath Terrace, Wellington 1. Please make cheques payable to OSNZ and crossed "Not Negotiable".

RALPH POWLESLAND

Mystery Bird # 2

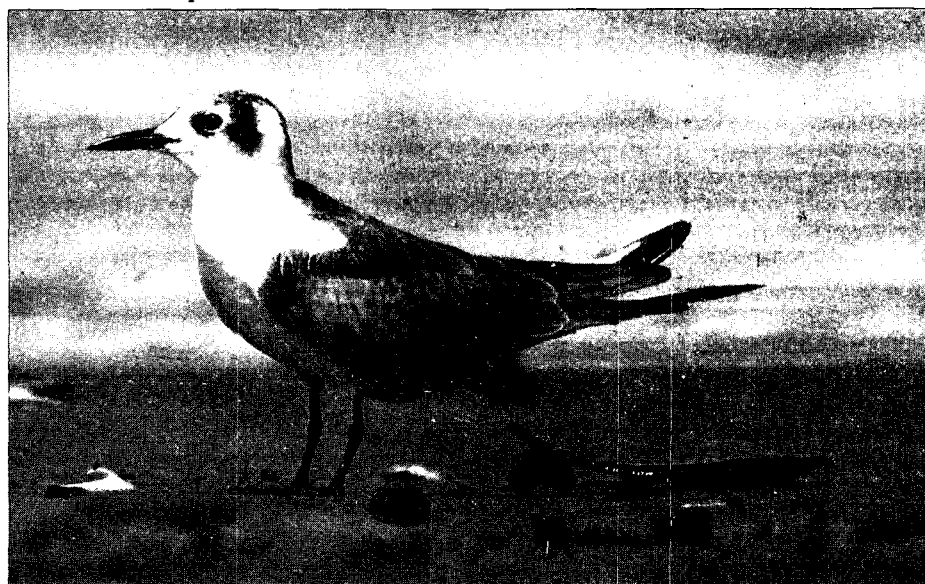
Most readers will have recognised last issue's mystery bird (repeated below) as being a tern of some sort or another. A look at its basic features should eliminate many of the 18 species of terns and noddy on the New Zealand list and narrow the choice to an acceptable level.

The only size comparison we can gauge is with the leaf on the ground behind the bird. This shows the bird to be relatively small. The most prominent feature of the

plumage is the head pattern—a small, dark patch around the lower front half of the eye; a wide dark patch extending from the lower ear coverts to the crown; crown dark, but rather streaked especially towards the front; nape and hindneck apparently dark (only just visible in the side-on view); rest of head white, extending high up behind the dark ear coverts to the same level as the crown in front of the eye. Back and wings generally smooth grey, possibly slightly darker on the upper mantle and along the front of the banded wing. Legs darkish, not short.

The size of the bird alone and its general colouring eliminates most species, except Little, Fairy, White-winged Black, Whiskered and Black-fronted Terns. Little and Fairy Terns would show dark on the head as a band from the eye around the back of the head, with a speckled crown. Whiskered Tern, a rare vagrant to New Zealand, would have dark from the eye back to the nape (on the same level as the bottom of the eye), a streaked crown and a dark nape, plus longer legs. Our endemic Black-fronted Tern, thought to be closely related to the Whiskered Tern, is larger than the others, has a mottled cap with a smudge blackish line extending from the lores through the eye to the nape, and always has short orange legs.

The bird in the photo could only be a White-winged Black Tern in nonbreeding plumage. In flight, a non-breeding White-winged Black Tern would show a white or pale grey rump, pale grey tail and grey back and wings. In breeding plumage it is unmistakable and very striking: head and body black, contrasting with the whitish rump and tail; upperwings pale grey, white on the leading edge and with darker outer primaries; forward half of the underwing black, rear half white.



White-winged Black Tern in non breeding plumage.

Photo: Brian Chudleigh

Juvenile White-winged Black Terns are not dissimilar to adults, but their back (mantle and scapulars) is dark, which contrasts with the pale rump and wings. The crown is more solidly marked, lacking the streaky fore-crown of adults.

The White-winged Black Tern breeds from western Europe to Eurasia. The Eurasian populations winter mainly in southern and central Africa. The Asiatic populations winter mainly from India to Australia, with only small numbers of birds occurring in New Zealand, mainly from early summer to autumn. New Zealand has the only recorded Southern Hemisphere breeding record of this species during 1973-74, when a pair made two nesting attempts in South Canterbury (see *Notornis* 21: 129-134 for full account). What has happened to those days of old when Westshore Lagoon, Napier, held a dozen birds, and Spider Lagoon, South Canterbury, half a dozen?

PHIL BATTLE

Bird banding in Western Australia - 1991

CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology is studying bird populations in remnants of vegetation and road verges in the wheat-belt of Western Australia. Dr Denis Saunders is in charge of the research programme, while Perry de Rebeira is the Senior Technical Officer running the bird banding project within the major programme.

Qualified banders, trainees, interested birdwatchers, or students wishing to acquire or extend their bird-banding experience, are invited to join Perry on banding trips to the study area near Kellerberrin.

Field trip dates for 1991 are: 15-26 April, 13-17 May, 17-21 June, 15-19 July, 16-20 September, 4-8 November.

Transport and accommodation on field trips are provided free of charge. A field allowance of \$A10 per day will be paid to volunteers except for the April expedition, which will be differently structured. The maximum number of volunteers per trip is three.

Enquiries can be directed to: Perry de Rebeira, CSIRO, LMB 4 PO, Midland WA 6056, Australia.

Birds International

This new magazine is backed by the International Council for Bird Preservation and is published in Australia, with J. Forshaw as its editor. This should ensure that our birdlife is well represented among the pages of the magazine. If the first four issues are anything to go by we will have every reason to be very pleased for these contained articles on Kakapo by Don Merton & Raewyn Empson, Kingfishers by Geof. Moon, Birds among mountains (including Wrybills and Black Stilts) by Ray Pierce, Kokako by Geof. Moon, and

A Tasman link (featuring Banded Dotterels and White-fronted Terns by Lindsay Smith (photos by Brian Chudleigh). The photos throughout the magazines are superb.

The subscription for *Birds International* is \$A28 for four issues. Enquiries and subscriptions should be sent to: *Birds International*, P.O. Box 206, Turramurra, NSW 2074, Australia.

Bird spotting competition

Those planning to attend the Annual Conference & AGM during Queen's Birthday Weekend may like to participate in a bird-spotting competition en route to Blenheim.

The rules are simple.

1. Bird species identified (seen only) in the 24 hours of 30 or 31 May 1991 (i.e. midnight to midnight) to be recorded by those going to the AGM.

2. One entry per team; e.g. people in one vehicle, or even one person by any form of travel. Where a team is involved, non-participating members i.e. drivers are to be specified.

3. All species are to be identified by all participating members of a team.

4. Complete list of species seen is to be signed by all team members, and the kms traveled are to be recorded.

5. Judges decision will be final.

Prizes will be given for:

- (a) most species seen,
- (b) most species per km traveled,
- (c) most banded Pied Stilts seen

It is assumed that Peter Schweigman will be donating these prizes since the competition is his idea. My responsibility has been to refine the rules and present them.

ANDY ANDERSON

(Perhaps the prizes should be donated by the eventual beneficiaries e.g., Ray Pierce for the most banded Pied Stilts seen, Rare Birds Committee for the rarest bird seen, Barrie Heather for the silliest bird seen. Ed.)

Mystery Bird # 3: identify this bird

Answer next OSNZ news



RAOU Column New seabird atlas and Fairy Prion study

The RAOU has recently undertaken the compilation of a seabird atlas for south-eastern Australian waters and the Tasman Sea. Apart from mapping their distribution, this project will be the first step toward plotting the abundance of seabirds in the area. Questions to be answered include how numbers vary according to season and marine conditions.

Seabirds, because they are at the highest level of marine food chains, are of major ecological consequence. Yet the abundance and movement of seabirds in Australian waters are poorly known and documented. In addition, it is thought that oceans will be one of the first ecosystems to show the effects of climatic change. It is important to establish now a baseline against which any future long-term effects caused by climatic change may be measured.

Using systematic seabird observations, it is proposed to develop an atlas of seasonal seabird abundances. Existing data will be supplemented with new information collected from vessels in south-eastern waters. The two-year project will culminate in the publication of a popular format Atlas.

The project will also investigate the abundance and movements of Fairy Prions off eastern Tasmania. These pelagic seabirds breed on Tasman Island near a



disposal zone for jarosite, a waste product from zinc refineries. This aspect of the project will improve knowledge of the dispersion and foraging habits of Fairy Prions in the vicinity of Tasman Island. It is important to determine whether the birds are attracted to the disposal zone. To do this, the main feeding areas for prions will be identified, and the time which they spend feeding near the jarosite disposal zone, as opposed to far from it, will be partitioned.

DAVID ANDREW

AWSG news

The field of wader studies in Australasia is an active and expanding one. The Australasian Wader Studies Group is involved with other groups in a series of diverse projects in a co-ordinated programme to understand more about the shorebirds of Australasia and the West Pacific/East Asian flyway. Some recent developments are:

The 5-year programme of regular counts in Australia has just finished. The object of this series of counts was to determine the movements of long-distance migrants and the response of inland-breeding waders to drought and flood. The results will be published in a report, possibly as a supplement to *The Stilt*.

The change of government in Queensland has provided an opportunity to reassess the Moreton Bay Management Plan, with the idea of better conserving or enhancing the value of the bay as a wader habitat.

The mini expedition to Java, in conjunction with the Asian Wetland Bureau, to investigate the status of Oriental Pratincoles, has ended successfully. Over 730 birds were caught for examination and flagging. Five Indonesians were trained in study techniques. A report concerning the hunting and marketing of Oriental Pratincoles is being prepared and this will also contain an analysis of biometric and plumage data.

Four AWSG members have been selected for the expedition to Vietnam, which commenced in mid March. Its objectives are to count and band waders in the Red River Delta.

AWSG assistance was provided during the recent waterbird survey of part of the Ganges Delta. The objectives were to identify places important to waterbirds and to train Bangladeshi scientists in identification and counting techniques. Some 80 000 waterbirds were seen and a number of important new sites were found, including one containing Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

The Broome Bird Observatory, established primarily to facilitate wader studies in north-west Australia, now has a draft proposal for a research programme. This recommends continuing studies to

monitor wader populations and migration, as well as the establishment of facilities for scientists investigating waders and intertidal marine ecology.

Two Dutch scientists visited Broome in March and April to study the feeding ecology of Great and Lesser Knots during the period prior to departure for the breeding grounds. Their work will complement studies carried out in Europe and north-west Africa.

A programme of colour-flagging waders, that is placing small coloured plastic tags on their legs, has started in Victoria, Australia, with the intention of extending the scheme to other countries in the flyway. The objective is to improve understanding of migration, especially in places where waders are not regularly caught for banding. The colour flags are not harmful to the birds and they are far more visible to the birdwatcher on the mudflats than the standard metal bands. Each country or region involved in the scheme will have its own colour - that for south-eastern Australia is orange - so it will be possible to trace the routes taken by the birds. An unexpected early bonus was the recent sighting of a flagged Red-necked Stint at Lake Ellesmere (see article by Kathleen Harrison elsewhere in this issue).

The project funded by WWF Australia to develop a management plan for waders in Australia is close to completion. The final report should be issued later this year.

The second volume of the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, which will include the waders, is due to be published in 1992. Much effort is being expended by banders on filling some of the many gaps in our knowledge about such basic things as migration routes, plumage descriptions, moult, and survival rates. However, even the casual birdwatcher can contribute by noting where and how the birds feed, their behaviour to others of the same and different species and, by regular counts to monitor movements and population sizes.

Membership of the AWSG is essential for those interested in waders in this segment of the world. It includes *The Stilt*, and costs A\$15 for Australasian members. Enquiries regarding membership should be directed to the AWSG Administrative Secretary, Brenda Murlis, 34 Centre Avenue, Vermont, Victoria 3133, Australia.

HUGO PHILLIPPS

Flag Watch 1991

Australian wader banding groups have commenced placing coloured leg flags on a variety of species caught in south-eastern Australia and Java, Indonesia. This activity is part of a co-operative East Asia-Australasia Flyway project, which has the objective of increasing our knowledge of wader migration routes.

By mid February over 3200 birds had been flagged and we hope that a further 1000 birds will be marked before the birds depart on northward migration in late March/early April. The numbers of birds flagged to date are as follows:

Red-necked Stint	1443
Curlew Sandpiper	933
Oriental Pratincole	602
Turnstone	99
Lesser Knot	60
Bar-tailed Godwit	40
Pacific Golden Plover	25
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	11

Other target species are Long-billed Curlew, Grey Plover, Sanderling, Great Knot, and Greenshank.

The flags are durable and should be visible as long as the marked bird remains alive. Therefore, a check should be made of any waders of the above species seen in the flyway over the next few years. We will keep you informed regularly concerning flagging activities and results through our bulletin *The Stilt*.

The flags consist of either orange or dark green plastic bands with a flap, at right angles to the band, which is about twice as long as the band diameter. The great majority of flags have been placed on the upper right leg (tibia), but a few are on the lower right leg (tarsus), and on the left leg. The exact position is not important.

OSNZ members are asked to keep a watch for leg-flagged birds, particularly during the migration periods in April/May and July/September. Reports of sightings should include species name, place (including latitude and longitude), date, and also approximate numbers and species of waders present. The information should be sent to: Australian Bird Banding Scheme, GPO Box 8, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

MARK BARTER,
Australasian Wader Studies Group

Flagged Red-necked Stint at Lake Ellesmere

On 22 Dec. 1990 we observed a group of 16 Red-necked Stints feeding on mudflats in the Wolfe's Road area of Lake Ellesmere. Amongst them was a colour flagged bird, very conspicuous because of a bright orange-red flag on the right leg. We contacted Rod Cossee at the Banding Office, Department of Conservation, Wellington, and on 7 Feb. 1991 received a letter from the Australian Bird & Bat Banding Scheme, which gave the following details.

"The information concerning your Red-necked Stint at Lake Ellesmere was relayed straight to us from Wellington. The banding was done by ... the Victorian Wader Study Group. Usually we would be able to give you the full banding information for this Red-necked Stint but

unfortunately this colour band was placed onto another 250 stints at two different locations in October 1990. It could have been banded at either: Werribee Sewerage Farm, Victoria (if banded here the bird had traveled a distance of approx. 2431 km with a bearing of 114 degrees.) or Yallock Creek near Kooweeup, Victoria (if banded here it had traveled at distance of approx. 2349 km with a bearing of 114 degrees.)

The time it has taken to travel to Lake Ellesmere from either place is approximately two months."

We were very pleased to learn that our itinerant Red-necked Stint had flown across the Tasman. Several times since we have visited the same area and other places on Lake Ellesmere, but have not seen the banded stint again. However, there is still time as we expect to have the 59 or so Red-necked Stints at the lake with us until mid April.

KATHLEEN HARRISON
& SHEILA PETCH

The Great Wairarapa Twitchathon - 17 November 1990

This was initially proposed somewhat lightheartedly as a fun day, but it generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm and proved a great social success.

The ground rules were roughly as follows:

Teams could be of any size with a minimum of three people, one of whom had to be a junior member.

Competition commenced at first light and ceased at 1800 hours, at which time all participants had to be at the site of the OSNZ barbecue in Masterton.

For every five minutes a team was overdue, a bird species would be deducted from their list.

The competition was confined to sightings in the Wairarapa OSNZ region and adjacent coastal waters.

No dead, caged or pinioned birds could be claimed as sightings.

For a bird sighting to be valid at least three members of the team had to see the bird.

Hearing the bird was not considered acceptable evidence of its presence.

The day (17 Nov.) dawned cold and clear, promising a good day for the creation of a little ornithological history within our region.

The local radio station, quite intrigued with the term "twitcher", made a lot of lighthearted comments about the phenomenon of "twitching" and announced that the fashion accessory for this weekend was a pair of binoculars slung casually from the neck. And how right they were!

Daybreak saw eager teams "squeaking" their way along forest tracks as far apart

as the Haurangi Forest Park and the Tararua Forest at Kiriwhakapapa. Hugh Robertson and his team had traveled well into the Haurangis on the previous night in order to obtain dawn sightings of the Kakas, which are not uncommonly reported there. Imagine the frustration when the Kakas they heard so well would not show themselves, and for the same reason they were unable to claim Bellbird (a very common bird) on their otherwise very creditable list.

All seven teams gathered at Lake Wairarapa at 1000 hours in order to more conveniently see the lake birds on a private farm. How devious and deceitful "twitchers" can be at these times. Wild claims were made by some people about running out of recording sheets, but no one would truthfully answer the question "How many birds have you seen so far?" For those of us with small tallies at this early stage it all could have been a bit demoralising. One team let it be known they had another important appointment at midday, but did not say where. Perhaps just as well or half their team might have deserted. They were very poor sailors and the appointment was with a fishing boat at Ngawi. However, the trip, a few kms off Cape Palliser, was a great success in some respects. They caught some beautiful groper and bluenose, added 10 pelagic birds to their list, and landed two incredibly ill birdwatchers who never want to see a fishing boat again.

All teams made the 1800 deadline at the barbecue, and so no bird species were lost off any lists. The barbecue was enjoyed by 33 members and friends and was greatly enhanced by the groper that was caught that afternoon. Hugh Robertson's team, with three very keen juniors Shane Wilkinson, Michael and David Bell, were the champions with a list of 63 species. Dave Sim, of fishing boat fame, was runner-up with a tally of 59. The total number of species seen by the combined teams was 75 and when one considers that our region has a potential total list of only 90 species this is very commendable.

It was a great day. It did very little, if anything, for scientific ornithology, but it made birdwatching fun and some people saw birds they had never seen previously. We intend to repeat the "Twitchathon" and having learnt something from this first attempt will certainly achieve even better results next time.

TENICK DENNISON

Taiko update

Since the rediscovery of the Chatham Island Taiko on 1 Jan. 1978 and the locating of the first burrows in Nov. 1987, 180 conservation-minded individuals have supported major expeditions to save the Taiko. Since Jan. 1978, 44 Taiko have been banded and five burrows located. The long

term survival of this species is paramount. However, the deteriorating habitat and high numbers of cats, possums, pigs and rats will make conservation of the small population difficult.

The Department of Conservation is preparing a recovery plan for the species which will ensure that a co-ordinated effort is conducted to secure the population. Chatham Island Taiko Research Project is contributing to the planning of this document. The role of Chatham Island Taiko expedition members will be in the establishment of a secure breeding colony. Strategies are being developed to attract the pre-breeding population of the Taiko to an artificial breeding area, using sensory and behavioural characteristics. Over a 5-7 year period, pre-breeding behaviour will be modified so that birds use a new breeding site. The population will be monitored continually to measure the success of the programme.

Taiko Camp will continue to be used to support fieldwork associated with this programme. Modifications have been made to the camp to allow smaller parties to operate facilities over a longer period. The proposed programme will utilise a wide range of skills, including those of fencing, trapping, carpentry, electronics, mechanics and sound recording. I am confident that the pool of expertise that has developed over the past 12 years of Chatham Island expeditions will make a significant contribution to the long-term conservation and management of this endangered species.

DAVID E. CROCKETT

A world first in waterfowl conservation

A world first in the captive breeding of rare waterfowl has been achieved at the Broadlands Wildfowl Trust, near Taupo, with the successful rearing of two Blue Ducks. Before the current breeding season all Blue Duck ducklings in captivity had been reared artificially, after hatching in incubators or under bantams. This season, at the Broadlands Wildfowl Trust, the parent Blue Duck has been left to hatch and rear her own offspring, and she has done this very successfully - rearing two ducklings from three that she hatched in early October 1990.

The breeding of Blue Duck in captivity is all part of Operation Whio, which is a joint Ducks Unlimited and Department of Conservation Blue Duck recovery programme.

Through habitat destruction and introduced predators, Blue Duck numbers have been steadily declining in the wild. The recovery programme, which involves habitat protection and enhancement, predator control, captive breeding and

research about the Blue Ducks activities in the wild, aims to reverse the decline of the species.

Blue Duck habitat is fast-flowing streams and through hydro development and forestry this habitat has changed dramatically. However, a trial release of six captive-reared Blue Duck onto the slopes of Mt Egmont in 1986 showed that the birds can adapt to areas where they have not previously been recorded – four of the six birds were known to be alive three years after release.

The Ducks Unlimited side of the recovery programme revolves around the captive breeding project, which calls for 30 pairs of Blue Ducks to be held in captivity. The project is very much in its infancy and only 11 pairs are currently held by members. However, following this seasons captive breeding results there are high hopes of a big increase in the number held in captivity and that over the next two seasons sufficient birds will be reared to enable further releases of birds into the wild.

NEIL HAYES

Unusual nesting site of Black-billed Gull

On 6 Nov. 1990 at Galloway, near Alexandra in Central Otago, I found a colony of 800-900 Black-billed Gulls nesting in what at first appeared to be the middle of an irrigated paddock of lush green grass. However, a closer inspection revealed that the gulls had built their nests on the relatively bare and slightly raised ground on either side of an irrigation race. The area on the eastern bank, over which 200+ nests were spread, measured 20 x 6 m; the western bank, containing 100+ nests, measured 12 x 2 m.

The colony was monitored and nesting progress recorded for the 200+ eastern nests. Many chicks were successfully fledged. An estimated 150-200 non-breeding gulls were attached to the colony.

MARGARET CHILD

Sitting up a totara tree

During the holidays our family stayed at Pureora. There are many things you can do there and birdwatching is one of them.

While eating breakfast, lunch or tea in the tent I noticed the occasional parakeet would fly into a totara tree. I thought there was a nest in there, so decided to investigate.

One evening I climbed up the tree and stayed for an hour and a half to see what birds came and what they were doing. During that time I saw 6 adult parakeets, but I soon found out there wasn't a nest. All the parakeets flew off in the same direction, probably to another food tree. As well as the parakeets I saw: 4 adult Whiteheads; 2 adult Grey Warblers; an

adult male Chaffinch; 2 adult Tuis; 3 adult Bellbirds; 3 adult Tomtits, with 1 juvenile being fed grubs; 3 adult Robins, with 1 juvenile being fed.

Although we had been camped in the area for a number of days this was the first time we had seen juvenile birds.

It was a bit uncomfortable in the tree, but it was interesting to watch the birds in this way.

RICHARD GUEST

Albinistic birds

The partially albino Blackbird illustrated below was photographed at New Plymouth airport on 28 Oct. 1990. It was mated to a normal coloured female and they had a nest in a nearby pohutukawa.



Partially albino Blackbird. New Plymouth 28 October 1990. (Photo: David Medway)

Don Brathwaite wrote in 1956 (*Notornis* 6: 217) that albino Blackbirds are said to be not rare, and birds with varying amounts of white in the plumage are even more common. We have all probably heard this said from time to time. However, the partial albino which Don Brathwaite described and illustrated was the first of either type ever seen by him. Likewise, the bird we photographed is the first of this type ever seen by me. Interestingly, Don Brathwaite's account is the only one of an albino or partially albino Blackbird to be found through the recently published 50 years index to *Notornis*. Perhaps records of such birds are scattered throughout CSN or the pages of this newsletter, but they are not easy to find. Maybe they are not being adequately recorded in the published literature at all.



Albino Blue Penguin. New Plymouth 12 January 1991. Photo: David Medway.

An albino Blue Penguin was found alive ashore at New Plymouth on 12 Jan. 1991. Unfortunately, it died a short while later. It was totally white except for a few dark feather streaks on the lower rump and flippers.

The recently published *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds Vol. 1(A)*: 256 notes that albinism and partially albinistic birds have been recorded in all subspecies of the Blue Penguin. Oliver (1955:83) gives only two records of pure white specimens.

I think it would be both of interest and value to record the occurrence of albino and partially albino birds in the pages of this newsletter or in CSN. That way we may be able to get some better indication than presently appears to be available of the extent to which such forms actually do occur.

DAVID MEDWAY

National Kea & Kaka databases

Last year a request for information on sightings of Keas and Kakas was made, with the intention of establishing a long-term database on the distribution and status of these species. Since then I have received a range of sightings from members of the public as well as interest groups and government agencies throughout New Zealand. The information from these sightings has been put onto computer.

Some of the main areas from which I have received sightings so far are:

North Island Kaka – Whangarei, Hunua, Urewera, Pureora, Kaimanawa, and Tongariro.

South Island Kaka – generally lower altitude valleys from Mt Richmond, Nelson Lakes, Victoria, Paparoa, western alps, South Westland, and Fiordland.

Kea – generally higher altitude ranges from Mt Richmond, Nelson Lakes, Kaikoura, Victoria, Paparoa, Arthurs Pass, Remarkables, Mt Aspiring, and Fiordland.

With only one year's information it is impossible to say whether the distribution or abundance of either species is increasing or decreasing; the information I have is fairly sparse and tends to reflect the popularity of areas for recreation. Also, Keas and Kakas tend to vary between being very conspicuous and quite secretive, which makes it difficult to say how many there are with any accuracy. I hope that by receiving sightings over many successive years any trends in the status and distribution of these species will become more apparent.

Could OSNZ members continue to report to me any sightings of Keas and Kakas, stating accurate location (map reference preferable), altitude, date & time, number of birds. Please send information to: Michael Wakelin, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

MICHAEL WAKELIN

Activities of garden birds

In early December 1987, I had an opportunity to observe our common birds during an 8-day spell in hospital when my bed was near a window overlooking lawns and gardens.

The day started anytime between 0345 and 0415 hours, when a Song Thrush began singing and kept going, almost non-stop, for 2-3 hours. I counted 28 different song phrases and these were repeated, though not in a set pattern. Other Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, House Sparrows, Chaffinches, Goldfinches, and Greenfinches gradually joined in and at full volume were more like a morning symphony.

House Sparrows were on the lawn in sizable flocks from dawn to dusk and one feeding method was moving along the grass, line after line, in formation. Blackbirds preferred the more secluded places. Every morning 2 or 3 Silvereyes visited the magnificent lilliums, perching on the base of the blooms to sip nectar.

I had my first sighting of young Dunnocks being led by a parent, and saw them again later, fending for themselves very actively. I was intrigued by some nest building, concerning a loosely made nest blown out of a tree in the night. A Song Thrush gathered the pieces and took them into a liquid amber. However, 2 mornings later a similar nest was again on the lawn and this time was taken up by a male House Sparrow.

With Welcome Swallows, Mynas, Starlings, and Feral Pigeons I listed 12 species during my stay.

KATHLEEN TODD

Praise for Society publication

In a recent letter to Dr Brian Gill, B.J. Marples (a founding member and past President of OSNZ) wrote:

"I was delighted to receive my copy of *A Flying Start* and must congratulate you and everyone else concerned with producing such an impressive volume. I was most interested to read the history and discover how the Society has grown over the years, and the stories about those early years were delightful. Please pass on my congratulations..."

Recent Publications

Anderson, A.J. 1989. The mechanics of overkill in the extinction of New Zealand moas. *J. Archaeological Science* 16: 137-151. Detailed account of the possible numbers of moas, and the effects of overhunting of a limited resource.

Anderson, A.J. 1990. *Prodigious birds: moas and moa hunting in prehistoric New Zealand*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Required reading for

anyone interested in moas, and New Zealand's history.

Baker, A.J.; Peck, M.K.; Goldsmith, M.A. 1990. Genetics and morphometric differentiation in introduced populations of Common Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) in New Zealand. *Condor* 92: 76-88. Another analysis of the changes which have occurred in birds introduced to New Zealand.

Balouet, J.C.; Olson, S.L. 1989. Fossil Birds from Late Quaternary deposits in New Caledonia. *Smithsonian contributions to zoology* 469: 1-38. The fossil birds of New Caledonia are of great importance to the study of the origins and relationships of New Zealand Birds; and their story of extinctions following the colonisation of new islands by Man in Polynesia is repeated here.

Barter, M. 1989. Survival rate of Double banded Plovers *Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus*, spending the non-breeding season in Victoria. *The Stilt* 15:34-36.

Cassels, R.J.S.; Jones, K.L.; Walton, A.; Worthy, T.H. 1988. Late prehistoric subsistence practices at Parewanui, lower Rangitikei River, New Zealand. *NZ J. Archaeology* 10: 109-128. A pre-European site in the Manawatu has bones of extinct birds, some of which may have survived rather longer than has been thought.

Fletcher, A.W.J. & M. 1989. An apparent NZ Stilt in Tasmania. *The Stilt* 15:37.

van Heezik, Y. 1990. Seasonal, geographical, and age-related variations in the diet of the yellow-eyed penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*). *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 17: 201-212.

Johnson, T.H.; Stattersfield, A.J. 1990. A global review of island endemic birds. *Ibis* 132: 167-180. Essential reference for anyone interested in island birds and their many problems.

Langham, N.P.E. 1990. The diet of feral cats (*Felis catus* L.) on *Hawke's Bay farmland, New Zealand*. *NZ J. Zoology* 17: 243-255. The problems that feral cats present for small birds (and not so small, these moggies also ate turkeys!) in NZ are shown clearly by this analysis. 24% of the cats' diet, both by frequency and weight, was birds. This points to the considerable toll which cats exact on native birds in forests and on islands.

McClatchie, S.; Hutchinson, D.; Nordin, K. 1989. Aggregation of avian predators and zooplankton prey in Otago shelf waters, New Zealand. *J. Plankton Res.* 11: 361-374. Red-billed Gull, Black-billed Gull, Black-backed Gull, Sooty Shearwater, and White-fronted Tern flocks correlated with surface swarms of krill (*Nyctiphanes australis*), but not hydrographic regime, water depth, or distance offshore.

Miskelly, C.M. 1990. Effects of the 1982-83 El Nino event on two endemic

landbirds on the Snares Islands, New Zealand. *Emu* 90: 24-27.

Miskelly, C.M. 1990. Aerial displaying and flying ability of Chatham Island Snipe *Coenocorypha pusilla* and New Zealand Snipe *C. aucklandica*. *Emu* 90: 28-32.

Olson, S.L.; Balouet, J.C.; Fisher, C.T. 1989. The owl-nightjar of New Caledonia, *Aegotheles savesi*, with comments on the systematics of the Aegothelidae. *Le Gerfaut (for 1987)* 77: 341-352. The New Caledonian owl-nightjar is known from only one specimen collected last century. In size and proportions it approaches the extinct New Zealand owl-nightjar. Its plumage was quite different from that of the Australian species, with which it has been merged by mistake. The taxonomy of the owl-nightjars is reviewed and it is concluded that the New Zealand species belongs in *Aegotheles* and not *Megaegotheles* as in the current checklist.

Sagar, P.M. 1989. Five years of national wader counts in New Zealand. *The Stilt* 15:10.

Roderigo, A.G. 1990. Specific and general formulae for the number of band combinations for different colour-banding regimes. *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 17: 285-288.

Seddon, P.J.; van Heezik, Y. 1990. Diving depths of the Yellow-eyed Penguin *Megadyptes antipodes*. *Emu* 90: 53-57.

Worthy, T.H. 1989. Validation of *Pachyornis australia* Oliver (Aves: Dinornithiformes), a medium sized moa from the South Island, New Zealand. *NZ J. Geology & Geophysics* 32: 255-266. The subalpine crested moa is redescribed and distinguished from other look-alikes. This makes 9 species for the South Island.

Worthy, T.H.; Mildenhall, D.C. 1989. A late Otiran-Holocene paleo-environmental reconstruction based on cave excavations in northwest Nelson, New Zealand. *NZ J. Geology & Geophysics* 32: 243-253. New Zealand was different way back then; and the birding in Oparara 14 000 years ago was unbelievable by today's standards. Things changed about 10 000 years ago.

Worthy, T.H. 1989. Aspects of the biology of two moa species (Aves: Dinornithiformes). *NZ J. Archaeology* 11: 77-86. Nocturnal moas sniffing out tasty fruits and flowers? Trumpeting moas? Did moas waddle or trot? Read on!

Worthy, T.H. 1990. An analysis of the distribution and relative abundance of moa species (Aves: Dinornithiformes). *N.Z. Journal of Zoology* 17: 213-241. Probably the most important single paper to be published on moa biology, this discussion of the moas as birds in an evolving environment is a landmark in the study of our extinct birds.

PAUL SAGAR &
RICHARD HOLDAWAY

Hawkes Bay region annual holiday

Waihi Beach was the destination for 17 members from 19 to 26 January 1991. Every day we went somewhere different, starting with a visit to our friends Juliet & Barry Pearson, whose home near Katikati has a panoramic view of the estuary, where godwits far outnumber other waders. The east side of the estuary, partly in mangroves and rushes, was at the back of the house where 12 of our party stayed, and seeing Fernbirds was a daily occurrence. They had fleeting glimpses of Banded Rails and found their old nests, and one of a Fernbird with two eggs.

A trip to Matakana Island was arranged by Murray Jeffries with the local police, who agreed to take us there and back in their Coast Guard boat during one of their sea rescue exercises. The island proved to be not just monotonous pines, but interesting plants such as the sand coprosma with pale blue berries and two orchid epiphytes growing under the trees instead of on them. There was a vast lagoon and swamp with a variety of common waterfowl visible, but not the Brown Teal.

We visited Whangamata and then on to Opoutere. At the end of the ocean beach near the estuary an area had been fenced off for nesting NZ Dotterels, Banded Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers.

We visited the Katikati Bird Gardens, where many birds were on show in a colourful and well-kept garden.

A day at Miranda was rewarded by us seeing a Marsh Sandpiper, 2 tattlers and a Long-billed Curlew – plus the thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits, Lesser Knots and Pied Oystercatchers coming in to roost at high tide. A wonderful flying display of about 500 Wrybills kept us enthralled before we went to the new Miranda Naturalists Trust centre for lunch.

We had bush walks, one coastal, the others in different places on the Kaimai Ranges, and all enjoyed bird watching and botanising. Kauris were prominent – from seedlings through to a real giant 2000 years or more old.

One evening we gathered for a show of Murray's excellent bird slides. Last, but not least, we completed a beach patrol of the whole of Waihi Beach and collected 91 seabirds plus one Tui.

Our thanks go to the leaders – Christine, Murray and Jim. Thanks also to Juliet for the suggestions of places to go and things to see.

KATH TODD

Lesson learned

The metal strips used by the US Department of the Interior to tag migratory and other birds are now inscribed: "Notify Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C."

They once read: "Washington Biological Survey" abbreviated, because of a lack of space on the small tags, to "Wash. Biol. Surv." This was changed after an Arkansas farmer shot a crow and disgustedly wrote to the wildlife agency; "Dear Sirs: I shot one of your crows the other day. My wife followed the cooking instructions on the leg tag and I want to tell you it was horrible."

Starling attacks snail

Recently seen on a New Plymouth house roof were a busy Starling and a Red-billed Gull watching it. The Starling was striking a snail on the roof in an endeavour to break its shell, but three times it dropped the snail which promptly rolled down the roof with the Starling running after and retrieving it. The fourth time it rolled, the seagull also chased the snail and the Starling took fright and flew away. The seagull must have decided the snail was not very appetising and also flew away, leaving the snail on the roof presumably alive, but shaken.

AUDREY EAGLE

Recent Reports

Contributions for November-February were received from Northland, Auckland, Manawatu, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Some of the large gaps were filled by traveling birdwatchers. We need a better coverage than this if this feature is to continue.

Please send records to me by 26 May for inclusion in the June *OSNZ news* and note my new address: 49 Bernera Street, Karitane, R.D. 1 Waikouaiti, Otago.

Some of these records have yet to be considered by the Rare Birds Committee.

Seabirds

A wreck of seabirds in the Bay of Plenty in Oct.-Nov. involved large numbers of Diving Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters, Buller's Shearwaters, and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, and extended to the north Auckland beaches of Pakiri and Mangawhai and into Northland. At the same time, a few Short-tailed Shearwaters same ashore on Southland beaches. As usual in Jan. and Feb., a few Fairy Terns turned up alive inland; at Masterton golf course (Wairarapa) and Hampden (Otago); a surprise for a cat. A Fiordland Crested

Penguin came ashore on the Otago Peninsula on 15 Dec.

Large numbers of Fluttering, Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters were present in the Hauraki Gulf in Jan. and numbers of the latter species off Oaro (Kaikoura) increased from 35 on 18 Dec. to c120 by 24 Jan. Also recorded at Oaro were small numbers of Wandering and Royal Albatrosses, Buller's, Black-browed, Shy and Salvin's Mollymawks, and 14 Gannets feeding alongside thousands of Hutton's Shearwaters. Salvin's and Shy Mollymawks were recorded off Halfmoon Bay (Stewart Island) on 14 Dec. A single White-chinned Petrel was seen 2 km off Cape Palliser (Wairarapa) on 4 Jan., and 2 were present off Otago harbour on 15 Dec. along with 3 Westland Black Petrels.

Despite the poor summer, or perhaps because of it, thinks looked decidedly tropical in Northland with a juvenile Brown Booby at Houora Harbour and 1 or 2 Lesser Frigatebirds floating over the upper Whangarei Harbour in Oct.

A small colony of Little Black Shags on the cliffs near cape Kidnappers was the only breeding site of this species found in Hawkes Bay this year. A sick Spotted Shag was found at Fox River (West Coast) in Jan.

Arctic Skuas were widely reported from the Hauraki Gulf to the Otago Peninsula over summer, with a maximum of 5 at Katiki Beach on 16 Dec. There were further indications that Southern Skuas are reasonably common off the east coast of the South Island, with single birds off Oaro on 24 Jan., the Nuggets in Oct. and Papatowai (both Otago) on 3 Feb. A Pomarine Skua in the Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 6 Dec. had perfect timing as it landed on the water close to a participants in an IOC field trip.

Black-backed Gulls continue to increase in Hawkes Bay; 780 were counted on a summer census, and the breeding season in Auckland appeared to be successful, with 50% of post-breeding flocks consisting of juveniles. Not all were associated with urban areas; they also nested inland at the south end of the Red Hills in Westland.

Unusually far north were 4 Black-billed Gulls in a White-fronted Tern colony at Tapura (Kaipara Harbour) on 16 Nov. Also a long way north for the time of year, was a Black-fronted Tern at the Tukituki Estuary (Hawkes Bay) on 6 Feb. The arrival of juveniles on the Otago coast by mid Jan. and a flock of 75+ in one paddock at Winton (Southland) on 1 Jan. indicate post-breeding dispersal. Single pairs of Fairy Terns raised one chick at the Mangawhai Reserve (Auckland) and two at Waipu (Northland).

There were high numbers of Little Terns in Northland this summer; 9 were at Whangarei Harbour over summer and

61 were at Walker I. - the largest flock recorded in the country. In contrast, numbers were low further south. None has been seen at Foxton (Manawatu) since an early record of 2 in Oct. Only 4 were reported from Miranda on 4-5 Nov. and single birds appeared at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Lake Wainono (Canterbury) in early Nov., Aramoana (Otago) on 13 Nov., and at L. Wairarapa on 10 Feb.

An Antarctic Tern at Riverton (Southland) on 13 Dec. is not unexpected as they breed on Stewart I., but a Crested Tern at Awarua on 23 Nov. is unusual and is only the second S.I. record. The Gull-billed Tern in Hawkes Bay was seen at Porangahau on 3 Nov. for the third year running. Regular records of White-winged Black Terns continue from the east coast of the South Island, this time from Coopers Lagoon (Canterbury) where there were 2 on 16 Dec., with one in full breeding plumage, and 1 on 9 Feb.

Hérons and the like

Royal Spoonbills continue to extend their range, remaining over summer in the north and reaching further south down the S.I. east coast. 2 stayed at Mangere (Auckland) in Jan. and 2-3 remained at the Ahuriri Est. (Hawkes Bay) over summer. In the Wairarapa, there were 4 at L. Onoko on 12 Dec., 3 on 6 Feb., and 9 at L. Wairarapa on 6 Feb. They bred at Green I. (Otago) after a lapse of a year. 17 reached the Catlins (Otago) on 16 Jan. and 1 got as far as Waituna (Southland) on 15 Dec.

A Little Egret was reported from Matata (Bay of Plenty) on 21 Nov. and the bird in Hawkes Bay remained at East Clive until 25 Nov. The only summer report of Cattle Egret also came from Hawkes Bay, at the Tukituki Est. on 13 Jan. An Intermediate Egret at Karamea (West Coast) has probably been there since last May.

Reef Herons were reported from the usual sites around Auckland and Kaikoura, with a more reliable record from Greenhills Beach (Southland); 2 on 20 Dec. A Glossy Ibis was seen regularly at L. Wairarapa over summer, while 1 was seen at L. Wainono in early Nov.

An encouraging 17+ Bitterns were counted at Pouto Lakes (Northland) on 22-23 Feb. and there were also records, as usual, from L. Wainono on 6 Feb. and L. Waihola (Otago). 3 were seen in the Oparara (West Coast) area over summer and 1 at Karitane (Otago) on 12 Jan.

Waterfowl

Numbers of Dabchicks were higher than usual on Pouto Lakes in Feb. with c130 counted; and 7 at Westshore (Hawkes Bay) on 6 Feb. was also a good number. Crested Grebes probably bred on L. Benmore (Otago) this year, extending their range slightly. An Australian Little Grebe was seen on L. Karetai (Auckland) on 12

Jan. and the 5 seen at St Annes Lagoon (Canterbury) in Jan. is the highest number recorded at this locality for several years.

Botulism was a serious problem for Mallard and Grey Duck at Mangere in Jan., but the 500 or so Grey Teal and single Brown Teal were unaffected. Brown Teal numbers were maintained at 444 in Northland. 220+ Scaup at L. Brunner (West Coast) in spring is a good number and 2 broods were raised for the first time on L. Karoro, a small pond in Greymouth. A pair of Blue Ducks with 5 young on the Otira River (Canterbury) must have been the most watched Blue Ducks in New Zealand, being twitched by several hundred IOC delegates. 2 pairs of Blue Ducks were found in the upper Tukituki catchment (Hawkes Bay) in Nov. and there was an unusual record from L. Rotoiti Nelson) and a new record from the Kawhaka R. on the West Coast. 2 Mandarin Ducks at Western Springs (Auckland) on 23 Oct. were presumably escapes. Coot appear to be doing well in the north. There were 27 adults and 14 juveniles at Western Springs on 9 Dec.; 9 at L. Pupuke (Auckland) over summer; and 20 at L. Owhareiti (Northland) in Jan.

A Marsh Crake was seen at Waitahora Lagoon (Northland) in Jan.; one of only 6 Northland records. Spotless Crakes bred at L. Oinga (Hawkes Bay) - with 2-3 adults and a chick there on 30 Dec. They also continue to be reported from Pukepuke Lagoon (Manawatu).

Waders

Pied Oystercatchers raised a chick at Tauanui Delta, the first successful nesting in the Wairarapa. South Island birds were migrating northwards up the West Coast by late Nov.

A Banded Dotterel on the top of the Kaimanawa Range (Hawkes Bay) on 4 Jan. probably had a nest nearby. 15 NZ Dotterel chicks were banded in Northland this summer and the post-breeding flock at Omaha (Auckland) formed early this year - in Jan. A single bird was seen south of its usual range at East Clive from 1-14 Nov., one of several recent records from that area.

The highest number of Bar-tailed Godwits since counts were started was seen in Southland - 4958+ in Nov.

A possible American Golden Plover at Rangiputa (Northland) in Jan. was the most unusual wader record. Otherwise there was the usual scattering of rarer species. Mongolian Dotterels turned up at Porangahau on 3 Nov., Kaituna Cut (Bay of Plenty) from 1-14 Nov., and Aramoana (in breeding plumage) on 14 Nov. 8 Black-tailed Godwits were reported from Jordans (Kaipara) on 1 Dec. and there were single Hudsonian Godwits at L. Wairarapa on 27 Jan. and L. Ellesmere in early Sept. Curlews were present at Miranda (S. Auckland) in early Nov.; at the Ashley Est.

in Nov.-Dec., and at Foxton until the end of Jan. Reports of single Whimbrel came from the Ahuriri Est. (Hawkes Bay) on 17 Nov., Avon-Heathcote Est. on 17 Dec., and the Asiatic subspecies at Kaituna Cut on 4 Nov.

Miranda continues to be a good place for Marsh sandpipers and there was also a Terek Sandpiper there in early Nov. 2 Tereks were at Port Whangarei in Jan. Sanderlings were reported from Canterbury, with one each at Washdyke Lagoon in early Nov. and at L. Ellesmere in late Nov. Curlew Sandpipers were reported from the north at Tapora in Jan., 7 at Miranda on 8 Nov. and down south at Awarua Bay, 5 on 17 Nov. L. Ellesmere held the highest number of Pectoral Sandpipers, with 6 during February. There were also 2 each at Kaituna Cut on 4 Nov. and Spider Lagoon (Canterbury) in early Jan. while singles were at Foxton from 22 Dec. and Coopers Lagoon (Canterbury) on 12 Feb.

3 tattlers were seen at Awarua Bay on 17 Nov. 1 or 2 of the Wandering species were identified at Kaikoura on 5 Jan. and Siberians occurred at Foxton, 2 from 22 Dec.; Ashley River, 1 on 4 Jan.; Avon-Heathcote Estuary, 1 throughout Nov.; Ashburton River (Canterbury), 1 in late Nov.; and Otago Harbour, 2 in Nov.

Others

Several Brown Kiwis were heard at Tapora on 16 Nov; survivors from a transfer of 6-8 years ago. The small population of 30 or so birds on Kawau I. (Auckland) lost a pair to dogs. Several were heard near Kaweka Station (Hawkes Bay) in Dec.-Jan.

Reports of Nankeen Kestrels continue to come in from the Te Mata Peak area in Hawkes Bay and 2 birds were confirmed over summer. However, there was no trace of the other autumn immigrants.

Kookaburras were seen in the north of the Waitakere Ranges, some way south of their normal range and a single Kaka was seen there on 5 Dec. Kaka numbers in the Kaweka State Forest (Hawkes Bay) remain at a reasonable level; 10 birds, including a group of 6 were counted between 21 & 28 Jan. A rare mainland record of 4+ Red-crowned Parakeets came from the same survey and a bird was present at Mission Bay (Auckland) on Christmas Day. 7 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were also in the Auckland area, at Waiatarua on 5 Dec. One at L. Brunner since Dec. may be an escape.

A second breeding colony of Barbary Doves has been found near Hastings, and also in Hawkes Bay, Fernbirds were found in good numbers at Puketitiri, one of only a few sites in the area.

Whiteheads transferred to Tiritiri Matangi I. (Auckland) bred well this summer. Welcome Swallows continue their colonisation of the South Island, Breeding at 2 sites near Tarras (Otago).

A few Rooks still hang around the Auckland area, 1 in the west of the city and 3 at Miranda on 5 Nov.

Late summer records of Shining Cuckoos, after singing has ceased, are few and far between, so one at Outram (Otago) on 15 Feb. and 5 together at nearby Woodside on 19 Feb., plus 1 at Springston (Canterbury) on 1 Mar. are worth noting.

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

Northland/Far North:

For many years Northland and Far North members have visited many beaches on regular patrols. The dead seabirds are regularly recorded in the Society's Beach Patrol Scheme.

As live birds have not been recorded on a co-ordinated system in the past, Pat Miller has prepared a card to record these observations from beaches and coastal areas. Beaches will be allocated a reference number, using the system prepared for the NZ Dotterel census by Richard Parrish and Pat Miller. The planned coastal bird survey should provide data on a long-term basis in several areas. Trends in the population of NZ Dotterel, Reef Heron, and Variable Oystercatcher will become evident. Observations can be made during a casual visit to the beach, on beach patrols, or on a specially organised survey.

(David Crockett)

Auckland:

Aspects of bird song was the subject of our November meeting. Folkert Nieuwland gave a delightful account of his methods of introducing the subject of birds to school groups and newcomers to the interest. In anticipation of a new RR in 1991, this meeting also devoted time to the election of a sub-committee, loosely headed Activities, Publicity, and Recording. The aim of which is to recognise the help which a large number of people give to the affairs of the region and to provide a continuing framework for these contributions.

Following meetings focused on summer activities, with reports of field work and news of the IOC and ICBP gatherings. Brian Ellis, Adrian Riegen and Sara Brouwer had each led congress tours, and at our February meeting Brian and Adrian exchanged highly entertaining accounts of their adventures in search of birds. We felt the international visitors would have been well satisfied with what they saw and learned.

(Michael Taylor)

South Auckland:

At our last meeting of 1990, we were lucky to have Paul Sagar describe, in a well-illustrated talk, how he jumped at the opportunity to spend part of a summer working on the Kerguelen Islands.

Earlier, a party of members accepted

an offer of a weekend at Papanui. Tuis were singing all day in the coastal banksias and flax. A pair each of Variable Oystercatchers and NZ Dotterels were incubating, protected by stakes, in a very vulnerable position near the harbour entrance, so we were pleased to hear that two halfgrown NZ Dotterels were seen there later in November.

We did our final count of the three main roosts at Miranda in January and now Dick Veitch is analysing the results. A lot of information is coming in now from members and visitors to the Miranda Naturalists' Centre. Some members visited the Gannet colony at Muriwai in early January. No adults were seen fishing in the area. The chicks in the most recently established colony were, on average, younger than those in the other colonies.

A small party braved a rough day to check on the high tide roost at Kirks, on the Manukau Harbour. There were the usual exciting large flocks of Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots – at least 10 000 in total. We finished the day by confirming that our veteran NZ Dotterel, "Whimbel", was still present on his territory at Seagrove.

The February meeting was lively with accounts of summer activities. Hazel Harty told us about the IOC from a worker's point of view and David Baker from a participant's. Ken Bond described some interesting walks with DoC staff around Port Macquarie, and Paul Harrison showed a fine collection of slides taken at Parengarenga and the far north, as well as from Little Barrier. Pam Agnew had been to Hobart and David Lawrie gave us a brief taste of what we can look forward to from the Southern Ocean cruise.

(Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato:

Waikato members, with DoC staff and Royal Forest & Bird members, turned out in force to help in welcoming the 370 delegates to the World Conference of ICBP, held in Hamilton during November. We staffed an information desk 12 hours a day during the Conference and arranged a lot of informal trips for the visitors. As we came to know them better and became involved with all the lectures, films and discussions we felt rewarded for all the hard work.

Those who did not go to the IOC had a successful field weekend on Tiritiri Matangi Island and ended the year with a pre-Christmas barbecue.

At our November meeting we were pleased to welcome Paul Sagar, who gave a splendidly illustrated account of The Snares – an island for seabirds.

(Stella Rowe)

Wairarapa:

The last three months have seen Wairarapa members carry out bird surveys in two bush areas and at one lake in the region.

The Hidden Lakes at Kopuaranga were visited in early October, when the kowhais were in bloom and the Tuis gathered in large numbers. On the same day the large and very noisy Rook colony of several hundred birds at Mauriceville was inspected.

Allan's and Lowes Bush in East Taratahi is one of the few remnants of original kahikatea forest – most is now second growth and harbours disappointingly few native birds. Native bush at the top of the Mangaterere Valley in the Tararuas proved a lot more interesting birdwise and was the destination of an early morning trip. Although the area had been milled many years ago some big trees remain and NZ Pigeon, Shining Cuckoo, Grey Warbler, Silvereye, Red-crowned Parakeet, Fantail, and Kingfisher were all seen.

On 17 Nov., 24 people frantically covered the region in our first Wairarapa "Twitchathon" (see elsewhere in this issue for an account of this event). The day ended with a social gathering and barbecue – a very good fun day.

Our summer wader count on 18 Nov. produced a tally of 1400 birds, with Pied Stilts at 538 and Spur-winged Plovers at 537 both significantly higher than in the last two years. This year Pied Stilt banding was still as frustrating as ever, but we were more successful, with a total of 25 banded – 21 of which were adults.

(Tenick Dennison)

Canterbury:

Our last evening meeting for 1990 was something of an experiment, which turned out to be very successful. Included in the programme was an ornithological quiz which involved identifying a series of bird calls, identifying the species illustrated in a series of slides, and a general knowledge bird questions. The winner of the book prize was Andrew Crossland.

On 9 Dec. the survivors of the IOC marathon met for an end-of-year barbecue, hosted by Peter & Ruth Reese.

As is usual, we started the year with a members' evening and as usual were treated to some interesting observations and excellent videos, slides and taped calls. Peter Langlands showed a video he had made during the most recent banding session at Ward, while Peter Reese and Don Hadden delighted us with a series of their most recent bird slides. Peter Reese showed us why he couldn't place a trap over a Pied Stilts nest – the nest was built on floating debris in a shingle pit.

(Paul Sagar)

Otago:

Otago members have been occupied with banding Pied Stilts and Black-fronted Dotterels. The mortality of Pied Stilt chicks appears to be very high and the banding team is eager to locate the Harrier nest in the vicinity of the major stilt colony to see how many colour bands are lying around.

The Black-fronted Dotterel nests at Outram were destroyed accidentally by a motorcyclist and by a flood. The Manuherikia birds raised 2 chicks and already are incubating a new 3-egg clutch—the chicks were constantly accompanied by one parent.

The region has just produced a booklet—Otago Bird Report—a compilation of all published bird notes of the Otago region from 1985 to 1989.

(Peter Schweigman)

Southland:

A record godwit count of 4958 + at the 17 Nov. census was the highest since regular counts began in 1976. 17 people did the fieldwork at 11 different sites.

A pleasant Boxing Day outing at Margaret Divers' home in central Southland attracted 10 people from the south (Winton & Invercargill) and none from the east, west or north. No Royal Spoonbills were found on the Waitangi Day census. John Dowding, talking about his NZ Dotterel work, interested and enthused 14 people at Peter & Wilma Muller's home in February—an excellent and informative evening. In February too, a wader day at Awarua Bay, extensively advertised, attracted only 4 "regulars" and 3 others. Indifferent weather did not help.

Seven members contributed information for a submission to DoC on the Breaksea Island Management Plan. Ornithological assessments were prepared by Roger Sutton for DoC on Gowan Hill Station Forest, and by Maida Barlow for the Invercargill City Council on Thomson's Bush and for the Southland Regional Council on the Waihopai River Detention Dam and environs. All these assessments were in response to requests from the various organisations.

14 adult and 4 juvenile Pied Stilts were banded during the 1990/91 season. Caspian Terns had an exceptionally good breeding season—51 chicks were banded, 42 of them with colour bands (Red-White over Metal). Of necessity, colour-banded chicks were close to fledging, so should have a good survival rate.

(Maida Barlow)

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