

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. 59

June, 1991

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

SHEARWATER TRANSFER

The translocation of birds has become almost commonplace around New Zealand islands. One immediately thinks of Saddleback, Kokako, Robin, Snipe etc. However, few consider the more difficult options of transferring colonial species with strong orientation to their natal colony. To protect some of these species, particularly petrels, we are at present restricted to the preservation of habitat and the removal of predators.

A new project has begun to see if petrel species can be successfully transferred from their natal island and established on another, where there is no historical record of their presence. This is rather different from experiments to attract species to new colonies using playback of calls or the seeding of existing depleted colonies (such as Black Petrels on Little Barrier). The project involves the transfer of 100 Fluttering Shearwater chicks from Long Island to Maud Island each year for five years, starting in 1991. The purpose is to prove a management technique using a common species so that it can be available in future for endangered species.

The current project began in late October 1990 when a party (H. Heinekamp, W. Cook, M. Neverman, V. Lowrie, and B. Bell) constructed 103 artificial burrows on Maud Island.

The major thrust came in January 1991 when a party (S. & J. Rowe, B. Bell, M. Bell and D. Bell) went to Long Island to collect the fledgling shearwaters. All the birds were collected on one day, but violent weather delayed the onward journey for half a day. Cooperation from the DoC, Picton, saw the birds overnight in their transport boxes at the DoC store. Next morning they were moved to Havelock and then Maud Island.



Transferring the shearwater chicks to their artificial burrows.

At Maud Island, a small party (H. Heinekamp, P. Bell & R. Bell) had prepared the burrows and opened up the access track. They had also arranged for the food to be available for the birds – the bulk of which was donated by Sanfords Fishery, Havelock. On arrival at Maud Island, the birds were weighed, banded and fed and then placed in their burrows. At first, the feeding regime was experimental and it took us almost a week to learn that our “soup” of fish, muttonbird oil and a few vitamin additives had to be fed twice a day at 50 ml per bird. This daily routine was quite demanding – taking about 2 hours to make up the mixture, then a 30 minute walk each way to the new colony and about an hour for each feeding. Until some of the birds departed from the island there was little time for other activities. The team was supported by J. Hawkins, W. Cook, E.

Bell, G. Climo, and D. Eason when the younger Bell contingent returned to school. Now that the procedures have been tried and modified we plan to involve more junior members, with the first contingent having refurbished the burrows during the May school holidays.

What has been achieved? One hundred and two birds were transferred and only three died. That means that 99 shearwaters fledged from Maud Island, but we have little information about their fate, except for two which have been recovered as beach wrecks in Victoria, Australia – both about 18 days after leaving Maud Island. One of these birds departed Maud after only a night or two but the other was fed for a fortnight. These birds must have adjusted to the change required after leaving the island – learning to feed and then flying the Tasman Sea. We can only hope that all

our shearwaters did not suffer the same fate and that there will be some to return to Maud Island in 2-3 years.

Grants from the Sharon Watson Trust (Forest & Bird) and Environmental Grants Committee covered most of the expenditure for the year. Some financial help from the Projects Assistance Fund (OSNZ) is available to help young members participate in this project.

You will be kept informed as the project continues.

BRIAN D. BELL

From the President's Desk

The Annual Conference & AGM has come and gone and it was most pleasing to see over 100 people attend the functions.

Although there was no election of officers we did see a change. Two members who have served on Council for several years stood down – Drs Brian Gill and Ben Bell – and we are most grateful for their contribution. They will continue to have an input into the activities of the Society through their association with various schemes and committees. In their place on Council we welcome Hazel Harty and Dr Ralph Powlesland.

You will note that we have to call another Special General Meeting to pass our annual accounts. Our Treasurer, Brigid Glass, has had to resign because of personal commitments. However, she has unraveled most of the earlier problems and passed on the accounts to Brian Ellis, who is standing in temporarily. Brian will be doing the annual balance sheet and will be setting up systems to make it easier for whoever is appointed as our next Treasurer. One of the major tasks relating to accounts is the membership and annual subscriptions etc. This, as most will be aware, has been running very efficiently thanks to the dedication of Hazel Harty.

The Annual Conference is a good time to judge the vitality of the Society and on this occasion all came away with a very positive feeling. There are many exciting projects being undertaken and there is an excellent spirit of cooperation. This is reflected in the sightings of colour banded birds in particular and in the support given to national schemes. Not everything is perfect of course and there is room for improvement in most areas. We are extremely grateful to the Regional Representatives, who provide the focal point for local activities. Don't leave it all to them, but give your help and support.

During the May school holidays I was away with a party of 9 junior members, who assisted with the shearwater translocation programme on Maud Island. This was a very rewarding experience for me. For the boys it was a great opportunity to work on a project and get training in various study techniques – you will hear

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

In accordance with the Constitution, notice is hereby given that a Special General Meeting will be held on Monday 7 October 1991 at the Conference Room, Conservation Sciences Centre, Department of Conservation, 58 Tory Street, Wellington, at 7.45 p.m.

Business: Adoption of 1990 Financial Statement.

To appoint an auditor.

R. EMPSON
Hon. Secretary

from them in the next *OSNZ news* – but for me it was notable as I could watch the enthusiasm of youth, the development of friendships, and their commitment to bird study. With young people, such as this group in our Society I am sure it will go from strength to strength. However, we could do with more junior members. I plan to provide further opportunities for young people to participate in our activities, so any who join will have a chance to take part over the next year or two.

BRIAN D. BELL
President

Donations to the Society

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

Mrs Marion Aubrey, Richard Atkins, David Baker, Ken Butler, Doug Booth, Alvin Brett, Kenneth Buchanan, Judith Beirne, W.F. Bowden, A.R. Carey, Bill Cash, Kay Clapperton, Gerry Clark, Robert Creighton, Paul Cuming, J.F. Davidson, M. Divers, C.J. Foreman, F.K. Furlong, P. Grant, Paul Harrison, C.M. Haslett, D.J. Hawke, Ian D. Hayton, Michael Helmansson, Martin Heine, A.R. Howarth, Graham Hunt, Mrs E. Jackson, Raymond Jackson, Mr & Mrs Jamieson, Helen King, M.A. King, Stewart Lauder, O.J. Linscott, J.W. Lock, Cameron Lucas, A.D. McAdam, John McCoy, Jill McDonald, Shona Mulligan, P.L. Munns, Marie Neverman, Gordon Nicholson, Olive Nutting, Emmie Pratt, P.F. Penny, Ralph & Mary Powlesland, Steven Rasmussen, Hugh Robertson, R.M. Sadleir, Joy & Paul Sagar, Rob Schuckard, Kina Scollay, Betty Seddon, Diana Shand, Lorna Simpkin, Nancy Tanner, Kath Todd, Mrs F.E. Treacher, Michael Turner & Jane Redwood, M.A. Waller, Mrs Barbara Walters, George Watola, W.W. Webb, Dr & Mrs Wilcox.

CSN – a reminder

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

In the first instance members should send their material to the appropriate Regional Recorder, who is responsible for

collating the region's contribution. In order to have time to complete this task, Regional Recorders need to receive members' contributions by 31 July.

The CSN year runs from 1 July to 30 June, so now is the time to extract all those observations from your notebooks. To assist with the process, below is a list of the Regional Recorders to whom the appropriate observations should be sent.

Far North & Northland: Terry Toohill, 3 Taraire Crescent, Whangarei. Ph. 437-5167.

Auckland: Michael Taylor, 28 Awarua Crescent, Orakei, Auckland. Ph. 524-9234.

South Auckland: Pam Agnew, 3 Dianne Louise Avenue, Bucklands Beach. Ph. 535-4222.

Waikato: David Riddell, Gordonton Road, RD1, Taupiri. Ph. 293-877.

Bay of Plenty: Paddy Latham, 72 Simpson Road, Papamoa. Ph. 420-406.

Volcanic Plateau: Vacant.

Gisborne/Wairoa: Geoff Foreman, 6 Rimu Drive, Wairoa. Ph. (0724) 8370.

Taranaki: Erika Woodger, Egmont Road, No. 6 RD, Inglewood. Ph. 672-2524.

Manawatu: Sybil Cresswell, 98 Manawatu Street, Palmerston North. Ph. 357-5271.

Wanganui: Vacant.

Hawkes Bay: Mary Craven, cnr Havelock & Norton Roads, Hastings. Ph. 878-7583.

Wairarapa: Tenick Dennison, 129 Renall Street, Masterton. Ph. (059) 85200.

Wellington: Don Stracy, 14 Fitzwilliam Terrace, Tawa. Ph. (04) 327-989.

Nelson: Gail Quayle, 6 Tresillian Avenue, Nelson. Ph. 520-456.

Marlborough: Beverley North, 107 Redwood Street, Blenheim. Ph. 88585.

Canterbury: Andrew Crossland, 46 Frensham Crescent, Christchurch. Ph. (03) 893-964.

West Coast: Richard Stocker, Iveagh Bay Road, RD1, Kumara. Ph. 738-0535.

Otago: Vacant.

Southland: Maida Barlow, 38 Filleul Street, Invercargill. Ph. 218-4573.

Changes of RRs

At the June meeting Council confirmed the appointments of the following new Regional Representatives – Elizabeth

Price, taking over from David Crockett in the Far North; Brian Ellis, taking over from Michael Taylor in Auckland; Allan Munro, taking over from Kerry Oates in Wellington; and Roger Sutton, taking over from Maida Barlow in Southland. The addresses and phone numbers of all RRs can be found on the inside back cover of *Notornis*.

Council expresses its sincere thanks to David, Michael, Kerry and Maida for their services on the Society's behalf during their time as RR.

Greetings cards still available

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

Hugh Robertson,
OSNZ Greetings Cards,
30 Deller Grove, Silverstream,
North Island.

Mystery Bird # 3

The mystery bird from the last issue (repeated here) was hopefully recognised as a wader (*Order Charadriiformes*) of some kind by most people. From here it is easy to work down to the general group of waders it belongs to. The shortish stout bill alone rules out all groups bar the plovers (*Family Charadriidae*), birds in all other groups generally having longer and more slender bills, although some of the smaller sandpipers and stints do have relatively short bills, but not as thick.

So now we know the bird to be a plover of some sort. The Grey and Golden Plovers can be ruled out by the smooth colouration of the bird and its smallish size in comparison with the shells. This leaves only the *Charadrius* plovers, which we in New Zealand generally know as dotterels. The plumage of the bird narrows the field to acceptable level next. It has smooth upperparts, a strong white supercilium pinched around the eye, and a dark line from the bill to the eye which extends below the eye and back to the nape. The white of the cheek extends fairly far back on the head but not into the collar, and a dark 'tab' ends squarely part way across its breast.

From that we can eliminate many of the species on the New Zealand list, leaving perhaps NZ Dotterel, Banded Dotterel, Mongolian Dotterel, and Large Sand Dotterel. As ever, before trying to find a rarity, we need to eliminate the commoners. As there are no breast bands or colouration we must be seeing a bird in non-breeding plumage. The mystery bird appears a bit small and not bulky enough for NZ Dotterel, also the head is perhaps a bit too rounded. So perhaps a Banded Dotterel? In breeding plumage, Banded Dotterels are unmistakable with their two breast bands, but in non-breeding and juvenile plumages they can be bewildering. This bird, however, looks rather too well defined with its breast tabs rather too extensive and sharply demarcated; the bill is slightly large too.

Therefore, it is apparently a Mongolian or a Large Sand Dotterel. From here we need to look at its bare parts and general structure to determine its true identity. The legs are relatively long, although you cannot see any of the tibia (above the 'knee'). The bill is fairly even in thickness and is about the same length as the distance between the base of the bill and the centre of the eye. So where does this leave us?

If we have done our research correctly then it should leave us having identified the bird correctly, as a Mongolian Dotterel. Large Sand Dotterel has a larger and thicker bill, which is generally greater in length than the distance between the base of the bill and the rear of the eye. Likewise, the legs are longer, especially above the 'knee', giving it a leggier appearance. The head of a Mongolian Dotterel is more rounded than that of a Large Sand Dotterel.

The Mongolian Dotterel breeds from eastern Asia to north-eastern Siberia, and winters from Africa across to Australasia. In New Zealand, it is a rare but regular migrant, first recorded in 1961 on Farewell Spit.

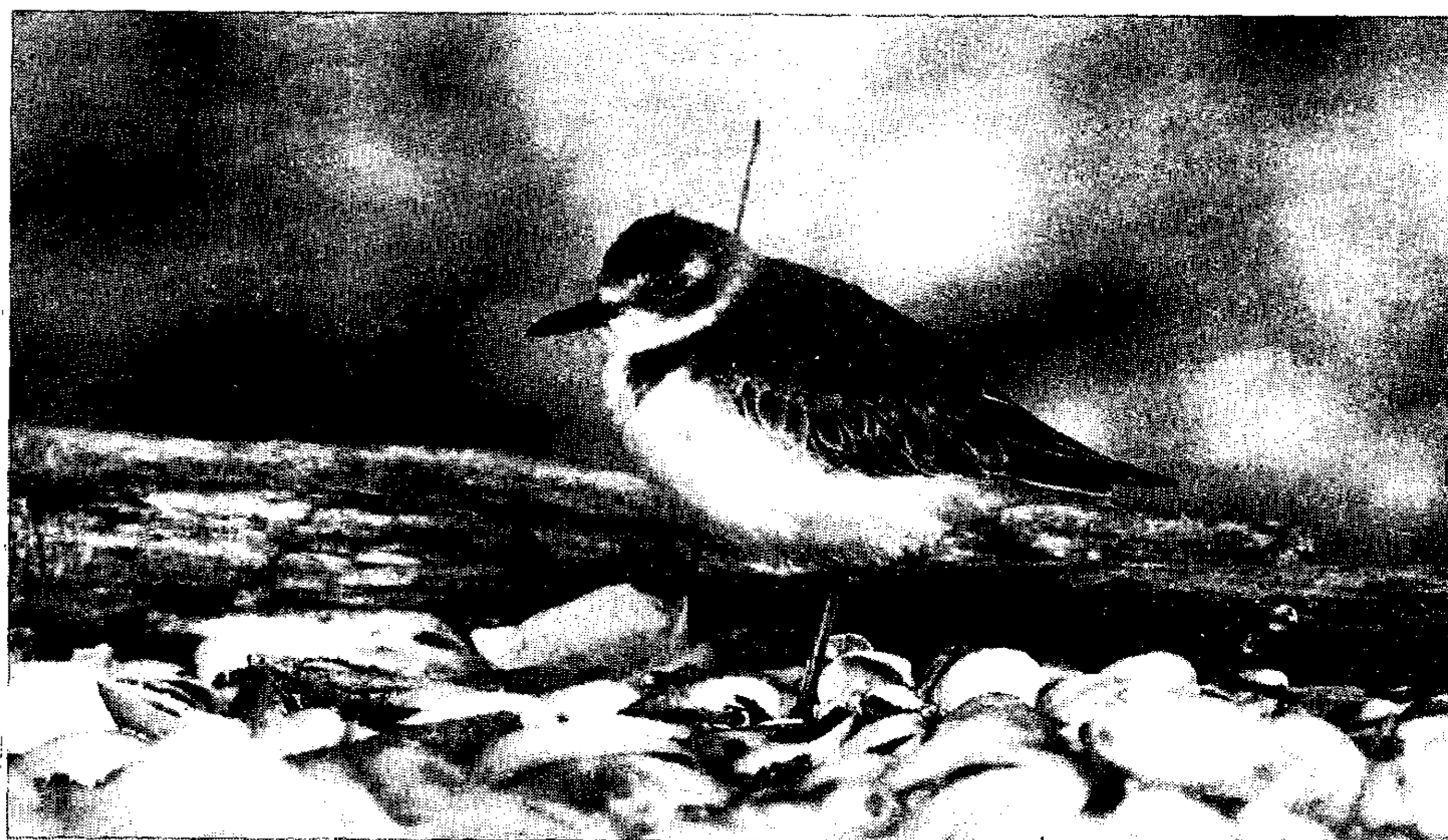
While we in New Zealand know this bird as a Mongolian Dotterel, in most other countries it is known as the Lesser Sand Plover, perhaps a more suitable name as it is now only a vagrant in Mongolia, the last bird being recorded there being seen in 1972!

PHIL BATTLE

Annual Conference & AGM – Blenheim 1991

Over 100 members gathered at Innes House, Blenheim, during the weekend of 31 May to 3 June for a thoroughly enjoyable and informative Annual Conference & AGM. As has been the trend with recent AGMs, this was a live-in event, so the fullest possible use was made of the time available. The bar was well patronised each evening and thanks are due to Bill Cash, ably assisted by Tom Harty and Dick Veitch, for organising this facility. If the noise level in the social room and at meal times was a barometer of the success of the weekend, then everyone must have had a great time.

The AGM was held on Saturday night and most of the comments from the President are covered elsewhere in this issue. One aspect isn't, however, and that was the presentation of a special award. The President was particularly pleased to announce this award to a member whose ornithology has essentially been done in geographical isolation. Hugh Robertson was called upon to present the award and in his citation he emphasised how Jack Taylor of Ward had made accommodation and field study facilities on his farm available to the Society for many years; Field Study Courses and Junior Members' Courses having been held there and more recently it has been the SI base for the activities of the Central Passerine banding Group. Jack has even gone to the extent of modifying his farming routine and encouraged weeds to grow, so passerines



Mongolian Dotterel

(Photo Brian Chudleigh)

would be attracted to their seeds and this would make the birds easier to catch for banding. The Society owes a lot to Jack's generosity. The announcement of this special award to Jack Taylor was greeted with prolonged enthusiastic applause. In his reply, Jack commented how he was privileged to have so many ornithologists visit and teach him so much about birds.

Field activities were the focus of the weekend. On the Saturday there was a trip to view the Kaka project at the Nelson Lakes National Park; on the way, visiting Kowhai Point Bush for mist-netting, and the Upper Wairau River and Eve's Creek areas for Fernbirds and Brown Creepers. The cold windy and sometimes wet conditions didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm, particularly when good views of Kaka were to be had.

The weather improved rapidly overnight and Sunday dawned clear and calm for the boat trips to Pelorus Sound and Queen Charlotte Sound. Those on the Pelorus trip visited Duffer's Reef (to see King Shags) and landed on Maud Island. Takahe, frogs and wetas were the main attractions on Maud, but the highlight for some was seeing a Kakapo. Don Merton was on the island to replace the bird's radio transmitter and this provided an unexpected bonus for some of the OSNZ party. Those on the Queen Charlotte trip visited the White Rocks (nesting King Shags), Motuara Island and Ship Cove. At the end of the day, everyone was pleased with their outing.

While the boat trips were underway, a few members opted to do some banding at Jack Taylor's farm. This too was highly successful, with 225 passerines caught – mainly Redpolls, Goldfinches and Greenfinches. Considering that over 200 birds had been caught and banded on the same paddock just 2-3 weeks previously it was a bit of a surprise that only 2 were recaptured this day. Perhaps this indicates the size of the finch populations in the area.

That night we enjoyed an excellent BBC film on albatrosses, plus 2 videos of the boat trips, and some superb bird slides taken by Roger Wasley.

Monday morning was devoted to a discussion of the Society's activities, plus talks by Peter Langlands and Dick Veitch.

Peter told us about some of the results of his regular seabird surveys from a fishing boat off Kaikoura. Then Dick summarised some of the findings of over 30 years of wader counts on the Manukau Harbour and Firth of Thames, plus the recently completed 3-roost counts in the Firth of Thames. The latter clearly showed how critical it was for counts at the one site to be conducted at the same time of year if meaningful comparisons of wader numbers are to be made from one year to the next.

The weekend ended with a well-earned vote of thanks to Bev North and her

organising committee for the smooth running of such a successful conference.

Next year's conference will be in Masterton – see you there.

PAUL SAGAR

Beach Patrol Scheme 1990

My apologies that there is no preliminary report of the 1990 results from the Beach Patrol Scheme. Although the data have been entered into a computer file, it is beyond my control to get the analysis done. This has come about because I have had problems with the OSNZ computer and it has had to be returned to the distributors to be fixed. However, later this year a preliminary report of the 1990 results should be available for publication in OSNZ news.

RALPH POWLESLAND

Convener

Mystery Bird # 4: identify this bird

Answer next OSNZ news

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

This year, 59 members and friends contributed 741 Nest Record cards covering 61 species and one hybrid mating, bringing the grand total to 21 289 cards. A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo nest was recorded for the first time, bringing the total number of species in the Scheme to 138.

There was a marked increase in the number of cards submitted, with major contributions from: Tim Shaw/Richard Parrish (88), Peter Bull (76), Peter Reese (72), Don Geddes (70), Andrew Crossland (61), Derek Onley (59), Lynn Adams (45), Jason Roxburgh/Richard Parrish (39), and Brent Stephenson (32).

There were 33 colonial cards contributed during the year, covering the following 9 species: Black Shag (2), Little Shag (4), Pied Stilt (5), Black-backed Gull (7), Red-billed Gull (4), Black-billed Gull (2), Black-fronted Tern (1), Caspian Tern (4), and White-fronted Tern (4).

Several people have asked over the past year whether old nest records are acceptable – they most certainly are!



I am sure that many members have filed away in their notebooks records of nests that never made it onto the Nest record cards at the time – this probably also applies to records of colonial breeding. No record is too late – some of the cards recorded in the totals above emerged from a lost cardboard box of OSNZ records 10 years late; hence some members may be surprised to see that they had contributed cards this year!

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

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS: Lynn Adams, Kathy Barrow, Phil Battley, David Bell, M. Bowron, Neil Bradley, Peter Bull, Margaret Child, Willie Cook, Jack Cowie, Andrew Crossland, Bev Elliott, Geoff Foreman, Don Geddes, K.J. Geddes, S.M. Geddes, Brian Gill, Brigid Glass, Mike & Sharon Graham, G. Grant, Terry Greene, Jim Hamilton, M. Harrewijn, Jenny Hawkins, Henk Heinekamp, Stewart Lauder, Peter Langlands, Steve Lawrence, Christine McRae, David Mudge, Bev North, Colin Ogle, R.C. Ogle, R.D. Ogle, Derek Onley, Richard Parrish, Ray Pierce, Mary & Ralph Powlesland, Nick Reedy, Peter Reese, Ian Reid, John & Stella Rowe, Hugh Robertson, Jason Roxburgh, Paul Sagar, I. Sangster, Colin Scadden, Peter Schweigman, Tim Shaw, Brent Stephenson, D. Swain, Jack Taylor, Rowley Taylor, Alan Tennyson, and Erika Woodger.

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING 1990/91: Crested Grebe 5, Black Shag 2, Little Shag 4, White-faced Heron 4, Bittern 1, Black Swan 5, Mute Swan 2, Canada Goose 4, Mallard 6, Grey Duck 2, Grey Teal 4, Shoveler 1, Scaup 32, Harrier 5, Pheasant 1, California Quail 2, Pukeko 12, Coot 1, SI Pied Oystercatcher 12, Variable Oystercatcher 79, Spur-winged Plover 17, Banded Dotterel 29, Black-fronted Dotterel 9, NZ Dotterel 50, Wrybill 3, Pied Stilt 34, hybrid stilt 1, Black-backed Gull 34, Red-billed Gull 6, Black-billed Gull 4, Black-fronted Tern 17, White-fronted Tern 5, Fairy Tern 3, Caspian Tern 9, NZ Pigeon 1, Morepork 2, Little Owl 3, Kaka 1, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo 1, Skylark 8, Kingfisher 3, Welcome Swallow 15, Pipit 1, Dunnock 19, Grey Warbler 3, Fantail 9, Whitehead 8, Song Thrush 88, Blackbird 77, Silvereye 12, Tui 2, Chaffinch 8, Greenfinch 19, Goldfinch 19, Redpoll 6, Yellowhammer 3, Cirl Bunting 3, House Sparrow 5, Starling 12, White-backed Magpie 4, Black-backed Magpie 1, and Rook 1.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Convener

Report of the Banding Liaison Officer – 1991

During the past year I have received 7

banding permit applications from the Banding Office for comment. I have had enquiries from the West Coast and Nelson, but no complaints. In addition, I have had contact with Rod Cossee, the Banding Officer, and there has been one meeting of the Banding Committee.

The Banding Officer says that there are no problems concerning permits issued to OSNZ members and that they have a responsible attitude to bird banding.

Members must be reminded to send all sightings of colour banded birds, where the combination has been recorded, to the Banding Office. Often, members know who the person doing the banding and make direct contact. This is quite permissible, provided a record of the sighting is also sent to the Banding Office. All retrap records should also be sent to the Banding Office.

Members will be pleased to know that all Banding Schedules are now being stored in a fireproof cabinet.

JENNY HAWKINS
Banding Liaison Officer

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer: 1990-1991

1. Overview of the Society's major national schemes

The Beach Patrol, Moulting Recording and Nest Record Schemes continue to run with moderate levels of support, usually with most input from a relatively small number of dedicated individuals or groups.

Very useful summaries of the Beach Patrol and Nest Record Schemes appeared in *Flying Start*.

The personal computers for the Beach Patrol and Nest Record Schemes have been purchased, along with most of the software (Wordperfect and DBXL). Statistical packages are currently being evaluated so that data can be analysed in more detail than simple tabulations. Beach Patrol data have been largely transferred to PC, but a start has still to be made with Nest Record Scheme data.

2. Review of the Society's special national studies

Wader counts

The biannual national wader count generally continues to operate well, but counts are starting to drift well away from a standard time in some regions, and last year some major northern estuaries were not counted in at least the winter surveys. Paul Sagar has made a start on analysing the data collected to date, and when this analysis is complete we will be in a better position to decide what wader studies could be undertaken next.

Cattle Egret

The annual Cattle Egret survey was done in August 1990. For the third year in

a row the totals were well down on the maximum numbers (recorded during 1987), but they were similar to the figures for 1988 and 1989. The continuing wet conditions in large parts of eastern Australia have provided good local feeding conditions, hence there is no need to fly to New Zealand. The build-up in 1991 seems to be slow and the totals are not likely to be very high.

Banded Dotterel movements

Ray Pierce has now completed a first draft of a paper for *Notornis* on the results of this study, and he presented a review of some of the major trends at the International Ornithological Congress.

Black-fronted Dotterel movements

A small number of dedicated people have been putting in considerable efforts to catch and colour-band breeding birds, but they are fairly elusive. We have yet to get any long distance movements (maximum 40 km, from Masterton to Lake Wairarapa), but with a more concentrated effort this summer, with no conflicting IOC, more birds should be marked. Large flocks of unbanded birds still accumulate at Lake Wairarapa in the winter, despite the efforts of Dave Sim and Tenick Dennison to mark many of the birds on the Ruamahanga River. Some very good information on mate-retention and site fidelity is starting to emerge from the colour-banding.

Pied Stilt movements

This project is going extremely well, with some interesting and most unexpected movements being recorded. Last winter about 70 sightings were made of the 204 birds banded – the obvious trends were of southern birds heading for Northland (and presumably Auckland too, if people looked). Coastal and birds in Canterbury and points further north tended to be relatively sedentary. Some pairs retained their pair bond through the winter, and many birds returned to breed at the same, or a very close, colony.

Despite the conflicting pressures on time from the 2 international conferences late last year, 15% more stilts were colour-banded in 1990-91 than the previous year. The total of 240 birds included 80 in the South Island. Some of the early post-breeding movements have been intriguing, with 2 birds banded at Helensville, Kaipara Harbour, being seen in central New Zealand, 500 km south a month or two after being banded.

Based on the interesting findings to date and the increasing skill of stilt banders, Ray Pierce has decided to continue the project for at least one more breeding season.

Passerine movements

The Central Passerine Group ran a series of banding training sessions at Ward, Greytown, Nga Manu, Pukepuke Lagoon,

and Fernhill (Hawkes Bay) during the year. A number of small banding groups have been formed through central New Zealand, and the permit has been extended to include Hawkes Bay and Taranaki. The number of birds banded in 1990-91 was 1394 of 19 species. Despite having banded over 5000 passerines since 1988, there still have not been any recoveries greater than 5 km from the banding site, but some useful longevity data are being collected.

Kereru display dives

The data collection phase of this study ended in June 1990 and these data are now being analysed for a paper to be submitted to *Notornis*.

Royal Spoonbill census

Most of New Zealand was surveyed in June 1990 when 258 Royal Spoonbills were found, with the main concentrations being in Auckland, Manawatu, Hawkes Bay, Nelson and Canterbury. Results of this census were published by Peter Schweigman in OSNZ news 56. The one chick colour-banded at the Vernon Lagoons, Marlborough, in summer 1989-90 was not seen. On 6 February 1991, most regions checked likely spots for Royal Spoonbills (see next page of this issue for details of this count). On the same day, 11 fledglings were individually colour-banded at the Vernon Lagoons. To date, some of these have been seen in the Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay and Nelson.

3. Register of OSNZ projects

Inactive. Will take up with RRs again.

4. Advice on projects

Through the year I have been called upon to give advice on projects being mooted by members, or projects that are nearing the analysis phase. Once I buy the statistical package for the Nest Record Scheme, I will be able to offer to do some statistical analyses for members, if their data are in a suitable form.

5. New studies

No new projects have been proposed.

6. Contact with New Zealand organisations

On behalf of OSNZ, I successfully applied to Lottery Science for \$14,000 plus GST for telescopes and tripods, Pesola spring balances, and dial calipers for research projects on New Zealand birds, as well as \$4300 plus GST for a microcomputer for the editor of *Notornis* I have received indications of interest in repeating the Distribution Mapping Scheme from DSIR, DoC, and DOSLI. Advancing this proposal will become a priority issue now that the IOC is over. The DoC has used much of the data collected by the various national studies, as well as local studies such as the Wellington region's bird counts on Mana and Kapiti Islands.

7. Contact with overseas organisations

The International Ornithological Congress provided a great opportunity to find out about the activities of organisations similar to OSNZ. Perhaps because of the small size of our country, and the very high per capita membership of OSNZ compared with ornithological organisations elsewhere, the OSNZ is carrying out an incredible range of bird studies. Many countries, for instance do not have Nest Record or Beach Patrol Schemes, and few carry out nationwide cooperative studies of bird movements. The record of the OSNZ is even more remarkable given that we have no paid staff and do not receive government grants.

8. Applications for funds from the Projects Assistance Reserve

Grants approved in 1990 were:

\$ 700 - Gabor Lovei; wintering passerines in the Manawatu.

\$ 964 - John Dowding; NZ Dotterel.

\$2800 - Mike Imber; Pitcairn Island seabirds.

\$ 280 - Chris Challies; White-flipped Penguin predators.

\$1000 - Central Passerine Group; passerine migration.

\$2000 - Brian Bell; Fluttering Shearwater chick transfer.

\$ 550 - Tenick Dennison; OSNZ bird slide collection.

\$ 500 - Philip Battley; Manawatu Estuary count data.

Three requests for funds were approved by Council at its June 1991-meeting.

\$ 500 - Kerry Sanders; Rarotongan Flycatcher.

\$1500 - Hugh Robertson & Paul Sagar; Chatham Island wader counts.

\$ 800 - Maida Barlow; Caspian Tern.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Field Investigation Officer

The Great Blenheim Bird Race

Teams from Otago, Canterbury, the West Coast and Hawkes Bay entered the Great Blenheim Bird Race en route to the Annual Conference & AGM. (You will find most of the rules of the competition in the March OSNZ news:) Barrie Heather, being the sole judge and receiver of bribes, announced the following results.

Most unusual bird - a Chestnut-breasted Shelduck seen outside the Marlborough area by Alun Baines' Otago team.

Best effort - 1. Christine McKrae's Hawkes Bay team, which made a substantial detour to add Great Crested Grebe to their list. 2. Peter Howden's Canterbury team - which spent 2 hours trying to identify a Siberian Tattler.

Silliest bird - a Peking Duck seen by Stewart Lauder's West Coast team.

Highest number of birds in relation to distance travelled - Winner: Peter Howden's team with 4.4 km per bird.

Runner-up: Stewart Lauder's team with 7.4 km per bird. Third: Christine McKrae's team with 9.8 km per bird. Last: Alun Baines' team with 11.3 km per bird. Note: Alun's team total would have been better if Java Sparrow, Bengalese Finch, Rainbow Lorikeet, Peach-faced Lovebird, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, and a few others had been allowed.

Perhaps the competition will be repeated for the Masterton AGM next year?

Wrybills recaptured

A flock of 100-200 Wrybills winters at Jordan's Farm on the Kaipara Harbour.

Nineteen Wrybills were banded there in February 1981 and more recently the Miranda Banders have had catches of 4 in late January 1987, 190 in February 1988, and 54 in March 1991. Information collected from these catches supports the conclusions reached by Rod Hay in his unpublished Ph.D on this species.

(a) Adult birds generally appear to be unusually long-lived for a small wader. The date of banding and age at banding revealed retrapped birds of not less than 11.5 (1), 8.5 (3), 7.5 (1), 6.5 (1), 5.5 (4), 4.5 (19), and 3.5 years of age (1). Abrasion on the bands of a further 4 birds made it impossible to determine the date of banding.

In-addition, a bird recaptured near Miranda on the Firth of Thames in April 1991 was not less than 12.5 years of age.

(b) Only 13 of the 179 unbanded birds caught in 1988 were aged as first-year. Of the 54 birds trapped in March 1991, 3 years after the previous catch, only 24 were unbanded and only 3 of these were aged as first-year. These figures are indicative of a low rate of recruitment to the population.

(c) Apart from 2 birds banded at breeding sites in the South Island, all the Wrybills retrapped at Jordan's Farm had been banded there. This indicates fidelity to winter sites in adult birds.

More than 1400 Wrybills were banded near Miranda in 1979-1981. About 5% of that flock is still banded. If Wrybills fly as crows do, Miranda is about 100 kms from Jordan's farm, yet no Miranda birds have been trapped there.

Miranda Banders continues concentrates on trying to band Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits, but it would be useful to monitor the Wrybills too in order to obtain a clearer picture of the age-structure of the population and longevity. It is hoped in the future to catch Wrybills at Miranda in order to replace the bands on the old birds there before those bands become illegible.

STEPHEN DAVIES
for Miranda Banders



National Royal Spoonbill Survey – 6 February 1991

We achieved an excellent coverage and consequently an excellent result. I would like again to thank all who participated and made this end-of-breeding season tally such a success.

The Royal Spoonbill was of course most numerous in the South Island, where there are 4 nesting colonies. However, it was also satisfying for those observers who made a thorough check of the various other habitats and came across a few non-breeders, like the 1 in Taranaki, 12 at Lake Wairarapa and Lake Onoke, and the 1 in the Gisborne district.

The totals at the breeding colonies might be considered to indicate a good breeding season – with 71 adults and 14 chicks at the Waiau Lagoons, 27 adults at Okarito, 56 adults and 14 chicks at Maukiekie, and 14 adults with 3 chicks at Green Island. The counts of chicks at the last two sites are considered to be very conservative because without going onto the colony one has to rely on a good telescope and hope that the chicks show themselves. Unfortunately, they did not do this at Green Island, where 3 chicks were seen from the beach with the island still some 2.5 km away. A month later all chicks had hatched and 26 birds were counted, of which 8 were juveniles.

The total population counted this time was 329 birds. This compares with the June 1990 total of 258, an increase of 71 birds or 27.5%. The numbers and distribution of Royal Spoonbills counted during the two surveys completed to date are shown on the accompanying maps.

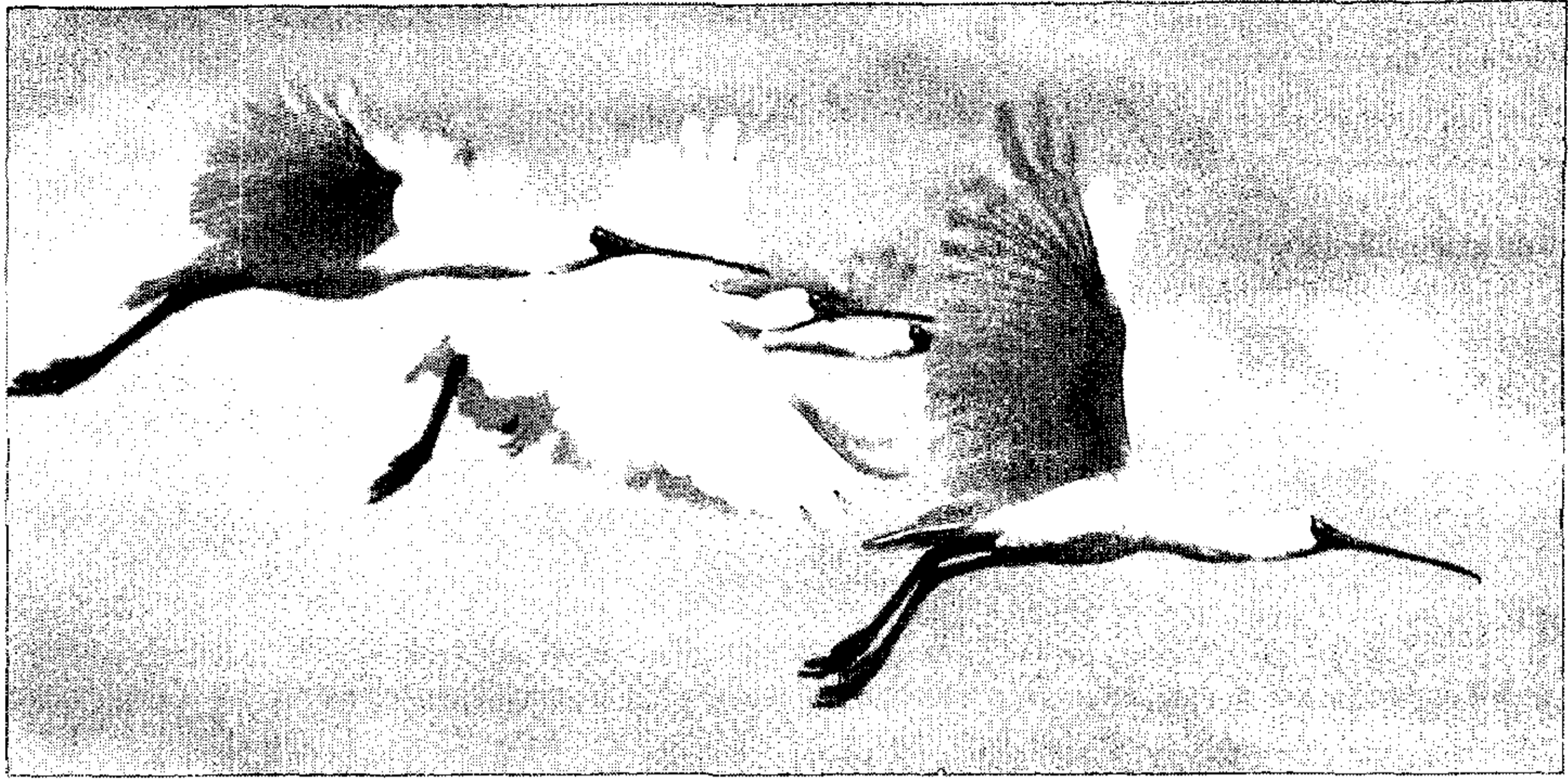
This breeding season 11 chicks at the Waiau Lagoons colony were colour banded; one chick was banded during the previous breeding season. Now is the time to follow their dispersal and look out for those banded ones in the flocks of these truly magnificent birds.

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

Cattle Egrets at sea

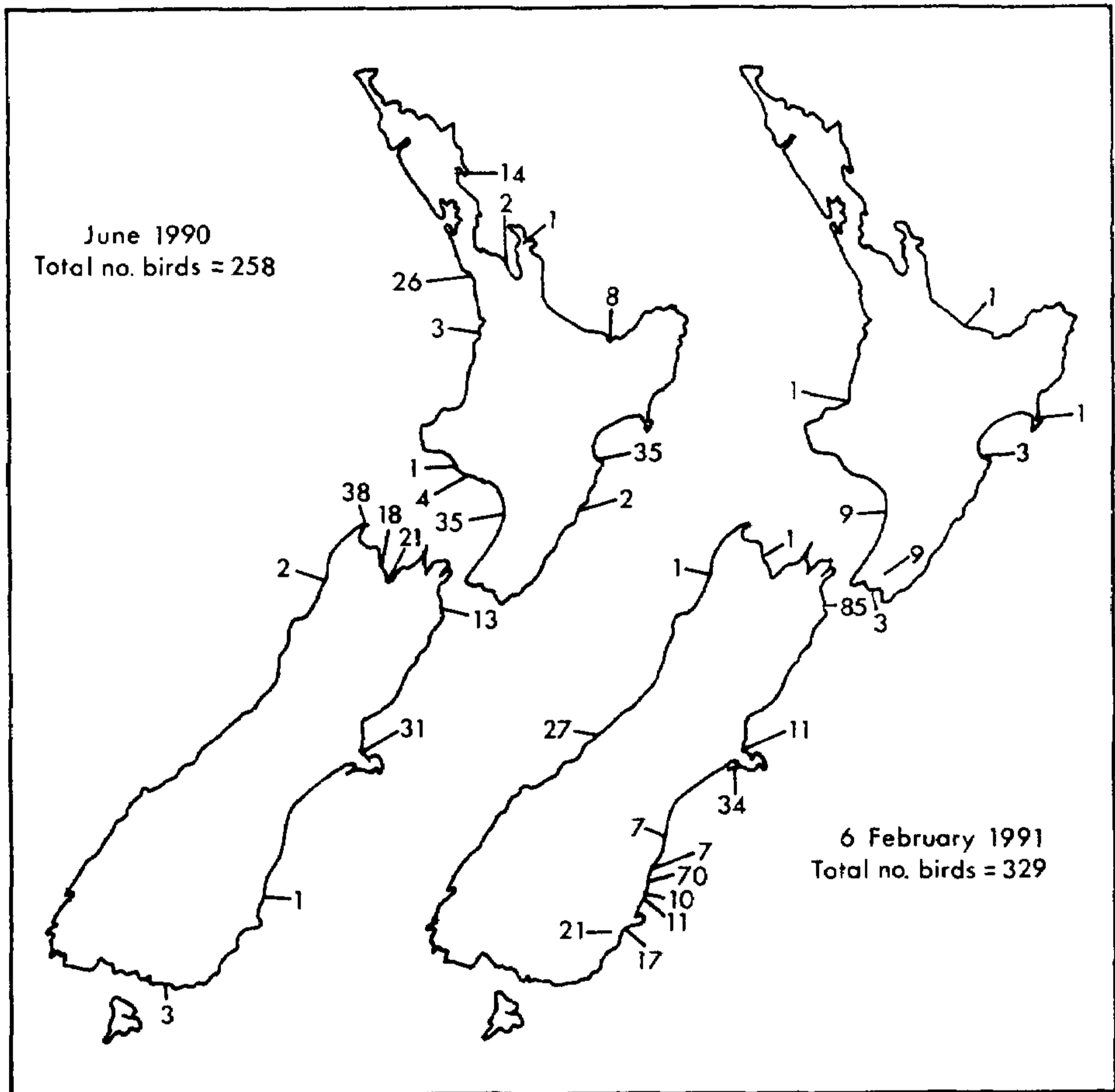
The following was related to me by Michael Wells, skipper of the fishing vessel *Kariga* sailing out of Nelson.

At midday on 31 March 1991, 9 Cattle Egrets landed on board the *Kariga* when



Royal Spoonbills at the Foxton Estuary.

(Photo Mike Dennison)



Distribution and numbers of Royal Spoonbills during the two national surveys.

it was some 192 nautical miles (355 kms) west of Cape Kahurangi, which is on the West Coast south of Farewell Spit. The weather at the time was fine and calm, as it had been for most of the preceding 10 days.

The birds were very weak, though at times they flew around the boat and occasionally flopped into the water when trying to come aboard again. At least one bird was seen to take off from the sea. Most of the time the birds huddled on the bow, behind bollards. While 9 birds were seen initially, only 8 were counted later. The crew fed them pilchards, but no water.

The following morning 5 or 6 were still on board. Some of these left the boat when it was 8 or 10 miles offshore, but 3 were still on board after it rounded Farewell Spit and headed into Tasman Bay. On arrival in Port Nelson, only one very weak bird was still on board. This very emaciated bird was given to Henk Heinekamp, who made every effort to revive it. However, unfortunately it died 2 days later, possibly from kidney failure due to an intake of salt water.

JENNY HAWKINS

Caspian Tern study – sightings needed

During the past few years I have colour-banded 121 Caspian Terns at the Invercargill Estuary colony, using age-cohort codes. Many more birds were metal banded only in the years 1964 to 1987. The adults and juveniles disperse widely throughout the country after the breeding season – the accompanying map shows the extent of their dispersion. The adults return to the breeding colony about August, but immatures do not appear there until they reach breeding age at four (occasionally three) years. Just what proportion of birds hatched at the Invercargill Estuary colony that return there to breed is not known.

More information is sought on the whereabouts of adults and of immatures in their first 3-4 years.

Some adults are banded with individual colour codes and there are indications that some at least utilise the same non-breeding area each year. One bird, hatched and metal banded in 1969, then recaptured and colour-banded in 1987, was seen at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary in January 1988 and again in March 1991. This bird nested at the Invercargill Estuary colony in 1988, 1989, and 1990. Another bird, hatched and metal banded in 1974, then colour-banded in 1987, was at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary in July 1989 and March 1991, having also nested back at the Invercargill colony in the years between.

The aims of the study are (1) to determine the movements of adults; testing the hypothesis that adults have fidelity to a particular non-breeding area; and (2) to

determine the dispersal and movement of immatures, and their breeding colony fidelity.

Sightings of colour-banded birds (and of course notification of any banded bird found dead) are eagerly sought. Please notify the Banding Office, or Maida Barlow, 38 Filleul Street, Invercargill. The standard reporting method is best: Number of birds seen; number checked for bands; number metal-banded; number-colour banded; colour combination(s).

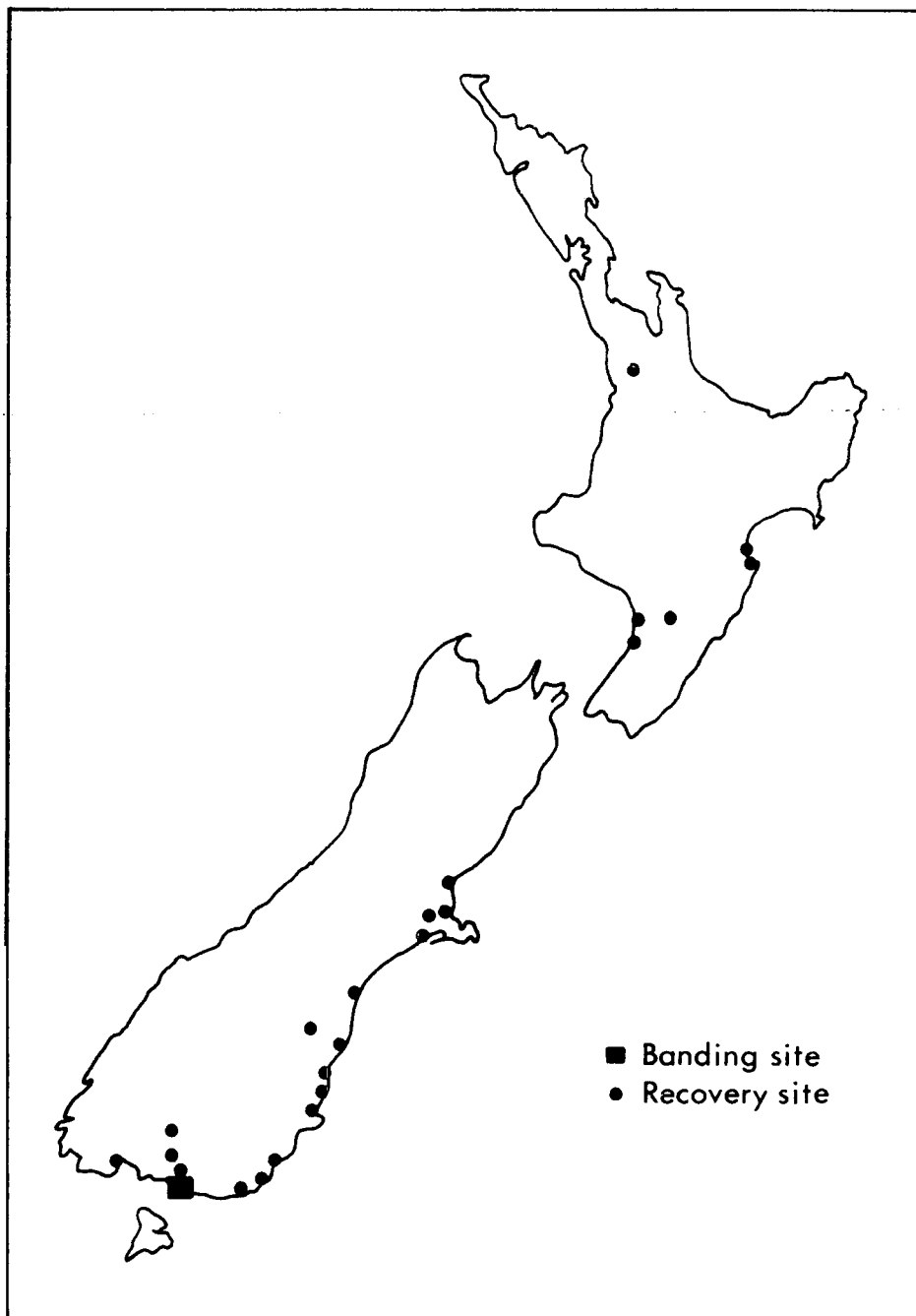
MAIDA BARLOW

South-west North Island Dabchick Survey – Easter 1991

OSNZ members from the Taranaki, Wanganui, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu and Wellington regions combined with DoC staff to count Dabchicks and other wetland birds in the Manawatu Ecological Region. From 28 March to 4 April, over 100 wetlands were visited between Paekakariki and Opunake – all major lakes and many smaller (or former) lakes were checked.

A total of 363 Dabchicks were recorded, 156 south of the Manawatu River, 170 between the Manawatu and Turakina Rivers, and 37 north of the Turakina River. This is the highest total recorded from this area, mainly because almost all suitable coastal habitats were checked in this survey. Lakes with 10 or more Dabchicks were: Waikanae Sewage Ponds (31), L. Papaitonga (34), L. Horowhenua (28), Waitarere Lake (15), L. Koputara (20), L. Kaikokopu (37), Pukepuke Lagoon (11), Omauka Lagoon (16), L. Alice (12), and L. Oturi (10). Comparison with a 1984 survey at the same time of year in the Rangitikei-Horowhenua area shows that, on those lakes checked both times, numbers had changed substantially at individual lakes (e.g., L. Horowhenua: 62 in 1984, 28 in 1991); L. Papaitonga: 6 in 1984, 34 in 1991), but the overall totals were similar – 241 in 1984, 228 in 1991. In some cases, winter flocks had already started to form (e.g., at Waikanae Sewage Ponds), but the low counts at L. Horowhenua and Marton Sewage Ponds (2), traditional winter flocking sites, suggests that numbers had yet to build up. Whether birds in these winter flocks come mainly from within the region or from further afield, is not known.

Other wetland birds were also recorded at most of the lakes visited. Mallards were the most common waterfowl (17 028 – many on sewage ponds), followed by Shoveler (3247), Black Swan (2960), Paradise Shelduck (2009 – 65% north of the Turakina River), Grey Teal (1026) Scaup (143 – 26 south of the Manawatu River and 117 north of Wanganui), Canada Goose (134 – only 1 between Turakina River and Hawera), Grey Duck (122),



Movements of Caspian Terns from the breeding colony at the Invercargill Estuary.

Carolina Wood Duck (6 – at properties of some members of Ducks Unlimited and probably pinioned), Mute Swan (4- at a Ducks Unlimited property and probably pinioned) and one female Chestnut-breasted Shelduck at Nowell's Lake, Hawera. Other wetland birds included 8 Bittern, 75 Coot (all north of the Turakina River), 140 Little Shag, 130 Black Shag, 95 Little Black Shag 444 Pied Shag (125 at lakes and 285 at the Waikanae and Ohau Estuaries), 40 Black-fronted Dotterel (8 at the Ohau Estuary, 32 at Omanuka Lagoon), and 1 White-winged Black Tern, at Lake Horowhenua.

Many thanks are due to the 25 OSNZ members who helped to do this major

survey of this important area for Dabchicks – it was especially useful to be able to cover all lakes within a short period, and so improve the accuracy of our estimated population. Special thanks to Peter Taylor (Wellington Fish & Game Council) for checking lakes that we could not get access to; Phil Battley, who covered all of the lakes between the Turakina River and Waverly when it became apparent that these had not been covered during the weekend as planned; and especially to Sybil Creswell for arranging access to all of the Manawatu and Rangitikei lakes and for organising the accommodation at Pukepuke Lagoon Wildlife Management Reserve.

HUGH ROBERTSON

the general birder, but also distills science to an easily digestible format. It is hoped that a gap in Australian ornithological publication has been filled by *Wingspan*, and that the new format of *Emu* will attract more readers to the serious side of birding.

DAVID ANDREW

Asiatic Whimbrel feeding

On 9 May 1991 we had the rare opportunity to watch closely an Asiatic Whimbrel feeding on small crabs which it took from a sandbank near the tip of the South Brighton Spit, Avon-Heathcote Estuary.

We were interested to watch the whimbrel feeding as it walked along, hunting for prey. It would turn its head sideways, first one way then the other, while inserting its bill into the sand for almost the entire length in a very slow and deliberate manner. Evidently locating its prey by tactile means worked well for we saw a crab being caught on several occasions. Having caught a crab, the whimbrel would mandibulate it for several seconds, with any dismembered legs being retrieved and swallowed. The body of the crab was swallowed last.

Eventually, the incoming tide forced the whimbrel off the sandbank and as it flew past us, it gave its distinctive rippling call. We watched it land amongst the Bartailed Godwits and SIPOs further out on the estuary.

KATHLEEN C. HARRISON
& SHEILA PETCH



Some of the participants in the Dabchick survey, Easter 1991. (Photo David Medway)



RAOU Column

This year has marked some changes to two important RAOU publications: *Emu* and the quarterly newsletter. *The Emu*, the scientific journal of the RAOU, has been produced continuously since 1901, the year of the RAOU's foundation. Originally containing a mixed bag of material, in the

1970s *Emu* was given a new direction and is now ranked in the top half dozen ornithological journals in the world.

There has always been room for improvement, however, and in 1990 a committee reviewed the layout and format of *Emu*. Their recommendations have been put into practice from the March 1991 issue. The main change is visible on the cover – with a bold title and two-colour approach, there should be no mistake as to what the reader is looking at. The contents are also now displayed on the front, and a new typeface has been chosen for the text.

There have been no critics of the new-look newsletter, retitled *Wingspan*. Thanks to a sponsorship deal with Kowa Spotting Scopes, we can now print the front and back covers in colour. This change is long overdue, as there is not one Australian birdwatching – as opposed to ornithological – publication that matches a standard set by other countries. A difference in direction is also taking place: in the past the newsletter has been a hotch-potch of news, views and research. The new, softer, approach caters much more for

Recent Reports

Records were received from Northland, Auckland, South Auckland, Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Wellington, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago, and Southland. The gaps were filled by observations sent in by roving reporters. Many thanks to all contributors. More records are always welcome to improve the coverage.

Please send records for the next issue to: 49 Bernera Street, R.D. 1 Waikouaiti, Otago by 24 August.

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

Seabirds

A Sooty Albatross seen on the way back from the Auckland Islands in Feb. is the first record for New Zealand waters. The other rare seabirds were both in Northland – a dead Red-tailed Tropicbird on 90 Mile Beach and a juvenile Brown Booby that has stayed through into autumn at Houhora Harbour.

The most numerous seabirds off Oaro (Kaikoura) on 7 Apr. were Westland Black Petrels, with smaller numbers of White-chinned Petrels, Buller's and White-capped

Mollymawks and Flesh-footed, Buller's and Sooty Shearwaters. Large numbers of White-capped Mollymawks were present well off the Otago coast from Mar. onwards, while Buller's Mollymawks came closer inshore, with a maximum of 60-70 passing The Nuggets on 22 May. The last of the large numbers of Sooty Shearwaters were off Otago on 25 Apr., although one was run over by a car beside the inner Otago Harbour in mid-May. In the North Island, "considerable numbers" of Fluttering, Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters were present in the Hauraki Gulf on 14 Apr. Hopeful birdwatchers "war-whooped" away on various headlands, but the only success appeared to be at Cape Maria Van Diemen, where c30 Grey-faced Petrels came to ground.

The Auckland harbours held the regular flock of 60-100 Little Black Shags in Apr. and large numbers continue to be reported from Hawkes Bay with up to 370 at Fernhill Bridge on 31 Mar. Black Shags were in full (pre-)breeding plumage at the colony in Raglan Harbour (Waikato) by 9 May, as were the Spotted Shags on Waiheke I. (Auckland).

In just 45 minutes, 11 Arctic Skuas flew north past Hokianga Harbour mouth (Northland) on 26 Mar., suggesting migration had started. Other Mar. records were 7 at Bruce Bay (Westland), 1 at the Avon-Heathcote (Canterbury) and 2 at Aramoana (Otago). The last record for Karitane (Otago) was 2 on 20 Apr. and later sightings came from the Canterbury coast, with a maximum of 9-10 at Taumutu on 11 May. A dark phase Pomarine Skua was seen at Foxton (Manawatu) in late Mar. and another dark bird was at Brooklands Lagoon and New Brighton (Canterbury) on 17 and 29 Apr.

Sightings of a Gull-billed Tern in Hawkes Bay continue, it was present at the Ahuriri Est. on 7 Apr. The only record of a White-winged Black Tern was from Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, in early May; almost a regular occurrence. 5 Little Terns remained at Miranda until at least 16 Mar. The first autumn record of Black-fronted Terns in Hawkes Bay was an adult on 27 Apr. and there were 48 at Waitangi Est. by 12 May. Large numbers were reported from the east coast of the South Island. At Lake Grassmere there were 488 on 19 May, including 30-40 juveniles, and 300+ were seen at Aramoana in mid-May.

Herons etc

The first reports of Cattle Egrets this autumn came from Southland. There were 16 at Wyndham on 28 Feb., increasing to 21 by 28 Mar., and 3 at Wallaceville by 22 Mar., but none at other traditional sites. 9 at Whangaehu R. (Wanganui) on 14 Mar. were also early and the main arrival occurred in the first part of Apr. 15 were seen flying into the Taipa Est. (Northland)

during the first week of April and 21 at South Kaipara (Auckland) on 1 Apr. had increased to 47 by 7 May. Subsequently, the highest counts were made from Unahi (Northland), 60 in May, Piako (Auckland) 45 on 25 Apr., L. Ngaroto (Waikato) 61 by 16 May, and L. Ellesmere 59 by 24 May. The Rangiri (Waikato) flock reached 123 by 10 May and included one wing-tagged bird from Shortlands, New South Wales. Birds reached the usual sites in Otago and Hawkes Bay much later. The first 11 arrivals were seen at the Taieri on 3 May and 2 reached Clive on 12 May – the only report from Hawkes Bay so far.

Apart from a Little Egret at E. Clive (Hawkes Bay) on 18 Mar., all other records were from late Apr. and May, perhaps indicating an influx from Australia. In Northland, there were 3 at Unahi and 1 at Taore; in Auckland, 2 at Conifer Grove, Manukau, and in the South Island, 1 at L. Ellesmere and 1 in Invercargill City, on the Waihopai R.

As usual, a Glossy Ibis associated with the Rangiri Cattle Egret flock. 6 turned up at L. Ellesmere in May and 3 returned to the Taieri (Otago) on 3 June, after an absence of a year. New arrivals from Australia?

Royal Spoonbill numbers continue to increase with the highest numbers ever at Ahuriri (Hawkes Bay), 42 on 5 May and Bromley (Canterbury), 55 on 12 Apr. As birds moved north from the South Island breeding grounds, numbers increased in the Nelson and North Island sites. Mangere (Auckland), for example, had 1 on 18 Mar., 12 by 30 Apr., and 31 by 20 May. Surprisingly, the banded chicks from the Vernon Lagoons (Marlborough) colony spread far and wide, with reports from Nelson, Hawkes Bay, Bay of Plenty, Auckland and Northland.

Waterfowl

Records of Australian Little Grebes have been few over the last 5 years or so, but a count of 28 in a survey of the Aupouri Peninsula (Northland) suggest they have not faded away completely. They were also reported from L. Waiporohito (Northland), 3 on 24 Mar., Kareta Lakes (Auckland), 3 on 12 May, and from Whataroa (West Coast), 1 on 6 Apr. In the same Aupouri survey, NZ Dabchicks were only slightly more numerous – 35 were seen. They continue to do well in Hawkes Bay, with 13 on L. Oinga, the first reports there in recent years. Counts from more usual sites were 30 at Kareta Lakes on 12 May and 21 at Pukepuke Lagoon (Manawatu), also on 12 May.

The Aupouri Peninsula wetlands held an encouraging 223 Grey Ducks. Bromley had the highest ever count of Grey Teal, 1797 on 31 Mar., and NZ Scaup, 457 on 21 May.

Over the last few years, Chestnut-

breasted Shelducks have "reappeared" regularly at L. Grassmere in autumn. This year the maximum number recorded was 24 on 12 May, and several appeared to be juvenile birds. Perhaps they are breeding in inland Marlborough? An adult male and 2 females were present at Waikouaiti Lagoon (Otago) in Apr. and May. A bird turned up in Southland as usual, this time at Otaitai Bush, near Riverton, on 26 May, and a male was seen at Condon Pond, near Bruce Bay (Westland) on 31 Mar.

A report of a female or immature White-eyed Duck on a farm pond at South Hillend (Southland) is the first NZ record for over 10 years.

Waders

The migrant flocks of Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits left the Firth of Thames about 20 Mar., but several of the rarer waders stayed later, some attaining breeding plumage. 1 of the 2 Siberian Tattlers at Foxton was still there on 7 Apr., as was 1 of 2 at Aramoana in late Mar. In Canterbury, the Ashley R. and Avon-Heathcote Est. still had single birds in Mar. and Apr., and in Southland, 1 was still at Invercargill Est. on 13 Apr. and 3 at Awarua Bay that day were in full breeding plumage.

A Marsh Sandpiper stayed at Miranda until at least 29 Mar. and a Greenshank was reported from Awarua Bay on 13 Apr. Pectoral and Terek Sandpipers remained at Miranda until late Mar. and there was a Pectoral Sandpiper at Foxton until 7 Apr. Terek Sandpipers were also recorded at Foxton until 7 Apr. and were still present in May at Farewell Spit and Whangarei Harbour, where there 2. The 2 Far Eastern Curlews stayed at Foxton into Apr. and 8 were reported from Miranda in mid-Mar. 4 whimbrels were at the Avon-Heathcote Est. in Apr. The Asiatic subspecies occurred at Whangarei H. in May and Miranda on 29 Mar. and single "American" birds were identified at Whangarei H. in May and Invercargill Est. on 21 Apr. A Hudsonian Godwit in breeding plumage at Mangere on 15 Apr. was the only report of this species after relatively large numbers seen over summer.

The only reports of rarer plovers were a Grey Plover and Large Sand Dotterel at Farewell Spit in mid-May. The odd records of NZ Dotterels from Farewell Spit have led to hopeful suggestions that the birds still breed in the mountains of N.W. Nelson. The sightings of 2 colour banded birds from Stewart Island and another, possibly from Northland, indicate local breeding is unlikely.

Black-fronted Dotterels also wandered away from their usual range: 3 arrived at Ellesmere in mid-May, 1 reached Mangere on 29 Apr. and another got as far north as Sweetwater (Northland).

The Wrybill flock at Miranda grew to 2500 by mid-Mar., with a further 800 at

Mangere in Apr.-May.

A snipe, yet to be confirmed as Japanese, was seen on several occasions by a farmer at Waitara Lagoon (Southland) around 13 Mar.

... and the rest

Notable records of NZ Falcons included 1 male trapped at Mangere on 20 Apr., which helped confirm records of a pair on the Auckland West Coast, and 1 in Hastings City on 3 Apr. Records of Nankeen Kestrels have faded away, with only 1 "possible" at Wairau Falls (Northland).

Unusual, was a report of Red-crowned Parakeets from L. Paringa (West Coast) and a Yellow-crowned Parakeet at Silverpeaks (Otago), well outside its usual range.

Late Shining Cuckoos were seen on 10 Mar. at Pukekohe (Auckland) and Ohakea (Manawatu), with the latest, on 3 Apr., at Barrytown (West Coast). A Long-tailed Cuckoo being fed by Whiteheads on 6 Apr. in the Wellington area was very late indeed. Also in Wellington, was a Black Fantail at Mornington, and the Tawa Myna continues to survive.

Welcome Swallows are still uncommon breeding birds in Southland, but 2 new sites were found this year, at Waituna and Thornbury. Are conditions there that much worse than for the pair that nested at Balloon Hut, 1300 m up on the Mt Arthur Tableland (Nelson)?

Rook eradication continues – and so do Rooks. c100 were seen at Miranda on 28 Apr., with 3 colonies in the Mangatangi-Ngatea area. c200 were seen at Oringi, Dannevirke on 10 Mar. and 95 at Tinui on 23 Mar. (Wairarapa). They even seem to be spreading a bit in Canterbury. c20 were beside SH1 south of Hinds on 30 Mar. and c60 near Dunsandel on 4 June.

Large numbers of Greenfinches passed southward along the Otago coast at Karitane during late Apr. and early May, with a maximum of over 2500 per hour on 26 Apr. While they were migrating, Song Thrushes started singing regularly on 6 May and at the other end of the country, in Auckland, at much the same time!

Compiled by DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

Auckland:

The March meeting was the occasion for a handover of duties for some of the region's office-bearers. Firstly, Michael Taylor retired after 9 years as RR and members made a presentation to him for his devoted and willing service throughout that time. He takes over the job of Regional Recorder from Mike Graham, whose business unfortunately takes him out of Auckland a lot these days. Brian Ellis was

welcomed into the post of RR, with the committee elected at the end of last year to help with tasks like deciding on the programme – and that's always a headache. Michael Turner and Tane Redwood take over the editing and production of our quarterly bulletin Tara, after 5 years under the hand of Geoff Arnold. With that business out of the way, Paul Harrison entertained us with his slides of birds around Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands. In a holiday there this summer, Paul had seen a variety of habitats. It was obvious that in spite of the heat, Paul did not do much sleeping under the palms or lying on the beach.

On the weekend after Easter, Ken Bond led a camp on Motutapu Island, which may be close to Auckland, but has not been surveyed for many a year. It was a small disappointment not to find NZ Dotterels or Reef Herons, but there was a good selection of species and it was a very enjoyable weekend.

A mist-netting session was organised at Mangere by David Baker on 20 April, with the aim of catching some finches for the study of moult etc and to band some of the large population of Malay Spotted Doves. This was achieved, with some Welcome Swallows also handled. New members in particular appreciated the opportunity to study birds in the hand and to learn the intricacies of taking standard measurements. However, there was also an unexpected bonus when a NZ Falcon arrived in the net! This is the first record of this species in the Auckland area for many years – we normally think of Mt Pirongia as their nearest stronghold. The bird was an adult male, not the immature which one might expect to be wandering far from its normal range. Anyway, we will hope it stays around; the trees of Puketutu Island and the ample food supply provided by the doves and the finches may encourage it to settle for a little while at least.

At the April evening meeting, David Laurie and Pam & Des Agnew took us on the Southern Ocean cruise which followed the IOC. We enjoyed the tales (especially the one about the captain and the mate falling out of the boat), and the photos were superb.

Our May meeting was devoted to a review of the long-standing study of Dabchicks and other birds on the Muriwai dune lakes, and reference to their status in other parts of the country. Sandra Morris spoke about the information collected during the region's counts from 1969 to 1990, and Gwenda Pulham gave us the picture of the status of Dabchick and Australian Little Grebe on other North Island lakes; the latter established in surveys conducted by the Society over several years. A most interesting picture is emerging and the biggest audience reaction came when we saw comparative slides of

what some dune lakes were like 10 years ago and the flat, dry areas of grasses and rush that they are now. Discussion on likely causes and the possible future of some other of our well-beloved lakes, showed what valuable data have been collected by these regular surveys.

(Brian Ellis)

Waikato:

For the second year running, the flock of Cattle Egrets at Rangiri includes a wing-tagged bird. After 2 days and 23 man-hours we still had not succeeded in reading the upper line of figures on the tag. However, enough information was gained for Max Maddock of the Shortland Wetland Centre, New South Wales, to confirm the bird as one he had banded on 22/12/89. The flock at Rangiri had built up to 123 birds by 10 May, with a Glossy Ibis present for the 4th successive year.

In February, an informative and entertaining members' evening covered topics from an account of the IOC subantarctic cruise to the translocation of Fluttering Shearwater chicks, as well as slides taken on recent field trips.

In March, we were pleased to welcome Brian Bell, who gave an interesting address on the Society: what we do, why we do it, and some of the results of what we do.

In April, a panel of speakers led by David Folwell of Hilldale Zoo Park discussed what to do about injured birds. We learned what facilities are available for help and advice. Other members of the panel were Roy Dench from Otorohanga Zoological Society, Folkert Nieuwland speaking as a vet, Joan Farnborough representing the SPCA's Animal Haven, and Phil Thomson giving the DoC viewpoint.

At our AGM in May it was decided to appoint a small committee and set up a fund which would be used to mount suitable bird specimens as they become available from beach patrols or other sources. The specimens, for which a DoC permit would be needed, would be housed at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust Centre, where they would be a valuable educational aid. We launched the project with a donation and a mounted Fairy Prion specimen. All members are invited to contribute to the project.

A 10-minute bird identification has become a regular feature of evening meetings; it is presented by a different member each time.

Overnight field trips have been well supported; one to Whatipu on north Manukau Head and another to see waders at Manukau Harbour and Miranda before their departure to the northern hemisphere. Also, 9 members joined the Miranda Banders in a cannon-netting field day in March.

(Stella Rowe)

Wellington:

The New Year started with feedback from the IOC – what a variety of activities took place at this exciting and stimulating event! Brian Bell gave a lucid description of the cruise to the subantarctic islands. Excellent weather ensured a wide range of birds was seen and many interesting places visited.

Alan Munro was elected RR at our AGM, after Kerry Oates stood down. Our thanks to Kerry for his hard work and dedication over the last 3 years.

April found Peter Moore talking to us about his preliminary work on the Yellow-eyed Penguins in Otago and the Catlins. He described how radio-telemetry was being used to track the birds and discussed the results of these studies. As a sequel to this talk, the following month we learned more about radio-telemetry from Murray Douglas, particularly how refinements in transmitter design are enabling work to be done on very small birds and animals – even wetas! These were very interesting talks.

Two highly successful weekend trips have been made to Ward for mist-netting and banding of passerines, led by Hugh Robertson and Ralph Powlesland. Wellington members were joined by friends from Palmerston North, Hamilton, Hawera, and Blenheim. The first weekend netted 100 birds, the second more than 200, including 5 Gull Buntings and a Shining Cuckoo. During these weekends visits were made to Lake Grassmere, where a colour-banded Black Stilt and a colour-banded Pied Stilt were seen. A beach patrol produced a Giant Petrel.

Kerry Oates led the April count at Mana Island, though this was limited to only one day due to bad weather. The visitors, however, were able to visit the shearwater colony where about 15 chicks were still present. Kerry reports that Harrier numbers have decreased noticeably, probably as a result of the eradication of mice from the island.

OSNZ carried out bird counts on Kapiti Island in the 1970s and 1980s, and DoC have invited the Society to repeat the counts over the next 3 years. Hugh Robertson and Raewyn Empson spent some time on the island locating and re-marking the old counting stations. Perfect weather was encountered for the first counts on 13 & 14 April, which covered the Te Mimi track at the south end of the island, Wairua bay at the north, and Rangatira in the centre. Results of interest will not show until later counts.

Monthly 5-minute bird counts in Wellington's Botanic Gardens have been underway since September 1989. The two regular counters, Alan Munro & Derek Batcheler, have to contend with jostling joggers as well as the noise of planes, trucks, cicadas and children. The results of this study will be collated at the end of the second year.

(Ros Batcheler)

Canterbury:

Speakers at our monthly evening meetings have provided us with a variety of interesting topics. In March, Mike Harding told us about his study of Blue Ducks in Arthurs Pass National Park. Then in April, Ian McLean reviewed the extensive and wide-ranging studies of passerines that have been undertaken at Kowhai Bush, Kaikoura. With several M.Sc and Ph.D theses completed in the area there certainly was a lot to consider. Jack Cowie was our speaker in May and he shared his extensive banding experience with us, particularly with respect to Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns.

The May meeting also provided the opportunity to present Jack Cowie with the Phil Howell Memorial Trophy for 1990. This Canterbury region award recognises Jack's contributions to the various recording schemes and projects of the Society. Although geographically isolated from other members of the Society, Jack been an active field worker for many years,

always passing on his observations to the Society's permanent records.

Our Silvereye banding project got underway in April and is proving a great success with members. Their support for the project has shown just what interest there is in a hands-on approach to bird study. By early June about 1200 Silvereyes and 500 birds of other species (by-catch) had been banded. As more birds move into Christchurch during winter we will continue trapping and watching for banded birds in order to record local movements. Already we have a retrap about 7 kms from the banding site.

(Paul Sagar)

Otago:

The proposed Yellow-eyed Penguin observation hide is close to reality. After initial hiccups, I am happy to be able to report that between the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, the Save the Otago Peninsula, and the Department of Conservation we sorted out the design, site and money. It won't be long before the hide will be erected at the northern end of Sandfly Bay, Otago Peninsula. It is intended to be made available to the public for them to observe Yellow-eyed Penguins in comfort without disturbing the birds.

(Peter Schweigman)

DEADLINE FOR THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE IS 20 AUGUST

Atlas available

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

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

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