

# OSNZ news

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for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject  
to confirmation.

**No. 60**      **September, 1991**

Note Deadline for the December issue will be  
10th November.

## Subantarctic Islands Bird Cruise

In mid-December 1990, some 80 ornithologists from the IOC enjoyed a very successful cruise to the subantarctic aboard the *World Discoverer*.

Our first port of call was the Chatham Islands where we traveled on a local bus to see Pitt Island and Chatham Island Shags. A short walk to a patch of bush to search for the Chatham Island Warbler was not so successful, only 3 of our party caught a glimpse of the bird.

Onward we sailed to the Bounty Islands, which many considered to be the highlight of the trip. A full day out in the zodiacs enabled us to get close to the Erect Crested Penguins and Fur Seals, and to see the nesting Salvin's Mollymawks crowded on the cliff ledges. Antarctic Terns, Fulmar Prions, Giant Petrels, Southern Skuas and many other species were there in spectacular abundance; large and small flying through the mists in every direction. Some sharp eyes even noted a Redpoll.

Next day at the Antipodes we were fortunate to see the Antipodes Island and Red-crowned Parakeets together, feeding on the grassy cliffs. On the rocks below, a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, White-chinned Petrels, Rockhopper Penguins and Southern Skuas were seen. Around Albatross Point the zodiacs entered a spectacular cave, the sea a deep bright blue and the walls of the cave banded pink, yellow and brown.

Sailing into Perserverance Harbour at Campbell Island, we all saw the Campbell Island Shags and enjoyed a sunny day for the walk up the hill on the boardwalk to see nesting Royal Albatross. The birds were unafraid as we approached close to take photographs. Many flowers were out, their blue, yellow and violet making a good show. This is a beautiful island, the gentle

green hills forming an amphitheatre down to the shores of the harbour. On the shore is the meteorological station, the shop selling T-shirts and pottery penguins, and the Post Office (still open!).

We then travelled north-west to the Auckland Islands, where while sailing up the east coast we saw a lone Bar-tailed Godwit battling north just above the waves. Another fine day with calm seas enabled us to spend the afternoon on Enderby Island. Dodging Hooker's Sealions, we landed on the sandy beach and observed Auckland Island Tomtits and Pipits. Walking through the dracophyllum and rata forest we found nesting Royal Albatross, and then came out on a carpet of yellow lantern bulbina. Hiding in the flowers were numerous Auckland Island Banded Dotterels, unafraid of us birdwatchers. Along the north coast the grass is like a golf course, cropped short by the blue rabbits and cattle. The Department of Conservation people said that both will be departing the island later this year. Several healthy Yellow-eyed Penguins put in an appearance, strolling nonchalantly over the grass. They were cautious and we could not get close. Several pairs of Southern Skuas were each caring for a downy chick, and an Auckland Island Shag was gathering weed on the cliff top for a nest. A pair of Red-crowned Parakeets fed unconcerned in the grass and we were able to approach quite close to take photographs. Many of us obtained a good view of an Auckland Island Teal on the shore. Back at the landing there were many more Yellow-eyed Penguins, including immatures, which had come ashore in the late afternoon.

Two days later we reached Macquarie Island, a paradise of penguins, where we spent 2 days. Our first trip was to Sandy

Bay where the Australians from the base introduce us to the King and Royal Penguins and a large number of immature male Elephant Seals. The latter littered the beach in ungainly piles of dark brown to pale cream fur-covered blubber. The penguins stood around looking at us, and we stood around looking at them. We climbed a boardwalk up the hill to see a colony of 20 000 nesting Royal Penguins sheltered in the tussock. At lunch we saw our first Orcas, and in the afternoon the zodiacs took us along the beach to see Rockhopper Penguins, King Cormorants, and a Southern Giant Petrel. The next day we saw the spectacular sight of 100 000 King Penguins crowded along the shores of Lusitania Bay. Many swam around the ship. From the zodiacs we saw several King Penguin chicks; as they take so long to grow there are always eggs and chicks in various stages of development. After a barbecue lunch on the stern deck we sailed north to the ANARE Station, where a short walk took us to a colony of about 500 Gentoo Penguins. The shop and post office were open at the station and many took the opportunity to post a letter or buy T-shirts or a cask of Macquarie Island Port.

Our final sight of multitudinous bird life was of rafts of Short-tailed Shearwaters just south of Tasmania.

The records show that we saw 87 species of birds, a pod of Orcas, and 2 schools of Hour Glass Dolphins. A wonderful cruise, superb food and excellent birdwatching. Our thanks to the IOC organisers and cruise staff of the *World Discoverer* for providing such a rewarding and enjoyable cruise.

PETER DORMON

## From the President's Desk

I write this on the ferry crossing Cook Strait. There is a strong north-westerly wind blowing and not many birds are about, only the escort of Black-backed Gulls and an occasional prion flashing by – perhaps there are more washed up on the west coast beaches.

A few weeks back I took the opportunity to visit members in the central North island. The first call was Rotorua, where Martin Day and Keith Owen had organised a meeting. It was good to meet old friends and make new ones, but more important it was great to find there was still a lot of enthusiasm throughout the Volcanic Plateau. The group selected a new RR, Kathy Jones, so we wish her well. I am sure the local members will give her their full support.

The next move was to the Bay of Plenty. Paddy Latham was out of town – after all, I could hardly compete with *Les Miserables!* The first day, I had with members from the eastern Bay of Plenty – a full complement, and some interesting birds as well – Bittern, Black-fronted Tern, Dabchick, Cattle Egret, White Heron etc., all organised by Malcolm Hutton. The next day was spent in northern Bay of Plenty, where Brian Chudleigh had got some members together, but wasn't able to organise the birds quite as well.

The following days were spent in Hamilton, New Plymouth and Wanganui where Folkert Nieuwland (in the absence of Stella Rowe), David Medway and Graham Randle respectively had organised for me to meet more members. I am grateful for their hospitality and the organisation that these people had gone to.

From my point of view it was a great chance to meet and talk with members. It made me appreciate the interest and involvement of members in 'their own patch'. There is a lot of solid observation going on and there is a great deal of personal interest and expertise. My only regret is that we don't see more of it as Short Notes or in Classified Summarised Notes in *Notornis*. It is important that our observations are recorded and made available to others.

During the trip I was accompanied by Roderick Cossee, Banding Officer with DoC, so we put in quite a lot of time looking for banded birds. With several species now carrying colour bands this opens a new avenue for watching birds. In addition to identifying and counting various species and flocks, we can now contribute to a number of studies by checking the legs of the birds for both metal and colour bands. Remember, some species are banded on the tibia (the upper leg), rather than the tarsus (lower leg). Any records you take should be sent to the Banding Office, DoC, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

The first results of the School Science Fairs are coming in and there have been some good bird exhibits. We will be welcoming a new group of young people to our Society as a result. A full list of winners will be in the next *OSNZ news* and we ask all of you to make them very welcome and to assist them in enjoying their birdwatching. We hope that some may be able to join in with the shearwater transfer programme. This provides a great opportunity for the young members to meet one another and to learn further skills and methods of studying birds.

Finally, I would remind all that the nesting season has begun for most species. This is a very exciting time of year and it provides the opportunity for all to contribute to one of the Society's cooperative schemes – the Nest Record Scheme. Every one of us sees at least one nest a year, whether it be Black-backed Gull or Blackbird does not matter. What does matter is that we complete a nest record card for that nest. Let us resolve to complete at least one card this season (available from your RR) and send it to the convener (Hugh Robertson, 30 Deller Grove, Silverstream, North Island).

BRIAN D. BELL  
*President*

## Beach Patrol Scheme in 1990 – preliminary report

This report concerns the results for cards received to 30 June 1991. In 1991, 4077 km were travelled. This distance is almost the same as the average of 4056 km per year travelled during the period 1971-1989. Dead seabirds found in 1990 totaled 7052. This is many fewer than the average of 10 370 found per year for 1971-1989. Of the coastal regions where greater than 100 km were travelled in 1990, Bay of Plenty had the highest rate of recovery at 3.4 birds per km (244 Sooty Shearwaters in October being the main contributor to this rate) and, surprisingly, Auckland West the lowest at 1.3 birds per km.

Unusual finds were a White-bellied Storm Petrel and a White Tern, the third specimens of each species for the Scheme. There were larger numbers than usual of 4 species:

- \* 24 Yellow-eyed Penguins - usually less than 10;
- \* 49 Stewart Island Shags - usually less than 10;
- \* 326 Spotted Shags - usually 100 to 200; and
- \* 546 Black-backed Gulls - usually 300 to 400.

Most of the Yellow-eyed Penguins and Stewart Island Shags were found on Otago and Southland beaches. Canterbury North patrollers found most of the Spotted Shags. In contrast, the Black-backed Gulls were found in all regions.

The following are provisional totals for each region of coast patrolled in 1990.

	<i>Birds</i>	<i>Km travelled</i>
Auckland East	1591	661
Auckland West	1955	1507
Bay of Plenty	668	195
Canterbury North	688	254
Canterbury South	128	62
East Coast N.I.	338	183
Fiordland	0	6
North Coast S.I.	27	32
Otago	186	142
Southland	446	315
Taranaki	149	98
Wairarapa	20	36
Westland	0	14
Wellington South	168	122
Wellington West	688	450
TOTAL	7052	4077

With the recent publicity about seabirds dying as a result of being caught and drowned on long-lines, it would be of interest to determine the number of seabirds found by patrollers for which the reasons for their deaths seem obvious. Please indicate the species and cause of death (no guesses please) in the "Previous weather and remarks" section of the Beach Patrol Card. Cause of death could be: entangled in net, broken wing, shot, hook and line in beak, covered in oil, etc.

The continued success of the Beach Patrol Scheme in 1990 was due, to a large extent, to the people who organised patrols by groups of members, and to the dedicated patrollers who carried out regular patrols. My thanks to the Department of Conservation for the use of computer facilities, and to Ross Pickard for computing assistance.

RALPH POWLESLAND  
*Convener*

## Colour banded birds – sightings wanted

Members seeing any colour banded birds should send full details to the Banding Officer, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington, who will send back details of the bird and bander, and forward the information to the bander. Even if you happen to know the person who is doing the colour banding, it is preferable to advise the Banding Officer as well as the bander.

The following species are being colour banded in New Zealand.

- Royal Spoonbill
- Pied Stilt
- Black Stilt
- Pied Oystercatcher
- Banded Dotterel
- NZ Dotterel
- Black-fronted Dotterel
- Caspian Tern
- White-fronted Tern
- Black-fronted Tern
- Red-billed Gull

## Southern Black-backed Gull Harrier

In addition, some waders, Cattle Egrets and Royal Spoonbills have been tagged in Australia, and more waders in South East Asia. Details of any sightings of these should also be sent to the Banding Officer.

All these colour banded birds add a new dimension to bird watching, so make sure you read the colour combinations, including the metal band, correctly (deciding which is the left and right legs can be difficult). Please remember to send all sightings to the Banding Officer.

JENNY HAWKINS  
OSNZ Banding Liaison Officer

## Overseas bird journals, newsletters and magazines – do you see them?

Members who work at a museum, university or government department do get to see some of them in their library. Most of us don't, without paying a huge annual subscription bill.

OSNZ's library, housed in the Auckland Museum library, receives many journals, newsletters and magazines, most by exchange with *Notornis*. They are there for all members to use, and the OSNZ librarian, Kathy Barrow, is keen to see members make more use of them than they do already.

Since 1980, the OSNZ librarian has run a scheme by which you can receive the new issues of journals and newsletters you want, on circulation with other members. Here's what you do:

1. Study the list of what we get, and decide what you want to receive.
2. If necessary, ask Kathy for one or two issues of anything you are wondering about, to help you make up your mind.
3. Send your list of wants to *Kathy Barrow, OSNZ Librarian, c/o Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag, Auckland*, together with \$1.00 for each journal or magazine title.

The \$1.00 covers the cost of posting the year's issues out, leaving a small fund to replace lost issues (a rare event).

So, you can read regularly about bird study in, say, Australia, Papua New Guinea, USA, Britain, southern Africa, or Europe without paying large subscriptions—indeed, having access to this resource is one of the benefits of your modest subscription to OSNZ.

You can also compare OSNZ activities with those of other societies, through their newsletters, and by comparing their newsletters and journals with ours (and their usually higher subscription rates), appreciate what good value for money *Notornis* and *OSNZ news* are.

Go to it. The library is there to be used (a new catalogue of books held is due out soon). Your only responsibilities are to pass on each issue promptly and to post it in a good-quality envelope.

Following is a list of the journals, newsletters and magazines received by our library.

### AUSTRALASIA

*The Emu* (Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union).

*Corella* (Australian Bird Study Association).

*Australian Birds* (New South Wales).

*The Stilt* (Australasian Wader Study Group).

*South Australian Ornithologist* (S.A. Orn. Association).

*The Australian Bird Watcher* (Bird Observers Club, Victoria).

*The Sunbird* (Queensland Orn. Soc.).

*The Tasmanian Naturalist* (Tas. Field Nat. Club).

*Muruk* (Papua New Guinea Bird Soc.).

*Naika* (Vanuatu Nat. Sciences Soc.).

### NEWSLETTERS & MAGAZINES

*Birds: RSPB* (Royal Soc. for the Protection of Birds); UK equivalent of *Forest & Bird*.

*IUCN Bulletin* (International Union for Conservation of Nature, Switzerland); newsletter style, in English.

*Birding in South Africa* (formerly *Bokmakierie*); general ornithological articles in popular style.

*Elepaio* (Hawaiian Audubon Soc.); newsletter style.

*Country-side* (British); natural history articles in popular style.

*BTO News*: a fairly formal newsletter on British Trust studies.

*The Bird Observer* (Victoria); a straight newsletter.

*NSW Field Ornithologist News* (NSW); a straight newsletter.

*Wingspan* (formerly *RAOU News*); Aust. equivalent of *OSNZ news*.

*The Living Bird* (North America); a quarterly, well illustrated.

### BRITAIN

*Ibis*; scientific studies, often of great general interest.

*Bird Study* (British Trust); scientific studies of European birds.

*Scottish Birds*; activities and studies in Scotland.

*Wildfowl*; 1 large issue; papers on wildfowl research in many countries.

*British Birds*; western Palearctic coverage, 12 issues; many photos and drawings; identification problems, esp. waders; book reviews; very popular.

### AMERICA

*Western Birds*; covers all Pacific states, Alaska to Hawaii and Mexico; readable and useful.

*Wilson Bulletin*; well presented; used mainly by more serious birdwatchers.

*El Hornero*; Argentina.

*Auk*; a well-known scientific journal.

*Explorer*; covers wildlife in general in USA. *Journal of Field Ornithology*; banding. *The Condor*; wide variety, not just American; fairly heavy content. *American Museum Novitates*; irregular; contains special studies, often very important.

### SOUTHERN AFRICA

*The Ostrich*; papers on many groups; well presented, esp. waders.

### JAPAN

*Japanese Journal for Ornithology* (formerly *Tori*); in Japanese with English summaries.

### EUROPE

Most of these journals have English summaries; some have papers in English; but in general they are in their national language with French, German or English summaries.

*Le Gerfaut* (Belgium); papers in English, French, Dutch; often very useful.

*Ardea* (Holland).

*Alauda* (France).

*L'oiseau et la Revue Francaise* (France).

*Suomen Riista* (Finland).

*Larus* (Yugoslavia).

*Der Ornithologische Beobachter* (Switzerland).

*Ardeola* (Spain).

*Ornis Fennica* (Finland).

*Var Fagelvard* (Sweden).

*Aquila* (Hungary).

*Acta Ornithologica* (Poland).

*The Ring* (Poland); in English.

*Journal fur Ornithologie* (Germany).

*Ornithologische Mitteilungen* (Germany).

*Die Vogelwarte* (Germany).

*Anzeiger der Orn. Gesellschaft in Bayern* (Germany).

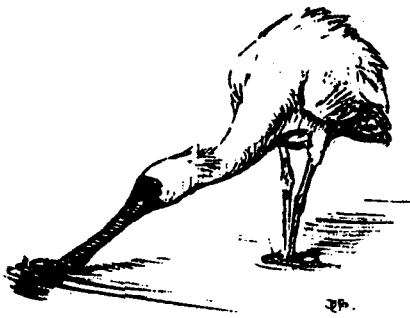
*Die Vogelwelt* (Germany).

BARRIE HEATHER

## Checklist available

The new *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* (3rd edition, 1990) by the OSNZ Checklist Committee (E.G. Turbott, convener) has an entry for all known living and extinct species of New Zealand birds. It provides an authoritative statement on the classification, names, status and distribution of our birds and a very useful indication of key literature references for each species. Along with the Field Guide and Atlas, the Checklist is an essential reference for New Zealand birdwatchers.

Copies of the *Checklist* are available at \$25.00 (includes GST, postage & packing) from: OSNZ Checklist Committee, c/o Auckland Museum, Private Bag, Auckland. Cheques should be made payable to OSNZ. Overseas purchasers should add \$5.00 to cover additional postage, and remit a bank draft in NZ currency.



## Royal Spoonbill survey – July 1991

It was with optimism that I started to coordinate the July count of Royal Spoonbills, since everyone more or less had agreed to carry out the survey during the weekend of 6 & 7 July. However, optimism on it's own is not enough to carry out a complete survey. Effort and enthusiasm are other requirements.

All the same we have 'lost' a large number of birds. Did we count them all? Did a number migrate to Australia? Have they died?

The summer count during 6 February 1991 produced a total of 329, but in July we only counted 242 – which is not far off the June 1990 count of 258.

Royal Spoonbills do have a habit of dispersing widely within New Zealand. We may think we know all the sites, but there is always the possibility that new areas have been taken up, areas we do not know about. To quote Edgar Stead in his preface to *The Life Histories of New Zealand Birds*: "Indeed it is not until one begins to put down on paper what one knows about a bird, that one discovers what a tremendous lot there is that one does not know."

We will just have to keep trying to find out more about Royal Spoonbills.

The July 1991 regional totals were:

West Coast	4
Canterbury	18
Marlborough	7
Nelson	61*
Wellington	1
Hawkes Bay	22
Manawatu	21
Taranaki	1
Gisborne	14
Waikato	3
Auckland	24
Northland	66
TOTAL	242

\*, the Nelson total is a conservative estimate. The lowest of 2 counts (one well before 6 July and the other just after) has been adopted for this survey.

Once again, my thanks to all observers. May I remind you of next year's end of breeding season count on 6 February (Waitangi Day).

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

## Mystery Bird # 4

Last issue's mystery bird can be identified as an albatross from its large bill, small tubed nostrils and the overall impression of a very large bird. The small, widely separated tubed nostrils distinguish albatrosses from other members of the Order Procellariiformes or petrels.

There are 16 species of albatross and New Zealand is fortunate to have 9 of these breeding and 3 others occurring offshore as vagrants. Unlike most Procellariiformes, most albatross species undergo considerable plumage and bill colour changes with age and this can make identification challenging.

However, the black-centred bill with pale borders combined with the grey head are only found in some of the smaller albatross species, known in New Zealand as mollymawks. The large albatrosses – Royal and Wandering – never have such dark bills and even the darkest Wandering Albatross has a white face. The Sooty and Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses have totally dark heads and culminicorns (uppermost bill plate). The Black-footed Albatross – a rare vagrant to New Zealand – has a black bill and dark crown. Black-browed and White-capped Mollymawks can be ruled out, because their heads remain largely white throughout life.

Immatures of these species have darker bills, but this never shows the distinct dark and pale pattern of the mystery bird.

This leaves Grey-headed, Yellow-nosed, Salvin's, Chatham Island and Buller's Mollymawk to choose from. All can have a grey head with a pale cap, and a dark centred pale-bordered bill.

Indian Ocean populations of Yellow-nosed Mollymawks have largely white heads, but the South Atlantic form can have a grey head. However, no birds of this species exhibit the pale strip the mystery bird shows on the mandibular rami (lowermost bill plate).

Salvin's and Chatham Island Mollymawks can show head colours similar to the mystery bird, but they have a darker eyebrow extending to the base of the bill that gives them a larger "frown". Neither have distinctly black plates on the sides of the bill. Adult Salvin's have greyish sides to the bill, while adult Chatham Island have a largely yellow bill with a black mandibular unguis (lower bill hook) – they have only light grey shading on the side bill plates. Immature plumages of these species are poorly known – they have darker bills, but these would never show a clear-cut bill pattern.

Distinguishing between Grey-headed and Buller's Mollymawks requires more detailed examination. Buller's of all ages have a slightly paler grey head and more prominent white crown than Grey-headed Mollymawks. Buller's have larger pale borders to the bill, particularly on the upper maxillary unguis or hook. This is the easiest way to identify the mystery bird photo as an adult Buller's Mollymawk. In life, the pale borders of Buller's and Grey-headed bills are bright yellow, but only the Grey-headed has a red tinge to the tip of the bill. Juvenile Grey-headed Mollymawks have blackish bills whereas those of juvenile Buller's are grey with a dark tip. In flight a good distinguishing feature is the darker underwing border of the Grey-headed.



Adult Buller's Mollymawk, Snares Islands.

(Photo Alan Tennyson)



Adult Grey-headed Mollymawk, Campbell Island.

(Photo G. Taylor)

Buller's Mollymawks breed only in the New Zealand region, on the Snares, Chatham, Solander and Three King Islands. They have been recorded off Australia and South America. There are concerns about the survival of the species because large numbers drown each year on tuna longline hooks.

ALAN TENNYSON

everywhere dirt flew in all directions and every now and then Brent would go sliding down the hill. All this work was hard, but well worth it.

### Mystery Bird # 5

Identify this bird. Answer next issue.

### Juniors' trip to Maud Island

On 11 May 1991 OSNZ gave 7 junior members the opportunity to work on Maud Island scientific reserve, in Pelorus Sound, Marlborough. Our main aim was to continue the Fluttering Shearwater translocation research programme begun by the Society in January 1991. The group consisted of Paul, Michael and David Bell and Jason Frogatt (Wellington), Shane Wilkinson (Wairarapa), Malcolm Falkner (Manawatu) and Brent Stephenson (Hawkes Bay). The team was led by Brian Bell.

The work on the shearwater programme was quickly completed, which enabled the group to do extra work on the island and gave more time for birdwatching. Following is a brief report of each study made during the 2-week trip.

#### General report

Of the 14 days we were on the island, only one was needed to refurbish the artificial shearwater burrows completely – much to Brian Bell's surprise. However, for the rest of our time on the island, the jobs weren't so easy – "conservation in practice" we were told. The jobs included scrub cutting and track clearing. Slashers and axes

In our spare time mist netting, walks, 5-minute counts, and Fantail and flock counts kept us happy. There wasn't a moment that we didn't see a bird – or more.

Even our sleeping quarters had flocks of House Sparrows in the rafters and noisy penguins under the floor boards.

The highlight of the trip, which made it perfect for the whole team, was the opportunity to see 2 live Kakapo – a female "Ruth" and a male "Smoko". These were released on the island by Don Merton. All our cameras were flashing non-stop and rolls of film were used. The release of the 2 Kakapo at Richard Henry Creek provided us with a chance to go radio tracking. Gideon Climo, a DoC worker (and also a junior member) based on Maud Island, gave each of us the opportunity to go radio tracking with him each morning. A special thanks must go to Gideon, as not only did we disrupt his daily routine, but he managed to answer many persistent questions about the Kakapo.

Sadly though, it was soon time to leave. Our 14 days had come and gone. All of us though were leaving with valuable knowledge and experience, as well as many rolls of film. Many of us left tired and sore, but all want to return to repeat an amazing trip.

JASON FROGGAT



### Fluttering Shearwater transfer

The main objective of the trip was to refurbish and modify the 103 burrows built on the north side of the peninsula in October 1990 by OSNZ volunteers. The burrows consisted of a 132 mm piece of Novadrain piping about 200 mm long, which leads up to a rectangular burrow about 300 mm by 450 mm and about 300 mm deep. The roof consisted of 2 planks of treated pine.

On 25 January 1991, 102 Fluttering Shearwater chicks were transferred to Maud Island from Long Island in Queen Charlotte Sound. All were banded and placed in their individual burrows. Here they were fed twice daily on blended fish, which was administered to them through a long tube attached to a syringe, which squirted the liquid into their stomach.

All except 3 birds fledged, the last leaving on 25 February.

The job of our group was to make the burrows slightly bigger and deeper and each entrance was cleared of grass. The planks were nailed together and covered with a piece of plastic sheeting. Then a wire handle was stapled to the lid. The lids were then covered with turf, making the whole structure look more natural. The lids can now be lifted like a trapdoor, making access to the chick and burrow easier and faster.

BRENT STEPHENSON

### 5-minute counts

While on the island we made a series of 5-minute bird counts on the ring road and the summit track. We set up 12 counting stations and covered most at least twice. These are the first 5-minute counts we have recorded on the island and they will be able to be compared with any made on subsequent visits. However, the counts did provide immediate information about bird behaviour on the island.

The first and most obvious trend was with bird activity. Some of the counts were done in windy conditions and these showed that bird activity on the windward side of the island was very low compared to that on the sheltered side. The second trend was that bird activity was greater on the side of the island where the sun was shining.

The counts showed that Silvereye and Fantail were the commonest species (they were recorded in 90% of the counts), with more Silvereyes than Fantails. Other species recorded were Pipit, Dunnock, Tui, Greenfinch, NZ Pigeon, Blackbird, Redpoll, Grey Warbler, Bellbird, Skylark and Yellowhammer. All of these species, however, were in low numbers in most counts (1-3 birds in 40-60% of counts).

These counts will be continued on further visits during the shearwater programme to see if bird numbers change during the year.

MICHAEL BELL

### Banding

During our time on the island we had a mist net set up on 10 of the 14 days. The site was between a kiwifruit vine and a fig tree (both of which had fruit) at the staff quarters. On 2 other days a couple of single tier nets were set up at a puddle being used as a watering hole by birds. This site proved very successful and good numbers of introduced finches were caught.

Over the 2 weeks we caught 12 species (10 species were banded) and banded 222 birds as follows: Silvereye (174), Goldfinch (20), Redpoll (15), Chaffinch (3), Greenfinch (3), Dunnock (2), Kingfisher (2), Yellowhammer (1), Tui (1), Blackbird (1), Grey Warbler (3, not banded), and Fantail (1, not banded).

There were also 3 interesting recaptures of Silvereyes banded on the island in January and May 1989 (all banded as adults).

PAUL BELL

### Feeding Stations

While on the island, we had planned to observe feeding stations of various birds. Unfortunately, this did not go as planned as the birds did not cooperate and time soon ran short.

Although we did not record specific feeding stations, we did observe large numbers of Silvereye, Goldfinch and Redpoll feeding on tauhinu seeds as mixed flocks. Yellowhammers also fed on these seeds.

Flocks of 9, 11, 14 and 15 NZ Pigeons were observed feeding on the leaves of tree lucerne on different occasions.

DAVID BELL

### Fantail colour phases

While making the 5-minute bird counts, and at other times, a record was kept of all Fantails seen and what colour phase they were - pied or black. After totaling the number seen (61 pied, 17 black), the ratio was worked out to be 18:5 pied to black. These counts will continue in future years to see if the ratios change over time.

MALCOLM FALKNER

### Flock report

While walking to and from various jobs on the island we observed flocking birds. We classified a flock as a group of 3 or more birds of any species. We noticed that there were few flocks of over 10 birds and that generally there were few species which formed mixed flocks.

The larger flocks contained mainly Silvereyes and Goldfinches, often mixing and feeding. The smaller flocks contained Redpolls and Greenfinches. NZ Pigeons were commonly seen in flocks of 6-15 birds.

The largest flock was ca300 Silvereyes and the smallest was 3 Greenfinches. Although not many flocks were observed, it was a good chance to learn and put into practice methods of observing and the composition and behaviour of flocks.

SHANE WILKINSON

### Conclusion

The 8 junior members would like to thank the following people for their help in the organisation and running of the trip: Brian Bell, for organising and leading the trip; Bev & Nelson North, for transport to and from Maud Island; Bill Cash, for transport to Havelock; Jenny Hawkins, for organising and buying the food for the trip; Mr & Mrs Bucknell, Gideon Climo and Mr Rowe for putting up with us on the island and providing all the work for the team. We would also like to thank anyone else we may have overlooked. Without the help of all these people, this trip would not have been possible.

### Norfolk Island Green Parrot

The latest news of the captive breeding programme of the Green Parrot is reported in the March 1991 issue of *Norfolk Nature Notes*.

A clutch of 4 was laid about 20 September 1990, but as the female had a history of abandoning the nest before hatching she was kept under close observation. On 15 October she had not returned to the nest after 40 minutes, so 3 of the eggs were transferred to an incubator, the 4th egg was infertile. One chick hatched on 18 October and was fed to a programme provided by Taronga Zoo, Sydney, but died on 21 October. The other 2 embryos died in the incubator without hatching, although one egg showed signs of pipping.

This is the first time an incubator has been used in the programme. The team would be interested to hear from anyone with experience in raising these chicks successfully. The address is: C/o Australian National Parks & Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 782, Norfolk Island.

JIM MOORE

### A whale of a time

Following the AGM in Blenheim a group of 20 members joined Brian Bell's whale-watch expedition to Kaikoura. For some it was a good opportunity to see these marine leviathans at close quarters, while for others the prospect of close encounters with seabirds was equally appealing. For this "born again" ornithologist, however, the occasion was first and foremost for birding. Being a relatively recent convert to bird study, I set out with all the enthusiasm of the novice.

A stopover at Lake Grassmere on the journey south gave us a good view of flocking Goldfinches and a Cirl Bunting, but our hopes of seeing Chestnut-breasted Shelduck were not realised. Farther south we stopped at Elterwater where a search of the small willow-fringed lake revealed Pied Shags, Paradise Shelducks, Shoveler, Pied Stilts and Grey Ducks – but still no Chestnut-breasted Shelducks.

Accommodation for the night at Kaikoura consisted of 2 small cabins and 2 caravans. Was it the inherently gregarious nature of our party, or was it some form of latent flocking behaviour that saw all but 2 members gather in one cabin for pre-dinner drinks and fish & chips? With the chilly temperature outside the tiny cabin was soon cosy to say the least.

A cold but calm morning promised a pleasant boat trip. Well before sunrise we made our way to the beach, where our 2 boats were drawn up. The light at that hour was quite remarkable; a half moon to seaward and fresh snow on the Seaward Kaikoura Range combined to bathe all in a soft eerie light. Before setting off, Brian made sure the boat crews were aware of our interest in birds as well as whales. They in turn promised us an experience that combined the sensations of white-water rafting and jet boating!

An assortment of gulls accompanied us for some distance before the first of many Cape Pigeons appeared. We then saw Westland Black Petrels and a Giant Petrel, followed soon after by the first of 2 mollymawks. At first these were thought to be Salvin's until a closer view of the dark strip along the centre of the bill led Brian to identify them as Buller's Mollymawks. Being seated beside Brian in the boat meant I was able to take full advantage of his knowledge of seabirds.

The 2 young crew members also tuned in. Initially they were, I suspect, somewhat bemused by the sometimes lukewarm response with which some of us greeted the sighting of another whale, compared with the evident enthusiasm as the second mollymawk appeared.

However, they quickly responded to this obvious interest and for them it ceased to be a routine whale-watch cruise.

A bucket of fish scraps had accompanied us and this was duly unloaded over the side. Unfortunately, most pieces sank before the birds could take full advantage. Nevertheless, we did get a good view of Cape Pigeons on the water, along with a flock of Fairy Prions. This view of the prions was of particular interest to some members of the party.

On the journey back to shore we encountered Blue Penguin, Fluttering Shearwater, Black-fronted Tern, Gannet, and Spotted Shag. We got a close look at a roost of Spotted Shags a few kms south of Kaikoura, along with a population of Fur Seals.

Before heading back to Blenheim a

visit to Kaikoura Peninsula revealed Little Shags and Pied Shag as well as a Reef Heron fossicking in the tidal rock pools. A second visit to Lake Grassmere failed to unearth the elusive Chestnut-breasted Shelducks. However, all in all it was an excellent expedition and a very enjoyable finale to the AGM weekend.

KEITH WOODLEY

### **Pitcairn Island Scientific Expedition, 1991-1992**

This expedition was conceived by Graham Wragg (who completed a masterate at Lincoln College on Fluttering & Hutton's Shearwaters), Mike Brooke (Manx Shearwaters on Skokholm, now at Cambridge University's Zoology Department) and Tom Spencer (Cambridge University's Geography Department). The impetus for the expedition was provided by Graham's ketch (*Te Manu*), as inaccessibility is the major problem confronted by anyone wishing to work on this remote archipelago of 4 islands (Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie, Oeno), situated about 2500 km from the nearest international airport (Tahiti).

The prime objective and base for the expedition is Henderson Island, a 37 km<sup>2</sup> raised coral atoll which is uninhabited, though Polynesians did occupy it for about 300 years. About 10 years ago a wealthy American desired it as a retreat from his compatriots and proposed to put an airstrip on the island and, as an incentive to the authorities, offered a large sum of money to put an airstrip on Pitcairn Island as well. Our President was at the forefront of the international conservation alarm that led to the rejection of the proposal; eventually, Henderson Island was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Features of Henderson Island are its geology, fauna and flora. It has an endemic crane, 3 endemic subspecies (fruit dove, lorikeet, warbler), and important seabird colonies which include 4 species of gadfly petrels, of which Murphy's Petrel is notable. This little-studied petrel may have its main breeding colonies on Henderson and Oeno. Legacies of the Polynesian occupation are kiore, and the absence (apart from subfossil bones) of ground-dove and 2 species of large *Ducula* pigeon. Seabirds were probably diminished, but could recolonise more easily than landbirds.

However, the White-throated Storm Petrel may have been wiped out by kiore.

The expedition has been planned in five 3-month phases from January 1991 to March 1992. Each phase has 5 to 9 personnel with most rotating, but Mike and Graham will be there almost throughout. Virtually every branch of the natural sciences will be studied, from life in the fringing coral reef upwards. I was

to have studied the petrels from July to September 1991, but my employer declared my services indispensable here in NZ. Fortunately, Jim Jolly was relatively free and jumped at the opportunity to go. He is carrying out more or less the same research programme that I would have attempted – study the breeding biology of the gadfly petrels; collect food samples from them by regurgitation or water-offloading; concentrate on Murphy's Petrel; collect mallophaga for Ricardo Palma (National Museum, Wellington), collect sound recordings for Les McPherson (who has supplied the equipment); collect data on bird populations; and contribute to the ongoing research programme. Jim, as I would have done, will need to work into the existing programmes, but may be able to carry out a project of his choice e.g. on the Henderson Crane.

The major sponsors of the expedition are the Royal Geographical Society, British Ornithologists' Union and NatWest Bank. In New Zealand, the South Pacific Development and Conservation Trust and OSNZ have given generous support. The expedition has a total budget of about \$300,000 and much of this will be spent of boat charters from Tahiti to Pitcairn (it was decided to use *Te Manu* only for emergency and inter-island trips, e.g. to Ducie, thus sparing expedition members wasted time at sea at each 3-monthly change over).

Jim Jolly left for Henderson on 20 June, overloaded with 67 kg of baggage (*merci beaucoup* UTA). He had an interesting 5-day stop-over on Moorea and Tahiti, where (on Moorea) he heard 2 species of petrels at night – Collared Petrels flying inland (to my knowledge, this species is not recorded as breeding in French Polynesia) and Tahiti Petrels calling from the high inland cliffs.

Though the expedition's results so far have been veiled in secrecy, we know that Jim arrived safely at Pitcairn, then Henderson; that kiore are a problem, and that he has been to Ducie. We hope to have further bulletins in *OSNZ news*.

MIKE IMBER

### **3rd Annual Blue Duck Liaison Group Meeting, Kaiteriteri, 29-31 July 1991**

I was invited to attend this workshop & conference, held over 3 days in picturesque surroundings at Kaiteriteri Beach.

The group, established in 1989, has worked through various research, counting, distribution and population monitoring programmes. At this year's meeting a recovery group (of 4) was established to formulate the basis of a national recovery plan.

I was able to contribute information on techniques and methods of monitoring Blue Duck populations, and presented some preliminary results of my 4 years of research on Blue Ducks in the upper reaches of the Manganuiateo River. There were 20 people at the meeting – from DoC regional staff, DoC Science & Research Threatened Species Unit, Ducks Unlimited, Massey University, OSNZ/private and Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society.

The meeting included reports of counting and monitoring programmes from 10 areas throughout the North and South Islands. Research results were presented by DoC Science & Research and Massey University; 2 further projects were proposed. Ducks Unlimited presented information on the captive breeding programme and reported the successful use of an extra male as a breeding stimulant to a pair of birds. It is hoped to transfer a further 6 birds, 2 pairs and 2 individuals, from the wild to Egmont National Park this summer. This has been successful in the past, with the birds becoming established and breeding. Future work will identify other possible enhancement sites.

KERRY OATES

## Cirl Bunting – an endangered species?

Those of you who read a recent British magazine *Birds* may have noticed an article outlining the plight of Cirl Buntings in Europe.

The Cirl Bunting is one of Britain's most threatened, but forgotten, birds. Today, they number just over 100 pairs and are still declining. In the 1930s they were common in some parts of the country, but only 300 pairs remained by 1970 and 167 by 1982.

Similar declines have been recorded in France, West Germany and Belgium and, in Luxembourg, the species is already extinct. New research indicates that changing farming practices threaten the buntings. The research is encouraging though, because the preferred habitats have been identified (certain cereal stubble fields) and creation of these habitats is possible.

Cirl Buntings were introduced to the South Island (Otago) in 1871 and the North Island (Wellington) in 1880. Today they remain the rarest of our introduced passerines, but occur widely. Records in the North Island are sporadic and isolated, but in the South Island they appear to be more common, especially in some parts of Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago. A recent OSNZ survey of metropolitan Christchurch indicated that they were present in small flocks all around the outskirts of the city in winter and the local population could even number in the low hundreds.

Many of us are well aware that New

Zealand conditions have been very suitable for some introduced passerines. Numbers of Cirl Buntings here may be greater than in their natural range, and perhaps the introductions have inadvertently contributed to an important conservation effort overseas. We still know virtually nothing about Cirl Buntings in New Zealand – perhaps it is time to rectify the situation.

COLIN O'DONNELL

## Brown Creepers in autumn

The Brown Creeper is an insectivorous species which on occasions during autumn, will take berries as a supplement to its diet. On 21 April I observed the activities of a flock of about 20 Brown Creepers feeding in trees along the side of the Akaroa-Takamatua Road, Banks Peninsula. There were a number of immatures in the flock. I was able to keep the birds under observation for about 30 minutes.

The immatures were being fed by the adults, the latter made contact and flocking calls with no song sequence at all. The begging calls of the immatures were accompanied by feather ruffling. I saw that the immatures were being fed *Coprosma robusta* berries and small invertebrates from the bark of kanuka. When gleaning insects from kanuka, the Brown Creepers often moved upside down along the underside of branches. I also noticed that the preferred food eaten by the adults and given to the immatures was the small white fruit of *Muehlenbeckia australis*, which grew in profusion over shrubs and a small apple tree.

I attracted the attention of the Brown Creepers by making squeaking noises and was immediately surrounded by the flock, they were accompanied by 2 Bellbirds, 2 Grey Warblers and 2 Fantails.

On 4 May I returned to the area and again noted the presence of Brown Creepers. This time they showed little interest in the *Muehlenbeckia* and on examining the panicles of fruit I found that they now contained a small black nut. The Brown Creepers gave some song on this occasion.

SHEILA PETCH



## RAOU Column

### Study on Australia's most endangered bird

The Black-eared Miner is Australia's rarest bird. Formerly found in mature

mallee across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, it is now restricted to possibly no more than 11 individuals in 5 widely scattered colonies in north-western Victoria. *Threatened Birds of Australia* (RAOU Report No. 68, 1990) classifies it as endangered and it is regarded as being in imminent danger of extinction.

Miners are a type of honeyeater and typically live in colonies or large groups. Like most honeyeaters, they are garrulous and aggressive, actively defending their territories against predators and rivals.

The favoured habitat of the Black-eared Miner is dense stands of mature mallee, much of which has been lost to fire and agriculture. Mallee is a low, dense form of eucalypt adapted to arid lands. The fragmentation of stands of old-growth mallee has enabled the spread of the closely related Yellow-throated Miner, which favours more open woodlands. The 2 species of honeyeater interbreed where their ranges overlap.

The RAOU established that the first priority for the conservation of the Black-eared Miner was a detailed investigation into its habitat use. With funding from the RAOU, the Victorian Department of Conservation & Environment and a Federal National Estate grant, the study will examine these concerns in northern Victoria. Special mention must also be made of the substantial sums raised since 1989 by the RAOU in the annual Twitchathon – a 24-hour birdwatching race.

The habitat study will have the following components:

- A detailed description of the vegetation and structural composition of the mature mallee and adjacent habitats now occupied by Black-eared Miners;
- Assessment of the modifying factors, especially fire and previous fire history, on these habitats;
- Behavioural observations of how Black-eared Miners use favoured habitats;
- Behavioural observations of Yellow-throated Miners and hybrids in ecotone and modified habitats and at colony sites in order to understand how they invade Black-eared Miner habitats;
- Preparation of recommendations for the protection and management of favoured Black-eared Miner habitats.

The Black-eared Miner may not have the immediate appeal of the spectacular Gouldian Finch or the mystique of the Night Parrot, but it is hoped that this study will raise the bird's public profile and precipitate strong moves to ensure its survival.

## 1991 RAOU Birds of Australia calendar

The 1991 Birds of Australia calendar is now available from RAOU Headquarters, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039, Australia. This popular calendar features 13 full-colour photographs of



native Australian birds, with large clear dates and space for appointments etc. Price, including postage is A\$14.00 (please make cheques out in Australian dollars).

DAVID ANDREW

## Excitement at the Manawatu Estuary

This winter there was excitement at the Manawatu Estuary with the sighting of a Chestnut Teal—the first record of this species for New Zealand. The bird was first seen by Jim Moore on 3 June and it was still there on 7 July. This is possibly the same bird that Hugh Robertson saw at the Waikanae Estuary in February, but was not absolutely certain of its identification before it flew off. In breeding plumage the absence of a white eye ring helps eliminate Brown Teal.

SYBIL CRESWELL

## Request for information

I am writing a review about the hour of egg-laying of passerines. As published data on this topic are scarce, I would appreciate hearing from persons who have unpublished records on laying times that they would allow me to use with appropriate acknowledgments. The records should include species name, locality, date, estimate of hour of laying, and type of time used (NZ Standard Time or NZ Summer Time). Information on whether the observation was of the first, second, or third egg, etc., of the clutch would also be useful. Please write to David M. Scott, Professor emeritus, Department of Zoology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5B7.

## National Kea and Kaka databases

This summer is the beginning of the third year of the Kea and Kaka schemes. I have received much valuable information from society and club members around New Zealand over the past 2 years, which has been inputted onto computer. However, even with this information it is difficult to see what might be happening to Keas and Kakas. The sightings received so far can be summarised as follows.

### North Island Kaka

\* Moderate numbers in Pureora, Tongariro, Kaimanawa, Urewera.

\* Few in Tararua, Ruahines, Raukumera, Coromandel Ranges.

\* Vagrants around northern North Island.

\* Noticeably, no sightings from Egmont, Whanganui.

\* Most sightings are of 1-2 birds, occasional larger flocks in February.

\* Seen between 0 & 1500 m, averaging 650-850 m (summer) and 400-550 m (winter).

### South Island Kaka

\* Moderate numbers in Fiordland, Mt Aspiring, Westland.

\* Scattered throughout lower altitude valleys of the western Main Divide, Paparoas, Richmond Range, Nelson Lakes.

\* No sightings from eastern Main Divide, Lake Sumner, Arthurs Pass.

\* Most sightings are of 1-2 birds, occasional flocks in February – April.

\* Seen between 0 & 1200 m, averaging around 450-700 m (summer) and 50-200 m (winter).

### Kea

\* Well represented in Fiordland, Westland, Mt Aspiring, NW Nelson, Landsborough, Whitcombe.

\* Some present in Richmond Range, Kaikouras, Nelson Lakes, Paparoas, Craigieburn.

\* Numbers seen are variable.

\* Seen between 20 & 2400 m, averaging 950-1400, but also variable throughout the year.

I do not wish to bias the database by requesting sightings of birds from particular areas, however, sightings from less accessible areas or birds out of their normal range are always valuable. Please keep on reporting accurate location (map reference if possible), altitude, date and time, number of birds seen.

Please send sightings to Michael Wakelin, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington

MICHAEL WAKELIN

## Recent Reports

Thanks to those who sent in reports, but unfortunately there were not enough to warrant compiling this time. With the return of warmer weather I expect members will be more active in the field, so if observations are forwarded to me by 12 November the feature will return in the December issue.

DEREK ONLEY

## Regional Roundup

### Northland:

Bi-monthly meetings have been well attended this year, with chairs having to be poached from 2 other rooms at the August meeting. Tony Beauchamp, on contract in Whangarei for a year, has given us 2 excellent talks—one in April about Wekas and the other in August about the eradication of mice on Mana Island. Northland members were unaware just how quickly the latter was accomplished and that mouse numbers were in the hundreds of thousands rather than the millions as reported in various news magazines.

At our June meeting, Ray Pierce talked about Banded Dotterels and gave us an estimate of the size of the population and showed the dispersal patterns of birds from different parts of the country.

Richard Parrish organised 2 Fairy Tern surveys in July and August. These covered all the areas where these birds have been recorded in recent years. Only 5 terns were found during the July survey, so we repeated it in August—but with no better result. Now we hope for better luck during the breeding season.

Cattle Egrets and Royal Spoonbills are back in force this year all their usual haunts, though the Kaipara Royal Spoonbills eluded us on the weekend of the national count. The 12 spoonbills at Port Whangarei often feed on the Onerahi foreshore at low tide and have caused quite a lot of excitement amongst local residents.

Beach patrolling has continued regularly with meagre results until August, when a small wreck of prions boosted numbers. Interesting finds so far this year have been an immature Gannet found on the Dargaville West Coast in April by Karen Miller, which had been banded at White Island in January, and a Red-tailed Tropicbird found in April by Barry Searle.

(Pat Miller)

### Auckland:

Field activities continued through the wet winter weather which we have had in recent months. The shorebird census in June was completed successfully and although the Royal Spoonbills on Manukau hid from us on the day of the national count they were seen a couple of days later. On 23 June we did a complete count of birds on the Muriwai lakes, actually in better weather than the storm which caught us in February. This winter count provides further information on Dabchick numbers in support of the long-running summer census. One point of interest from the June shorebird census was the finding of 6 Dabchicks on No. 4 pond at Mangere; they have not wintered there in recent years.

At the June meeting, John Craig gave us some very interesting thoughts about establishing small populations of birds. While overseas theory has taught that at least 500 birds are needed to establish a species in a new location, New Zealand practice has achieved success with very small numbers in several cases. The existence of isolated communities on islands, with already a high level of inbreeding, may be a factor which enables these species to expand from a very small population base. The Black Robin story is a shining example.

The birds of Sri Lanka provided the subject of a talk by Ruud Kleinpaste to the July meeting. The slides were good and Ruud's inimitable style of commentary made it a very entertaining evening. It is a little sad to be reminded that many of the

best habitats of these exotic species are now in zones controlled by guerrillas, so visiting them is virtually impossible. We hope that the birds survive.

At this meeting a new series commenced, dealing with the main birding areas around Auckland. Over the next 4 or 5 meetings, members who are familiar with a particular area will describe access, species to expect, the best places to spend time at etc. The aims are to give everybody the benefit of knowledge which usually comes only with years of experience of the place and to bring together all that is collectively known about each of the major birding areas around Auckland.

The first area to be discussed was the Mangere Oxidation Ponds and nearby Ambury Park. David Baker explained how to get into the roads which encircle all the ponds, and where various species congregate. Most of the high tide roosts are traditional sites dating from before the construction of the ponds. David also described how OSNZ is working with the management to implement the Auckland Regional Council's plans for large-scale plantings of native vegetation with the aim of encouraging birds as well as beautifying the area. Connie Schischka described the features of Ambury Park and produced an impressive list of species which have been seen there.

Ray Pierce spoke to the August meeting about the birds of kauri forests and brought us up to date with the work DoC ~~Whangarei is doing in Waipoua, Puketi~~ and other forests. It was disappointing to learn that all native parrot species have gone from Waipoua and that Kokako numbers have crashed in Puketi. We can hope that the recent large scale assault on possums will allow the vegetation to recover to the extent that it will support more birds, while the battle with predators continues. Also at this meeting, Geoff. Moon and John Staniland described the best birding places in the Waitakeres.

(Brian Ellis)

### South Auckland:

In April we had a closer look at Hingaia Creek, on the eastern Manukau, following reports that the Pied Shags had abandoned their long-established colony. They are now using smaller eucalypts about 2 km downstream. By late afternoon, 125 had come in, together with a few Little Black and Little Shags. A few blisters and sore bottoms were a result of the strenuous rowing required for this exercise. In May and June we combined with Auckland to carry out the winter census of the Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour.

In late June we once again spent a working weekend on Tiritiri Island and were rewarded by getting to know Mr Blue and Stormy, the 2 Takahe recently

transferred from Maud Island. Their preferred habitat is the warden's garden! It was good to learn that the Brown Teal had bred successfully at last, as had the Whiteheads.

In June we had a thorough look at the Port Waikato area. A good flock of 34 Variable Oystercatchers was with the SIPO on Sunset Beach, together with 2 pairs of NZ Dotterels. 25 Kingfishers counted along Shallow Water Beach would have delighted southerners. There was no sign of the White Heron reported earlier in the season, but many people have visited the Wattle Downs Ponds at Manurewa and reported up to 4 Little Egrets and 2 White Herons there and in the adjoining coastal area. Also in July we were given a complete tour of the Mangere Sewage Ponds by David Baker and Ray Clough. 24 Royal Spoonbills flew in just as we were leaving, but we did not find the Black-fronted Dotterel seen earlier.

At our evening meetings we have been very lucky to have Pam & Des Agnew and David Lawrie taken us on the southern cruise, Andrew Cummins explaining what his studies show is required for NZ Dotterels to breed successfully, and David Blaker discovering Vanuatu. In July, Paul Harrison showed excellent slides, Pam Agnew talked about the Far North and David Lawrie reported on some highlights from his trip between Adelaide and Melbourne.

(Anthea Goodwin)

### Waikato:

We have been pleased to welcome 6 new members since the last newsletter.

Waikato again offered a prize for the best ornithological entry in the Schools' Science Fair. For the second year running, it was won by Becky Broughan with a well thought out exhibit on bird bills. Congratulations Becky!

Five OSNZ members were the speakers at a University of Waikato Continuing Education day on "Birds and their Habitats", a course which attracted about 20 people.

Some excellent speakers at our evening meetings have enlightened us on a number of (mostly) bird-related topics. Stuart Chambers spoke on a low key tourist venture he is promoting in Vanua Levu, Fiji, by which it is hoped to help save the Tunuloa rainforest and its birds, with particular reference to the endemic Silktail. Rick Thorpe gave us a graphic first-hand account of the problems of the Gulf, where people, birds and marine life are the victims of the aftermath of the war. Hamish Spencer illustrated and identified the seabirds of the outer Hauraki Gulf. His talk was complemented by Abby Smith, who gave us an insight into what lurks beneath the waves. She showed slides of a fascinating world of microscopic marine

animals, new to most of us. In July, Adrien Riegen combined with Stephen Davies to talk about the migration patterns of arctic waders and the activities of the Miranda Banders.

Two field workshops have been valuable both for newer members and as refresher courses for the more experienced. At Waikorea Beach, everyone measured and identified seabirds, and at Lake Ngaroto members observed the nesting behaviour of immaculately plumaged Black Shags.

(Stella Rowe)

### Hawkes Bay:

Our March field trip was to Lake Omakere. This was the first time we had visited this lake, which is on private property. Waterbirds included 15 Dabchicks, 30 Grey Teal, 80 Mallards, 100+ Shovelers, 19 Paradise Shelducks, 32 Black Swans, 2 Pukekos, 3 Spur-winged Plovers, 1 White-faced Heron, 70 Black-backed Gulls, 1 Little Black Shag, 9 Little Shags, and 3 Black Shags.

In April, we visited Triplex Creek at Wakarara. On the track up to Sunrise Riflemen were plentiful and Bellbirds, Whiteheads, Fantails, Silvereyes, Dunnocks, Grey Warblers, NZ Pigeon, Tomtits, and a parakeet were seen.

A pleasant walk through Mohi Bush was enjoyed during May. NZ Pigeons, Tuis, a few Riflemen, Dunnocks, Silvereyes and Blackbirds were seen.

At a meeting held in June the guest speaker was John Cheyne from the Department of Conservation, Napier. He told us about the work being carried out in the conservancy, particularly the Blue Duck and Brown Kiwi projects.

(Christine McRae)

### Manawatu:

Unrewarding for us, though not for the birds, there were very few wrecks found in June/July. This was despite the hundreds of mollymawks (probably White-capped) sitting on the sea some 60 nautical miles off the coast and extending as far north as Wanganui, which were spotted by Ohakea pilot Ian Saville when returning from the Marlborough Sounds on 21 June.

At the Manawatu Estuary there has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of Grey Teal, 188 this year compared with 100 in 1990. Also at the estuary were some of Maida Barlow's banded Caspian Terns, seen there for the first time. Small numbers of Black-fronted Terns were seen in late May and June. The number of Bar-tailed Godwits fell to 25 on 13/14 April, then 9 on 16 June, but 52 were present a month later. The Cattle Egret tally is almost the same as last year, with a flock of 28 seen at Rate, near Hunterville, during the first week of June.

(Sybil Creswell)

### Wairarapa:

In January, members attempted some ornithological archaeology. An OSNZ member from Tauranga who surfs at Tora, on the Wairarapa east coast, told me of some moa bones which were being exposed and possibly washed away on a cliff face. With the blessing of the local DoC office a party of us travelled to Tora and sure enough, at the site we had been told of, there were some partly exposed bones. One intact bone and several fragments were carefully removed. We were convinced we had an intact moa femur and with great anticipation we awaited the experts' report from the National Museum. Imagine our disgust when the report came back – bone is of mammalian origin, probably that of a cow. However, all of us enjoyed the outing.

In February, 12 members spent the weekend in the Hawkes Bay. Taradale Motor Camp provided a convenient base and Christine McRae and Jim Hamilton introduced us to the very beautiful Lake Oingo where, among other birds (including Black and Little Shags, Black Swan, Black-billed Gull, Bittern, Grey Teal and Scaup) a very obliging Spotless Crake came out of raupo. Later, we met up with more of the local OSNZers at Westshore and travelled with them to the Pumphouse and then the top of the estuary where, as well as hearing crake, we saw 3 Royal Spoonbills. In the evening, we were entertained at a barbecue and enjoyed a slide show presented by 2 local members. Before sunrise the following morning we were on our way to Cape Kidnappers. The young Gannets were almost fully fledged, but still provided an interesting spectacle, especially at Black Reef where you are so close to them. The weekend was a great success both socially and ornithologically and our thanks to Hawkes Bay OSNZ for their hospitality.

February also produced our best Royal Spoonbill count, with 12 birds present. None was seen at the winter count.

We have been well served with visiting speakers in the last few months. Raewyn Empson spoke about endangered birds in the Wellington region and Peter Moore gave an illustrated talk on the wildlife of Campbell Island. Two very interesting evenings.

Passerine mist netting has been carried out on 2 days at Tates Orchard in Greytown during May and June. Rod Cossee, DoC Banding Officer, came for each day. One day members of Forest & Bird, including some Kiwi Conservators, came and over the day some 32 people were involved. Some 125 birds were banded over the 2 days.

(Tenick Dennison)

### Wellington:

Tiptoeing barefoot across frozen winter grass, plunging pack-laden into the icy sea. Midwinter madness? Hara-kiri? No, just all in the day's work for a hardy group participating in the quarterly Kapiti Island survey. The second trip in the current survey took place over the weekend of 6-7 July, when 8 people led by Hugh Robertson carried out 256 5-minute counts on the 6 lines. Most numerous species were Whiteheads followed by Bellbirds and Tuis, and then Kakas, Fantails, Robins and Silvereyes. Among the least numerous were Saddlebacks – apparently they are just maintaining a foothold on the island.

In spite of the frosty start, the weather was fine, especially on Saturday, making the bush walks very pleasant. A torchlight search one evening failed to locate any Little Spotted Kiwis.

On the same weekend, 5 other members travelled dry-footed to Mana Island to conduct the penultimate counts in a survey begun 4 years ago. Kerry Oates reports that the 4 transects were counted twice on both the Saturday and Sunday, despite deteriorating weather on the Sunday morning. Redpolls were recorded for the first time and Pukekos were thriving.

In June, Ron Goudswaard gave an interesting evening talk on an expedition to Dent Island to locate and collect Campbell Island Teal – a subspecies thought to be extinct until 1976. July brought a very large audience to hear Steve Lawrence bring us up to date on the Falcons of Wellington and, with Gavin Woodward, show some home Falcon videos. In August, Brian Bell outlined the purposes of the Central Passerine Banding Group and then led a workshop on mist netting, banding, measuring and weighing. The following weekend, Brian held 2 "drop in" days at his home for us to practice these skills on living birds.

(Allan Munro)

### Canterbury:

Passerine banding has kept a lot of our members busy during the winter/early spring. The Silvereye banding project has been very successful, with about 3000 birds banded and many recaptures/recoveries/sightings reported. Publicity in newspapers, asking for reports of banded birds, resulted in over 200 phone calls to Peter Reese and Paul Sagar. Some of the callers reported that they had not seen any banded birds yet, but were continuing to watch their bird tables. One lady was upset that she had not seen a banded Silvereye despite long hours of watching. Obviously there is a lot of public interest in birds.

A result of all these reports, plus recaptures and recoveries (the latter usually courtesy of cats), is a large-scale map of Christchurch festooned with coloured pins. Birds banded in particular areas of the city have been banded with a different coloured band, so we have been able to plot movements of the birds. The Silvereye flocks should disperse by the end of September and then we will prepare a preliminary report of the results – perhaps in time for the December newsletter.

(Paul Sagar)

### Otago:

At the August meeting, George Chance showed us some excellent slides he took of our Royal Spoonbills at Taiaroa Head. He also took us by sailing boat to the subantarctic islands, where he had photographed various mollymawks and penguins. Those who know of George's photographic work will realise how fortunate we have been to be able to share these excellent slides.

The penguin hide on the Otago Peninsula will be erected as soon as the weather improves. We are all hoping for an improvement soon, so we can carry out some serious ornithology.

(Peter Schweigman)

### Gipsy Point Lodge



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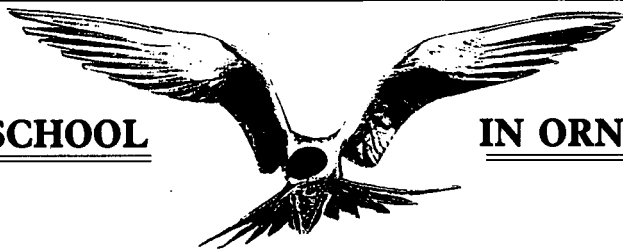
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**DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER ISSUE IS 10 NOVEMBER**

# A SUMMER SCHOOL

# IN ORNITHOLOGY, 1992



Centre for Continuing Education,  
University of Canterbury, Christchurch.  
Four days of illustrated lectures and a day field trip to Kaikoura

The University of Canterbury cordially invites all Ornithological Society of New Zealand members to attend a first Summer School in Ornithology over the above dates. The aim of the school is to allow an exciting interchange of ideas in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

This is your invitation to hear some of New Zealand's best known authorities to speak on their speciality fields. The topics and tentative timetable are as follows:

<b>Day One</b>	<b>Opening Address</b> <b>The Evolution of New Zealand Birds</b> Evening talk, commencing 7.30 p.m.	John Warham Richard Holdaway
<b>Day Two</b>	<b>The Prehistory of New Zealand Birds</b> <b>Seabirds</b> School Dinner from 7 p.m.	Ian Atkinson Graham Taylor
<b>Day Three</b>	<b>Bird Recognition</b> <b>Current Bird Research at Canterbury</b> <b>Breeding Systems In Birds</b>	Colin Miskelly Graduate students Ian McLean
<b>Day Four</b>	<b>A Coach Trip to Kaikoura</b> Departing at 7.30 a.m. and returning to Christchurch about 6.00 p.m.	
<b>Day Five</b>	<b>The History of Bird Conservation and Endangered Species</b> <b>Management in New Zealand</b> Evening talk, commencing 7.30 p.m.	Don Merton
<b>Day Six</b>	<b>Photographing Birds</b>	Peter Harper and Don Hadden

The school will close with a lunch on Friday at the Staff Club. 12.30 to 1.30 p.m.

**Dates:** Sunday - Friday, 19 - 24 January, 1992.  
**Times:** Daily: 9.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. Evening Sessions: 7.30 p.m.  
**Venue:** Centre for Continuing Education, "Okeover", University of Canterbury.  
**Fee:** \$299.00 all inclusive and payable on application.  
**Closing Date for Enrolments:** Monday, 2 December 1991.

## APPLICATION FORM

Tax Invoice (GST Reg. No. 11/131/859)

Centre for Continuing Education,  
University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch

I wish to enrol for the **Summer School in Ornithology, 19 - 24 January, 1992**

Course Code: CSSOR02

Enclosed is tuition fee: \$299.00

or Deposit (to be paid by 2 December, 1991) \$ 50.00

Balance (to be paid by 16 December, 1991) \$249.00

**Total** \$299.00

(cheque payable to Centre for Continuing Education)

**Name:** Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms:.....

**Address:**.....

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