

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. 62 March, 1992

Note Deadline for the June issue will be 20th
May.

Pitcairn Island Scientific Expedition

Henderson Island, the expedition's base, proved to be as extraordinary and fascinating as we had imagined. Its surface is fossil coral, weathered into jagged ridges and gullies, and raised 30 metres above sea level. It is clothed, for the most part, in dense, low forest that offers food and shelter for the four species of landbirds and nesting sites for at least eight species of seabirds. We also camped on the two atolls of the group, Ducie and Oeno. Ducie, which is a broken ring of mostly dead coral, must be one of the most remote places on this planet and is the nesting place of tens of thousands of petrels. Most of the world's population of Murphy's Petrel breed there. Oeno, which has more diverse vegetation than Ducie, is host to three species of waders (Bristle-thighed Curlew, Wandering Tattler, and Pacific Golden Plover), the Reef Heron, and the Spotless Crake as well as seabirds.

Four species of gadfly petrels are recorded from Henderson Island (the Kermadec, Herald, Phoenix and Murphy's Petrels), but the expedition doubts the presence of Phoenix Petrel. Analysis of measurements, feather lice, and DNA should resolve whether the Herald Petrel occurs in two colour morphs or whether there are both Herald and Phoenix Petrels on the island. The expedition found that these light and dark colour "morphs" segregate in breeding pairs and favour different breeding sites on the island.

My priority task was to collect stomach samples for Mike Imber's study of petrel foods. This work was curtailed on Henderson Island because the nesting of all petrels failed almost completely. Almost all losses were of young chicks, and as far as we were able to determine, the losses were due to predation by kiore. We witnessed predation by kiore during long vigils at

nests (all petrel species are surface nesters at the Pitcairn Islands) and found kiore sign with freshly killed chick carcasses.

I collected 70 regurgitations from chicks on Ducie and Oeno, mostly from Murphy's and Kermadec Petrels. Other work on the petrels included monitoring nests, collecting lice for Ricardo Palma, and tape recordings for Les McPherson.

The three major landbird studies were an assessment of abundance of forest birds on Henderson Island, a study of the diet of the Henderson Fruit Dove in relation to foods available and their seasonal changes, and breeding and behavioural studies of the Henderson Crake. We also logged the distribution and feeding activity of the Henderson Lorikeet.

The crakes proved to be confiding (though extremely difficult to catch) and were the main attraction at our base camp, particularly as they chose to nest nearby and to bring their chicks in for breakfast. Chuck Doersch (Nebraska) and I took the opportunity to study parental care by the local pairs (including their breakfasts). We found that both parents feed and guard the chicks and vigorously pursue kiore, but we also found that they leave even young chicks unguarded at times.

The three islands have an important bird fauna, but our observations have shown the vulnerability to predation of both the seabirds and the landbirds. Elsewhere in the Pacific, some of these species, or their close relatives, are in



Murphy's Petrel at its nest on Ducie Island, Pitcairns.

(Photo. Jim Jolly)

in decline or are already absent through introductions of more predators or diseases, through habitat loss and hunting.

The long sea voyages to and from the Pitcairns gave plenty of opportunities for recording seabirds, but also emphasised the paucity of birds in this region compared with New Zealand waters. One hour counts generally produced between 0 and 2 sightings. Between Tahiti and Pitcairn, in July, we saw Red-tailed Tropicbirds and Red-footed Boobies frequently, and Tahiti and Collared Petrels and Masked Boobies infrequently. In mid ocean we also saw a single, cheery Wandering Tattler which whistled as it circled our yacht before continuing on its way. Near Pitcairn and Henderson we saw Cape Pigeon and one Giant Petrel (both species were well to the north of their usual ranges), a storm petrel, and the species which breed on the islands. South from Pitcairn in September, on the direct route home to New Zealand, Wandering Albatross followed the ship from 28°S, and I saw some Grey Petrels and one White-headed Petrel, as well as Giant Petrel and Cape Pigeon. The numbers of birds seen increased noticeably from about 32°S with species common in New Zealand waters.

My participation in the Henderson Island Expedition was supported by grants from the OSNZ Projects Assistance Reserve and the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust.

JIM JOLLY

From the President's Desk

I have recently had two rewarding experiences. The first was working with a team of young, enthusiastic juniors on the shearwater translocation project in the Marlborough Sounds. To see the young people get willingly into all aspects of the work, moulding into a team, and building lasting friendships makes the effort of planning and organising worthwhile. They are the future of the Society and I see few problems ahead if they are a sample of our young members. I hope that other young members will avail themselves of future opportunities to become involved in Society projects. (See the report on the shearwater transfer project in the next newsletter.)

The other rewarding experience was calling on a very remote member, Rob Schuchard, to discuss banding and to learn about his current personal project – the seasonal distribution and feeding activities of King Shags. It is good to see members such as Rob working in isolation and I am delighted to be able to help by trying to find some reference material for him. We often forget the problems of isolated members and we should always try to help them when we can. Don't leave it all for the RR.

Within the next few weeks we have the Annual Conference weekend. Annual General Meetings have a tendency to turn people off, but the Society's AGM is only a very small part of the weekend. It is a time to learn something from other members, to visit habitats of interest, and especially to make and renew friendships. Ornithology is the study of birds, but it also has a social side which for many is very important. I would recommend that you try our Annual Conference if you haven't done so before now. Those who have, just keep coming back! Give your support to the Wairarapa region, who this year have worked hard to organise an interesting programme for us.

For most species the nesting season and post-breeding moult is over, so we have to look to other activities for the next few months. There are still many things we can do. For those who like to walk the beaches there is always beach patrolling. This can be worthwhile following the winter storms. Another worthwhile activity can be passerine banding – both the birds which visit our gardens and those which feed in flocks through pastures and orchards. Most regions are now covered by group banding schemes. Consult your RR if you are interested.

Finally, our Membership Secretary reported a steady growth of membership during 1991. Let us see that we keep this up, but to achieve it we all need to seek new members actively. The challenge is there for us all to join up a new member.

BRIAN D. BELL
President

Fleming Memorial – Chatham Islands

On Saturday, 9 November 1991, the commemorative plaque to "Old Blue", Sir Charles Alexander Fleming, and the staff of the Wildlife Service was unveiled at the Chatham Island Airport Terminal by the County Chairman Mr Albert Preece (Snr).

The ceremony began with a prayer by the Anglican minister Rewai Preece. A welcome was given by the Kamatua, Mr Sandy Hough, which was followed by a waiata from the Wharekanui Maori Committee. The President of the Ornithological Society, Brian Bell, then explained the background and significance of the memorial.

Sir Charles Fleming had made several trips to the Chathams. Perhaps the most significant trip was in 1937-38 when, along with Graham Turbott and local school teacher Alan Wotherspoon, he rediscovered the Black Robin on Little Mangere Island. On his return to New Zealand he published a major paper on the birds of the Chatham Islands, which remains the basic text for the island group. Sir Charles continued his interest in the Chathams and was influential in having South East Island, and later Mangere Island, set aside as nature reserves.

Sir Charles followed the transfer of Black Robins from Little Mangere to Mangere closely. Both he and Lady Fleming were present during the second transfer of birds, in March 1977. He encouraged those involved in the manipulation of the Robin eggs and



OSNZ President Brian Bell (left) and Chatham Islands County Chairman Bunty Preece (right) at the unveiling of the commemorative plaque.

nestlings. Later, he was very keen to see a memorial established to "Old Blue", the key Black Robin in the recovery of that species, and to the Wildlife Officers involved in the programme.

Before this aim was achieved, however, Sir Charles died. The Fleming family asked that any recognition of Sir Charles by the Ornithological Society be a one off occasion rather than another perpetual award or something similar. The family suggested that perhaps the memorial plaque which Sir Charles had suggested could also make reference to his work and that this could be erected on the Chathams. OSNZ, assisted by a generous contribution from the family, proceeded to prepare and erect the memorial. The local County Council were very happy to be associated with the erection of the memorial and suggested the most appropriate site.

Brian Bell also spoke about the importance of the Black Robin project, but stressed that this was the beginning of active conservation in the Chathams. There was much more to be done with other endangered species, problem animals, and habitats to protect. There had been many changes since the Wildlife Service began the programme. The Service had been incorporated into the new Department of Conservation. More responsibility had been given to local people through the Conservation Board. The opportunity is there for all to contribute our collective responsibility.

Mr Bell was followed by the Mr David Holmes, the elder statesman of the Chatham Islands. He paid tribute to Sir Charles' contribution to the birds of the islands and to the Ornithological Society's involvement. He expressed the hope that the reserves - South East, Mangere, and Pitt Islands - would prosper and that species such as the Chatham Island Pigeon would increase again.

Mr Alfred Preece spoke briefly about Sir Charles, saying he was an instigator in the well being of wildlife and that he was a giver not a taker. Mr Preece then unveiled the plaque and the ceremony ended with a Maori hymn and blessing.

The plaque reads:

**THIS PLAQUE WAS ERECTED TO
COMMEMORATE
OLD BLUE
1970-1983**

**FEMALE BLACK ROBIN
PETROICA TRAVERI
SAVIOUR OF HER SPECIES**

**SIR CHARLES ALEXANDER
FLEMING 1916-1987 WHO
REDISCOVERED THE BLACK
ROBIN ON LITTLE MANGERE
ISLAND 2 JANUARY 1938 AND
STRESSED THE UNIQUENESS- AND
PLIGHT- OF THE CHATHAM
ISLAND BIOTA.**

**THE STAFF OF THE NEW ZEALAND
WILDLIFE SERVICE (1947-1987) FOR
THEIR COMMITMENT AND
INGENUITY OVER THE YEARS
1976-1987 IN RESCUING THE BLACK
ROBIN FROM NEAR EXTINCTION.**

**THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF NZ
AND THE FLEMING FAMILY**

Falla Memorial Award & A.T. Edgar Junior Award - 1992

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Secretary, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, by 30 June 1992. Nominations should be on the standard form, which is obtainable from RRs.

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

A full summary of OSNZ awards procedures was published in *OSNZ news* 58 (March 1991).

**RAEWYN EMPSON,
Secretary**

Bird book auction

It has been proposed that a bird book auction be held in conjunction with this years AGM in Masterton, probably on the Saturday night (16 May) at the conclusion of the dinner.

Many people have bird books they no longer require. These books, however, could be of value to others, particularly new and younger members and the auction could be a practical way of bringing this about.

We propose to charge a commission comparable with commercial book auctions and proceeds from this would go towards completion of the OSNZ Bird Slide Library. This way vendors will not lose out. However, if vendors so wished, all the money received for a book could go to OSNZ - this is purely optional. A number of members will be asked to act as celebrity auctioneers and this should add to the entertainment if not the takings.

A request is made on the registration form for information on any books people may wish to sell. Please complete this as fully as possible as it will allow us to catalogue the books beforehand.

TENICK DENNISON

Postal Auction



The Otago region offers for postal auction an original watercolour of the NZ Kingfisher by Derek J. Onley.

Dimensions:
Mounted 45 x 34 cm.
Actual picture dimensions:
33 x 20 cm.

Proceeds towards ornithology in Otago.

Postal address for bids: Peter Schweigman, 121 Maryhill Terrace, Dunedin.

Auction closes at midnight 14 May 1992.

Late offers accepted after this date at the AGM in Masterton until midnight 16 May 1992, with a beer for the auctioneer.

The Successful bidder will be able to collect the painting the next morning, 17 May 1992, upon paying the accepted sum.

Bird banding in Western Australia, 1992

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

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

Field trip dates for the rest of 1992 are: 11-15 May, 15-19 June, 13-17 July, 14-18 September.

Transport and accommodation on field trips is provided free of charge. A Field Allowance of A\$10 per day will be paid to volunteers. The maximum number of volunteers per trip is three.

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

PERRY DE REBEIRA

Cape York – Iron Range

It is proposed that we organise a tour of Cape York Peninsula, Australia for a 2-week period in August/September 1993. It would be organised in conjunction with Bert Bolton Outback Track Tours. An experienced Australian ornithologist would lead the trip. Up to 340 species have been recorded in the area.

The cost of approximately A\$1300 includes all travel, meals, camping gear (except sleeping bag), and fees. This does not include return airfare to Cairns – we would organise a group booking for this part of the trip.

We need a year's lead time to set up the tour, which would involve either 15 people for the Toyota Coach or 28 people for the Volvo.

Those interested please contact either Christine McRae or Jim Hamilton at P.O. Box 755, Hastings or phone (06) 879 9136, by end of July 1992.

CHRISTINE MCRAE

Migratory waders colour marked in NZ

On 22 Dec. 1991, the Miranda Banders conducted a successful cannon netting operation at Jordan's on the Kaipara Harbour. The catch included 85 Pied Oystercatchers, 77 Bar-tailed Godwits, and 102 Lesser Knots. These totals included several retraps of birds originally banded by the group, plus 2 Lesser Knots banded in Australia.

In addition to a numbered metal band, a white leg flag was attached (on the right tibia) to 67 of the Bar-tailed Godwits and 101 of the Lesser Knots. Members are asked to check carefully any of these species that they see and report sightings of colour marked birds to the Banding Office, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

ADRIAN RIEGEN

NZ Dotterels go ORANGE

No, this has nothing to do with breeding plumage. In order to give us more band

combinations for our studies of NZ Dotterels, we recently added bright orange colour bands to the range we use. There are now six possible colours, namely O = orange, R = red, B = blue, Y = yellow, G = green, and W = white.

Please report sightings of any banded NZ Dotterels to the Banding Office, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington, who will pass them on to me. Please remember that all birds have a metal band (although it may be quite hard to see) and that band combinations should be recorded left leg first and top to bottom e.g. OM-WG is orange above metal on the bird's left leg, white above green on it's right.

JOHN DOWDING

Mystery Bird # 6

Last issue's large, mainly white-bodied, exceptionally longwinged, soaring mystery bird can only be a few New Zealand seabird species of the gannet/booby group. The bird's appearance roughly resembles that of an albatross, but the large wedged tail, pale leading edge of the underwing, and relatively small head eliminate this group from contention.

Three species of gannet and booby occur in New Zealand – Australasian Gannet, Masked Booby and Brown Booby. Unlike mystery bird # 6, Brown Booby adults have a brown neck and throat extending down to the breast, and juvenile Brown Boobies are speckled brown over their underparts. Juvenile Masked Boobies and Australasian Gannets have a lot of brown plumage and are speckled with white. Mystery bird # 6 could not be a juvenile of these species because their dark colouring would be clearly visible in the photograph.

There are two characteristics of the underparts which readily distinguish between an adult Australasian Gannet and a Masked Booby. The darkness around the face of the booby, which gives the bird its name, is different to the white throat and yellow crown and nape of the gannet. The dark face of our mystery bird is clearly visible in the photograph, therefore it can be safely identified as a Masked Booby. The totally dark tail feathers of mystery bird # 6 are also characteristic of the booby. Adult Australasian Gannets normally have the outer four pairs of tail feathers white, although this varies to some extent and the occasional individual has all 12 tail feathers black (Sibson, R.B. 1988. *Notornis* 35: 261-264). The Cape Gannet, which may straggle here, also normally has a totally dark tail.



Masked Booby. (Photo Alan Tennyson)

The Masked Booby (also known as the Blue-faced Booby) is widespread, breeding on islands in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and the Caribbean Sea. In New Zealand, it breeds in small numbers at the Kermadec Islands. It is a rare straggler to mainland New Zealand.

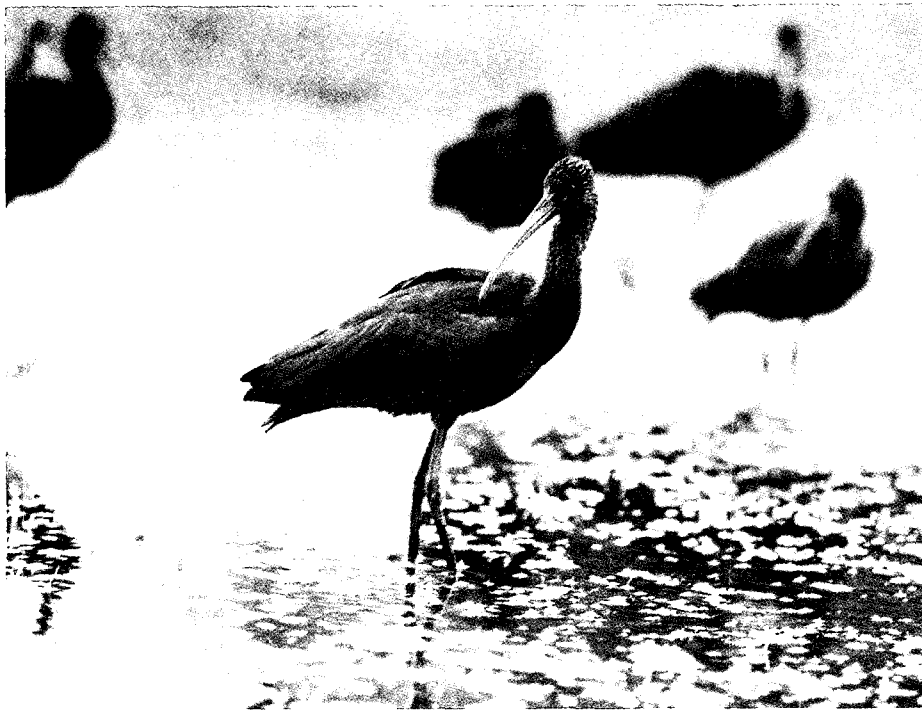
ALAN TENNYSON



RAOU Column

This year will see a number of changes in the RAOU. Our image is being revamped with a new logo to broaden our appeal to everyone, not just ornithologists and the more serious birdwatchers. The Five-year Forward Plan has been approved by Council and various far-reaching objectives are now being implemented. These include a membership drive and the relocation of Headquarters. With 11 people working full-time the converted suburban house that is our head office is now far too small, although it served its purpose adequately when it was first purchased. A subcommittee has been formed to find suitable new premises with adequate work and storage space and extra room for our growing library and sales activities.

Projects, both old and new, will continue to be a major part of RAOU activities in 1992. Volume 2 of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* will be completed on schedule and is due for publication early in 1993. BHP Petroleum purchased the



Mystery Bird # 7

Identify this bird. Answer next issue.

National Wader Counts – 1990 & 1991

When initially conceived it was envisaged that the National Wader Count project would run for 5 years and then perhaps undergo some change of emphasis. However, such has been the enthusiasm from members throughout the country that the project has continued well beyond the original life expectancy.

In Nov/Dec 1988 and June/July 1989, we completed the sixth summer and winter national wader counts respectively (*OSNZ news* 57). Although counts have continued, the national coverage has faltered a little and some counts were completed outside the established time frame. The project was discussed at the Society's June 1991 AGM (*OSNZ news* 61) and this resulted in a return to almost full national coverage for the November 1991 count.

Here I present a preliminary report on the national wader counts conducted during 1990 and 1991. Thanks to all those who responded so promptly to my requests for the additional information which made this report as complete as possible.

Summer

As for previous summer counts, participants were asked to pay particular attention to migratory waders from the Northern Hemisphere and, whenever possible, also to count NZ-breeding species.

Coverage for the counts was as follows: 1990 – no reports received for the Far

North, South Kaipara Harbour, Taranaki and Wanganui; 1991 – no reports from Taranaki, Wanganui and Southland. Bad weather during November thwarted the plans of Southland members and prevented them completing their usual efficient counts. The Southland count was eventually completed in February, but this was considered to be too far outside the count period for the rest of the country to be included here. Such variations in coverage make year-to-year comparisons of wader numbers difficult and only relatively high counts of particular species may be compared with any degree of confidence.

Totals of 153 256 and 177 188 waders were counted during Nov/Dec 1990 and 1991 respectively. The increase in total numbers from 1990 to 1991 was due to the inclusion of counts from the Far North and South Kaipara Harbour.

Distribution: Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted are listed in Table 1. As found in all previous counts the general pattern in summer is that most waders are concentrated in the north (Parengarenga to Kawhia, and the bay of Plenty and Nelson regions).

For the second time during this series of counts, more than 10 000 birds were counted at Parengarenga – due to the exceptionally large numbers of Lesser Knots (see below). Otherwise, the pattern was the same as in all previous counts with Manukau Harbour, Farewell spit, Kaipara Harbour and the Firth of Thames comprising the top 5 localities in the country for waders.

Total numbers: Summaries of wader totals by region and year are given in Tables 2 & 3. Once again, Bar-tailed Godwits and

TABLE 1. Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted in Nov/Dec 1990 and/or 1991. nc, not covered.

Location	1990	1991
Manukau Harbour	46261	42089
Farewell Spit	34868	26854
Parengarenga Harbour	nc	19364
Kaipara Harbour	3936*	17401
Firth of Thames	11505	7743
Whangarei Harbour	6432	9750
Rangaunu	nc	6379
Tauranga Harbour	4236	6246
Ohope/Ohiwa	3680	4848
Houhora	nc	4097
Kawhia Harbour	4228	3441
Waimea Estuary	4608	2701
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	1682	2515
Motueka Estuary	3878	2190
Lake Ellesmere	2153	1860
Golden Bay	1154	1652
Aotea Harbour	1948	1603
Lake Wairarapa	1305	1254
Nelson Haven	992	1145
Maketu Estuary/Kaitune Cut	1101	1139
Invercargill Estuary	6284	nc
Riverton Estuary	1014	nc

* North Kaipara only counted

Lesser Knots made up the majority of the birds counted and the order of abundance of the top 5 migratory waders remained the same as in most previous counts i.e. Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot, Turnstone, Golden Plover, and Red-necked Stint.

Numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits have remained above average, following the record high of 101 701 in 1988. The count of 85 666 in 1991 is the second highest for this species in this series of counts. There was a record count of Lesser Knots (67 367) in November 1991, topping the previous high of 65 102 in 1988. The low count of 42 799 in 1990 is probably a reflection of the lack of coverage in the Far North and at South Kaipara that year.

Turnstone numbers have decreased markedly over the past 2 years. The counts of 2394 and 3099 in 1990 and 1991 respectively are the lowest on record – the previous lowest count was 4216 in 1988. In both 1990 and 1991, the totals for Golden Plover and Red-necked Stint fell within the ranges of counts obtained in previous years.

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

Species distribution: As in previous years, Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots favoured the harbours and estuaries of the Far North, Northland, Auckland, South Auckland, the Bay of Plenty and Nelson regions. Highlight of the Lesser Knot totals was the large concentration of 13 500 at Parengarenga in November 1991, which was almost twice the previous highest total (7220 in Nov. 1989).

Turnstones were concentrated at Parengarenga – 500 (1991), Rangaunu – 230 (1991), Kaipara Harbour – 195 (1991), Manukau Harbour – 338 (1990) & 342 (1991), Firth of Thames – 110 (1991), Tauranga Harbour – 170 (1990) & 200

(1991), Farewell Spit - 608 (1991), Lake Grassmere - 200+ (1991), Invercargill Estuary - 800 (1990), and Fortrose Estuary - 133 (1990).

Golden Plovers favoured Parengarenga - 60 (1991), Rangaunu - 70 (1991), Whangarei Harbour - 104 (1990), Kaipara Harbour - 32 (1990) & 19 (1991), Manukau Harbour - 80 (1990) & 35 (1991), Maketu Estuary/Kaitune Cut - 41 (1990) & 40 (1991), Little Waihi - 56 (1990), Ohope/Ohiwa - 13 (1990), Ahuriri Estuary - 22 (1990) & 20 (1991), Manawatu Estuary - 39 (1990) & 26 (1991), Lake Wairarapa - 65 (1990) & 53 (1991), and Lake Ellesmere - 12 (1990 & 1991). Red-necked Stints were to be found mainly at Parengarenga - 18 (1991), Manukau Harbour - 23 (1991), Farewell Spit - 22 (1991), Lake Ellesmere - 40 (1990) & 80 (1991), and Awarua Bay - 29 (1991).

Among the rarer waders favoured sites were: Curlew Sandpipers - Parengarenga - 39 (1991) and Lake Ellesmere - 27 (1991); Far Eastern Curlew - Manukau Harbour - 19 (1990) & 9 (1991) and Farewell Spit - 7 (1991); whimbrel - Firth of Thames - 12 (1990) & 15 (1991), Kawhia Harbour - 13 (1991) and Farewell Spit - 20 (1991).

... and Winter

The 7th and 8th national winter wader counts were completed during June and the first week of July in 1990 and 1991 respectively. Coverage of these counts was the same in both years, with no reports being received for the Far North, South Kaipara Harbour, Taranaki and Wanganui. In 1991, the Southland count was completed in late July. This will have affected the numbers of NZ-breeding species, which would have been lower than if the count had been completed earlier. However, the totals for Northern Hemisphere species should have been relatively unaffected.

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

These national winter wader counts resulted in 119 725 and 123 819 waders being counted in 1990 and 1991 respectively.

Distribution: Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted are listed in Table 4. As in all previous winter counts the general pattern of distribution was that most waders were concentrated at 4 main locations - Manukau Harbour, Firth of Thames, Farewell Spit, and Kaipara Harbour. Manukau Harbour supported about twice the number of waders of any other location in the country.

TABLE 2 - Waders counted in New Zealand, November - December 1990.

	N'Land	Auckland S'Island	Waikato	BOP	Gisborne Wairoa	Hawkes Bay	Manawatu	Wairarapa	Wellington	Marlboro	Nelson	West Coast	Can'ty	Otago	S'land	TOTAL
Pied Oystercatcher	1000	6860	775	122	-	13	21	6	-	25	2514	133	1199	932	963	14563
Variable Oystercatcher	104	-	7	207	3	8	35	9	5	14	216	36	4	82	42	772
Golden Plover	136	80	-	110	15	23	39	65	-	12	1	12	-	38	-	531
Spur-winged Plover	-	-	7	126	6	139	6	558	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	846*
NZ Dotterel	30	13	5	110	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	163
Banded Dotterel	8	4	5	35	9	31	-	25	8	-	148	52	404	16	26	771
Mongolian Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	10	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	20
Wrybill	3	48	1	1	-	6	-	1	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	90
Far Eastern Curlew	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	30	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	8
Whimbrel sp.	-	-	12	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	23
Bar-tailed Godwit	6057	26112	5270	8747	311	771	569	77	5	48	26191	211	1614	1609	4958	62550
Hudsonian Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
Black-tailed Godwit	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Marsh Sandpiper	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Terek Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
Siberian Tattler	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	3
Tattler sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sanderling	-	392	-	200	-	5	2	-	3	27	784	-	18	-	963	2394
Turnstone	2250	22766	6	66	-	5	226	11	3	19	16418	8	30	-	991	42799
Lesser Knot	-	12	1	1	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	13	-	6	37
Sharp-t. Sandpiper	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Pectoral Sandpiper	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	16	-	5	29
Curlew Sandpiper	-	16	-	2	-	6	-	-	-	-	11	-	40	-	29	104
Red-necked Stint	892	1418	92	494	156	434	27	538	16	85	93	65	2052	748	294	7504
Pied Stilt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Black Stilt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	10580	57766	6176	10227	502	1449	933	1305	44	219	46398	506	5442	3391	8318	153256

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

TABLE 3 - Waders counted in New Zealand, November - December 1991.

	Far North	N'Land	Auckland S'Island	Waikato	BOP	Gisborne Wairoa	Hawkes Bay	Manawatu	Wairarapa	Wellington	Marlboro	Nelson	West Coast	Can'ty	Otago	TOTAL
Pied Oystercatcher	3	798	6243	630	92	-	11	8	12	9	11	2085	104	758	991	11755
Variable Oystercatcher	83	228	34	6	245	15	18	12	2	34	9	206	30	12	50	982
Golden Plover	130	-	54	-	43	8	20	26	53	-	-	5	-	12	-	351
Grey Plover	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3
Spur-winged Plover	nc	-	38	3	73	14	119	16	561	14	-	-	-	-	-	838*
NZ Dotterel	72	33	40	17	85	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	254
Banded Dotterel	25	-	5	19	24	14	59	-	13	3	32	70	7	149	12	432
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	2	13	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Wrybill	-	1	33	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	42
Far Eastern Curlew	1	-	10	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	5	-	1	-	19
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	1	16	-	10	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	29
Whimbrel sp.	16	-	5	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	6	-	60
Bar-tailed Godwit	10700	7453	25882	4268	11976	239	743	547	13	1	17	18302	206	2541	2778	85666
A. Black-tailed Godwit	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	4
Terek Sandpiper	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Siberian Tattler	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Sanderling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Turnstone	744	10	647	3	230	4	43	16	7	6	280	1022	-	90	3	3093
Lesser Knot	18000	2044	33678	11	106	12	132	260	8	4	10	13007	-	95	-	87367
Sharp-t. Sandpiper	4	1	11	-	7	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	20	-	49
Pectoral Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Curlew Sandpiper	40	-	21	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	11	-	27	-	102
Red-necked Stint	20	-	23	-	2	-	17	3	-	-	-	22	-	80	-	167
Pied Stilt	nc	165	1630	73	233	225	404	45	578	47	139	62	62	1665	605	5933
Black/Hybrid Stilt	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
TOTAL	29840	10732	68375	5044	13132	537	1582	942	1254	119	499	34822	409	5462	4439	177188

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

TABLE 4. Localities where more than 1000 waders were counted in June/July 1990 and/or 1991.

Location	1990	1991
Manukau Harbour	42515	41769
Firth of Thames	20625	20384
Farewell Spit	12341	1558
North Kaipara Harbour	6788	5618
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	3462	4573
Whangarei Harbour	2401	4479
Motueka Estuary	3244	3682
Kawhia Harbour	3067	3627
Waimea Estuary	248	3475
Golden Bay	1342	3258
Tauranga Harbour	1993	3011
Lake Wairarapa	1749	1555
Ohope/Ohiwa	1490	1499
Aotea Harbour	1162	532
Otago Harbour	1050	685
Invercargill Estuary	1681	917

Total numbers: Summaries of wader totals by region and year are given in Tables 5 & 6. Following the record high of 87 868 Pied Oystercatchers counted in 1989 we achieved a record low count of this species (70 190) in 1990; the 1991 count was about average. However, previous winter counts have shown that substantial numbers of Pied Oystercatchers are likely to have been in the Far North and South Kaipara Harbour, and so would not have been counted during 1990 and 1991. In both years the numbers of Pied Stilts were within the range of previous counts. As with the Pied Oystercatchers, totals for Banded Dotterels and Wrybills were low, but many Banded Dotterels in particular overwinter in the Far North, while some Wrybills favour South Kaipara Harbour,

TABLE 5 — Waders counted in New Zealand, June — July 1990.

	N'Land	Auckland S.Auck	Waikato	BOP	Gisborne Waioke	Hawkes Bay	Manawatu	Wairarapa	Wellington	Marlboro.	Nelson	West Coast	Canty	Otago	S'land	TOTAL
Pied Oystercatcher	6064	39545	2896	583	-	25	35	24	5	32	12541	436	3752	2653	1599	70190
Variable Oystercatcher	187	8	12	369	2	15	82	10	20	7	220	33	27	127	60	1179
Golden Plover	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Spur-winged Plover	-	-	13	118	20	262	-	117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	530*
NZ Dotterel	50	16	9	151	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	8	236
Banded Dotterel	404	693	481	714	64	122	53	454	17	19	1004	124	552	260	565	5526
Mongolian Dotterel	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	3	-	6	19	108	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	141
Wrybill	70	3581	-	92	-	60	16	-	-	1	-	-	7	-	-	3827
Far Eastern Curlew	-	4	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Asiatic Whimbrel	3	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Whimbrel sp.	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	4
Bar-tailed Godwit	879	6885	436	1505	48	159	53	2	3	4237	41	433	588	625	15894	
Hudsonian Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Siberian Tattler	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Tattler sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Turnstone	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	78	83
Lesser Knot	-	4903	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	248	-	-	-	-	172	5348
Sharp-t. Sandpiper	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Red-necked Stint	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Pied Stilt	2018	7486	341	838	1061	978	65	1034	98	63	281	110	1094	573	675	16715
Black/Hybrid Stilt	-	11	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	30
TOTAL	9676	63140	4229	4375	1195	1629	324	1749	142	126	18534	744	5876	4203	3783	119725

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

TABLE 6 — Waders counted in New Zealand, June — July 1991.

	N'Land	Auckland S.Auck	Waikato	BOP	Gisborne Waioke	Hawkes Bay	Manawatu	Wairarapa	Wellington	Marlboro.	Nelson	West Coast	Canty	Otago	S'land	TOTAL
Pied Oystercatcher	7044	41477	2970	1053	-	54	14	20	8	20	16671	802	4824	2206	974	78137
Variable Oystercatcher	244	13	7	316	10	2	17	-	46	4	332	63	31	67	1	1153
Grey Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Spur-winged Plover	25	-	-	129	136	163	22	622	20	-	1	-	-	-	-	1117*
NZ Dotterel	23	28	13	137	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	13	221
Banded Dotterel	235	614	277	846	50	207	88	97	16	235	1627	29	648	204	81	5254
Large Sand Dotterel	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	5	2	6	14	21	-	9	-	-	119	-	-	177
Wrybill	170	2633	-	51	-	83	16	-	-	-	25	-	3	-	-	2981
Far Eastern Curlew	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Asiatic Whimbrel	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Whimbrel sp.	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	6
Bar-tailed Godwit	902	3783	663	1797	14	99	9	-	-	3706	54	402	423	377	12229	
Terek Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tattler sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
Sanderling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Turnstone	-	52	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	41	141	-	-	-	42	293
Lesser Knot	-	4174	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	478	-	-	-	50	4706
Sharp-t. Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Curlew Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	3
Red-necked Stint	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	7	-	26	-	-	37
Pied Stilt	1867	9368	224	1101	531	621	115	795	98	446	556	83	1283	304	95	17487
Black/Hybrid Stilt	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	4
TOTAL	10510	62153	4159	5453	743	1238	295	1555	188	755	23558	1031	7343	3204	1634	123819

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

so this probably accounts for these results.

Of the remaining NZ-breeding species, the numbers of Variable Oystercatchers and NZ Dotterels were well below previous counts, but once again this probably reflects the lack of coverage in the Far North and South Kaipara rather than any population decline. Totals for these species should not be taken as indications of population size as these species do not congregate at estuaries and harbours to the same extent as other species, and some remain widely spaced on sandy beaches which generally are not covered during this series of counts.

A noteworthy count of 119 Black-fronted Dotterels was achieved in Canterbury. All these birds were on the Ashburton River, where the population

appears to be doubling every year (D. Geddes, pers. comm.)

Record counts of overwintering Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots were made in 1989 (17 170 and 7145 respectively), so it is no surprise that totals for these species declined in both 1990 and 1991. Turnstone numbers in 1990, however, were at a new low (83) and the previous low count of 292 in 1985 was only just matched by the 1991 count of 293. Where were the Nelson and Auckland/South Auckland flocks of Turnstones in 1990?

Species distribution: As in all previous winter counts the harbours and estuaries of the Auckland/South Auckland and Nelson regions were the most important wintering grounds for Pied Oystercatchers.

In 1990, the Auckland/South Auckland and Nelson regions supported about 56% and 18% respectively of the national total of Pied Oystercatchers, and in 1991 comparable figures were 53% and 21%. The highest counts of Pied Oystercatchers were at Manukau Harbour - 27 395 (1990) & 28 224 (1991), Firth of Thames - 12 150 (1990) & 13 253 (1991), North Kaipara Harbour - 4775 (1990) and 3996 (1991), Kawhia Harbour - 2160 (1990) & 2560 (1991), Farewell Spit - 7328 (1990) & 7342 (1991), Waimea Estuary - 2711 (1991), Motueka Estuary - 2873 (1990) & 3083 (1991), and the Avon-Heathcote Estuary - 2847 (1990) & 4022 (1991).

Some 45% and 54% of the Pied Stilts counted were located in Auckland/South Auckland regions during the 1990 and 1991 counts respectively. Further north, Northland supported 12% and 11% of the national total. The highest counts of Pied Stilts were at the North Kaipara harbour - 1534 (1990) & 1319 (1991), Manukau Harbour - 2460 (1990) & 4697 (1991), Firth of Thames - 5026 (1990) & 4671 (1991).

Banded Dotterel numbers were fairly evenly distributed in the North and South Islands. Favoured sites for this species were Whangarei Harbour - 368 (1990) & 204 (1991), Manukau Harbour - 660 (1990) & 591 (1991), Kawhia Harbour - 480 (1990) & 260 (1991), Tauranga Harbour - 416 (1991), Farewell Spit - 935 (1990) & 925 (1991), Lake Ellesmere - 389 (1990) & 305 (1991), and the Invercargill Estuary - 353 (1990). Wrybills were almost solely confined to Auckland/South Auckland, where 1081 (1990) and 1330 (1991) were counted at Manukau Harbour and 2500 (1990) and 1303 (1991) at the Firth of Thames.

Footnote:

Now that the National Wader Counts are back on schedule and with full national coverage we have a solid base for comparing species totals between years. To continue with this national coverage, however, requires the participation of a large number of members. So don't leave it to others to have all the enjoyment and satisfaction of contributing to an important project with international interest (don't forget that the results of this project are also incorporated into a review of migratory wader populations throughout the East Asian/West Pacific Flyway) - contact your RR or local organiser of wader counts and put your name down to participate in the June/July counts.

PAUL SAGAR
Coordinator, National Wader Counts

Fiordland Crested Penguin near New Plymouth

The Fiordland Crested Penguin in the photograph was found ashore at Perth Road, near Okato, on 21 Nov. 1991. It had an injured foot and flipper. It was

subsequently released off the coast at New Plymouth after receiving several days care at the nearby Pouaki Zoo Park. This is only the second known record of this species in Taranaki. The first was of a bird present for some 2 years at Mohakatino in 1980/81.



Fiordland Crested Penguin, New Plymouth, November 1991.

(Photo. David Medway)

It seems opportune to point out here that in the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds it is stated that the joint type-specimen of the Rockhopper Penguin was from Bruny Island, Tasmania in 1773 and reference for this is given to Forster in Carins Emu 74: 55-57 article. This is not correct. Carins himself specifically recommended that this 1773 record be deleted for the Rockhopper Penguin because it does not refer to that species.

DAVID MEDWAY

Food of the Morepork in Taranaki

The gizzard contents of 19 Moreporks (7 males, 10 females, and 2 of unknown sex) were examined from dead birds deposited at the Taranaki Museum. Most of the birds were collected around human habitation outside the known breeding season after they were struck by road vehicles, flew into windows, or died of unknown causes.

Only 6 of the 160 prey items were vertebrates. One female (190 g) had the remains of 3 House Mice; another female (180 g) had the remains of an unidentified small passerine. Each of the other two vertebrate prey, one small rodent or bird and the other a House Mouse was found in the gizzard of a female.

Of the 154 invertebrate prey taken, 93 were moths (many Hepialidae) in 9 birds, 17 were wetas in 8 birds, and 20 were beetles in 5 birds. The remaining 24 prey were made up of 6 cockroaches, 4 spiders, 4 katydid, 3 caterpillars, 2 stick insects, a harvestman, a chafer beetle, and unidentified material.

J.M. CLARK

Falcon food in the subantarctic

On 9 Feb. 1992 I joined the *S.V. Tradewind* on a subantarctic voyage.

We returned to the Auckland Islands on 19 Feb. and anchored at Camp Cave in Carnley Harbour. During the afternoon a party went ashore and it was not long before a Falcon was seen. Eventually it took up a position in a large rata tree overlooking Crab Bay.

The forest floor in this area was littered with circular feather patterns where the Falcon had plucked its prey. I have seen many such "kills" in the hill country near Dunedin. The main difference here was the addition of the complete wings of the prey; neatly dissected at the joint. All the "kills" were of Antarctic Prion. In one instance, the body was complete except for the head.

The following day two prions were found aboard the *Tradewind*, and this allowed a positive identification to be made. Later, as we climbed the hill above Breaksea Point, a second Falcon was seen and at the same time the dark wings of a prion or petrel were found in the tussock. The wings were similar in shape and size to those of the Antarctic Prions, but were darker.

Some years ago I found two Broad-billed Prions which had been killed by a Falcon on Powder Hill, near Dunedin.

When available, prions must be an attractive prey for NZ Falcons.

G.R. CHANCE

Curious behaviour of a Harrier

Thursday, 2 January 1992, was a warm summer day in Taupo and I had a water sprinkler watering my front lawn. About 15:00 hours, it clouded over and there was a very loud clap of thunder which appeared to come from directly overhead. My two companions at the time and I naturally looked out and were amazed to see a large bird standing on the lawn under the spray of water. The bird slowly turned around to face away from the spray and then stood still for at least 10 minutes. This allowed us to inspect it, using binoculars, from not more than 15 m. We are quite sure that it was a Harrier.

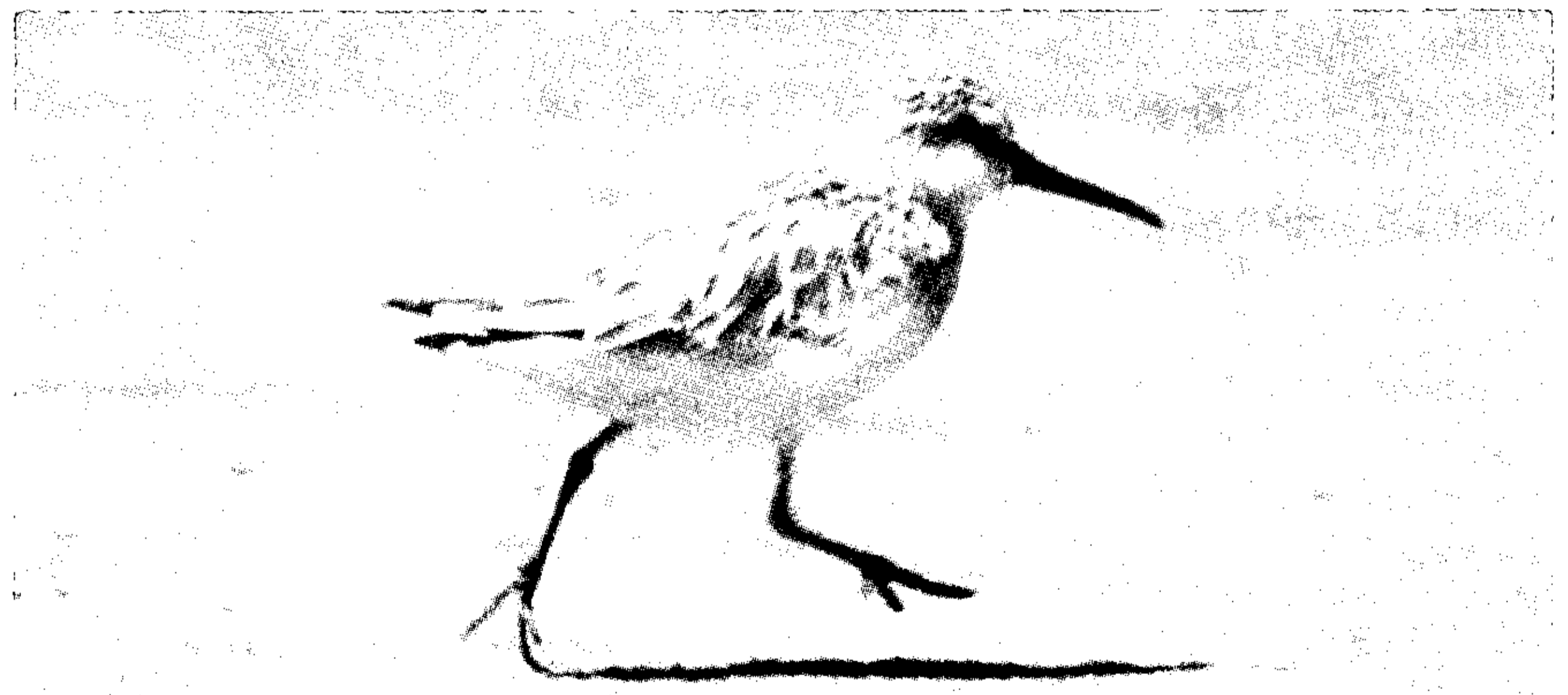
After a little while it tried to fly, but again failed and fell over. I went down and turned the hose off and was then only about a metre from the bird. It walked away slowly to some bushes at the edge of the property and had gone about two hours later, presumably recovered.

My suggested explanation is that the Harrier was in or near the cloud at the time of the thunder clap and that it was concussed.

E.G. GIBBS

Bumper summer at Manawatu Estuary

We have enjoyed a fascinating summer at the Manawatu Estuary. Uncommon species have always been present and include Far Eastern Curlew, whimbrel, tattler, Red-necked Stint, White-winged Black Tern, and Sharp-tailed, Curlew, Terek and Broad-billed Sandpipers. The latter has caused quite a stir with notable members from as far afield as Silverstream and Hamilton flocking to have a glimpse!



Broad-bill Sandpiper at Manawatu Estuary, 8 February 1992. (Photo David Medway)

Also of interest has been the number of birds at the estuary. This year we have had record numbers of Lesser Knots (421), which is virtually twice the previous high count, of Red-necked Stints (10) and Turnstone (34). The Turnstones included a group of 25 which were obviously on passage – they kept circling in a tight formation, calling freely before flying up and away.

Add to this the usual Wrybills, Golden Plovers, Banded Dotterels, Pied Oystercatchers, Variable Oystercatchers, Pied Stilts, Spur-winged Plovers, and of course the most common species, Bar-tailed Godwit, and you begin to appreciate how good the birding has been!

ROB GUEST

Spoonbills in the Catlins

Royal Spoonbills show persistence in extending their range southwards. On 7 Jan. 1992, one of our tour parties spotted a spoonbill incongruously battling a stiff southerly to round the Nugget Point lighthouse. Two days later another party was thrilled to see three spoonbills feeding in the Tahakopa Estuary, just above the Papatowai Bridge.

FERGUS SUTHERLAND

Recent Reports

These reports cover the months Nov. to mid Feb., but I have included some of the more important records from the ill-fated spring contributions.

Please send records for the June OSNZ news to me at 49 Bernera Street, RD 1, Waikouaiti, to arrive by 20 May.

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

Many thanks to all contributors.

Seabirds

Few birdwatchers went boating over the summer, and when they did there was not much to see. On a trip from Whitianga to Cuvier I. on 27 Nov. and 4 Dec., Flesh-footed Shearwaters were by far the most numerous birds; there was also the odd Giant Petrel, Diving Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Fluttering Shearwater. A Grey-faced Petrel and a White-faced Storm Petrel visited birdwatchers in Hamilton, the first in early Oct. and the latter in Jan.

A moulting Yellow-eyed Penguin at Motunau (North Canterbury) on 21 Jan. was further north than usual, as were 2 Fiordland Crested penguins on the Northland east coast and the boatshed on Kapiti I. Further south than usual was a Little Black Shag at the Avon Heathcote Estuary (Canterbury) on 10 Dec.; a first record for this location.

The Gannet colony at Farewell Spit (Nelson) held at least 3000 adults with 841 chicks in early Feb. – and a Brown Booby on 8 Jan.

Gulls & Terns

Six pairs of Fairy Terns attempted to nest in Northland, fledging 6 chicks to date and in the Auckland area 3 pairs nested at Mangawhai and 1 unsuccessfully at Papakanui, South Kaipara Head. Little Terns arrived as usual in late spring, with 2 at the Tukituki Estuary (Hawkes Bay) and 4 at the Waimea Estuary (Nelson).

Grey Ternlets were reported from the Poor Knights Is (Northland) and the regular Wellington Crested Tern frequented Pukerua Bay from mid Sept.

Surprisingly, no skuas were reported from the Canterbury coast over the

summer, but higher numbers than usual were seen in Hawkes Bay and Otago. In Hawkes Bay there were 3 at Waitangi on 23 Nov., 2 at Cape Kidnappers the next day, and 10-12 off Awatoto on 2 Jan. Six Arctic Skuas were identified off Waitangi on 7 Dec. and at Karitane (Otago), up to 10 Arctics were present in late Dec. – early Jan. A Southern Skua also appeared at Karitane on 4 Jan.

Hérons etc

The Little Egret at E. Clive (Hawkes Bay) was still there on 20 Nov. and 1 at Mangere (Auckland) stayed into Jan. 1 was present at the Waimēa Estuary (Northland) in late Jan. and another was seen at Berwick (Otago) in late Aug.

Several groups of Cattle Egrets stayed well into the summer. In Hawkes Bay, 9-10 remained at Fernhill until late Nov. and 7-8 were in full breeding plumage at Poukawa in the 2nd week of Dec. In Jan., 3 were in the Hope area (Northland) and 12 at Stirling (Otago).

Only 1 Reef Heron was found in a survey of 215 km of coast from Gisborne to Hicks Bay (E. Cape) and the birds breeding on the islands around Whangarei (Northland) had a hard time when predators took at least 1 adult, 3 chicks and 4 eggs. In Otago, a pair was found nesting on Maukiekie I. on 7 Dec.

Two Royal Spoonbills reached the Three Kings Is in Oct. – either from Northland or Australia. The flock at Mangere declined from a high of 47 on 9 Oct. to 8 by 15 Nov. and 0 in Jan. The winter flock at the Ahuriri Estuary (Hawkes Bay) reached 42 over winter, with 2 remaining until early Nov. and 4 at the nearby Tukituki Estuary on 17 Nov. The first sightings at the Otago breeding sites were 2 at Maukiekie I. on 12 Aug. and 6 at Green I. on 11 Oct.

Booming Bitterns were heard at Wairau and Korito Lagoons (E. Cape) and Kopuatai Swamp (Waikato) during spring. The odd bird was reported from Puketapu Ponds and West shore (Hawkes Bay) in Sept. and Oct., and at the Kaikourai Estuary (Otago) on 29 Oct.

All reports of Glossy Ibis came from the South Island, where 1 was at the Waimea Estuary (Nelson) during Nov./Dec., 5 have frequented L. Ellesmere (Canterbury) for the past 8 months or so, 6 were at Washdyke lagoon (Canterbury) on 7 Feb., and 4 were at All Day Bay (Otago) on 22 Feb.

Ducks & Grebes etc

Coastal records of Crested Grebes in winter are not that unusual, but a juvenile at Tomahawk Lagoon (Otago) on 13 Sept. was exceptional. A pair of Australasian Little Grebes nested unsuccessfully on L.

Kareta (Auckland) during Nov./Dec. Coots appear to be well established at Western Springs Lake (Auckland). Over 30 adults and several young were present during spring.

A pair of Scaup also spent the summer at Western Springs and others were seen at new sites at Puterere (Hawkes Bay) and at Totara (Otago) – where they produced 5 young.

Puponga Farm Pond at the base of Farewell Spit produced a couple of surprises – a Chestnut-breasted Shelduck in Jan. and a White-eyed Duck. New arrivals from Australia?

A Blue Duck survey in inland Hawkes Bay found only 4 on the tributaries of the Mohaka and Ngruroro Rivers and arrived at an estimate of 35-37 birds for the N. Ruahine Ranges. In Jan., 2 were found at a new site in the Ahimanawa Range, south of Te Haroto.

Waders

NZ Dotterels had a good breeding season around Whangarei, where 25 chicks were banded. The slow expansion south around East Cape appears to be continuing – 3 pairs and 2 single birds were counted from Hicks Bay to Gisborne, and the pair that bred at Oraka last year had returned by 2 Nov. Further south, in Hawkes Bay, 2 were seen at Porangahau Estuary on 10 Nov., with 1 on 17 Nov. This is the third successive year that NZ Dotterels have been recorded in Hawkes Bay. A colour banded bird at the Ohau Estuary (Wellington) on 24 Aug. was subsequently seen at Waikanae on 14 – 16 Oct.

The small population of Black-fronted Dotterels on the lower Taieri River (Otago) continues to intrigue, with 2 unbanded birds in a flooded paddock in late Sept.

Two Grey Plovers appeared at their usual site, Farewell Spit, in Sept. More unexpected were 2 Golden Plovers at Maungawhio Lagoon (Gisborne/Wairoa) that showed several characteristics of the American species. Single Large Sand Dotterels were seen at Farewell Spit, and Taporā and Parengarenga (Northland) over summer. Two Mongolian Dotterels were also at Parengarenga in Jan. and 1 was at Miranda (S. Auckland) in mid Oct.

Terek Sandpipers were reported from Whangarei, Muriwai Beach, Miranda, Manawatu Estuary, and Farewell Spit over summer, but there was only 1 report of Pectoral Sandpipers – from the Ahuriri Estuary (Hawkes Bay) on 1 & 7 Dec. – and a Marsh Sandpiper – from Farewell Spit in Sept. and early Feb.

Even the *Otago Daily Times* and *Timaru Herald* picked up the story of the Broad-billed Sandpiper at the Manawatu Estuary (which was how I heard about it!). This is the 10th record in NZ, but equally as rare, and not reported in the *ODT*, was

a Common Sandpiper at Whangarei. Rarer still was a Reeve at L. Ellesmere, the 6th or 7th for the country.

In contrast to last year, only 2 Hudsonian Godwits were seen – 1 at the Wade River (Auckland) on 4 Nov. and the other at Lake Ohia, Karikari (Northland) also in Nov. There were 2 Asiatic Black-tailed Godwits at Farewell Spit in early Feb. and 3 at Lake Ellesmere over the summer. The largest numbers of Far Eastern Curlew occurred, as usual, at Farewell Spit and 1 or 2 were also seen at Omaha (Auckland), Waimea Estuary (Nelson), and the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, all in Jan.

Northland seems to be a good place for whimbrel; 52 "Asiatics" were counted at Parengarenga and there were 15 more at Whangarei. The Farewell Spit count in early Feb. was 26, which included 1 of the American subspecies. Elsewhere, there was only 1 at Moa Popt (Wellington) on 14 Nov. and 2 at Shearer Swamp (Westland) in late Sept.

Knot numbers were exceptionally high at Parengarenga – 13 500 were counted in Nov., but this had declined to 10 000 by Jan. On a smaller scale, a count of 132 in Hawkes Bay was 3 times the usual number.

... and the Rest

Brown Kiwi sign was found near the Makino Hut, N. Kawekas (Hawkes Bay) on 13 Dec. Kakas were also recorded there and from Mt Holdsworth in the tararuas in Jan. At the Blowhard Reserve in the S. Kawekas, Robins were noted on 16 Jan. and Fernbirds were seen on the Plateau. Fernbirds were also recorded from Pollen I. at the head of Waitemata Harbour (Auckland) on 6 Feb., and from Waihau Beach, East Cape, where they are surprisingly uncommon.

A group of 6 Banded Rails was obligingly conspicuous in the estuary at Wenderholm Reserve (Auckland) on 1 Feb. In Otago, Falcons were reported from Flagstaff Hill, Dunedin, Akatore, and the Rock & Pillar range at 1140m a.s.l. A new colony of Rooks at Clinton, established in 1990, now contains over 100 birds.

Regular sightings of Barn Owls in the Christchurch area over the last few years, have prompted a search of the Takamatua Valley, Akaroa, where reliable reports suggest that a bird has been present for up to 5 years.

Sightings of Nankeen Kestrels in the Te Mata Peak area of Hawkes Bay have followed a similar pattern to the Christchurch owls and suggest a small resident population. The latest report was of 1 on 8 Oct., slightly further north than usual. A male kestrel at Te Koopuru, Pouto Peninsula (Northland) in Oct. may have been around for a while or could have been connected with what appeared to be a small influx of Australian vagrants in spring.

The first of these was a White-browed Wood Swallow at Miranda on 14 Sept – the first record since 4 spent a summer in Otago during the early 1970s. On 20 Sept., a Fan-tailed Cuckoo was found in an aircraft hangar at Wanaka while another was seen at Karikari Peninsula (Northland) in Oct. These are the 2nd and 3rd NZ records. Two more regular vagrants appeared later on – a Spine-tailed Swift at Cuvier I. in late Nov. to early Dec., and 2 Tree Martins at Farewell Spit during Dec. and Jan.

DEREK ONLEY

Regional Roundup

Northland

The barbecue and beach patrol held to mark 20 years of beach patrolling on the Northland West Coast in December went very well and we covered the beach from Maunganui Bluff to the Causeway (74 km). Several of the original beach patrollers came to the barbecue held on the beach at Mahuta. The fact that Northland is still lumped in with Auckland as Auckland East and Auckland West for beach patrol purposes was discussed and it was decided to buy Auckland out with the funds from the "Christmas" cards and call them South Northland!

There has been a good variety of birds on the beach patrols these past three months, with the most interesting being several Black-winged Petrels, a White-chinned Petrel, and an Arctic Skua. A Hector's Dolphin found in December north of Omamari was a most unusual find though, being quite a long way out of its normal range.

Richard Parrish organised another Fairy Tern survey in December, when six pairs were found and subsequent monitoring found six nests from which six chicks were fledged. Richard also banded Reef Herons at known sites this summer.

At the February meeting, Ross Sinclair talked about his work over the for the Department of Conservation, monitoring and protecting NZ Dotterels and Fairy Terns.

Only one Royal Spoonbill was found on the Waitangi Day survey and that was on the Kaipara. The rest had left us.

Finally, a colour banded Prue Cozens has been sighted recently in Whangarei. This species often disappears for a month or so over Christmas. It was banded in January this year at its feeding grounds on the Chatham Islands, very close to the Taiko breeding site, and was recorded feeding on Blue Cod at the time. There was a white band on the right from hand to elbow with a much narrower steel band on the left. It had travelled over 1200 km from the banding site.

(Pat Miller)

Auckland

One of the region's ongoing projects, the regular six-monthly survey of the birds of Tiritiri Matangi Island, was carried out over the weekend of 16-18 November; the newly arrived Takahe were a major attraction. It will be interesting to note their longterm relationships with the big numbers of Pukeko on the island. The Brown Teal had six well grown ducklings, and Little Blue Penguins were making good use of the nest boxes around the shoreline. Black-backed Gulls had over 40 nests with eggs on the north point, but no White-fronted Terns were recorded. Bellbird numbers seemed to be down, but this may be due to the increase in vegetation which makes them harder to see. It had been a better than average breeding season for the Saddlebacks, with many being transferred to Mohoia Island in Lake Rotorua.

Over the weekend of 23-25 November, Ken Bond led a small group to Oputere, on the east coast of Coromandel Peninsula. They stayed in the Youth Hostel, which is handy to everything, bush and coast. A survey of the beaches found 37 NZ Dotterels (including juveniles), about 61 Variable Oystercatchers, and one Reef Heron; 4 Banded Rails were seen in the estuary.

The December meeting was a purely social gathering, with plenty of wine and a fabulous supper. Everyone enjoyed Michael Taylor's ornithological quiz, even if some questions were difficult and others just plain ridiculous. A good time was had by all.

The new year started with a talk by Nan Rothwell and Kathy Barrow about their time on St Kilda, in the Outer Hebrides; so far north that it takes about 24 hours to get there from mainland Scotland in a converted fishing boat. We were entertained with slides and stories of the seabirds and the interesting history of the island.

(Brian Ellis)

Waikato

Two offshore island visits have been the highlights of recent field trips. The first, in December, was to Cuvier Island where we joined some Whitianga Polytech. students to help DoC dismantle one of the lighthouse keepers houses; now redundant since the automation of lighthouses around New Zealand. Red-crowned Parakeets and Saddlebacks were abundant, but we did not see any Stitchbirds. It was exciting to watch a Spine-tailed Swift circling above the cliffs.

Kapiti island was our destination in February, where again Saddleback (and Stitchbird) band combinations were a major interest. The high point was seeing a Little Spotted Kiwi, but the most surprising sighting was surely the Fiordland Crested Penguin which had

taken up residence in the boatshed for its annual moult. Some of our members had assisted DoC in catching Kokako in the King Country for transfer to Kapiti and it was good to learn from Ron Moorhouse that the three birds with transmitters had all been traced since their release. On our way north to the Waikato we visited the Manawatu Estuary to see the Broad-billed Sandpiper which was making headlines in the local papers. This area is wonderful for seeing a great diversity of waders actively feeding at close quarters.

Paul Cuming was invited to Maud Island to assist with this year's Fluttering Shearwater project.

A day trip to White Island had to be cancelled because of bad weather. For the same reason, we had to postpone the Kawhia and Aotea Harbour counts until 10 Dec. However, 9 whimbrel, 3 Turnstone and 2 Little Tern added interest to the count and we were glad to locate 12 NZ Dotterel on Kawhia and 5 on Aotea.

At the November meeting, Betty Seddon presented a very well illustrated and informative talk about her recent birdwatching trip to Alaska. We shared her delight in seeing some of "our" Arctic migrants on their breeding grounds in the tundra.

Our final function for the year, organised jointly with South Auckland, was a Christmas barbecue weekend at Miranda. Auckland and Volcanic Plateau members also attended; an excellent way for members of the different regions to get to know one another. Waikato held a tally hunt (twitchathon) on the way and the winning team scored 47 species.

13 Pied Stilts were banded this season. Most of them were young birds as adults proved extremely trap shy. An adult banded at Mangawara on 8 Sept. was recovered on a farm at Ngatea on 3 Nov. - it had been brought in by the farmer's cat. It would be interesting to know if it had been nesting when caught by the cat! Tony Habraken reports locating a Hamilton bird at the Waiuku sandspit and another at Port

(Stella Rowe)

Our annual barbecue and get together was held at the home of Paddy & Rosemary Latham on 7 Dec. 1991. Some 15 members, plus others, attended and all enjoyed a good time in brilliant weather.

On 28 Dec. 1991 we had a trip to Whale Island, a first for many of us. It was a wonderful calm, fine warm day and some 30 bird species were noted - Red-crowned Parakeet and Arctic Skua being the highlights. An unusual and sad find was a dying Brown Quail chick. NZ Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers had chicks in the small area of dunes behind the landing beach. Regeneration and a good deal of planting has transformed the island since

the removal of rats, rabbits and goats.

A couple of visits have been made to the Maketu Estuary, both at low tide to wander among the feeding waders on the mudflats. The first, on 2 Jan. 1992 with Barrie Heather and visiting Englishman Richard Bradbury, and the second on 4 Jan. with Phil Battley. Between us we considerably altered the wader census figures for the area - sightings included 6 Red-necked Stints, 7 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 5 Curlew Sandpipers, 1 Grey-tailed Tattler, about 200 Lesser Knot, 5 Asiatic Whimbrel, 2 Far Eastern Curlew, and 1 Little Tern.

Beach patrolling over spring and summer 1991/1992 produced little but Blue Penguins, and there have been quite a few of these. Very few Sooty Shearwaters were found, largely because of the prevailing westerlies.

Bill Sloan has found Spotted Doves in Opotiki (a big jump/fly from Te Puke), so they are now well established in the region. The doves were eating Bill's windfallen grapefruit! Len Buchanan reports Banded Rail, Spotless Crake and Fernbird, all seen during walks along the edge of the Waikareao Estuary, right in the middle of Tauranga.

(Paddy Latham)

Hawkes Bay

The National Wader Count was carried out at the beginning of November. Sightings of interest included an increase in the number of migrant waders, including Lesser Knots, Turnstones and Red-necked Stints. Porangahau Estuary was notable for the 2 NZ Dotterels and Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were up by 100.

We finished the year with a meeting and a barbecue; due to bad weather we had to cancel our plans for a bird spotting competition.

January saw members depart in different directions for holidays - the Chatham Islands and Werribee (Victoria, Australia) being just two of the destinations.

13 members travelled to the Kapiti Coast to spend an enjoyable week staying at Tatum Park and venturing out to various places. Kapiti Island was a highlight with sightings of most of the native birds. Other ports of call included Taki Forks, Mangahao Dams, Nga Manu, Manawatu Estuary, Lake Horowhenua, Lake Papaitonga, Akatarawa Road across the ranges from Waikanae to Upper Hutt and to Staglands. 74 species were recorded during the week.

A coastal survey of the region, in conjunction with DoC, was held over the weekend of 15-16 Feb.

(Christine McRae)

Wairarapa

Planning for the AGM (15-17 May) is well underway and is occupying quite a lot of our time over this quarter. The Wairarapa College venue provides a comfortable and conveniently central site. The major field trip will be to the National Wildlife Centre on the Saturday morning. On the Sunday morning the options are either mistnetting passerines in a Te Ore orchard or visits to Henley Ponds and Homebush Oxidation Ponds. A series of short presentations followed by the AGM will occupy the Saturday afternoon.

The summer wader count on 17 Nov. again showed how important the Lake Wairarapa wetlands are for Pacific Golden Plovers, with a count of 53.

Another successful Twitchathon was carried out on 1 Dec. Four teams were involved and last year's defending champions Shane Wilkinson, David Bell and Hugh Robertson triumphed again, this time with a tally of 70 species. This very creditable effort was up 7 on last year's total. In all, 74 species were recorded by the four teams - compared with 75 last year. The day finished with 41 people attending the barbecue which was followed by an interesting illustrated talk by Mike Imber on the birds of the Chatham Islands. All in all it was a very enjoyable end of year function.

Colin Scadden, Matthew Wong and I joined Brian Bell and his highly trained home grown team for a banding exercise on Onoko Spit on 22 Dec. Colin Scadden had hoped we would be able to band the juvenile Caspian Terns, but all these had fledged. However, the Black-backed Gulls Brian had come for were there in force and in a remarkably short time over 300 birds were banded. One couldn't help but admire the energy, enthusiasm and thoroughness exhibited by the Bell team. They are a credit to Brian's training and few birds, if any, escaped their attention.

(Tenick Dennison)

Wellington

1991 ended with two very successful field days. The first was a beach patrol from Pekapeka to Te Horo, with identification assistance given by Ralph Powlesland. This was followed in the afternoon with nest spotting on Peter Bull's property. Peter seemed to know the location and status of every nest on his 10 acres and, armed with a ladder, he led the group on a "nest crawl".

In December we held our first Twitchathon - a great success for all who participated. Four teams took part, identifying a total of 76 species, which is not bad for Wellington. The Bell family "Bellbirders" were the winners, with 68 species seen, closely followed by the "Silverstream Silvereyes" with 62, and bringing up in the rear were the "Valley Vultures" and the "5 Musketeers" with 47

and 44 respectively. We all congregated at the Nga manu Bird Sanctuary for an evening picnic to end the very enjoyable day.

The quarterly counts of Kapiti Island birds continued in January. The Long-tailed Cuckoos had well and truly arrived and noisily announced their presence. Large numbers of Tuis and Kakas were busy feeding in the rata. Saddlebacks seemed more widespread. Some people stayed up late to see the Little Spotted Kiwis, and the Takahe chick was seen by most of the group.

We have a good line-up of speakers already for our meetings this year and a lot of interesting and exciting activities to look forward to. It should be a good year!

(Ros Batcheler)

Nelson

For the ninth year, members have banded Black-backed Gull chicks on the Nelson Boulder Bank; 238 were caught this year, with the nests being over a much shorter distance of the Bank. This total is certainly better than our stilt total. Apart from not having large numbers nesting that we can find, all the birds that do nest are interrupted by high tides, flooding, Harriers, and general human and dog disturbance. Even the increased numbers of stilts that are now appearing on the estuaries have very few young birds with them.

More frequent census work is being done on Farewell Spit and passerine banding is also done on these trips whenever possible.

In January, Henk Heinekamp and Kelly Quayle went to Maud Island to help with the Fluttering Shearwater project.

At our Christmas meeting, George Wilkinson told us about birds and conservation in Pakistan, and other members showed slides ranging from Nelson to Argentina.

Frequent watching around the Waimea Estuary by Willie Cook, Alvin Brett, Margaret Grew and Gail Quayle has produced Little Egret, Long-billed Curlew, Glossy Ibis, Royal Spoonbills, whimbrels, and several overwintering Cattle Egrets.

A footnote to the Cattle Egret count report in the last OSNZ news - Nelson members contributing to this survey were Alvin Brett, Willie Cook, Margaret Grew and Gail Quayle.

(Jenny Hawkins)

Otago

In November, Dunedin members and friends made themselves familiar with surveying a semi-braided river, the Manuherikia, near Alexandra, Central Otago. Unfortunately, not many braids were left due to extensive growth of willow and broom; consequently, birdlife was

somewhat sparse.

During 1991, the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust purchased a promising piece of land on the Otago Peninsula - promising in the sense that this area, now known as the Okia Reserve, will soon be teeming with breeding Yellow-eyed Penguins. OSNZ has offered to carry out an extensive census of the area. This time not only birds, but mammals and reptiles are also on the wanted list. Cats, stray sheep and seals were recorded during the first count, in December.

Under the leadership of John Darby we once again have been involved in counting Yellow-eyed Penguins. The December count extended from 09:00 until dark, but it was split into 3 time zones. It appears that this breeding season has been good for Yellow-eyed Penguins.

(Peter Schweigman)

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