

# 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. 69 December, 1993

Note Deadline for the March issue will be 10th  
February.

## Safe Islands for the Malau

The Tongan Malau *Megapodius pritchardii* survived on a single island, remote Niuafou'ou in the far north of the Tongan archipelago. Its total population numbers less than 1000 birds, with about 200 territorial pairs and an unknown number of unpaired birds, chicks and juveniles.

Bones of megapodes of different sizes have been found on islands in Tonga and Fiji, indicating that megapodes were well represented in the avifauna of the southwest Pacific, and the Tongan Megapode was much more widespread in pre-human times.

In order to safeguard the future of this smallest megapode in the world, the Brehm Fund for International Bird Conservation started a translocation programme, based on almost four years of field work and preparation. The islands of Late and Fonualei were selected as release sites, because they are free of introduced predators (which do affect megapodes on Niuafou'ou), they are rarely visited by humans due to the difficult access, they are large enough to support viable populations, and, most importantly, volcanically warmed areas are present, which are essential for reproduction.

Because adult megapodes are rather difficult to catch without causing injuries, it was decided to use newly hatched chicks and eggs in an advanced stage of development. In 1991, six chicks were released on Late. In 1992, two chicks, which hatched during the voyage to the island, were released near a site where 29 eggs were dug on a first venture and 32 eggs during a second transfer, conducted by Ann Goth and Uwe Vogel of the Ruhr-Universitat Bochum, Germany.

In June 1993, seven chicks were released on Fonualei, and 38 eggs were dug in warm ground a landing site in the



southeast. Five of the chicks flew off shortly after their transport box had been opened.

While only one area of warm ground was discovered on Late, soil temperatures on Fonualei varied considerably between areas of "normal" temperature and permanently smoking patches.

A few further transfers of eggs and chicks to both islands are planned for the near future. The reproductive potential of the Malau raises hope that healthy populations will establish within the next ten years.

The Malau conservation programme

includes the production of educational material and discussions about possible conservation measures on Niuafou'ou with the inhabitants of the island. A bilingual booklet is in press, and a list of proposed measures such as a closed season for egg collecting and the protection of some of the breeding grounds has been presented to the people of Niuafou'ou. The islands within the crater lake of Niuafou'ou have been proposed as strict nature reserves. A comprehensive account of the project will be prepared once the first monitoring expeditions have been completed.

DIETER RINKE  
Project Director

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

## NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL

Under the provisions of the Constitution, the following four Council members retire in May 1994 and nominations are hereby called for, to fill the vacancies created:

Mr D.E. Crockett (Vice-President)  
Mrs Hazel Harty  
Mrs Jenny Hawkins  
Dr R.G. Powlesland

Nominations close with the Secretary on 28 February 1994, and must be signed by two financial members and consented to by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. Please also submit two or three lines on the work and interests of the nominee. Retiring Officers are eligible for re-election.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 1994 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28 February 1994 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder.

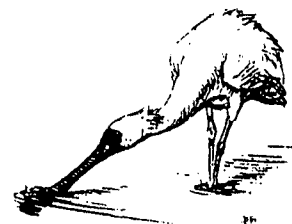
The 1994 OSNZ Annual Conference & A.G.M. will be held in Nelson on Saturday 14 May.

P.O. Box 12397  
Wellington

Raewyn Empson  
*Hon. Secretary*

## Chatham Island wader count

Due to unforeseen difficulties in obtaining matching dates for flights and accommodation on the Chathams the proposed wader count has been postponed until November 1994. Further details will appear in *OSNZ news* next year.



## Royal Spoonbill census – Waitangi Day 1994

The suggestion/recommendation to Council that the census of Royal Spoonbills be discontinued was discussed at the October meeting and not accepted because "...results are too valuable to discontinue...".

Unfortunately, I cannot see any value in the June 1993 census because 30% of regions have not returned any figures, and these regions accounted for 50% of the total population of Royal Spoonbills in the June 1992 census. This means that the 70% of regions which have filed returns wasted a lot of their time; a pity, really. To all those that made an effort to count spoonbills and sent in their returns, my thanks.

The spoonbills are returning to their breeding grounds and reports from Otago and Southland indicate that these regions have a population of about 200 birds. A rather dramatic expansion! To be able to test this expansion for the rest of the

## Wanted Editor for *Notornis*

Members wishing to indicate their interest in editing *Notornis* are asked to notify the Secretary (OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) by 31 January 1994. A job description for the position is also available from the Secretary. A PC with word processing software is available for the Editor.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1994 NOW DUE

### Photographic Competition

OSNZ plans to hold a photographic competition in association with next year's AGM in Nelson.

The competition rules are as follows.

1. All birds must be photographed in New Zealand.
2. There are two categories -  
A. NZ Land Birds  
B. NZ Sea Birds and Waders
3. A maximum of 2 prints or slides per photographer in each section.
4. Print sizes will be a minimum of 400 sq.cm and a maximum of 2000 sq.cm.
5. Slides must be standard 35 mm.
6. Identification of prints: on the back of each print must be the photographers

name and address, plus title of the print (including common and scientific name of the bird(s)).

7. Identification of slides: each slide should have the name and address of the photographer, plus the common and scientific name of the bird(s). Each slide should be spotted in lower left corner when held in hand viewing position.
8. There is an entry fee of \$10 per photographer. Please make cheques payable to OSNZ Photographic Competition.
9. Closing date for entries is 1 March 1994.

Send all entries to Bob Talbot, 109 Carrington Street, New Plymouth.

## Ornithological Society of New Zealand – Scientific Day

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand will hold its first Scientific Day on **Friday 13 May 1994** at Nelson Girls' College, Nelson, starting at 9.30 am. Anyone, whether a member of the Society or not, is invited to offer for selection a spoken paper and/or a poster paper on topics of ornithology.

Spoken papers – 15 minutes for presentation followed by 5 minutes for questions.

### Prize for best spoken paper

\$200 + a year's membership of the Society  
+ a book published by the Society

Poster papers – 700 mm x 1000 mm

### Prize for best poster paper

\$100 + a year's membership of the Society  
+ a book published by the Society

The judging panel will take into account the age of each contributor and whether an amateur or professional ornithologist.

Accommodation and meals will be available at the College.

A variety of field trips is planned for Saturday, including one to Abel Tasman National Park. An additional session of spoken papers will be held on Sunday morning.

People wishing to present a spoken paper and/or poster paper during the Scientific Day need to send a title and an abstract, of 100 words or less, of their proposed paper to J. Hawkins, OSNZ Scientific Day, Black Horse Quarry, R.D. 1, Nelson by **25 February 1994**.

For registration forms (available in March 1994) and enquiries about the Scientific Day, please contact J. Hawkins.

country, I urge regions to set aside Waitangi Day (6 February) 1994 for another end of breeding season count of Royal Spoonbills. Please can I have your cooperation!

PETER SCHWEIGMAN

**REMINDER**  
**ROYAL SPOONBILL CENSUS**  
**WAITANGI DAY 1994**

**NZOCTB Travelling  
Fellowships – 21st IOC, Vienna**

OSNZ congratulates Phil Battley of Massey University and Steven Trewick of Victoria University, who have been awarded the first two travelling fellowships awarded by the NZ Ornithological Congress Trust Board.

C.J.R. ROBERTSON,  
*Business Manager NZOCTB*

**OSNZ Bird Slide Library**

We are still looking for more slides for the OSNZ collection. Currently we have some 900 slides covering about 250 species and subspecies. However, we still lack many shots of common birds, particularly those showing some form of behaviour, and those of birdwatchers in action too. Almost everyone who has ever photographed birds or OSNZ activities has some slides of special interest. These do not have to be of rare birds or of competition standard.

The slide library allows you the opportunity of sharing the pleasure of your slides with interested ornithologists throughout New Zealand. So please dust off those slides which have been hidden in boxes for years and send them to me at the address below for duplication. Your originals will be returned safely. No payment can be offered but your name is on the slide in our collection, so people borrowing and viewing these slides are aware of the photographer.

Below are listed the people who have already contributed – your slides could join a very eminent collection.

J. Cockrem, D. Cornick, S. Davies, M.D. Dennison, T.C. Dennison, C.A. Fleming, G. Foreman, D. Hadden, M. Jeffries, D.A. Lawrie, G. Moon, P.J. Moors, F. Nieuwland, R. Parrish, R.G. Powlesland, P. Reese, A. Riegen, J.L. Sagar, P.M. Sagar, C. Scadden, R. Wasley.

Send slides to: Tenick Dennison, 129 Renall Street, Masterton

TENICK DENNISON

**Wanted – Librarian for OSNZ  
Film Slide Library**

Tenick Dennison has been looking after the slide collection since its inception, but because of other commitments would like someone else to take over.

The Council, which administers the collection, would like a volunteer for this interesting post. Currently the collection is made up of about 900 slides covering some 250 species and subspecies, together with shots of OSNZ activities.

The job, which is not onerous, includes the safe storage of the collection, the dispatch of collections to members on request, and the soliciting and duplication of further slides for the collection.

If you are interested in the post, please contact the Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington for a more detailed job description.

**Birdwatching in Hawkes Bay: A  
guide to prime birding locations**

by P.W. Twydl. Jointly sponsored by the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society (Napier Branch) and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

A booklet about where to find birds in Hawkes Bay. Complete with detailed descriptions, maps, and checklists.

Cost: \$5.00 plus \$1.00 packing and postage. Please make cheques payable to "Birdwatching in Hawkes Bay" and send orders to Birdwatching, 160 Vigor Brown Street, Napier

**Projects Assistance Fund grants**

At its October meeting Council considered 11 requests for assistance from the Projects Assistance Fund and the following grants were approved.

Adrian Riegen – \$400 for aerial search of Kaipara for waders during summer.

K. Brown – \$200 for video hire to monitor Kokako nests.

M. Imber & G. Taylor – \$500 for travel costs associated with Taiko expedition.

Ray Pierce – \$110 for purchase of colour bands for Pied Stilt project.

Maida Barlow – \$500 for travel costs associated with Caspian Tern studies.

Gwenda Pulham – \$440 for Fairy Tern studies.

Paul Sagar & Donald Geddes – \$300 for travel costs associated with Pied Oystercatcher study.

Peter Schweigman – \$800 for Royal Spoonbill colour banding study.

Peter Schweigman – \$600 for Variable Oystercatcher studies.

**Ornithological research at NZ  
Universities**

The following is a list of ornithological research currently undertaken in NZ universities.

**University of Otago**

PhD

Judah Bunin: A comparative study of Takahe and Pukeko ecology on offshore islands.

Kerri-Anne Edge: Artificial brood reduction in the Yellow-eyed Penguin – a viable management option?

Martyn Kennedy: Phylogenetic analysis of New Zealand shags.

Adrian Paterson: Construction of seabird phylogenies using ecto-parasitic lice.

Hiltrun Ratz: Temporal and spatial patterns of predation of Yellow-eyed Penguins by small mammals, and their control.

MSc

Kerry Brown: Predation of forest birds. Sheryl Hamilton: Monitoring impacts on mainland Sooty Shearwater colonies.

Phil Lyver: Harvesting of Sooty Shearwaters and population dynamics.

Jane Maxwell: The survival of wild-reared and captive-reared Takahe in Fiordland.

Shirley McQueen: Reproductive endocrinology of Fiordland Crested and Adelie Penguins in relation to foraging trip times during incubation.

Lora Peacock: Relationships between the "die back" years of Yellow-eyed Penguins and the *El Nino* effect.

Lisa Taylor: Nest sharing in female Pukeko.

**Diploma in Wildlife Management**

Kirsty Barr: Effects of common wasps on litter invertebrates and robins in honeydew beech forest.

Simon Clearwater: Human activity and changes in distribution and abundance in sea birds at Taiaroa Head.

Leigh Joyce: Human attitudes to Kea.

Andrew Ranum: Parasites of Yellow-eyed Penguins.

Bert Rebergen: Predation of Banded Dotterels.

Staff

Lloyd Davis: Mating behaviour, penguins. Ian Jamieson: Mating behaviour, Pukeko and Takahe.

Henrik Moller: Predator-prey interactions of birds and mammals.

**Lincoln University**

Staff

Kerry-Jane Wilson: Habitat use and predators of the Kuramoo (Blue Lorikeet) on Aitutaki, seabird-vegetation-reptile-insect interactions in Cook Strait (with A. Freeman, J. Marris, G. Daly).

Kerry-Jane Wilson and Ria Brejaart: Breeding biology and ecology of Kea.

## University of Canterbury

### PhD

Mark Sanders: Habitat improvement and foraging ecology of Black Stilt.

### MSc

Lyn Adams: Causes of mortality in captive-reared Black Stilts after release.

Katherine Caesar: Effects of disturbance on birds of the Christchurch Estuary.

Debbie Hume: Teaching captive-reared Black Stilts to recognise predators.

Belinda Studholme: Parent-offspring recognition in Tawaki (Fiordland Crested Penguin).

### Staff

Richard Holdaway: "Project Moa", palaeoecology of New Zealand bird communities, systematics of New Zealand birds.

Ian McLean: Response of birds to enemies and teaching birds to recognise predators, foraging ecology of forest birds, biology of Fiordland Crested Penguin.

John Warham: Completing 2nd volume of *The Petrels*, continuing work on *A bibliography of the Procellariiformes* – this now has 10 000 fully keyworded citations from Aristotle to the present.

## Victoria University

### PhD

P.J. Barwell: A study of late ventral bodywall degeneration in the embryonic chick, with special reference to the cell cycle.

A.J. Cooper: Molecular evolution of New Zealand ratite birds.

D.K. Lee: Cell dynamics of the dermamyotome of the chick.

Tim J. Markwell: Ecological relationships of seabirds, lizards and tuatara on Stephens Island.

Ron Moorhouse: Ecology of Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*) on Kapiti Island.

Jean-Claude Stahl: Seabird behaviour and distribution in relation to weather systems in the Southern Ocean.

Steve Trewick: Evolution of flightlessness in an endemic rail: the Takahe *Porphyrio mantelli*. Cause and effect of a popular strategy.

### MSc

Andrew Styche: Habitat use and movements of the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* in the Turakina Valley.

Sally Truman: Nest site selection and breeding success of the Welcome Swallow *Hirunda tahitica* near Lake Wairarapa.

Departmental projects of Molecular Biology Laboratory

G.K. Chambers: Molecular systematics of New Zealand Birds, with projects on evolution of moas and kiwis, Takahe systematics, taxonomic relationships of NZ parrots and breeding behaviour in Starlings.

## Massey University

### PhD

Isabel Castro: Transfers of Stitchbird to Kapiti Island and their behavioural ecology.

Gavin Hunt: The conservation and ecology of Kagu in New Caledonia.

Dale Towers: Niche overlap between Blue Duck and trout populations – the potential for dietary competition.

### MSc

Phil Battley: The ecology of shorebirds on Farewell Spit.

Andrea Booth: The breeding biology of Little Shearwater on Lady Alice Island, Hen & Chickens.

Gary Bramley: The ecology and conservation of the North Island Weka at Matawai.

Jonathon Miles: The ecology of two populations of the North Island Brown Kiwi in the Tongariro district.

### Staff

Doug Armstrong: Reintroductions of New Zealand birds.

Ed Minot: Population and behavioural ecology of birds.

Murray Potter: Ecology, reproductive biology and endocrinology of kiwi.

Clare Veltman: Ecology of Blue Duck.

## University of Waikato

### MSc

Laurence Barea: Habitat use and diet of the New Zealand Falcon.

### Staff

Jo Waas: Behaviour.

## University of Auckland

### PhD

Simone Holmes: Analysis of parentage of populations of South Island and North Island Robins and Chatham Island Black Robins.

### MSc

Craig Millar: Parentage using DNA fingerprinting methods of cooperative breeding Brown Skuas.

Tracey Monehan: Molecular genetic analysis of population structure of Antarctic Adelie Penguin.

### Staff

Dianne Brunton: Behavioural and population ecology of a newly established population of North Island Robins on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

Mick Clout: The ecology of the New Zealand Pigeon in Wenderholm Regional Park.

John Craig: Issues of genetic and population viability and the methodology and outcomes of translocation for a range

of native animals, including many species of bird.

David Lambert: Determining genetic parentage in a range of bird species, including Adelie Penguin, Brown and Antarctic Skuas, Pukeko, North Island and South Island Robins, and Chatham Island Black Robins.

Euan Young: Behaviour and ecology of the Brown Skuas on Chatham Island, Antarctic Skua on Ross Island, and the Adelie Penguin in Antarctica.

Compiled by PHIL BATTLE

## Mystery Bird # 13



The black cap and general structure of Mystery Bird #13 should have suggested a tern to most people, and in that they would be correct. But which tern? The black caps extends down to the level of the bill, which rules out Fairy, Little and White-fronted Terns all of which show a white forehead or "front". It also indicates that the bird is in breeding plumage. Caspian Tern can be ruled out because of its truly massive bill, so that leaves only four potential species – Antarctic Tern, Arctic Tern, Common Tern, and Black-fronted Tern.

Plumage-wise, the bird shows an even light-grey (presumably) upperwing, with a dark line along the outer vane of the outermost primary feather of the wing. On the underwing, the most prominent feature is the darkish line along the tips of the primary feathers, tapering from the outermost to around the fourth primary. There is a glimpse of a pale tail, possibly one side of a fork. The underbody is a medium-dark grey, contrasting slightly with the rather pale underwing. Both bill and legs appear of a medium tone, and the legs are neither very long nor very short.

Common Tern, which is being reported with increasing frequency in New Zealand, can be eliminated on several accounts. It has longer legs, a broader dark edge to the underwing, darker outer primaries on the upperwing, a bill that always shows a dark tip of some size.

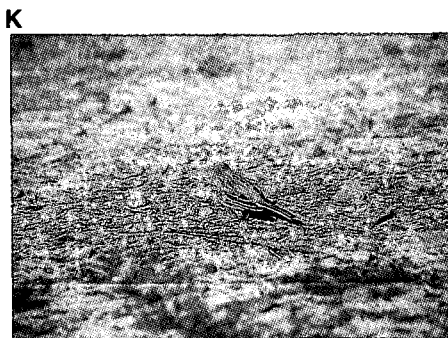
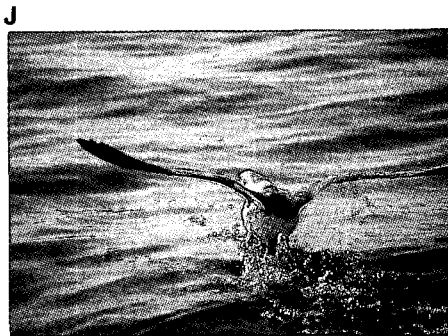
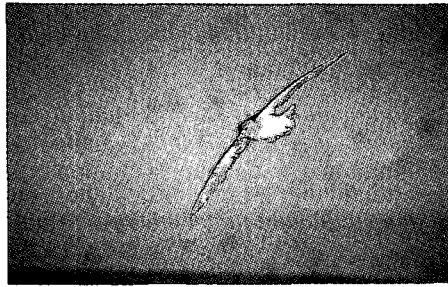
Black-fronted Tern is harder to rule out. It is hard to tell if the underwing is white or grey, but it appears rather reflective, suggesting a white plumage. This would point to the Antarctic/Arctic duo, as does the limited extent of dark on

the underside of the wingtips.

The main features distinguishing Antarctic from Arctic in the photo are the extent of black on the underwing and the length of the legs. In Arctic Tern the tips of the outer primaries appear black (not just dark as in the photo) and this extends in a slightly wider band along the underwing than shown in the photo. The other feature is leg length; Arctic Terns have very short legs and when roosting their belly touches the ground.

Therefore, Mystery Bird #13 is an Antarctic Tern and was photographed at the Snares Islands in November 1985 by Paul Sagar.

PHIL BATTLE



**SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR  
1994 NOW DUE**

### Mystery Bird # 14

Identify this bird. Answer in next issue.

### Mystery Bird Quiz

Three out of the four competitions have now been completed. It seems the three Mystery Birds in the last issue were too easy as most of you guessed all three correctly.

Identifications were:

G. Rock Wren – photographed near Homer Tunnel.

H. Brown Creeper – photographed at Wainui, Banks Peninsula. You don't often see one with its tail fanned, but no doubt the pattern around the head gave it away.

I. Buller's Mollymawk – photographed off the coast of Kaikoura.

At this stage Daryl Eason still leads with 9 correct. Lloyd Esler has 8 correct, with others on 7 or 6 correct. I have tried to find some really difficult to identify species for this final competition. Good luck.

Send entries to Don Hadden, 288 Yaldhurst Road, Christchurch 4.

DON HADDEN



### RAOU Column

New RAOU Conservation Statement The latest RAOU Conservation Statement will be available by the time this newsletter is published. *Antarctic Seabirds: Status and conservation of breeding birds in Australian Antarctic Territory* is the ninth publication in the series. RAOU Conservation Statements are produced to inform RAOU members, supporters, educators, industry, politicians and the public about threats facing Australian birds and bird habitats.

*Antarctic Seabirds* looks at the ten species that breed in the Australian Antarctic Territory (Emperor and Adelie Penguins, Antarctic Petrel, Cape Pigeon, Snow Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmar, Antarctic Prion, Wilson's Storm Petrel and South Polar Skua), summarising their biology and populations. Present and future conservation issues, such as long-line fisheries, entanglement, tourism and chemical pollution are discussed. This eight-page publication features full colour photos of birds and is produced with the generous assistance of the Australian Antarctic Foundation. *Antarctic Seabirds* will be distributed to RAOU members with the December issue of *Wingspan*, and extra copies will be available through Head Office.

## Help for Cat Island gannetry

Although not considered endangered, Australasian Gannets are nowhere as numerous in Australian waters as they are across the Tasman. Cat Island, near Flinders Island in Bass Strait, was once the largest colony in Australia, reaching a peak of nearly 10 000 birds earlier this century. The Cat Island gannetry has been declining for some decades now and only a few pairs show interest in breeding. In an effort to reverse this trend, a call went out earlier this year for volunteer wardens to police the island against cray fishermen shooting the birds for bait and to discourage marauding sea eagles.

The first volunteer wardens took up a rather windswept position late in October, only to have their dwelling demolished by wind a few days later. After a hasty evacuation in stormy conditions, repairs were effected and they were due to return by the week ending 20 November. We wish them better fare over the warmer months.

## Bird race helps rare birds

The RAOU's annual bird race, the Twitchathon, was run in late October. This year saw a record number of teams competing in every state including for the first time, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

The final tallies aren't in yet but many bags of money were raised, numbering several thousand dollars. Funds will be distributed to help conservation projects around the states: Forty Spotted Pardalotes in Tasmania, Regent Honeyeaters in Victoria and New South Wales, Night Parrots in Queensland and Northern Territory (if we ever find them again), Malleefowl in Western Australia, and Rufous Bristlebird in South Australia. In addition, 25% of the total funds raised will go towards a national project to protect the Plains-wanderer and native grasslands.

DAVID ANDREW

## Unusual activity of Fiordland Crested Penguin

At 16.00h on 28 August 1991 I watched, for about 45 minutes, at very close range, a (presumed) pair of adult Fiordland Crested Penguins on a beach close to Lake Moeraki about 23 km north of the Haast Rivermouth, a common breeding area for the species. When first seen the birds were standing quietly side by side on a boulder about 3 m high at the edge of the beach with heavy bush behind into which it would have been possible for them to move. During the period of observation for the most part the birds were almost stationary, standing close together, but occasionally shuffling a few centimetres to and fro, to the edge of the bush and back

again. On four occasions the following performance took place: the slightly larger (presumed male) bird stood closely and directly behind the (presumed) female, seized a large beakful of feathers at the nape of the neck and then shook the female bird violently backwards and forwards (never side to side) about 50 times through a distance of 3-4 cm for about 30 seconds before releasing hold. On none of the occasions did the female bird shift her stance or make the slightest reaction of objection or otherwise; the performance had no evident consequence in the birds' subsequent demeanour or behaviour, at the end of which the birds were left as first seen; there had been no attempt at mating. Such activity is not described in standard works on the Fiordland Crested Penguin or related species, although nape-biting is recorded as an element in one mode of fighting, which the performance reported here patently was not.

D.H. WILKINSON

## Seabirds around a tuna long-liner

From 24 July to 1 August 1993 I made seabird observations aboard a NZ-owned tuna long-liner operating north east of New Zealand. We were fishing in the area 34°00' - 34°27' S, 175°20' - 175°53'E, which is about 200 km north east of Cape Brett (about the same latitude as the Three Kings Islands), over 2000 m on the southern edge of the South Fiji Basin (where the water was 17°C).

The following is a species by species account of my observations.

Wandering Albatross - nearly always 1 to 7 following the ship, with a tendency for numbers to increase later in the trip with north east winds. Two specimens killed on the long-line were identified as an adult male and subadult female from the Auckland Islands by J.A. Bartle at the National Museum of New Zealand. Three caught and released alive included a first-year bird and 2 that were probably female, from the Auckland or Antipodes Islands, according to Chris Robertson.

Salvin's Mollmawk - 5 adults seen, singly, usually only briefly interested in joining the scavenging flock behind the ship, and soon passing on.

NZ Black-browed Mollmawk - the commonest albatross associated with the ship, all ages being seen, with numbers increasing during the trip; thus 1-4 on 24/7, 1-5 on 25/7, 2-6 on 26-27/7, 5-12 on 28/7, 3-7 on 29-30/7, and 4-18 on 31/7. Only 1 was hooked, a bird of about 2-4 years old was hooked at 1915 h on 31/7, when it was fully dark but with a nearly-full moon obscured by cloud; this bird was drowned.

Yellow-nosed Mollmawk - at least 2 adults regularly following throughout 24/7, and 1 early on 25/7 but not seen again. No obvious reason for this pattern, perhaps the ship moved too far east or offshore, or the

birds returned westwards towards their breeding grounds.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross - 1 seen twice within an hour on 31/7, passing forward and only briefly in the wake.

Sooty Shearwater - seen singly on 26/7 and 1/8, following closely in the wake. The first, by its uniform, fresh, non-moulting plumage seemed likely to be a first-year bird, but failing light on 1/8 made such a judgment impossible. No other shearwaters were seen in the fishing area, though Fluttering Shearwaters were plentiful in the Hauraki Gulf as we left Auckland.

Grey Petrel - nearly always 1-4 in the wake from 25/7 to 1/8. They did not dive as much as their reputation implied.

White-chinned Petrel - 1 on 28/7 following in the wake for a while.

Snares Cape Pigeon - at first scarce, only 1 briefly on 24/7; 1 on 25/7 then increasing, 10-13 on 26/7, 7-18 on 27/7, 15-43 on 28/7, 30-35 on 29/7, 15-25 on 30/7 and 8-13 on 31/7, following in the wake.

Northern Giant Petrel - a juvenile (probably first year) from noon on 27/7 to late on 29/7, possibly the same bird, following in the wake.

Fairy Prion - about 7 seen in the fishing area, passing by; more (8) on 1/8 about 50 km north east of the Poor Knights Islands, where they breed, as we were returning to port.

Grey-faced Petrel - the commonest bird in the fishing area, both following in the wake scavenging and passing by. During 10-minute counts, 5-23 on 24/7, 30-35 on 25/7, 1-8 on 26/7, 8-21 on 27/7, 6-15 on 28/6, 4-7 on 29/7, 28 on 30/7, 7-30 on 31/7, and 8-52 on 1/8.

White-headed Petrel - 3 seen singly, passing by on 24/7, 30/7 and 1/8.

Soft-plumaged Petrel - 2 seen, on 25/7 and 31/7; both spent about 15 minutes in the wake.

Australasian Gannet - an adult passed close by on 28/7, but showed no interest in the wake.

Spur-winged Plover - a party of 4 flew southwards past the ship on 26/7. The nearest land in the direction they were flying was the Kermadec Islands.

MIKE IMBER

## More seabirds in Hauraki Gulf

Surveys of seabirds in the Hauraki Gulf have continued since the report in *OSNZ news* 66; this report covers the periods December 1992 - March 1993 and April 1993 - July 1993.

During the year April 1992 to March 1993 I recorded 131 620 birds of 44 species in 16 return trips from Auckland to Great Barrier Island. Interesting records during the period December 1992 to March 1993

included 1 Long-tailed Skua, 5 Pomarine Skuas, 7 Grey-faced Petrels, 17 White-faced Storm Petrels, 2 Black Petrels, 1015 Cook's Petrels, 26 Pycroft's Petrels, 13 Black-winged Petrels, 5 Hutton's Shearwaters, 1 Manx-type Shearwater, and 1 Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

The commonest species (100 + birds) over the whole year were Fluttering Shearwater (92 299), Gannet (16 507), Buller's Shearwater (8236), Flesh-footed Shearwater (5906), White-fronted Tern (2891), Red-billed Gull (1392), Cook's Petrel (1133), Black-backed Gull (1131), Diving Petrel (626), Grey-faced Petrel (462), Blue Penguin (392), and Pied Shag (306).

The period April to July this year has been notable for the large counts made. Interesting records included max. 16 356 Gannets, max. 96 996 Fluttering Shearwaters, max. 574 Blue Penguins, max. 1992 White-fronted Terns, 29 Arctic Skuas, max. 1238 Diving Petrels, 2 Hutton's Shearwaters, 2 Harriers, 2 Common-type Terns, 255 Grey-faced Petrels, 3 Black Petrels, 5 Cook's Petrels, 28 Little Shearwaters, 1 Long-tailed Skua, 2 Red-footed Booby, 5 Pomarine Skuas, 29 Sooty Shearwaters, 1 White-chinned Petrel, 1 White Tern, 1 Northern Giant Petrel, 1 Southern Giant Petrel, 33 Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, 1 Buller's Albatross, 1 Grey-headed Albatross, 1 White-headed Petrel, 1 Kerguelen Petrel, 1 Fairy Prion, 2 Grey-backed Storm Petrels, 2 Brown Skuas.

In the seven trips undertaken between 20 April and 7 July 1993 I recorded a total of 178 750 birds of 38 species.

C.R. JOWETT

## Mainland Birding

Early in 1993 I went on a birdwatching tour around the South Island; the results may be of interest to people intending to visit the South Island.

The trip took place over the six weeks, from 6 February to 18 March 1993 and I travelled via Picton, Nelson, Westport, Greymouth, Timaru, Dunedin, Invercargill, Bluff, Stewart Island, and Kaikoura.

The crossing of Cook Strait in mill-pond conditions on 6 March produced few birds, but included Wandering Albatross, Shy Mollymawk (2), Little Shag, Arctic Skua (2), Diving Petrel (3), Buller's Shearwater (3), and Flesh-footed Shearwater (2). A boat cruise on Queen Charlotte Sound included sightings of Arctic Skua (2), Pomarine Skua (2), King Shag (21), Hutton's Shearwater (2), and Westland Petrel (1).

A visit to the Motueka and Waimea Estuaries on 11 March produced 5 White Herons, 2 Wrybills, 2 Siberian Tattlers, and 2 Black-fronted Terns. A Little Owl

was heard in Nelson City.

The bus ride to Westport turned up a Rook south of Murchison; while Grey Teal (2), Weka (1) and Fernbird were seen at Orowaiti Lagoon in Westport. Also at Westport, in pools near the beach was a White Heron and a possible Mongolian Dotterel.

Greymouth was visited from 16 to 19 February and produced excellent birdwatching, including: Little Black Shag, Shoveler (16) and Scaup (17) at Lake Karoro; a White Heron at Lake Ryan; Fernbird and Weka in the Arahura Valley; Brown Creeper and Tomtit at Mitchells; Scaup on Lake Brunner; and Canada Goose (37) at Lake Poerua. While en route to Christchurch I saw a possible Crested Grebe at Lake Pearson.

Thirty seven species were seen at Washdyke Lagoon, near Timaru, on 22 February including White Heron (1), Canada Goose (148), Spotted Shag (2), Black-fronted Tern (7), Grey Teal (384), Paradise Shelduck (68), and a probable Long-tailed Skua.

Four days were spent in Dunedin, with visits to the Otago Peninsula. Frank's Wildlife Tour visited Taiaroa Head where Stewart Island Shag, Royal Albatross, Spotted Shag, Sooty Shearwater, and a giant petrel were seen; 12 Yellow-eyed Penguins, Sooty Shearwater, Grey Teal and Dunnock were seen at Sandfly Bay later in the day. Taiaroa Head was visited again the next day (25 Feb.) and a probable Buller's Mollymawk was seen. A visit to McGouther's farm produced an Erect-crested Penguin and a Magellanic Penguin being cared for while sick. A moulting Fiordland Crested Penguin was seen at Sandfly Bay, as were several Yellow-eyed Penguin chicks and thousands of Sooty Shearwaters offshore. Several hundred Grey Teal and Pied Stilts were at Papanui and Hooper's Inlets.

Visits to wetlands around Invercargill at the end of February included sightings of Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Pacific Golden Plover, Pipit, and a juvenile Black-fronted Dotterel at Awarua Bay. At the rubbish dump were a White Heron, Little Egret, and Little Tern; with 24 Black-fronted Terns and a distant view of Royal Spoonbills on Omaui Island from Oreti Beach. A Bittern was seen at nearby dredge ponds. Seawatches were completed from Stirling Point, Bluff, on 2-3 March, with 1-minute counts of from 110 to 280 birds; an estimated 20 000 birds were off the point during 1.5 hrs on 3 March. Stewart Island was visited from 4 to 10 March and provided some excellent birdwatching. A trip on a fishing boat up the north coast turned up Stewart Island Shag (102), Buller's Mollymawk (64), Salvin's Mollymawk (1), Shy Mollymawk (31), Fiordland Crested Penguin (5) and Blue Penguin (23). A boat trip around Bench Island included sightings of Buller's

Mollymawks (33) Salvin's Mollymawk (1), Shy Mollymawk (22), Brown Skua (1), Blue Penguin (6), and Black-fronted/Antarctic Tern (1). A fishing boat trip to Gullrock Point, on the north coast of Stewart Island, included sightings of Buller's Mollymawk (22), Shy Mollymawk (56), Black-fronted Tern (7), Antarctic Tern (4), and Short-tailed Shearwater (2).

Four Antarctic Terns were seen during the boat trip to and from Ulva Island, where Weka, Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Brown Creeper, and Tomtit were seen. Buller's and Shy Mollymawks and Sooty Shearwaters were easily seen off Acker's Point. On the return crossing of Foveaux Strait on 10 March I recorded 18 species, including Stewart Island Shag (165), Buller's Mollymawk (6), Shy Mollymawk (35), Antarctic Tern (5), Blue Penguin (24), Yellow-eyed Penguin (1), Diving Petrel (2), Cape Pigeon (1), Southern Giant Petrel (1), and Black-fronted Tern (1).

Back in Bluff, a walk on the Foveaux Walkway revealed Bellbird, Tui, Brown Creeper, Rifleman, and Tomtit.

The next stop was Kaikoura, with a fishing boat trip on 15 March when I recorded 24 species, including Hutton's Shearwater (3194), Sooty Shearwater (32 +), Diving Petrel (3), Little Shearwater (4), Buller's Shearwater (384), Flesh-footed Shearwater (149), Black-fronted Tern (2), Wandering Albatross (28), Royal Albatross (2), Buller's Mollymawk (4), Shy Mollymawk (11), Salvin's Mollymawk (1), Black-browed Mollymawk (20), Brown Skua (1), White-chinned Petrel (8 +), Westland Petrel (5 +), Gannet (3), Cape Pigeon (11), and Grey-faced Petrel (3). During walks on Kaikoura Peninsula I recorded Turnstones (max. 71), Gannet, Spotted Shag, Pied Shag, and Black-fronted Tern (max. 17).

Finally, the return crossing of Cook Strait in gale conditions netted fewer birds than on the initial crossing, with a few Sooty, Fluttering and Buller's Shearwaters, a Westland/White-chinned Petrel, and an unidentified Cookkilaria petrel.

For someone without their own transport, opportunity was provided by the assistance and hospitality of strangers and old friends - many of whom are OSNZ members - Bill Cash in Picton, Jenny Hawkins and Gail Quayle in Nelson, Stewart and Pauline Lauder in Greymouth, Paul Sagar in Christchurch, Peter Schweigman in Dunedin, Lloyd Esler in Invercargill, John Leask, Alistair Eades, Alan Skerrick and Kevin Anderson on Stewart Island, and Gary Melville in Kaikoura - many thanks.

I can certainly recommend a birding visit to the Mainland, with 118 species on my trip.

C.R. JOWETT

## Changes in the Checklist — 3

### Swans, Geese and Duck

*Dendrocygna eytoni* - Plumed Whistling Duck, now also known as Grass Whistling Duck.

*Branta canadensis* - Canada Goose, now *B. canadensis maxima*.

*Tadorna variegata* - Paradise Duck, now Paradise Shelduck.

*Chenonetta jubata* - Wood Duck (Maned Goose), now Australian Wood Duck

*Anas gibberifrons gracilis* - Grey Teal, now *A. gracilis*.

*Aythya australis australis* - Australian White-eyed Duck (Hardhead), now *A. australis*.

### Hawks and Falcons

*Circus approximans goudi* - Australasian Harrier, now *C. approximans*.

### Game Birds and Allies

*Lophortyx californica brunnescens* - Californian Quail, now *Callipepla californica brunnescens*.

*Phasianus colchicus* - Pheasant, now Ring-necked Pheasant.

### Rails, Cranes and Allies

*Tribonyx ventralis* - Black-tailed Water Hen, now *Gallinula ventralis* Black-tailed Native-hen.

*Notornis mantelli* - Notornis (Takahe), now *Porphyrio mantelli hochstetteri* South Island Takahe (*P. mantelli mantelli* - North Island Takahe).

### Waders and Allies

*Haematopus chathamensis* - Chatham Island Oystercatcher, now Chatham Island Pied Oystercatcher.

*Himantopus himantopus leucocephalus* - Pied Stilt, now Australasian Pied Stilt.

*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* - Australian Avocet, now Australian Red-necked Avocet.

*Charadrius bicinctus* - Banded Dotterel, now *C. bicinctus bicinctus*.

*Charadrius alexandrinus ruficapillus* - Red-capped Dotterel, now *C. ruficapillus*.

*Thinornis novaeseelandiae* - New Zealand Shore Plover, now Shore Plover.

*Pluvialis dominica fulva* - Pacific Golden Plover, now *P. fulva*.

*Lobibyx novaehollandiae* - Spur-winged Plover, now *Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*.

*Arenaria interpres interpres* - Turnstone, now *A. interpres*.

*Coenocorypha aucklandica pusilla* - Chatham Island Snipe, now *C. pusilla*.

*Gallinago hardwicki* - Japanese Snipe, now *G. hardwicki*.

*Calidris canutus canutus* - Knot, now Lesser Knot.

*Limicola falcinellus sibirica* - Broad-billed Sandpiper, now *L. falcinellus sibiricus* - Eastern Broad-billed Sandpiper.

*Numenius madagascariensis* - Long Billed Curlew, now Eastern Curlew.

*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* - American Whimbrel, now also known as Hudsonian Curlew.

*Bartramia longicauda* - Upland Plover, now Upland Sandpiper.

*Tringa incana* - Wandering Tattler, now Wandering (Alaskan) Tattler.

*Tringa brevipes* - Siberian Tattler, now Siberian (Grey-tailed) Tattler.

*Xenus cinereus* - Terek Sandpiper, now *Tringa terek*.

### Skuas, Gulls and Terns

*Stercorarius skua lonnbergi* - Southern Skua, now *Catharacta skua lonnbergi* - Brown (Subantarctic) Skua.

*Stercorarius skua maccormicki* - Antarctic Skua, now *Catharacta maccormicki* - South Polar Skua.

*Larus dominicanus* - Southern Black-backed Gull, now *L. dominicanus dominicanus*.

*Gelochelidon nilotica macrotarsa* - Gull-billed Tern, now *G. nilotica*.

*Chlidonias hybrida albostratus* - Black-fronted Tern, now *Sterna albostrata*.

*Hydroprogne caspia* - Caspian Tern, now *Sterna caspia*.

*Sterna fuscata* - Sooty Tern, now *S. fuscata serrata*.

*Sterna vittata bethunei* - Antarctic Tern, now New Zealand Antarctic Tern.

*Sterna nereis* - Fairy Tern, now New Zealand Fairy Tern.

*Sterna bergii cristata* - Crested Tern, now *S. bergii*.

*Anous stolidus* - Common Noddy, now *A. stolidus pileatus*.

*Anous minutus minutus* - White-capped Noddy, now *A. tenuirostris minutus*.

*Procelsterna cerulea albivitta* - Grey Ternlet, now *P. cerulea albivittata*.

DOUG BOOTH

## Reviews

*Birds of Sydney*, by E.S. Hoskin (K.A. Hindwood & A.R. McGill), 1991. Second (revised) edition. Surrey Beatty & Sons Pty Ltd. 292 pp., numerous black & white illustrations. ISBN 0 949324 40 X. Price \$A39.00 (hbk).

The first edition of *Birds of Sydney* (1958) examined all historical records of birds that had ever been recorded in the Sydney district. This second edition is a complete revision of that work which not only updates the list of species but also analyses the changes in the status of species since that time, looks at species which are becoming rare, and those which are extending their range.

Since 1958 there has been rapid suburban development in the Sydney district, the most closely settled part of Australia. This development has influenced the status of many bird species, mostly detrimental. Aggressive species such as the Common Myna and Pied Currawong have become well established and these species pose a real threat to smaller birds. On the positive side, there has been an increased interest in sea watching and water watching and more species are being

observed now than ever before, with new species for the district being recorded frequently.

*Birds of Sydney* contains a comprehensive list and a brief description of all bird species that have ever been recorded in the Sydney district (447 native and 35 exotic). These records date back to the first years of European settlement. (The only record for Brahminy Kite is from remarks on a painting from around 1790.)

All entries have a cross reference to the plates in *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* by Graham Pizzey. There is a brief chapter on where to locate birds in the area, but there are no maps of finer details of locations, as this is not the purpose of this book.

Finally, there is a very useful section which discusses identification of similar species e.g. Little & Hoary-headed Grebes and New Holland & White-cheeked Honeyeaters.

The book is well indexed, with species listed by common and scientific names. The black & white illustrations are mainly head studies, but little attention has been paid to detail of structure and the cross reference to the plates of Pizzey's field guide is unfortunate, as these plates fall short of modern field guide standards. However, the book is not intended to be a field guide, but rather an examination of all records for the Sydney district.

This book can only be purchased direct from Australia as there is no agent in NZ, so unless readers in NZ have a special interest in what species have been recorded in Sydney, there is little to recommend purchasing the book.

PAM AGNEW

*Of birds and men*, by Herbert Axell. 1992. The Book Guild, Sussex, England. 282 pp. ISBN 0 86332 747 8. Price £14.95 (hbk). Obtainable from: South Pacific Books, P.O. Box 68097, Auckland.

This delightfully rambling autobiography by Bert Axell is a must for anyone who has the slightest interest in the history of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; the development of its reserves, particularly Dungeness and Minsmere; far-flung sites like Mai Po, Costa Brava and Malta; an ornithologist's view of 1970s New Zealand; changing attitudes toward conservation; or a Who's Who of British birding over the past 40 years.

Bert (although I note that he uses Herbert in the title) has filled the 271 pages of text with numerous details of places visited, activities on the day, birds seen and people met. His life-long and continuing deep interest and involvement in birds and bird habitats is for ever evident as is the care of his note-taking over the years and the hours of work taken to turn these notes into this book.



Thankfully the 10 chapters do not slavishly follow a chronological order, but go rather from place to place. One such place is Rye – the start of Bert's life – and even there birding seems to have occupied much of his life but less of his note-taking than in later years. Wartime army life took him to interesting places - or at least places which he has portrayed as either interesting or where birding was more important than marching.

Some of the places referred to during the 40 years since he began work with the RSPB are now history, but at others you can still see and enjoy the experiences which Bert portrays so well. Try 'Nights at the Lights' – the light is Dungeness where they continue to trap migratory birds today, albeit by different methods - or 'The Making of Minsmere' – and the hides he describes are those which you can sit in to this day.

The trials and tribulations of bird conservation in Spain and Malta are a stark contrast to the positive and rewarding activities in Britain. Bert himself was rewarded for his efforts and includes pleasant and informative accounts of attempts to advise on the establishment of bird reserves in other countries and of his Churchill Fellowship travels around the world, including New Zealand.

Unusually, but very usefully, the book is completed with four indices: people, institutions, the media; birds; other animals; and places.

DICK VEITCH

*Bird life of coasts and estuaries*, by P.N. Ferns. 1992. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 336 pp. ISBN 0 521 34569 3. Price \$Aus.99.00.

*Bird life of coasts and estuaries* is the second in the Bird Life series of books, which aims to describe the ecological and conservation aspects of bird life in Britain and Ireland in a habitat by habitat framework. Aimed primarily at the layperson/birder audience, this book succeeds in providing a splendid overview primarily of seabirds, waders and waterfowl of the British Isles and their habitats with which they interact.

The book is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 provides some basic geomorphology and biology of the coastal environment. The next 4 chapters detail the birdlife of the open sea (chapter 2), rocky shores, cliffs and shingle beaches (chapter 3), mudflats and sandy shores (chapter 4), and the coastal fringe (chapter 5). The final (and longest) chapter deals with threats to coastal birds.

New Zealand readers may find the chapters about the open sea and mudflats and sandflats of the most relevance. In covering topics as large as these, and aiming at the lay person, only a limited amount of information can be presented. Nevertheless, Peter Fern does very well in

selecting relevant examples to illustrate the essential features of the birds' behaviour. The reference list of some 740 items is testament to the amount of research involved in the book.

The chapter about threats to coastal birds is important and should encourage New Zealanders to consider the status of our estuaries and coasts.

To conclude the, Peter Fern has produced an easy to read yet very full book that will play an important role in educating the general public, yet be of interest to those in the scientific community. Many will want to delve deeper though, and Ferns suggests the reference list be used as an introduction to the wealth of available literature. I couldn't help but note how poorly certain areas of research in New Zealand are currently served, such as tidal flat and wader ecology, and seabird feeding ecology. The price is unfortunately high enough to preclude much of its intended readership from being able to purchase a copy.

PHIL BATTLE

*Lifesong. Amazing Sounds of Threatened Birds*. Available from Mankind Music, 32 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11 1BW, UK. Price £12.99 for CD, £8.50 for the cassette, plus postage & packing (£2.50).

Thirteen extinct or rare species are presented on this disc introduced by Andrew Sachs. On track two an interesting exercise is attempted to recreate the sounds of a species considered to be extinct for at least 80 years. The Huia was never recorded onto magnetic tape, so no authentic recordings of it are available. Fortunately, however, a disc recording of a human imitation of this species has been preserved. This human imitation has been fed into a computer to obtain tonal values which were then used to produce an electronic version that sounds close to the call of the live bird.

The other extinct species featured is the Kauai O O A A of Hawaii from a field recording made in 1983 in the Alaska Swamp, the then stronghold of the species. This species which is on track 3 of the CD became extinct in 1987.

Track 4 presents John Kendrick's recordings of the North Island Kokako from Puketi Forest in Northland 13 years go. For the remaining species, all of which are considered endangered, the problems are similar: loss of habitat and the presence of predators such as mustelids and cats. There are a few exceptions, fortunately, like the American Whooping Crane (a foster parent scheme has now increased its numbers) and the Seychelles Magpie Robin (now the subject of a major conservation effort by the International Council for Bird Preservation).

Perhaps the most surprising species to appear on a production dealing with rare

and extinct species is the Nightingale. It seems that droughts in its winter range in Africa are taking a high toll of these birds, combined with habitat loss and hunting in Europe as well. Tracks 15 and 16 form a memorial to the 100 or more species that have become extinct over the last 300 years. Track 15, in memory of the Huia, is a longer version of the reconstruction referred to earlier. Track 16, entitled 'Symphony' features real and slowed-down songs of Grey Warblers, Saddleback, Kokako, and others to form an interesting montage which could never be heard in the wild.

The recordings of real birds featured in this production are nice, crisp and clean, free of major background sounds, something which one expects in this day of digital studio production methods. A minor fault is that tracks 15 and 16 have not been separated on the CD (this does not occur on the cassette version). Information about each species, its habitat requirements, status and recording details are provided in the booklet, as well as the sources of information.

If one is interested in the sound made by those species under threat then this is the recording for you. Similarly, if one wishes to get involved in the valuable work that the ICBP is doing worldwide, then purchasing this recording will help (some of the proceeds from the sale of this CD will go towards ICBP conservation projects around the world). In the booklet an enrollment form is available along with notes on the range of projects supported by the organisation.

LES MCPHERSON

## Scaup survey in North Canterbury

Over many winters we have noticed a considerable increase in the number of Scaup on some of the local shingle pits, ponds and small lakes and waterways along the coast from Christchurch to Amberley Beach in North Canterbury. This winter we decided to conduct a census of Scaup and Australian Coot and this was carried out on 18 July, with the help of several local OSNZ members.

The small shingle pits at Bryndwr, once valuable winter refuges for Scaup and coot, are being gradually filled with spoil. At Kaiapoi there is a series of four ponds with plenty of cover and in addition to many Scaup and coot, other waterbirds breed there. The Groynes recreational area at Belfast has extensive waterways and a boating pond, and many Scaup can be seen – several pairs breed on the quieter reaches of the river. The waterways at Waikuku proved interesting as usual, Scaup are always present and some breed there. Woodend Lagoon is a large body of water and supports hundreds of waterfowl,

including many Scaup. However, access is very difficult as thick stands of willows prevent a clear view of the lake. We regularly visit Archer's Pond at Woodend and often see large numbers of Scaup, a few pairs breed there successfully.

The largest number of coot was found at Isaac's Peacock Springs reserve, Harewood; Scaup also occur in large numbers and both species breed on the ponds.

We surveyed a few of the major sites on 17 June (see below) and found that the numbers of Scaup peaked around that time, then gradually declined so that by the time of our July survey many birds had presumably returned to the high country lakes. In future, we plan to conduct our census in mid June, and to continue monitoring the movements of the birds at intervals throughout the year.

Below is a summary of the counts.

Site	Scaup	Coot
Owaka Road shingle pit, Halswell	2	0
Brigham Drive shingle pit, Halswell	1	0
Ashby's pit, Christchurch	0	2
Bryndwr pit, Christchurch	8	0
Bromley Oxidation Ponds	6	0
Orana Park	47	0
Peacock Springs	103	43
The Groynes	59	0
Kaiapoi shingle pits	62	13
North end shingle pits, Kaiapoi	2	0
Archer's pond, Kaiapoi	131	1
Woodend Lagoon	91	0
Oxidation pond, Woodend	1	0
Oxidation pond, Southbrook	6	3
Waikuku waterways	20	1
Leithfield Lagoon	10	0
Amberley Lagoon	12	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>73</b>

KATHLEEN HARRISON  
& SHEILA PETCH

## AWSG News 7

### Flying flags: the concept takes off

The idea behind the AWSG wader leg-flagging programme always was to find out something about the migration routes used by different wader species or populations, rather than the fragments of individual life histories shown by retraps of birds with only numbered bands. There are many more birdwatchers spread through the East Asian/West Pacific Flyway than study groups and researchers, and it was this underused resource that Mark Barter, Chairman of the AWSG, hoped to utilise.

However, when the programme began two years ago with the attachment of small orange plastic tags to the legs of migratory waders in Victoria, Australia, there were some people who doubted its usefulness. It was felt that the flags would not be noticed often by birdwatchers and, if they were, it would not reveal much about the birds. At first a few local sightings of recently flagged birds showed movements along the Victorian coast. These were soon followed by the first international recovery, a Red-necked Stint at Lake Ellesmere, New Zealand.

This gave an immediate boost to the

leg-flag proponents. Not only did it confirm one suspected stage of a migration route, but it also demonstrated that the concept of using leg-flags was useful. Birds are seen in places where they are never likely to be trapped, and flag sightings complement data from band recoveries.

The techniques of making and applying the colour-flags were subject to some experimentation before the present methods were developed. The improved techniques are explained in The Stilt 20. So far, flag retention is close to 100%, and this is constantly monitored through recaptures of banded birds. There are no signs that the flags harm the birds in any way.

There are now over 5000 migratory waders of 13 species with leg-flags in the East Asian/West Pacific Flyway. The majority of these birds are wearing orange flags from Victoria, but more birds are now being flagged in other areas, each with their own distinctive colour. Those with white leg-flags will have received them in New Zealand, while those with dark green flags show that they have passed through south-east Queensland. Any birds with yellow flags will have been caught in north-west Australia. Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and the Philippines have shown interest in participating in the programme in future.

There have now been many international recoveries of flagged birds. Red-necked Stints with orange flags have been seen in New Zealand, south-eastern Australia, Brunei, Hong Kong and China. When these sightings are plotted on a map they immediately suggest a migration route, and show the areas where the birds stop to feed when en route. Curlew Sandpipers from Victoria have been seen in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Sightings of Lesser Knots in New Zealand show that many of these birds pass through Australia, at least on southwards migration.

An important feature of the programme lies in the potential to distinguish visually between different populations of the same species without the necessity of retrapping. This underlies the reason for using different colours on birds caught in different regions. Will Bar-tailed Godwits from Australia's north-west mix with those from New Zealand on a Korean estuary? Do Red-necked Stints cross arid central Australia? Will Curlew Sandpipers from the East Asian/West Pacific Flyway turn up on the coast of India or southern Africa? Answers to these and other questions may become apparent over the next few years.

The last question is not entirely fanciful. Birds seem to be drifting between flyways more than had been assumed. The very success of the leg-flagging programme has also thrown up a few problems, with increasing numbers of researchers and countries thinking of starting their own programmes. Already a Lesser Knot with a red band of unknown origin has appeared

in New Zealand, while a Curlew Sandpiper with an orange leg-flag and a Russian band has been caught in Peninsular Malaysia. This may have been banded and flagged in the Taimyr Peninsula of northern Russia, which could be a zone of overlap of breeding populations of two flyways.

Without some central authority to coordinate the allocation of colour codes to different regions, there is potential for confusion about the provenance of a sighted colour-flagged bird. This results in a waste of effort and harm to existing research. The responsibility for such coordination has been assumed by the Asian Wetland Bureau, which intends to set up a register of colour marking schemes for the Asia-Australasia-Pacific region. The problem of Curlew Sandpipers in the Taimyr Peninsula also shows that coordination may be needed at a global level!

Meanwhile, we ask OSNZ members who watch waders or survey wetlands to look for flagged migratory waders. Sightings should be reported with species, location, and the numbers and species of other waders present to the Banding Office, Science & Research Division, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington.

HUGO PHILLIPPS

## Regional Roundup

### Waikato

The Waikato team has been greatly reduced during Sept/Oct, with no less than 10 members travelling overseas to destinations ranging from Australia, New Caledonia, Japan and Nova Scotia, to Bermuda. However, the home bodies kept up attendances at evening meetings and on trips.

In August, Mick Clout spoke about his study of NZ Pigeons at breeding sites at Pelorus Bridge in the South Island, at Wenderholm near Auckland, and at Mohi Bush in Hawkes Bay. Research at all three study areas showed how the availability of a plentiful supply of native fruit influenced the breeding ability of the pigeons. He also demonstrated that where Native Pigeons are no longer present, that favoured food species such as nikau now have a very poor seed dispersal. As well, Mick was able to show how introduced predators affected the pigeons' breeding and food supply. Graeme Taylor's graphic descriptions and excellent slides of seabirds on Midway Island trying to re-establish colonies on an island that has been a naval base for 50 years left us feeling very aware of the disastrous impact that humans have had on pristine places. More alarming was Graeme's discovery that the local people did not think it unusual that a seabird's stomach should be full of plastic! Then in October, Ross Galbreath spoke about his recently published book *The history of the NZ Wildlife Service*.

We counted 55 Cattle Egrets at Lake Ngaroto in August, and 295 at Rangiriri. Reports of about 100 birds seen near Cambridge and later at Waharoa have not been confirmed, and may be another Waikato flock of which there have been vague reports over the years, but they are never there when we go to look for them.

An early morning trip to Pirongia in September gave several members their first view of Kokako when 2 were seen and heard calling at very close range, while 2 and possibly 3 more birds were heard calling in the distance. Whiteheads were in full song and Grey Warblers were seen in courtship flight. A Shining Cuckoo heard calling was the first Waikato report this season.

Having been in a very dirty condition for some time, the waters of Hamilton's Lake Rotoroa recently seemed a little clearer to local observers. Counts show that Coot are returning, with 16 being counted at the beginning of October. A White Heron was resident for several days over the winter, and Dabchick, Bittern, Grey Teal and 2 NZ Scaup have also been seen recently. The local council is currently seeking public submissions on how to combat problems with the water quality of the lake.

(Bev Woolley)

### Hawkes Bay

Our August field trip was to Horseshoe Lake where Black Shags and Little Shags were nesting. Coot, Scaup, Mallard, Shoveler and Grey Teal were also present. 2 Mute Swans which were introduced there many years ago have had no success breeding. Dabchicks, Paradise Shelduck, Pied Stilts and Spur-winged Plover were also seen.

Our September field trip, which was to have been to Shines Falls, was cancelled due to bad weather. October saw us visiting Balls Clearing and Little Bush. A pleasant day was spent wandering through the bush where Whiteheads were plentiful and NZ Pigeons, Tuis, Fantails, Grey Warblers and introduced species were seen; Shining Cuckoos were heard.

Our Pied Oystercatcher banding project is progressing well. One pair of adults have been colour banded at the nesting site on the Ngaruroro River and their 2 chicks metal banded. 2 more pairs of Pied Oystercatchers were located during a survey of the Ngaruroro River at the end of October.

Our daily wader watch is continuing. The bulk of our Bar-tailed Godwits appear to have arrived. We have a few extras – 1 Asiatic Whimbrel, 2 Red-necked Stints, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 18+ Golden Plovers, and 6 Lesser Knots.

(Christine McRae)

### Taranaki

Two recent trips took us into the bush of Moki State Forest in North Taranaki and the Pouakai Ranges in Egmont National Park. Only a small number of species were seen but they included Whiteheads (which are quite common in both areas), and in the Moki State Forest we saw and heard the very few Kokako still to be found there.

More unusual sightings during the past three months have included a Kaka at New Plymouth and Inglewood, a Little Egret at Mokau, and a Blue Duck (one of a group released some time ago by DoC) at Lake Dive in Egmont National Park. Native Pigeons, which are quite common in New Plymouth, have been noted feeding on magnolia flower and leaf buds. Cattle Egrets returned in reduced numbers this year, the highest count being 13 in September.

In July, DoC staff and some OSNZ members trapped a number of feral cats which had been preying upon Grey-faced Petrels at the Rapanui breeding colony, North Taranaki.

(Erika Woodger)

### Wanganui

On 17 June we handed in what is possibly a Kerguelen Petrel, picked up on Turakina Beach. It was alive but died the next day; this has been handed to DoC for positive identification.

At our August meeting our guest speaker was Norm Marsh from DoC who spoke about the different aspects of his job and outlined the Kiwi recovery plan. He informed us that there is a possibility that the kiwi could be in more trouble than was thought, this should be a major concern to us all.

At our September meeting we were given a talk by Dr Kenneth Thomson about his recent visit to Cairns in Australia. Colin Ogle assisted by showing some slides of the area he covered. This was an informal talk and enjoyed by all.

At our October meeting we had a general discussion on a format for next year and those present came up with some good ideas.

(Tom Teasdale)

### Manawatu

Our complement of wading birds is busy arriving at the Manawatu Estuary. At the end of October there were 500+ Bar-tailed Godwits and about 160 Lesser Knots. An orange-flagged Knot has been seen again – for the third consecutive year.

Small numbers of Wrybills and Pied Oystercatchers are still present. Up to 3 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 5 Turnstones, 13 Golden Plovers and a Red-necked Stint have also been seen. It will be interesting to see if our Broad-billed Sandpiper returns for a third year.

The information boards, paid for by the Horowhenua District Council and constructed by Heritage Trails, are now in place at the Manawatu Estuary. One is near the motel in Dawick Street, and one near the old sailing club. There are also 3 large signs which advise people with 2- and 4-wheeled drive bikes, and people with dogs, not to disturb the birds at their favourite roost at the end of the spit.

In October a local trapper gave a most interesting talk about his observations of Blue Duck in Whitiaki Valley. Bob Wellington and his family had made many trips, at all times of the year, over several years, to this area. His video recording of the Blue Ducks and the forest was extremely good.

Happy Christmas to everyone and good birding from the Manawatu.

(Pam Slack)

### Wellington

As summer approaches the travel bug is affecting some of us – the Chatham Islands have been visited and the long-awaited trip to Little Barrier Island is nearly here.

The final count on Mana Island has been completed and increases noted in the numbers of Black-backed Gulls, Pukekos, Pipits and Fantails. The planting programme is progressing well, with the earlier trees now 3-4 m high. There are now 11 Takahē on Mana; one pair were incubating and another pair preparing a nest site.

October is a good time to be on Kapiti Island – Kakas were evident and NZ Pigeons were scattered throughout the grass and low coprosma bushes on Rangitira Flat. On Sunday a pair of Saddlebacks turned up at the wharf for a breakfast of cheese.

Alan Tennyson spoke to us one evening about seabird fisheries bycatch. Drift nets, set nets, and trawling all cause problems but the major threat now is longline fishing. Not enough is known about the extent of the problem and more observers are needed, but if one observer saw an albatross caught each day and that was multiplied by the number of boats in the fleet the result would be many thousands of birds caught each year. Solutions are difficult to find.

In October, Colin Miskelly deputised at short notice to give a talk about the major DoC projects underway in the Wellington region. Many issues were raised, providing food for future discussions.

Another local project was presented at our November meeting by Ralph Powlesland, who has been studying the Black Shag colony at Pencarrow. This is another fascinating project on our doorstep with much interesting waiting to be discovered.

We have had some Wrybills at Waikanae, and 2 Turnstones and some Bar-tailed Godwits at Pauatahanui – and even 1 at Lyall Bay. We are looking forward to a great summer of birdwatching.

(Ros Batcheler)

### Nelson

Nelson has not fallen off the top end of the South Island nor have we stopped attending to the birds, it is just that we have not been very good at putting pen to paper.

Our winter wader census was done in reasonable weather with thanks to Sheila Petch from Canterbury, Simon and Patrick in Golden Bay, and of course Peter, Willie, Gail and Jenny in all the other odd places. We were rather short of our usual stalwart counters this winter because of overseas trips to the North Island and other far flung countries.

During the winter census we found an absolute dearth of godwits in Nelson Haven and the Waimea Estuary, and at Motueka Estuary there were more in the paddocks than on the sandspit. At Farewell Spit, Lesser Knots were three times their usual number and were still high on a further count six weeks later. Turnstones were also in decidedly short supply.

Recently, we completed the Black-backed Gull nest census on the Boulder Bank and in the Waimea Estuary. This year we also have very good colonies of Red-billed Gulls, Caspian Terns and White-fronted Terns.

Stilt banding is progressing well thanks to early morning efforts of Henk and Willie.

Alvin keeps finding the odd Marsh Crane, and Cirl Buntings keep appearing in different places.

A count of the Pied Shag nests on Haulashore Island showed a slight increase in the last year, and the colony in the trees on the Boulder Bank is flourishing.

Younger people are being encouraged in bird study by the Science Fairs and classroom talks, mostly done by Gail.

Preparations are underway for the 1994 AGM, which will include an all-day boat trip to the Abel Tasman National Park and the new marine reserve. There is also the possibility of kayaking for the more adventurous. We hope to see lots of you here in May. The weather will be fine!

(Jenny Hawkins)

### Canterbury

Our September field trip was a survey of Little Shag colonies in the Christchurch area. We found six colonies, the Selwyn River colony being by far then largest with 125 nests – by October this had increased to 178 nests. A small colony in Hagley Park is creating a lot of interest among locals.

The October field trip to St Annes

Lagoon was a little disappointing for the Spotless Crakes which nested the previous year was not found, even though Don Hadden played taped calls.

We had a very good turnout for the November field trip, when Andrew Crossland organised a survey of the Ashley River. The 20 kms to the rivermouth were well covered. We were checking for Black-fronted Dotterels, but none was found. However, two pairs and a single Wrybill were counted Black-fronted Terns were found nesting. The surprise find was a Common Sandpiper, no doubt the bird which had been found previously on the Waipara River.

In August, the speaker at our evening meeting was Dave Murray of DoC who gave us a very interesting update on the Black Stilt project. There are about 100 birds now and "Project River Recovery" is underway to help create more nesting habitat by clearing weeds on the riverbed. However, there is some opposition to this because overseas visitors like photographing the flowering lupins. Some of the birds disappear in winter and DoC do not know where they go. Any ideas?

The September meeting had Euan Kennedy of DoC who enlightened us all about the work on South East Island. There are 66 bird species, 29 of which are seabirds. Euan has adapted snow shoes which are excellent for walking on ground pitted with seabird burrows without causing any damage.

In October Andrew Grant told us of the work on the Chatham Island Pigeon. A concentrated predator trapping programme in the study area in the southern part of the island, together with the trapping programme associated with the Taiko project, is paying off. Fencing the area to keep out animals has also helped increase the population from 40 to 200. A Pigeon has been seen for the first time in

many years in Waitangi.

Migratory waders are now arriving in their usual numbers, giving more excitement to our outings; an orange flagged Red-necked Stint has been seen again at Ellesmere. A male Chestnut Teal stayed at the Kowai Rivermouth until an extra high spring tide obliterated the small lagoon it favoured. The Caspian Tern colony on Kaitorete Spit has 40 nests this season, last year there were 36 nests. Tony Crocker found a Black-fronted Dotterel nest on the Waipara River and two chicks have since hatched; six pairs of Black-fronted Dotterels were found in a recent survey of the river. A Kaka was seen by Jack Cowie at Timeline Downs. We are having difficulty finding nesting Pied Stilts this season, with very few banded to date.

(Sheila Petch)

### Otago

At long last somebody has done some work on the Sooty Shearwaters on mainland Otago. Sheryl Hamilton, as part of her Masters degree, talked to us about her field work and the results. From the numerous questions fired at her by a large audience one could feel that we didn't know much about the population of this shearwater in Otago, and Sheryl did.

Once again, members and friends were involved in the Yellow-eyed Penguin census during October. This is the 13th year we have assisted John Darby. It involves getting oneself in position in sand dunes at 15.00 h and counting all the penguins coming in and going out. One is allowed to go home when it gets too dark to see the penguins. Yellow-eyed Penguins do not land after dark anyway. This year the birds in some parts of the Otago peninsula and the Catlins did not cooperate fully – they either did not appear or were very late. A count in December will determine if this trend is repeated.

(Peter Schweigman)

## SUBANTARCTIC OPPORTUNITY

In February 1994, the Dunedin based company, Discovery Charters is able to offer 7- and 10-day voyages which will visit Stewart Island, the Snares, Enderby, the Auckland Islands, and on the 10-day voyage, also Campbell Island. The objective is to see and come to know as much of these islands and their amazing proliferation of birdlife as we can. There are many endemic bird species to be easily seen, as well as a search for the more rare. The Snipe, Teal, albino Yellow-eyed Penguin, Rockhopper Penguins, and that most beautiful of creatures, the nesting Light-mantled Sooty Albatross.

Berths available from \$1995 on a 16-berth 240 ton motor vessel.

For brochures and information, write to Discovery Charters (South Seas) Limited, P.O. Box 1182, Dunedin or Phone (03) 453 6986, (025) 322 609, or Fax (03) 477 1380.

**DEADLINE FOR MARCH ISSUE IS 10 FEBRUARY**