

OSNZ news

Edited by TONY CROCKER, 117 Paparoa Street, Christchurch 5,
for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Please note that sightings recorded in this Newsletter are subject
to confirmation.

No. 71 June, 1994
Note Deadline for the September issue will be
10th August.

Predation at Robin and Tomtit nests

Our mainland forests are lacking in both terms of diversity and density of birds when compared to islands. Predation is likely the most important reason why our forests are so quiet. If we are to protect and enhance our mainland forest communities we need to identify the culprits and more importantly determine their relative significance. It was with these things in mind that I chose to look at predation at Robin and Tomtit nests as part of an MSc based at Otago University.

The first step was to choose a study site with enough easily accessible birds to monitor. I chose Kaharoa, a logged-over forest remnant located approximately 23 km north-west of Rotorua. So why Kaharoa? Well Kaharoa is one of the noisiest forests on the mainland. This is the result of three years active management of predators by DoC Rotorua with Tasman Forestry's financial assistance. Predator control ceased in early 1993 and already most of the predators have reached previous densities.

The next step was to find 12 pairs of Robin and 12 pairs of Tomtit that loved eating mealworms. The Robins were easy to convince but the Tomtits took a little more time to appreciate these wriggling culinary delights. Why feed the birds mealworms you may ask? Well the reasoning is simple and goes like this. Soon I could enter a pair's territory, clap my hands and they would appear to be fed. If a male Robin or Tomtit continued to scoff the mealworms I threw him, there was nothing much happening in his love life, but when he took a mealworm in his bill and uttered a high pitched feeding call I knew something was up.

By following the male to the female and then following the female it was

possible to catch her nest building or, later in the cycle, locate her nest. The rate at which the male fed the female also provided an indication of where she was in the nesting cycle. Robins and Tomtits take from 1-3 days to build their nests but incubation does not begin until 6-10 days after the nest is complete. During the pre-incubation period eggs are laid at about 24 hour intervals and left until all the eggs (1-3 for Robins and 3-5 for Tomtits) are laid.

I used two methods to monitor nests: time lapse video equipment and regular visits. I compared the sign left by predators captured on video footage with the sign left at nests monitored through regular visits, to work out the importance of various predators.

Seventy-five nests were found of which only nine fledged chicks. More than 80% of nests were preyed on. One pair of Robins made ten nesting attempts and every one failed. Each nesting attempt involved building a new nest. Adult female Robins and Tomtits were also preyed upon while incubating eggs. Ship rats proved the most common predator and Morepork also preyed on a small percentage of nests.

It is likely that these results have implications for other forest birds and may go a long way to explaining why our mainland forests are so quiet.

KERRY BROWN

Two Unusual Visitors near New Plymouth

On 4 December 1993 an exhausted Southern Royal Albatross was found at Urenui Beach, north of New Plymouth. It probably came ashore as a result of a brief



Southern Royal Albatross. New Plymouth: 5 December 1993
(David Medway).



Red-tailed Tropicbird. New Plymouth: 23 March 1994
(David Medway).

but severe storm which occurred off that part of the Taranaki coast the night before.

The bird was immature, in plumage approaching that of stage 2 of *HANZAB* 1A:Plate 15. It had many feather lice. After two days of care at Pouakai Zoo Park near New Plymouth it was released by DoC officers about 10 km offshore. Apparently "albatrosses" are often seen from the Maui platform.

On 20 March 1994 a Red-tailed Tropicbird landed on the deck of a bulk carrier on passage from South Australia, about 300 km from its destination of Port Taranaki. It remained on deck until the ship berthed two days later. It was taken to nearby Pouakai Zoo Park where it was cared for until being released offshore several days later.

The Tropicbird was an adult with one long red central tail feather. It appeared in good physical condition apart from being somewhat exhausted initially.

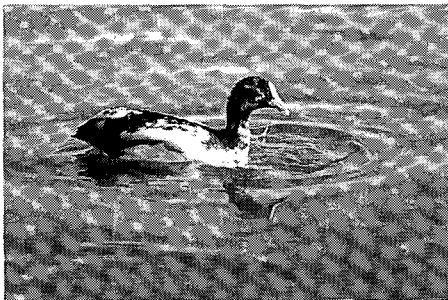
There appears to be only one similar record. In *Notornis* 9 (1961) page 166 there is a photo of a Red-tailed Tropicbird which flew on board a ship on 18 April 1961 "somewhere" west of New Plymouth.

DAVID MEDWAY

A Partial Albino Coot on Hamilton Lake

A partial albino Coot has recently made its temporary home on Hamilton's Lake Rotorua. The bird has been resident since 22 May, after briefly appearing in 1991. Photographs proved it was the same bird. The behaviour of this particular bird is different to the 'normal' coots, in that it often feeds alone, or amongst other waterfowl, but not its own species. It is one of 21 Australasian Coots currently inhabiting the lake.

PAUL CUMING



Albino Coot Hamilton Lake.

Unusual feeding behaviour of Shining Cuckoo

While on a photographic trip to the Whirinaki Forest with Geoff Moon and Len Doel I observed several Shining Cuckoos aerial feeding on moths and other insects above the river.

I have seen this feeding method used by the species on occasions but only briefly, whereas on this occasion the birds used it for long periods during the day, and for several consecutive days. The birds would fly out from a perch in trees beside the river and chase insects, in a similar way to that used by fantails, before returning to the original perch or another nearby. Because

the birds did not seem unduly concerned by our presence we were able to approach closely and actually see the insect being taken.

We found Shining and Long-tailed Cuckoos very common along the Whirinaki River above Minginui at this time of the year (the last week in November). The weather at the time was mostly dull and showery but this feeding continued even during steady rain.

JOHN KENDRICK

Changes in *Notornis*

There have been recent changes in the editorial procedures of *Notornis*, the scientific journal of the Society. A three-member Editorial Panel has been set up, composed of the Editor and two members. I welcome John Dowding and Paul Sagar as members of this panel.

Readers will notice slight changes in the format of papers in *Notornis* which are intended to conform to accepted international standards. A set of Instructions to Authors has been developed and will be published once in every volume (starting in the June 1994 issue); prospective authors are asked to consult these Instructions when preparing their manuscripts. There will be a possibility to order more reprints than the free set of 25 each author receives; these have to be ordered at the time of returning proofs. Prices will be sent with the order form and proofs.

There is no intention to change the scope or content of *Notornis* and we hope to keep up the high standard of the editorial work of preceding Editors. We especially encourage amateurs and first-time authors to submit their completed work to *Notornis*. We will not lower standards but will try to provide constructive and helpful advice.

We keenly await your manuscripts.

GÁBOR LÖVEI
Editor, *Notornis*

- Wanted - Reviews Editor

Due to the recent appointment of Gábor Lövei as Editor of *Notornis*, the society requires a new Reviews Editor. The role involves soliciting relevant books from publishers, receiving all books, distributing books to appropriate reviewers, and ensuring that reviews are forwarded to the Editor for inclusion in *Notornis* or *OSNZ News*.

A job description is available from the Secretary.

Members interested in filling this role or requiring further information should contact the Secretary (OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington) by 31 July.

CSN - a reminder

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

In the first instance members should send their material to the appropriate Regional Recorder, who is responsible for collating the region's contribution. In order to have time to complete this task, Regional Recorders need to receive the members' contributions by 31 July.

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

Far North/Northland: Pauline Smith, 15 McLintock St, Whau Valley, Whangarei. Ph (09) 437 2974.

Auckland: Dr Michael Taylor, 28 Awarua Crescent, Orakei, Auckland. Ph (09) 524 9234

South Auckland: Pam Agnew, Dianne Louise Drive, Bucklands Beach, Auckland. Ph (09) 535 4222.

Waikato: David Riddell, Gordonton Road, Taupiri RD1. Ph (07) 824 3877.

Bay of Plenty: Paddy Latham, 72 Simpson Road, Papamoa. Ph (07) 542 0406.

Volcanic Plateau: Keith Owen, 24 Sloane Ave, Rotorua. Ph (07) 347 7134.

Gisborne/Wairoa: Geoff Foreman, 6 Rimu Drive, Wairoa. Ph (06) 838 8370.

Taranaki: Erika Woodger, Egmont Road, RD6, Inglewood. Ph (06) 752 2524.

Wanganui: Tom Teasdale, 33 Paterson St, Aramoho, Wanganui. Ph (06) 343 9992.

Hawkes Bay: Wayne Twydlé, 124 Nelson Crescent, Napier. Ph (06) 835 6563.

Wairarapa: Matthew Wong, P.O. Box 90, Ahikouka Road, Greytown

Manawatu: Jon Andrews, 6 Eton Place, Palmerston North. Ph (06) 358 1183.

Wellington: Max Falconer, 188 Miromiro Road, Lower Hutt. Ph (04) 566 2702.

Nelson: Gail Quayle, 6 Tresillian Ave, Nelson. Ph (03) 545 0456.

Marlborough: Beverley North, 107 Redwood Street, Blenheim. Ph (03) 578 8585.

Canterbury: Amanda Freeman, 1/527 Cashel Street, Christchurch. Ph (03) 381 2005.

West Coast: Bruce Menteth. P.O. Box 36, Punakaiki. Ph (03) 731 1826.

Otago: Alun Baines, 41 Marion Street, MacAndrew Bay, Dunedin. Ph (03) 476 1022.

Southland: Lloyd Esler, 64 Herriot Street, Invercargill. Ph (03) 217 9060.

– Participants Wanted –
Chatham Island wader survey

In November 1994 and June 1995 it is planned to conduct wader counts on Chatham Island. This information will be used to fill in a gap in our long-term project of National Wader Counts. Council has made funds available from the Projects Assistance Fund to subsidise this special Chatham Island project and members are invited to volunteer their assistance.

Dates for the first count are Sat 19 – Sat 26 November. Participant costs are estimated at \$750.00 plus food, and numbers are limited.

Applications should be sent to Hugh Robertson, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, to arrive by 30 August. Please mark envelopes "Chatham Is. Wader Survey".

Kawhia Harbour census

Another five years have passed since Adrian Plant presented winter census data for Kawhia Harbour (*OSNZ News 45*, December 1987). This report is intended as a follow-up exercise, including summer census figures for comparison.

As before, the winter census was taken in June and the summer census in November. Kawhia continues to be an important wintering ground, with birds consistently numbering over 1000. Most numerous are SI Pied Oystercatchers, Black Swans, godwits, Pied Stilts and Banded Dotterels. Birds showing a decline include Black-backed Gulls, Black/hybrid Stilts and Little Shags. This is the second small shag species to decline in numbers in recent years. As Adrian stated, Little Black Shags have not occurred at Kawhia since the early 1980's; at least not on census days!

The number of waders at Kawhia rises to around 5000 in summer. Godwit numbers have been more or less steady since 1987, whereas there has been a major decline in White-fronted Terns counted. Until 1987, they numbered in the hundreds each summer – in 1992 only two were seen. Both New Zealand and Banded Dotterels regularly use Kawhia Harbour. This and Aotea Harbour, 7 km to the north, are favoured habitat with healthy numbers.

Counts of the larger shags also remain constant. Reef Herons and Pied Stilts have maintained their numbers in summer, while counts of White-faced Herons fluctuate widely. Birds present in low but stable numbers are knots, Variable Oystercatchers and Caspian Terns. As

Kawhia Census results

SPECIES:	WINTER CENSUS						SUMMER CENSUS					
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Large Black Shag	21	-	3	18	13	7	10	9	12	5	7	2
Pied Shag	6	-	8	7	22	-	1	-	-	18	45	30
Little Shag	14	1	36	11	1	2	1	4	-	-	-	2
White-faced Heron	74	27	13	44	45	5	28	32	36	41	135	28
Reef Heron	1	1	1	4	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	-
Black Swan	250	-	160+	103	900	1049	62	70+	240	165	13	51
Mallard	172	137	155	187	87	110	31	25	35	16	58	28
SIPO	1665	1072	2370	2166	2560	1580+	494	613	712	537	408	896=
Variable Oystercatcher	2	3	4	5	3	-	2	5	11	7	6	2
NZ Dotterel	9	4	9	7	12	2	3	6	6	4	12	5
Banded Dotterel	437	16	543	480	260	170	-	-	-	5	10	1
Lesser Knot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	5	10	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	380	120	867	150	583	75	*	3950	5350	3570	2908	4180=
Pied Stilt	226	55	334	210	206	64	100	41	92	90	67	98
Black/Hybrid Stilt	13	6	6	16	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-
Black-backed Gull	105	104	38	60	13	9	42	66	45	65	44	25
Red-billed Gull	36	32	42	37	30	42	60	34	72	97	74	130
Caspian Tern	17	4	21	8	43	13	8	21	36	20	37	4
White-fronted Tern	-	5	1	-	2	-	5	312	78	22	5	2
Australasian Gannet	6	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paradise Shelduck	-	4	2	21	14	6	-	-	-	1	80	2
Little Tern	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	2	-
Kingfisher	-	-	4	14	-	4	-	-	-	3	4	-
Spur-winged Plover	-	-	23	9	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	-
Royal Spoonbill	-	-	2	3	-	**	-	-	-	6	-	-
Whimbrel	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	10	7	13	-

* Bar-tailed Godwits were not counted due to adverse weather conditions

= Estimated number

** 5 seen the day before

always weather plays an important part in harbour censuses. Weather affected both summer and winter censuses in 1987 and 1992 when, due to rough conditions, boats could not be taken into some areas.

Other points of note over the past five years were:

- colour-banded Black Stilts were seen almost annually in June, a single bird being present in the winters of 1989 and 1991.

- colour-banded Banded Dotterels and Pied Stilts were seen in the winter of 1989, and the winters of 1990 and 1992 respectively.

- a metal-banded Caspian Tern was seen in the winter of 1990.

Birds found breeding at Kawhia were Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls, Caspian and White-fronted Terns, NZ Dotterels, Pied Shags and Variable Oystercatchers.

Thank you to all participants over the years, especially to DoC and members with boats who helped out.

PAUL CUMING

Aotea Harbour census results

This is the second report and table of results concerning the combined Kawhia/Aotea census since 1987. As before winter counts were in June and summer counts in November.

Aotea Harbour does not match Kawhia for sheer numbers of birds, but is significant as an alternative to Kawhia. Some examples of this, for each season, follow.

In the two years that godwits were fewer in Kawhia in winter, they were decidedly more numerous in Aotea (1988 and 1990). In the winter of 1990, the only record of Mallards at Aotea coincided with the lowest numbers recorded at Kawhia.

In summer in 1988, Pied Stilt numbers were down in Kawhia but rose in Aotea, and a declining count of White-fronted Terns at Kawhia in 1992 contrasted with the largest numbers being recorded at Aotea. As the tables show, these numbers can be reversed, as the summer of 1989 shows. A dismal godwit count at Aotea, with only two birds, led to a record 5350 godwits at Kawhia.

Aotea census results

SPECIES	WINTER CENSUS						SUMMER CENSUS					
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Large Black Shag	2	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	7	6	-
Little Shag	-	-	-	5	1	3	1	2	1	-	3	3
Pied Shag	4	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
White-faced Heron	1	-	-	43	1	6	-	-	1	-	2	-
Reef Heron	3	2	1	2	1	1	-	-	2	2	-	1
Black Swan	48	27	-	37	365	595	4	8	*	165	69	40
Mallard	-	-	-	92	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
SIPO	64	188	286	730	410	671	629	117	12	238	222	264
V. Oystercatcher	18	6	6	8	2	7	10	3	-	-	-	-
NZ Dotterel	-	-	5	2	1	-	1	1	-	1	5	-
Banded Dotterel	126	73	112	1	17	112	4	4	11	-	9	-
Lesser Knot	-	-	-	-	4	-	34	1	3	1	1	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	100	245	15	286	80	1	1487	1000	2	1700	1360	554
Pied Stilt	194	25	12	131	18	11	20	46	12	2	6	-
Black-backed Gull	8	-	7	23	16	32	2	-	-	7	26	4
Red-billed Gull	29	-	-	24	-	-	1	3	-	9	22	12
Caspian Tern	17	5	3	11	11	5	3	6	2	7	6	5
White-fronted Tern	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	47
Paradise Shelduck	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	4
Spur-winged Plover	-	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	6	-	12
Welcome Swallow	11	23	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* not counted as were too widespread for accuracy.

Other interesting trends:

- Little Shags are present at Aotea in low numbers while more or less deserting Kawhia

- summering Variable Oystercatchers chose sites other than Aotea since 1988

- the 34 Lesser Knots in the summer of 1987 were possibly sheltering from the bad weather at Kawhia Harbour

- wintering Black Swan numbers are increasing

- Pied Stilt numbers are not increasing

While Aotea does not have the rarities or numbers of birds that Kawhia Harbour has, it still provides an important habitat and permanent home for more than 35 species of coastal bird.

Again, thanks must go to the boat-owners and DoC for their continued support.

PAUL CUMING

The 1994 AGM and conference - Nelson, 13-15 May

As usual the conference was preceded by the all-day Council meeting on Thursday, as members began to gather from around the country. People continued to arrive throughout Friday - those who arrived later missed part of a collection of papers

covering Black Shags, albatrosses, King Shags, Laughing Owls, Grey-faced Petrels, Kea, the Mangaiā (Cook Is.) Kingfisher, Knots, as well as seabirds from trawlers, and birds of the Manawatu estuary and Tiritiri Matangi Is. All agreed that these interesting and, at times, entertaining, papers made this inaugural "Scientific Day" a thoroughly worthwhile event. The papers were complemented by poster and photographic displays. Rob Schuckard's presentation on "Aspects of the ecology of NZ King Shag on Duffers Reef in the Marlborough Sounds" took the award for best paper.

On Saturday two coachloads of members departed for Kaiteriteri. Since there is no jetty at Kaiteriteri, we boarded the waiting "Abel Tasman Explorer" via an ingenious ramp pushed out from the stern. We motored close to the shore of Abel Tasman National Park for most of the day and saw a number of Spotted Shag roosts and a colony of seals basking on the rocky granite outcrops. These formations were spectacular, as were the golden beaches. We went ashore at Tonga Bay for lunch and to enjoy the beach and bush around the lagoon. Later the magnificent scenery provided a backdrop to lively conversation as we returned along the coast. Most members who did not join the cruise went to the Rainbow Skifields, the area in which Graeme Elliott is conducting his Kea research. Keas were conspicuous by their absence but there were superb views over

Lake Rotoiti to savour.

That evening there was time to tidy up before a very good meal and local wine, followed by the main business of the day, the AGM. Reports of the various schemes of the Society are contained in this issue and the financial state of affairs was outlined by Mark Nee. Special mention was made of Hugh Robertson's contribution to funds through Lottery Board grants for the Falla Memorial Issue of *Notornis*, the new *Field Guide* and for part of a vehicle for work on Farewell Spit. Matthew Wong from Wairarapa was awarded the Junior Award for his outstanding efforts to date, and it was proposed that Barrie Heather be made an Honorary Life Member of the Society at a Special General Meeting to take place in October. Meanwhile a vote of thanks for Barrie's contributions over the years (with particular reference to his silly hats) led to a standing ovation.

Sunday morning the RRs from Southland, Canterbury, Wellington, Waikato, Auckland and Northland each gave a brief outline of regional undertakings and it was of interest of all to hear of activities of other areas. An informal meeting of a proposed seabird group followed.

After lunch on Sunday the party began to break up, some 12 intrepid souls setting off to Farewell Spit, others for the airport or ferry. Special thanks to Nelson members for all of their hard work, as a good time was had by all over the weekend. We were lucky that the weather was as promised by Jenny Hawkins - just perfect.

KAY HASLETT

Beach Patrol Scheme in 1993 - preliminary report

This report concerns the results from 501 cards received to 1 May 1994. In 1993, 2954 km were travelled. This distance is well down on the average of 4136 km per year travelled during the period 1971-1992. Dead seabirds found in 1993 totalled 4295. This is much fewer than the average of 9865 found per year in 1971-1992. Of the coastal regions where greater than 100 km were covered in 1993, Southland had the highest rate of recovery at 3.7 birds per km (Sooty Shearwaters, Diving Petrels, Fairy Prions and Broad-billed Prions being the main contributors to this rate) and Auckland West the lowest at 1.2 birds per km.

Unusual finds included a Black-fronted Tern found on an Otago beach in May, just the tenth for the Scheme. A Gould's Petrel was found on an Auckland West beach in January. It is the fourteenth for the scheme. Three Yellow-nosed Mollies were found on Auckland East and Bay of Plenty (2) beaches in June, July

and August; 19 have been found previously. Two Grey-backed Storm Petrels were found in 1993, both on Wellington West beaches in October; 16 have been found previously.

Greater numbers of Black-backed Gulls were found in 1993 than previously; 690. Usually fewer than 500 are found each year. This result occurred, in part, because regular patrols are now being carried out around Somes Is. (WS) where over 2000 pairs nest.

The following are the provisional totals for each region of coast patrolled in 1993.

	Birds	km covered
Auckland East	409	298
Auckland West	1342	1649
Bay of Plenty	196	90
Canterbury North	272	74
Canterbury South	31	15
East Coast N.I.	37	94
North Coast S.I.	18	71
Outlying Islands	21	13
Otago	35	78
Southland	391	105
Taranaki	54	48
Wairarapa	3	10
Westland	5	12
Wellington South	470	137
Wellington West	704	193
TOTAL	4295	2954

Of the 2954 dead seabirds found on beaches in 1993, the cause of death of 46 was indicated. Thirty-six of the birds had been shot (28 Black-backed Gulls, 3 Red-billed Gulls, 2 Black-billed Gulls, 2 Variable Oystercatchers and 1 Pied Shag), four birds had each swallowed a fishing hook and nylon line (one each of Black Shag, Pied Shag, Black-backed Gull and Red-billed Gull), three birds had broken wings (one each of Westland Black Petrel, Flesh-footed Shearwater and Red-billed Gull), a Buller's Mollymawk had a fish head stuck in its mouth, a Black Shag had drowned in a net and a Spotted Shag had become entangled in a nylon line.

The success of the Beach Patrol Scheme in 1993 was due, to a large extent, to the people who organised patrols for groups of members, and to the dedicated patrollers who carried out regular patrols. My thanks to Mary Powlesland for assisting with the analyses of the data on the OSNZ computer (provided by a Lottery Board grant) during the past year.

RALPH POWLESLAND
Convenor

Nest Record Scheme – report for the year ending 30 April 1994

This year 39 members and friends contributed 367 cards covering 43 species,

bringing the grand total to 22,837 cards. To date 144 species are included in the scheme. 55 of the cards were colonial cards covering Gannet 3, Pied Shag 1, Little Shag 2, Black-backed Gull 7, Red-billed Gull 11, Caspian Tern 21, White-fronted Tern 10.

There was a high number of colonial nest record cards this year, but disappointingly few ordinary cards. The diversity of species was moderately good. Of note this year was the high number of cards with very detailed information, especially from Gwenda Pulham, Richard Parrish, D. Reed and Mark Melville for Fairy Terns, and Ralph Powlesland for Chatham Is. Pigeons. The major contributors were: Peter Bull (79), Richard Parrish (44), Ralph Powlesland (36), Don Hadden (37), Peter Langlands (35, mainly White-flipped (Little Blue) Penguin), and Mark Melville (22).

Information from the Nest Record Scheme has been used by several authors of texts for Volumes 2 and 3 of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* and data on NZ Falcons and Fairy Terns have been used by OSNZ members preparing papers. More progress has been made on computerising Nest Record data. Mary Powlesland has written a programme to input nest record card data onto the computer, and is now testing this with data on a number of species. Her work has been supported by very generous assistance from the Science Committee of the Lottery Grants Board.

Many thanks to all of the contributors to the scheme and to those who have encouraged members to take part.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS IN 1993/94: Peter Anderson, David and Elizabeth Bell, Peter Bull, Simon Chamberlain, Hugh Clifford, Willie Cook, Tony Crocker, Paul Cuming, Bev Elliott, Anthea Goodwin, Peter Graham, Don Hadden, Peter Langlands, Stewart Lauder, Steve Lawrence, Bruce Mackereth, Ina May, Mark Melville, Pat Miller, Sue Moore, Richard Parrish, P. Penney, Sheila Petch, Mary and Ralph Powlesland, Gwenda Pulham, D. Reed, Peter Reese, Hugh Robertson, Colin Scadden, Betty Seddon, Tim Shaw, D. Taylor, Alan Tennyson, Margaret and Wayne Twydale, Erika Woolger, Bev Woolley.

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN 1993/94: Brown Kiwi 1, Little Blue Penguin 32, Gannet 3, Pied Shag 1, Little Shag 2, Reef Heron 7, Feral Goose 1, Mallard 1, Harrier 1, NZ Falcon 3, Spotless Crake 1, Pukeko 5, Coot 2, SI Pied Oystercatcher 4, Variable Oystercatcher 27, Pied Stilt 12, NZ Dotterel 17, Banded Dotterel 16, Spur-winged Plover 7, Black-backed Gull 9, Red-billed Gull 11, Black-billed Gull 1, Black-fronted Tern 1, Caspian Tern 21, White-fronted Tern 10, Fairy Tern 14, NZ Pigeon 22, Little Owl 2, Skylark 1,

Welcome Swallow 6, Pipit 1, Dunnock 3, Blackbird 20, Song Thrush 41, Grey Warbler 1, Fantail 10, Tomtit 1, Silvereye 12, Chaffinch 6, Greenfinch 19, Goldfinch 3, Redpoll 2, Starling 17.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Nest Record Scheme Convenor

Report from the Banding Liaison Officer

This year I have received four permits from the Banding Office for my comment. While this is fewer than last year they were all good projects of interest to members and worth encouraging. It was good to see local Department of Conservation support for several of these projects.

I have received several enquiries from members concerning banding, and one from Australia, all of which have been attended to by the Banding Officer.

I have visited the Banding Office several times during the year. It is of some concern that people reporting sightings of colour-banded birds are not taking sufficient care to note which leg is carrying the colours. Completely accurate reporting is essential to enable the Banding Officer and his staff to process these sightings. Also when a group of people see banded birds only one record of the sighting needs to be sent to the Banding Office.

The Banding Office has had yet another review and a paper was sent to the Society for comment but so far nothing further has been heard.

There has been no meeting of the Banding Committee.

JENNY HAWKINS
Banding Liaison Officer

Annual Report of the Field Investigation Officer 1993-1994

1. Overview of the Society's major national schemes

The Beach Patrol, Moulting Recording and Nest Record Schemes continue to run with moderate levels of support, usually with most input from a relatively small number of dedicated individuals or groups. Mary Powlesland has continued to write and test programmes to allow the input and analysis of Nest Record Scheme data.

2. Review of the Society's special national studies

Wader census

The biannual national wader census continues to operate well. It is pleasing to note that the times that counts are being done and the coverage have improved, even if some reporting-in is rather slow, causing delays in finalising the national results.

Paul Sagar is analysing the data collected over the first ten years of the study and is making this available to the authors of the new field guide, even if *HANZAB* didn't generally use these extremely valuable data.

Banded Dotterel movements

Ray Pierce has now completed a second draft of a paper for *Notornis* on the results of this study. He has sent a copy to Clive Minton and RAOU expressing grave concern at the lack of cooperation from Australia in finalising the paper.

Black-fronted Dotterel movements

A small number of dedicated people have been catching and colour-banding breeding birds, but the birds are fairly elusive.

Pied Stilt movements

This project is going well in some regions, but poorly in others, with a special need to band birds in Manawatu, Marlborough and North Canterbury. Banding effort has tapered off in the southern North Island and South Island due to the elusive nature of breeding birds and other commitments of the key banders.

Passerine movements

The Central Passerine Group had a poor year, with Myk Davis deciding to stop banding when his backyard got invaded by the neighbourhood cats. Most effort concentrated on cage-trapping Silvereyes, Greenfinches and House Sparrows in the Wellington-Hutt area. The longest distance recovery this year was a Greenfinch from Upper Hutt to Plimmerton (15km). Some useful longevity data is now being collected, and morphometric data are being included in the new field guide.

Kereru display dives

The data collection phase of this study ended in June 1990 and these data are unfortunately still awaiting analysis for a paper to be submitted to *Notornis*, to the disgruntlement of the people who collected the data and of the organisers themselves!

Royal Spoonbill census

A good survey of the country was done in winter 1993, and extremely good coverage was made on 6 February 1994. Peter Schweigman is happy with the recent results and suggests that we continue this project. The applied project of colour-banding nestlings had a mixed year – none was banded at Vernon Lagoon because some chicks fledged early, and those that hadn't were killed by a mustelid; however chicks were colour-banded at the Green Is. colony for the first time. We are still having problems from people not reporting sightings of colour-banded birds to the Banding Office, even though the news that colour-banded Spoonbills were seen appears in local newspapers. Also many reports received have the combinations

reversed, and so please take particular care when recording band combinations.

Caspian Tern colonies

A nationwide check of Caspian Tern colonies was made in spring-summer of 1992. No progress to report.

3. Advice on projects

Through the year I have been called upon to give advice on several local or individual projects being mooted by members, or projects that are nearing the analysis phase. In particular I was involved in liaison regarding the colour-banding of S.I. Pied Oystercatchers in Hawkes Bay, and Variable Oystercatchers and Royal Spoonbills in Otago. I provided Maida Barlow with copies of scientific literature relevant to her study of Caspian Terns.

4. New studies

No new projects have been proposed.

5. Contact with New Zealand organisations

On behalf of OSNZ, Ralph Powlesland and I successfully applied to Lottery Science for two new computers for CSN organisers (\$4820), and for the outstanding amount (\$9000) needed to publish the Chathams issue as a special supplement to *Notornis*, rather than simply replace an issue.

6. Applications for funds from the Project Assistance Reserve

Grants approved in 1992 were:

\$400 – Reigen – Kaipara wader research
\$200 – Brown – nest predation study
\$500 – Taylor – Taiko expedition
\$110 – Pierce – Pied Stilt banding
\$500 – Barlow – Caspian Tern study
\$440 – Pulham – Fairy Tern study
\$300 – Sagar – Pied Oystercatcher study
\$800 – Schweigman – Royal Spoonbill banding
\$600 – Schweigman – Variable Oystercatcher banding

Also \$2000 loan to Hawkes Bay (Twydle) for a booklet on bird watching spots in Hawkes Bay.

The \$2000 for wader censuses on Chatham Is. was not called upon in 1992/93 because of problems getting flight bookings and accommodation to coincide in November 1993. Plans are being made for a visit in November 1994, followed by a visit in June 1995.

HUGH ROBERTSON
Field Investigation Officer

Mystery Bird #15

Mystery bird #15 is definitely a penguin – I hope you got that far. Sixteen types of penguin occur in New Zealand; most are vagrants and only three (Yellow-eyed, Fiordland Crested and Blue) breed on the mainland. This bird has prominent head

crests which immediately eliminates Emperor, King, Gentoo, Adelie, Chinstrap, Blue and Magellanic Penguins from contention.

Adult Yellow-eyed Penguins have a prominent yellow stripe leading from the eye to the rear crown, but they are streaked yellow over the whole crown and don't show the prominent tassels of this bird. Immature Yellow-eyed have darker head plumage than adults.

The crests identify the bird as one of the 'crested penguins', which include the Macaroni, Royal, Rockhopper (three races), Fiordland, Snares and Erect-crested. The crest shape and facial colours are the key to identifying the different species.

Macaroni and Royal Penguins have crests extending across the forehead, whereas this bird has a black forehead.

A key feature is the prominent patch of pale skin at the base of the bill. Two races of Rockhopper Penguin (Western and Moseley's) and the Fiordland Crested Penguin never show this character. Adult Snares, Erect-crested and Eastern Rockhopper Penguins show it clearly, but it may be less distinct in immatures.

Eastern Rockhoppers don't fit the bill (theirs is more delicate) – they have a thinner crest above the eye which starts further from the bill and is longer and more pendulous at the rear. Erect-crested tend to have more upright crests at the rear and their crests start slightly closer to the bill gape; they also have a larger 'chin' because the feathers meet the bill closer to the bill's tip. The top bill plate is more straight-sided and less bulbous in Erect-crested.



The mystery bird is a typical adult Snares Crested Penguin – a species rarely sighted away from its sole nesting grounds on the subantarctic Snares Islands, where an estimated 23,250 pairs breed. Unfortunately many Snares Penguins that turn up on mainland New Zealand beaches are in a motley state – either in immature plumage, moulting, or dead (or all three), which makes identification more taxing.

Vagrant crested penguins are easily misidentified, so be careful.

ALAN TENNYSON



Mystery Bird # 16

Identify this bird. Answer next issue.

Migrating Spoonbills

The rocky shores of Mana Island provide unlikely habitat for Royal Spoonbills, and so I was more than surprised to see a couple of flocks on a recent visit. I was on Mana Island (20 km north of Wellington, 4 km off Titahi Bay) from 2 to 4 December 1993. The weather on 2 December was miserable, with strong north-west winds, low cloud and frequent rain showers.

At about 1300 hrs on 2 December I saw a flock of 11 Royal Spoonbills flying north along the eastern shore of Mana Island. They were at about 15 m altitude and making slow progress into the strong wind. They were heading towards an area known as Shingle Point (halfway along the eastern shore) and I wondered if they would land among the nesting and roosting Black-backed Gulls there. A search of the area and the adjacent coast to north and south over the next 10-15 minutes revealed no spoonbills.

At 1400 hrs two spoonbills were seen flying north at the same location and height as the first flock. It is possible that they were members of the original flock that had flown right around the island and roosted for a while, but given the total lack of spoonbill habitat on the island I expect that they were additional to the first 11.

The most direct route for spoonbills migrating between Vernon Lagoons (or other sites on the east coast of the South Island) and the west coast of the North Island would pass close to Mana Island. I suspect that the low cloud and strong winds had forced these birds to fly low, and that they were using the lee side of the island

shelter en route to points further north. It would be interesting to know if there was an influx of spoonbills at Waikanae or Manawatu Estuaries on the same day.

COLIN MISKELLY

Maud Island visit – 29 January 1994

The weather was fine and the sea calm as 20 Marlborough OSNZ and Forest & Bird members left Havelock. It was low tide when we left and gulls, oystercatchers, Caspian Terns, shags, ducks, and swans were all present on the sand bar.

On arriving at Maud Island we were met by Brian Bell and family – the main aim of the trip being to see and hear about the Fluttering Shearwater project.

Apart from the shearwater project we were also told about the Giant Weta and Hamilton's Frog, and given plenty of time for questions and photographs. This was followed by a talk about the food given to the shearwater chicks, with measuring and processing of the food being completed twice a day.

After lunch under some welcome shade we proceeded out to the shearwater colony on the peninsula which takes about an hour each way. There were 40 Fluttering Shearwater chicks translocated from Long Island on 6 January and by the time of our visit only 10 remained to fledge. The colony is located on the northern side of the peninsula, so the fledglings have a direct flight out to Cook Strait. Here we were able to participate in the weighing and feeding of the birds which remained. Also at the colony is a newly installed tape player with a solar charge battery. This is operated by a light switch and it plays a continuous tape of shearwater calls from dusk to dawn

with the hope that it will attract returning birds to nest here.

Just before we boarded the boat for the return journey a family of Takahe appeared at the house much to everyone's delight.

After leaving Maud Island we visited the Waimai Point Gannet colony where calm water allowed the boat to be nudged in very close; many chicks of all sizes were present and several adults gave us a beautiful display of gliding around the boat. Then it was a quick return to Havelock after a magic day.

BEVERLEY NORTH

Hauraki Gulf Seabirds

Following previous reports on my survey of seabirds in the Hauraki Gulf covering the period April to November 1992 and December 1992 to June 1993, I now intend to send regular 3-monthly reports starting July 1993. This, the first of these, covers the period 1 July 1993 to 30 September 1993.

Six trips were made over this period, with 38 species being recorded. The high numbers reported for this survey often exceeded the 1992-1993 totals, even when taking into account the different number of survey trips, and many species have reached single trip (Auckland-Great Barrier Island) maximums.

Interesting records include Yellow-nosed Mollusc-eater – 10 on 3 occasions; Buller's Shearwater – 49 on 2 occasions; all on the last trip 21-22 September; Manx-type shearwater – 2 on 1 occasion; Little Shearwater 38 on 8 occasions; Diving Petrel 790 on 11 occasions, max. 277; Kerguelen Petrel – 1 on 18 August; Cape Pigeon – 3 on 2 occasions; Northern Giant Petrel – 5 on 2 occasions; Southern Giant Petrel – 3 on 2 occasions; Grey-faced Petrel – 275 on 9 occasions, max. 110 on 18 August; Providence Petrel – 1 on 18 August; Soft-plumaged Petrel – 1 on 4 August; Grey-backed Storm Petrel – 1 on 7 July; White-faced Storm Petrel – 266 on 4 occasions, max. 159 on 22 September; Australasian Gannet – max. 8502, plus two other occasions when over 1000 recorded; Little Black Shag – 45 on 6 occasions; Arctic Skua – 4 on 3 occasions; Pomarine Skua – 3 on 2 occasions; Long-tailed Skua – 1 on 18 August; Brown Skua – 1 on 6 July; White-fronted Tern – max. 1200 on 21 September; unidentified gull – 4 on 21 September.

The next report will cover the period 1 October to 31 December 1993.

CHRIS JOWETT

Changes in the Checklist – 4

Doves

Streptopelia chinensis tigrina – Malay Spotted Dove, now Spotted Dove.

Cockatoos and Parrots

Cacatua galerita – White Cockatoo, now Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

Cyanoramphus auriceps forbesi – Chatham Island Yellow-crowned Parakeet, now Forbes' Parakeet.

Cyanoramphus malherbi – Orange-fronted Parakeet, now considered to be a colour morph of *C. auriceps* – Yellow-crowned Parakeet.

Cuckoos

Cuculus saturatus horsfieldi – Oriental Cuckoo, now *C. saturatus*.

Cacomantis pyrrhophanus prionurus – Fan-tailed Cuckoo, now *C. flabelliformis flabelliformis*.

Chalcites lucidus lucidus – Shining Cuckoo, now *Chrysococcyx lucidus lucidus*.

Eudynamis taitensis – Long-tailed Cuckoo, now *Eudynamis taitensis*.

Owls

Sceloglaux albifacies albifacies – Laughing Owl, now South Island Laughing Owl.

Swifts

Chaetura caudacuta caudacuta – Spine-tailed Swift, now *Hirundapus caudacutus caudacutus*.

Kingfishers

Dacelo gigas – Kookaburra, now *D. novaeguineae novaeguineae*.

Passerines

Xenicus lyalli – Stephen Island Wren, now *Traversia lyalli* Stephen's Island Wren.

Alauda arvensis arvensis – Skylark, now *A. arvensis*.

Lalage sueurii tricolor – White-winged Triller, now *L. tricolor* Australian White-winged Triller.

Prunella modularis occidentalis – Hedge Sparrow, now *P. modularis*.

Turdus merula merula – Blackbird, now *T. merula*.

Bowdleria punctata rufescens – Chatham Island Fernbird, now *B. rufescens*.

Finschia novaeseelandiae – Brown Creeper, now *Mohoua novaeseelandiae*.

Gerygone igata igata – Grey Warbler, now *G. igata*.

Rhipidura fuliginosa penitus – Chatham Island Fantail, now *R. f. penita*.

Petroica macrocephala macrocephala – Yellow-breasted Tit, now South Island Tomtit.

Petroica macrocephala dannefaerdi – Black Tit, now Snares Island Tomtit.

Anthochaera carunculata carunculata – Red Wattle Bird, now *A. carunculata* Red Wattlebird.

Emberiza citrinella sylvesteris – Yellow Hammer, now *E. citrinella* Yellowhammer.

Emberiza cirulus cirulus – Girl Bunting, now *E. cirulus*.

Fringella coelebs gengleri – Chaffinch, now *F. coelebs*.

Carduelis chloris chloris – Greenfinch, now *C. chloris*.

Carduelis carduelis britannica – Goldfinch, now *C. carduelis*.

Passer domesticus domesticus – House Sparrow, now *P. domesticus*.

Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris – Starling, now *S. vulgaris*.

Acridotheres tristis – Indian Myna, now Common Myna.

Gymnorhina tibicen tibicen – Black-backed Magpie, now considered as one species *G. tibicen* Australian Magpie.

Gymnorhina tibicen hypoleuca – White-backed Magpie, now considered as one species *G. tibicen* Australian Magpie.

Corvus frugilegus frugilegus – Rook, now *C. frugilegus*.

DOUG BOOTH

Safring News available on subscription

Safring News, the biannual journal of the South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAFRING), has been in publication since 1972. The journal publishes articles reporting the results of banding activities in southern Africa, ageing and sexing guides to southern African birds, and book reviews. Many of these papers relate to migratory birds, and therefore their immediate interest transcends a purely southern African relevance. Papers in *Safring News* are included in *Wildlife Review* and similar services.

Previously *Safring News* has had a limited distribution, with copies being sent only to SAFRING banders and to banding offices. In response to requests from researchers and institutions from many parts of the world, it has been decided to make *Safring News* available on subscription. The subscription rate for Volume 23, 1994, has been set at US\$ 30.00 for individuals and US\$ 60.00 for institutions. Orders for subscriptions should be sent to SAFRING, Avian Demography Unit, Department of Statistical Sciences, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa.

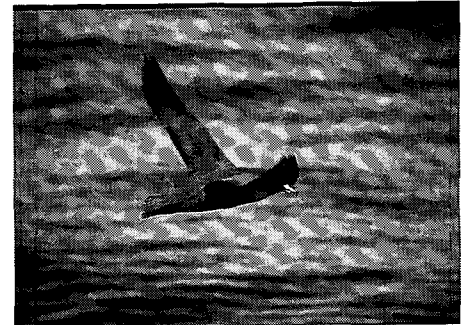
Mystery Bird Quiz

Unfortunately we have begun rather badly with this round of the quiz. The printers managed to print the birds in a variety of unusual poses and they were too dark to be able to see them properly. Consequently very few of you have sent me your guesses. I was tempted to abandon the whole project, but at the AGM in Nelson a surprising number of people told me they liked to try and identify the species even

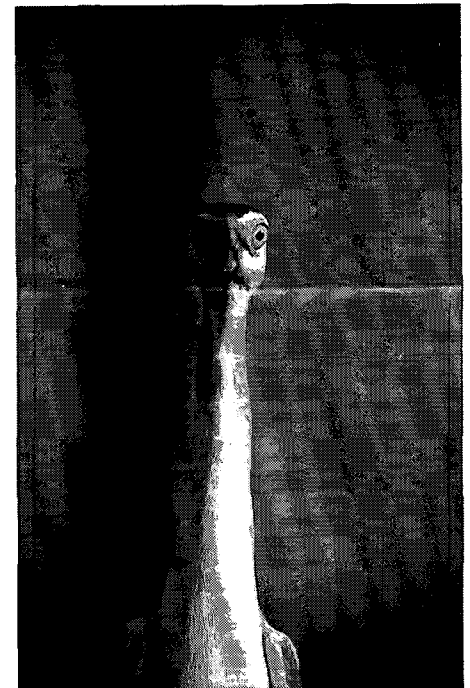
if they didn't get around to sending in an entry. So, hopefully, it is adding some interest to your reading of *OSNZ News*.

As the first set of slides were inadequately presented, we have decided to rerun A, B and C along with D, E and F. Hopefully they will be clearer and give those of you who gave up trying the first set a chance to enter the competition this time. Please send entries to 288 Yaldhurst Road, Christchurch.

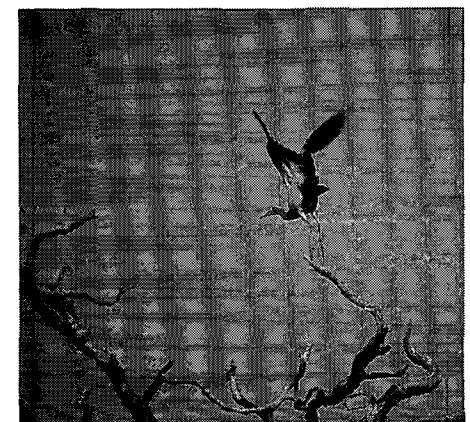
DON HADDEN



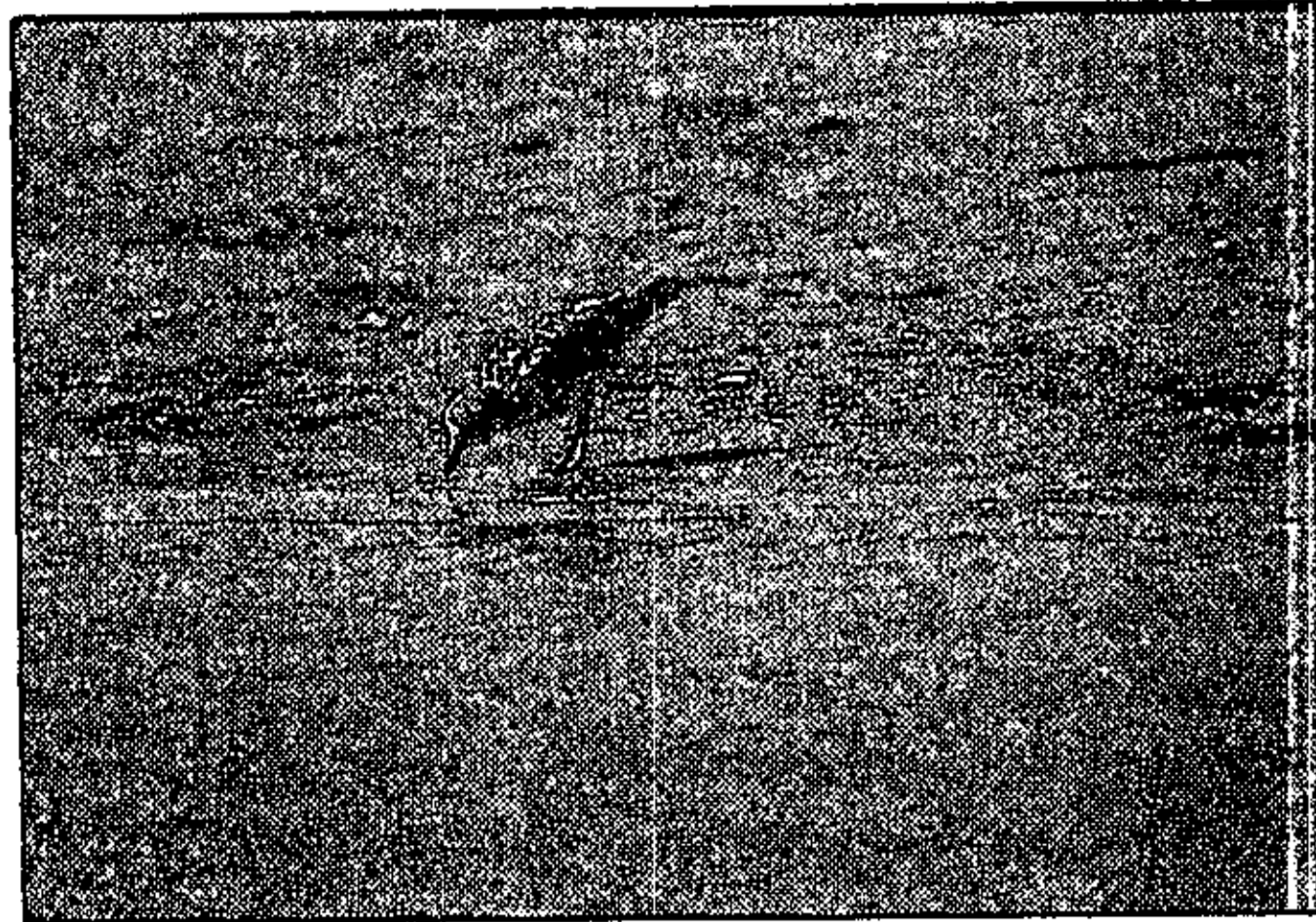
A



B



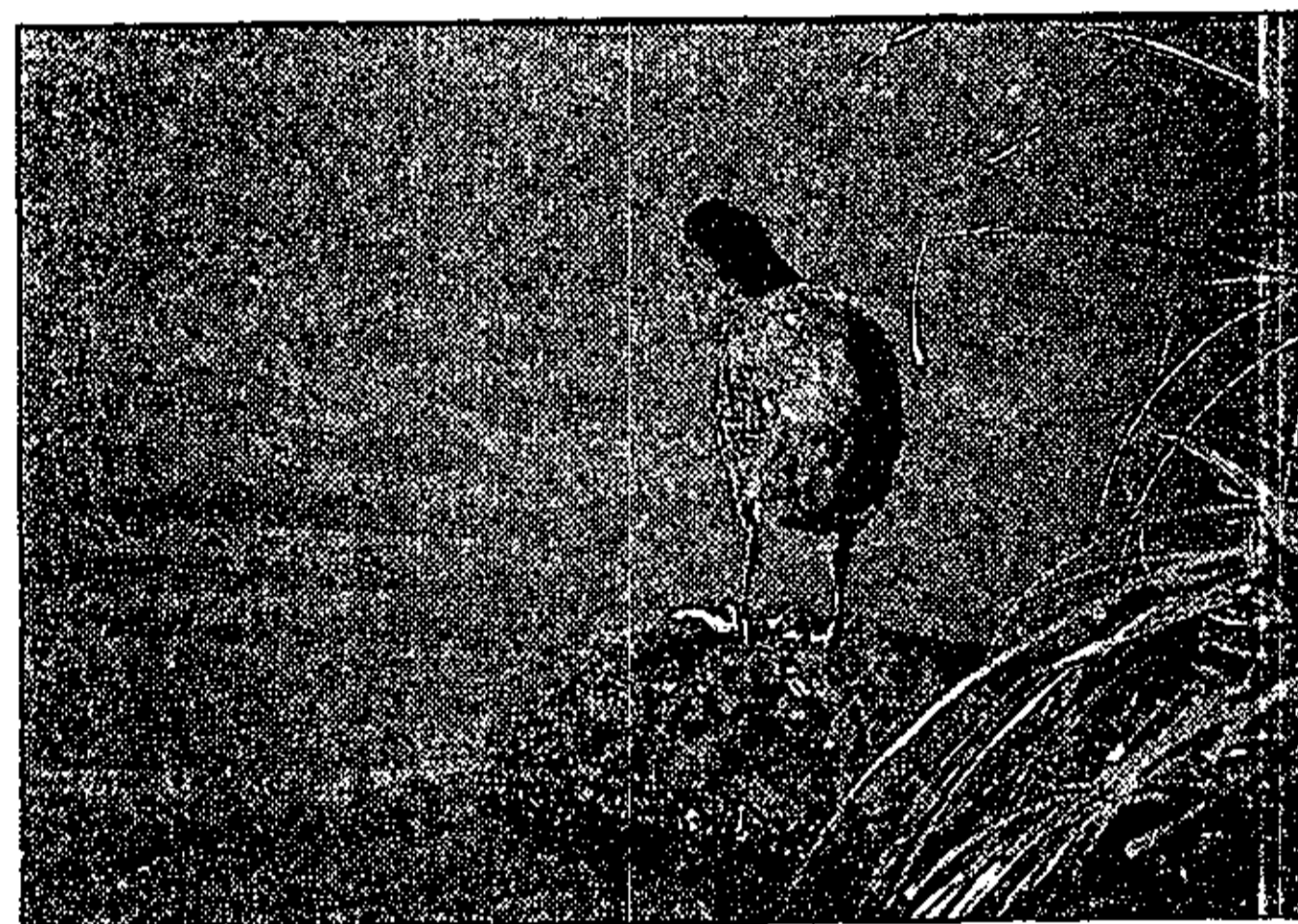
C



D



E



F

Reviews

The Birds of Africa, Volume IV, by Stuart Keith, Emil K. Urban and C. Hilary Fry, with illustrations by Martin Woodcock and Ian Willis. 1992. Academic Press, London-San Diego. 632 pp. + 32 colour plates. Price £STG72.00. ISBN 0-12-137304-5.

This is the fourth volume in a comprehensive reference work on birds of the African continent. This book deals with the passerine families, and includes the following groups: broadbills, pittas, larks, swallows, wagtails, pipits, longclaws, cuckoo-shrikes, bulbuls, waxwings, dippers, wrens, accentors, thrushes, robins and chats.

The inclusion of warwings, dippers, wrens and accentors, more usually associated with Europe than Africa, gives some idea of the enormity of the task undertaken by the authors, for this book, like the volumes preceding it, is no quick reference guide. It contains a wealth of detailed information including excellent distribution maps for each species, as well as some superb line drawings to complement the colour prints. While the latter often suffer at the hands of the

printer, that is far from the case here. Martin Woodcock's work on S.E. Asian birds would be well-known to many New Zealand ornithologists; his exceptional artistic ability brings alive these African birds.

The volume is well presented and organised. It is easy to find one's way through the book and it is easy to read. My only criticism is in the Descriptions section, where for the sake of including more details, the print size has been reduced. These sections are universally hard to follow and the small print here adds to this difficulty.

For collectors and those with any interest in African birds this and the other volumes should be compulsory acquisitions. There is no doubt that they will be regarded as the classical ornithological work of the African continent.

MICHAEL F. GORMAN

Birds Songs in celebration of the Four Seasons in Japan. Compact disc, available from Tsuruhiko Kabaya, 4-15-13 Fuji-machi Houya-shi, Tokyo, Japan 202. Appollon Inc. cat. no. KBYA 5033. Price not available.

This CD was released to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Tsuruhiko Kabaya's weekly radio programme in Japan. Of the 65 tracks on this recording, four species (Grey-tailed Tattler, Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, and Leach's Storm Petrel) will be of interest to ornithologists here as they occur here during the northern summer. The research scientist will find more valuable material on this production.

This reviewer found it to be a fascinating exercise to compare the recordings of the Skylark from England and New Zealand. Differences of dialect are apparent.

Technically the individual recordings stand out and are easy to follow, as are the bilingual names on the back of the CD. The only gripe I have is that the booklet is in Japanese. A considerable amount of technical information as well as a short biography is included.

Any collector of recordings of the sounds of nature would find this CD a worthwhile addition to one's collection.

LES McPHERSON

The Vultures of Africa, by Mundy P., Butchart D., Ledger J., and Piper S. 1992. Academic Press, London. ISBN 0-12-510585-1. 460 pp. Price US\$118.50, £STG55.00.

This splendid monograph, the work of four ornithologists based in South Africa, deals with the 11 (of the global 22) African species of vultures. Individual accounts take up about half the volume, or 15 pages per species, and give detailed information on morphology, distribution, biology and

behaviour. Well-crafted chapters address general aspects of vulture evolution, foraging, comparative aspects of breeding and conservation. The book is well produced, the illustration material is outstanding; tables, glossary, species and topical index and 12 pages of small print bibliography add further value to it.

GÁBOR LÖVEI

Birds of Nga Manu Sanctuary. Cassette tape. McPherson Natural History Unit, Christchurch, 1992. Price NZ\$10.00

This cassette contains sound recordings of 49 bird species which occur at the Nga Manu Bird Sanctuary near Paraparaumu in the North Island. At the beginning of each track the English and Maori name of each species is announced—this is practically all the documentation accompanying the recordings. The species are divided by habitat (bush vs. water and open country) and the species appear in taxonomic order within each.

The bird sounds are usually clear or clearly interpretable. Unfortunately the quality sometimes suffers from background noise, or the recorder shuffling with his gear (a bad case of this is New Zealand Pigeon, or the Canada Goose). It escapes the reviewer why the rather poor recording of a Grey Duck is repeated four times. The Ring-necked Pheasant is also less than convincing for a free-living bird.

The cassette contains a wide selection of bird calls and would be of appeal to the visitors to the Sanctuary or somebody requiring an introduction to the calls of some of our common birds.

GÁBOR LÖVEI

Unusual Sparrow in Hamilton

On a regular monthly trip to Hamilton a friend and I usually take morning tea in the car parked beside the Rogers Memorial Rose Garden in the Hamilton Gardens off Sillary Street. Inevitably the sparrows gather for handouts.

In December 1993 attention was held by a sparrow in markedly different colouring: the normal black and grey of head, shoulders and chest was mostly lacking and replaced by a rich gingery chestnut. The usual pale cheek patches were seen as a paler shade of the chestnut and the black male throat patch was absent as the chestnut came well down the chest and extended to enclose the cheek patches. The bird was really handsome as almost a quarter of its body was of the chestnut colour, which may have accounted for the impression that the bird was slightly larger than its companions.

This different sparrow arrived long after the others, remained on the fringe of the crumb scramble and was once seen to be deliberately pecked at by a normal female.

No trip was made in January 1994, but this sparrow was still present in February. Surprisingly, in March and April the sparrows showed no interest in the car park, remaining either out of sight or at a distance.

AILSAL McCUTCHEN

Regional Roundup

Northland

For our February meeting we had an informative talk with interesting slides from Tony Beauchamp on studies he carried out on Pipits in the Wairarapa, and Ray Pierce gave an update on the Kiwi conservation programme and the concerns held for the future of Kokako in Northland.

In April Mike Kearns gave a fascinating talk on the cat eradication programme on Little Barrier Is. and showed some beautiful slides of this unique island.

At the end of February we carried out our annual survey of the Poutu dune lakes with particular emphasis on Dabchicks. Numbers appear to be fairly stable. We intend to repeat this survey in September as a comparison. The annual wader survey was carried out as usual in March on the Whangarei Harbour.

Our annual Bird Race was held in March with four teams competing over twelve hours. Everyone enjoyed this event with a total of 66 species sighted overall, and a pot luck tea at Gwenda Pulham's motel unit made for pleasant end-of-race discussions.

At Easter ten members had an enjoyable trip to Little Barrier Is. and most saw the rare yellow Rata in flower. Birds were numerous and the vegetation varied and beautiful – New Zealand the way it used to be.

Our monthly beach patrols on both the West and East Coasts have continued as usual. Unusually high numbers of beach-wrecked birds were found on the January and February patrols of Kauri Mountain beach – mainly Fairy Prions, Flesh-footed Shearwaters and Grey-faced Petrels – and I finally found a banded bird after all of the beach patrols I have done! An immature Gannet banded on 30/1/94 by V.T. Davis on White Is. (found 17/4/94).

We have begun passerine banding again now that there is fruit on the trees to attract them. Three cat-killed Silvereyes have been recovered, the furthest 13 kms from the banding site. To quote Ray Pierce "we await the elusive recovery from the south..."

Gwenda Pulham and Richard Parrish are continuing their work with Fairy Terns and have probably seen the total population of these birds – about 28 individuals.

Ray Pierce and team have revisited Wara Wara Forest, and in a limited area of mature Kauri Rifleman appear quite common. Two Fork-tailed Swifts were also observed flying above their camp.

To end on an encouraging note, Kaka have been observed in increasing numbers in the Whangarei area, and from the numbers reported Tomtits are also apparently on the increase.

(Lorna Simpkin)

South Auckland

Instead of our regular evening meeting in February we met at Miranda in time for the evening tide and had a meal together afterwards. It was good to be joined by some members and friends from Thames. In March Paul Harrison showed us some excellent slides from his two trips from Britain, to Morocco with three friends in a hired car, and to Beidaihe on the Bo Hai Bay in China. This was a very good place to see both waders and passerines on migration. April took us south with Pam and Des Agnew and David Lawrie on a five week voyage from the Magellan Straits to the Antarctic Peninsula and around to the Ross Sea aboard the 'Marco Polo'. Making the most of every minute aboard, they organised ten minute seabird counts around the clock (it was summer!) and marvelled at the birds and animals on the passing icebergs. In May we were delighted by Colin Tucker's beautiful bird slides. Colin is a true artist and this was something different and full of wonder.

As well as trying our best for band recoveries, we had a field trip to Kidds in March. The Golden Plover were mostly in breeding plumage and 16 New Zealand Dotterel were present. There were also an unprecedented 45 at Mataitai, Clevedon.

Lake Whangape was still extremely low in April, but as well as waterfowl there were large flocks of Little Black Shags and Pied Stilts.

In May we walked from Waharau along the ridge track to Whakatiwai. Perhaps because of the prolonged drought it was very quiet. Pied Tit were evident but we didn't positively identify a Bellbird. The bush was in good condition with less sign than usual of browsing by goats.

(Anthea Goodwin)

Waikato

Our 1994 programme began with a field trip weekend to Opoutere where the focus was on shorebirds. This is a study area for NZ Dotterels, and has been wardened over the summer for several years. Caroline Bagshaw told us about her work as this season's warden and pointed out that birdwatchers with binoculars often caused nesting birds unnecessary stress by staying too long in an area. The birds, according to Caroline's observations, regard binoculars as the large "eyes" of predators.

The RR, who has been responsible for chick-banding at Opoutere this year, showed the group how to band a chick, then as a follow-up the group tested their colour band recording skills by looking for colour-banded birds on the mudflats as the tide receded. The problem of which was the bird's left and right leg was, hopefully, resolved! A highlight of the weekend was observing a family of Banded Rails with five chicks feeding among the reeds on the edge of the mudflats.

New members attended a beach patrol workshop at Kawhia, and although few beach wrecks were found all had a chance to measure and learn identifying features of Fluttering Shearwaters in various stages of decay.

A pre-shooting season census on Lake Waahi revealed lower numbers of some bird species, especially Bittern, which probably reflects the effects of lower water levels due to the long dry autumn.

A review of three years work on our regional project, the monitoring of two colonies of Grey-faced Petrels in the Bay of Plenty, was presented by Hugh Clifford at our March meeting. Hugh's enthusiasm has rallied a keen group of helpers, including several new members and others drawn from neighbouring regions. Large numbers of birds have already been banded this season, and the first recapture of a bird banded as a chick in the first year of the project has caused great jubilation.

Our local AGM took place in April with a keen committee being retained. The comment was made by another RR that the Waikato region was "on a roll". This does seem to have been the case, as in the last few weeks we have enrolled about a dozen new members including several very keen juniors. Many of these have come to us through the very good PR work done by Keith Woodley at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust Centre. Others have seen our programme advertised in the local free press "What's On" columns and others through the encouragement of friends. Most of our committee of 12 are responsible for some aspect of the region's activities which shares the RR's task and widens the possibilities.

(Bev Woolley)

Hawkes Bay

In February ten members spent the weekend at Oraka Beach. 2 Banded Rail, c.95 Godwits, 7 Golden Plover and 14 Whimbrel were seen on the Maungawhio Lagoon. We saw Fernbirds, a Reef Heron, and the Variable Oystercatchers were starting to flock.

In March we visited the Porangahau Estuary where the Godwits were showing colourful breeding plumage. We saw about 30 Wrybills and 2 Pectoral Sandpipers were feeding on the mudflats.

In April we visited Lake Hurimoana only to find that it was dry with very few birds to be seen. We then moved up to the Ngaruroro River up Ohiti Road where we saw Black-fronted and Banded Dotterels, Paradise Shelducks, Spur-winged Plovers, Pied Stilts and a Pipit.

We had a meeting at the end of April to catch up with what people had been doing and to discuss future happenings.

(Christine McRae)

Taranaki

On 19 February several members visited part of Waitaanga State Forest in northern Taranaki. Good numbers of Robins and Whiteheads were seen and heard, as well as a few Riflemen which are not very common in that area.

We visited the Maketawa Hut area in Egmont National Park on 17 April. Considerable numbers of Silvereyes were present into the subalpine scrub zone, and Hedge Sparrows and Redpolls were also recorded there. Lower down there were several Whiteheads, as well as the usual Pied Tits, Grey Warblers, Fantails, Pigeons, Blackbirds and Chaffinches, but only one each of Bellbird and Tui were recorded. The numbers of the last two species vary considerably from time to time in this area.

In February a pair of Morepork were active raising a pair of large young on the writer's property. Each night the adult birds appeared up to half an hour before dark and spent most of their time catching cicadas, both large and small, which have been particularly abundant this year. These they fed to their young. Cicada catching continued for about half an hour after dark. It was possible to tell whether they caught large or small cicadas by the different noises the victims made.

In late April a White Heron was present near Waitara, and our first Cattle Egrets of the season were also seen there at that time. Two unusual visitors recently have been a Southern Royal Albatross and a Red-tailed Tropicbird. Details of these appear in a separate note in this issue.

(David Medway)

Wellington

A final bird count in the current series on Kapiti Island took place on 22/23/24 January 1994. On the same weekend it had been decided that a kiwi call count would be carried out in the evening at three locations on Kapiti – at Waiorua Valley, the intersection of Trig and Wilkinson tracks and at Seismometer hut. A total of 20 plus calls were heard at all locations. Also heard were Long-tailed Cuckoo, Kaka, Weka and Morepork. The calls were recorded during a two hour period from 9.30 pm to 11.30 pm. A further trip to Kapiti was made in early February to continue the count of kiwi calls and to try to survey the numbers

of Saddleback, Stitchbird, Kokako and Takahe in the northern and central areas. Hugh Robertson gave us some preliminary findings from the Kapiti surveys at the Mav meeting.

A three day "Coming Round the Mountain" trip to the Tongariro and Whanganui National Parks, Manawatu Estuary and other spots of interest appears to have been a roaring success – it's being serialised in our local newsletter, so we will not have the full story until later. Steve Lawrence got us to the right place at the right time to see an adult falcon making a food pass to its offspring at the Putangirua Pinnacles on the Wairarapa coast. Those of us who looked skywards at the right moment had a really good view of the action. On another good day in the Wairarapa we visited the lake where we saw Spur-winged Plover, Pied Stilt, Canada Goose, a Black-fronted Dotterel, Banded Dotterel, godwits and knots. Among the godwits and knots were six Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and several Pectoral Sandpipers, fairly uncommon here according to our leader, Hugh.

At our February meeting Reg Cotter, fresh from his ninth trip to the Chathams, told us about the current state of the Taiko project. In March Peter Moore updated us about his Yellow-eyed Penguin work, and in April Brian Bell spoke of his experiences in Mauritius where he and Michael Bell had spent some time the previous year surveying the fauna.

(Ros Batcheler)

Nelson

Nelson produced the 1994 AGM – need we say more?! We just hope that everyone enjoyed it as much as we did, from Tessa our youngest helper through to our oldest. Gail, Peter, Graeme and Alvin were all very willing and able workers. We greatly appreciated Ruth Crockett's stint as a ring-in tea lady. We shall now relax for the next nine AGMs and wish Southland good luck for 1995.

Other regional activities have been a very interesting slide evening given by Peter Cook on the birds from the parts of Africa where he travelled and worked. Even Black-backed Gulls begin to look a little drab alongside some of Peter's exotics.

The Farewell Spit wader census picked up a Waikato-banded Pied Stilt at Taupata Creek, our first record of a 'foreign' banded stilt.

Chris Petyt reported some 80 Royal Spoonbills from Farewell Spit which, with the 50 to 60 in the Waimea and Moutere estuaries shows the popularity of Nelson for the winter. Our spoonbill census will give us a more accurate count.

We are looking forward to seeing Henk and Willie back after their respective OEs which unfortunately, for reasons beyond their control, coincided with the AGM.

(Jenny Hawkins)

Canterbury

This summer Lake Ellesmere has proved most challenging for finding our migratory waders. The lake was at the lowest level I have seen, making for a shortage of mudflats and a shortage of waders, although a Black Stilt stayed around until March. The Avon/Heathcote Estuary had it's usual numbers of birds, with two Whimbrel sp. which arrived in April.

White Herons and Royal Spoonbills (3 of the latter banded) have taken up residence in the usual places, but no Cattle Egrets have shown up yet. There has been just one Glossy Ibis up to now this season, and 2 Black-fronted Dotterels have again appeared at the lake.

Our February field trip was spent in the Okuti Valley counting Brown Creepers. We were thrilled to find a few Riflemen also. The April field trip saw the start of our Silvereye banding season in a local apple orchard, with lots of enthusiastic banders but few birds – they must be finding food elsewhere.

Our evening meetings started the year with a members' night and a most challenging quiz, the winner of which was presented with a book. The March speaker was Johanna Pierre, with slides of Japan. We saw glimpses of some of the work being done there to save endangered species. April's speaker was Dr Chris Challies, who told us of the plight of the White-flipped Penguin which is fast disappearing from Banks Peninsula. Andrew Crossland has now departed on his overseas trip and we wish him well. Amanda Freeman has taken over the task of Regional Recorder.

(Sheila Petch)

Otago

At the June indoor meeting Kerri Anne Edge explained to us the project on artificial brood reduction of Yellow-eyed Penguins during the poor food supply year of 1990, which she carried out as the subject of her PhD.

The Otago region has commenced a passerine banding programme. Under the guidance of Derek Onley we have so far banded close to 80 Silvereyes and the odd other native passerine. Thanks to Derek the small group of dedicated members is getting very efficient and the urgent need for more banding gear became obvious, with members anxiously waiting for the one available banding pliers and Pesola scales.

The Flagstaff bush bird survey, a two year seasonal count of all bush birds close to Dunedin, came to a successful end in March this year. The weather these two years has been kind to us, and no motorbikes or chainsaws have upset the counts, thanks to the cooperation of City Forest, the owner of the exotic forest. We will be following this survey up with a colour banding programme of the South

Island Robin, a native bird more numerous in the Flagstaff and Silverstream area than anticipated prior to this bush bird survey.

(Peter Schweigman)

Southland

Weekly beach patrols conducted up until recently have produced a disappointing number of birds. This indicates either that there are fewer birds in Foveaux Strait or that life expectancy has dramatically increased – probably the former. As a substitute activity for our junior members I have started a weekly species count in the one kilometre squares bordering the Invercargill Estuary. We can expect up to 30 species in one square. One square included four shag species, several waders and a variety of introduced species. We have a resident White Heron at the lagoon bordering the rubbish dump, Spoonbill numbers look healthy and odd Rooks, Cattle Egrets, Reef Herons and an albino Blackbird are reported.

Plans are underway for the 1995 AGM which will probably be based at the Shearwater Inn on Stewart Is., with opportunities for seabird, kiwi, penguin and bat-spotting and a visit to Ulva Is., now free of rats.

In November there was a report of a strange SIPO near Otautau. For the past three years a pair have raised one normal chick and one pale grey (“isabelline”) one. From a distance it appears lilac. There have been no subsequent sightings of the three oddities.

We always welcome visiting ornithologists. Stewart Is., Foveaux Strait, the Catlins, Awarua Bay and Fiordland are good birding localities.

(Lloyd Esler)

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