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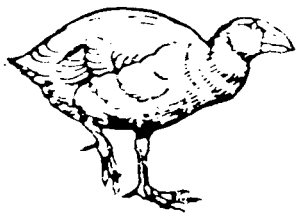


OSNZ news

Edited by TONY CROCKER, 117 Paparoa Street, Christchurch 5, Ph (03) 352 4530, Email crocker+@0++1,chchp.ac.nz for the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

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

No. 74 March, 1995

Note Deadline for the June issue will be 10th May.

Chatham Island Wader Survey 19 - 26 November 1994

Six keen OSNZ members, three from Wellington - Alan Munro, Janice Woon, Kerry Oates - and three from Nelson - Willie Cook, Henk Heinekamp, Rob Schuckard - all squeezed into the Air Chathams Metroliner at Wellington airport to fly to Chatham Island on a rather blustery day. We were met on arrival Louise-Blue Booth from Christchurch and Frank Austin from Dunedin who had flown Mt Cook Airline from Christchurch in considerably more spacious comfort.

We set off by Land Rover under the guidance of our host and motel proprietor Evelyn Tuanui to Waitangi and the motel which proved to be a most comfortable and well-equipped base for our week-long survey of the waders of Chatham Island.

Before dinner we enjoyed an appetising walk along the pretty Waitangi beach in the late afternoon sunshine, then sat down after dinner to plan our schedule for the following days, including obtaining access from many of the local landowners.

We set off on a fine but windy Sunday morning to walk in two groups around Cape Pattison on the northern coastline. One group started from Waitangi West Beach, the other from Mt Maunganui on the cape's eastern side. We met in the middle for lunch, exchanging notes on our findings, then swapped over to return to the starting points. Despite strong cold winds and hail showers we recorded 70 Turnstone, 4 Banded Dotterel, 32 Spur-winged Plovers, 6 Chatham Is. Oystercatchers plus numerous gulls, terns and shags. On the return to Waitangi, two inlets of the Te Whanga Lagoon near the airport were checked for waders, to no avail.

The next day we split into three groups to cover most of the Te Whanga Lagoon shoreline. This proved to be a long, tiring but productive day with one group walking some 33 kms from Hapupu to Hikurangi Channel (the lagoon opening) and back again through never-ending peat bog known as 'The Clears'. The daily total included 7 Chatham Is. Oystercatcher, 1818 Lesser Knot, 127 Bar-tailed Godwit, 285 Turnstone, 3 Red-necked Stint and 49 Banded Dotterel.

Too tired for sightseeing, we returned the following day to Hapupu Reserve to enjoy a pleasant bush stroll among ancient kopi (karaka) trees complete with Moriori carving or dendroglyphs. In the afternoon we visited Matarakau Point shag colony and the Ocean Mail Reserve which had been recently destroyed by fire. Matarakau Point hosted 54 Chatham Is. Shag, with 15 juveniles, and 19 Pitt Is. Shag on nests, with Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls also nesting.

One of the highlights of the trip came the following day, 23 November, with a visit to the north-western corner of the island, including walks around Point Munning, Kaingaroa Harbour and Okawa Point. Apart from six Banded Dotterels and the ever-present Spur-winged Plovers, Point Munning was devoid of waders. Four Giant Petrels were seen at close range however.

Okawa Point treated is to a close-up view of both Chatham Is. and Pitt Is. Shag, one small rock stack hosting both species, and White-fronted Terns, White-faced Herons and Red-billed Gulls all on nests. 189 Chatham Is. Shag with 35 juveniles and 34 Pitt Is. Shag with 11 juveniles were counted, plus 42 Turnstones, five White-faced Herons, two American Whimbrels, 18 Banded Dotterels and two Chatham Is. Oystercatchers.

The next two days were spent sightseeing. At Rangaikia Reserve on the south-eastern coast we discovered that it is difficult to get a Land Rover out of soft peat soil when 4 wheel drive and first gear don't work very well! Blue will vouch for this when getting a face full of mud when the wheels finally gripped. After an arduous bush bash through thick terehinau scrub we were rewarded with a close encounter with Chatham Is. Warbler - similar in appearance to its mainland counterpart, but with a very different, more metallic call.

Superb views were gained across Pitt Strait from a precarious vantage point of Pitt, Mangere, and Little Mangere Is., Sail and Castle Rocks, the Murumurus, the Pyramid etc. The rare Chatham Is. Pigeon or Parea and Tui were also seen in the reserve region.

We then visited the Tuku Valley Nature Reserve and Taiko Town, where more pigeons were seen along with Red-crowned Parakeet and warblers.

Lastly two of us walked from the Te Awainangia River mouth to Hikurangi Channel on the south-eastern shore of Te Whanga Lagoon where a Bar-tailed Godwit, six Banded Dotterels, a White-faced Heron and a Giant Petrel were recorded. Sadly this brought the trip to a close, marked by a farewell dinner at the Waitangi Hotel where weka was rumoured to be on the menu - no takers in this party!

The warm hospitality and conviviality of the Chatham Island people were enjoyed by all and we experienced friendly cooperation throughout our visit. My thanks to all who took part - a great team! Thanks also to the organisers Hugh Robertson, Brian Bell and Mark Nee, and to the Projects Assistance Fund of OSNZ for financial support.

Totals for the week were:

Lesser Knot	1818
Turnstone	397
Spur-winged Plover	155
Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit	128
Banded Dotterel	87
Chatham Is. Oystercatcher	15
Pied Stilt	9
South Is. Pied Oystercatcher	5
Red-necked Stint	3
American Whimbrel	2

In all 43 species were recorded, the additional ones to the above as follow - White-faced Heron, Fantail, Skylark, Chatham Is. Warbler, Red-crowned Parakeet, Chatham Is. Pigeon, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Redpoll, House Sparrow, Blackbird, Silvereye, Red-billed and Black-backed Gull, White-fronted Tern, Giant Petrel sp., Black, Pitt Is. and Chatham Is. Shag, Grey Duck, Mallard, Paradise Shelduck, Shoveller, Welcome Swallow, N.Z. Pipit, Australasian Harrier, Dunnock, Tui, Western Weka, Starling, Goldfinch, Pukeko, Song Thrush.

KERRY OATES

Old Variable Oystercatchers

In the early 1970s, Allan Baker banded a number of Variable Oystercatchers at Waipu Spit, Northland. During a visit to Waipu in April 1994, we noticed that a few of these birds were still present more than twenty years later. Some had no colour bands, while others had wafer-thin scraps remaining. Just over a year ago, we began a colour-banding study of VOCs in the Omaha-Tawharanui area; we therefore decided to expand our study northwards and try to recapture some of these old birds, firstly to find out just how old they were and secondly to fit them with new bands.

In late November we trapped and rebanded five of them. One had been banded as a chick and was thus nearly 16 years old. Another was banded as an adult in May 1971 and was probably a minimum of 26 or 27 years old - VOCs do not appear to breed before the age of three, but there is some debate about how accurately they can be aged as sub-adults. The other three had all been banded in early 1970, one as a chick (nearly 25 years old when recaptured) and two as adults. These last two were therefore likely to be aged 27 or 28 minimum. We suspect that these are now the oldest known Variable Oystercatchers, and probably the oldest known oystercatchers of any New Zealand species.

They have a little way to go, however, before they are the oldest of any oystercatcher species - Volume 3 of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* reports a banded Eurasian Oystercatcher aged 35 years 11 months. We know there are at least three more 'oldies' at Waipu, and we will try and band them in the coming months.

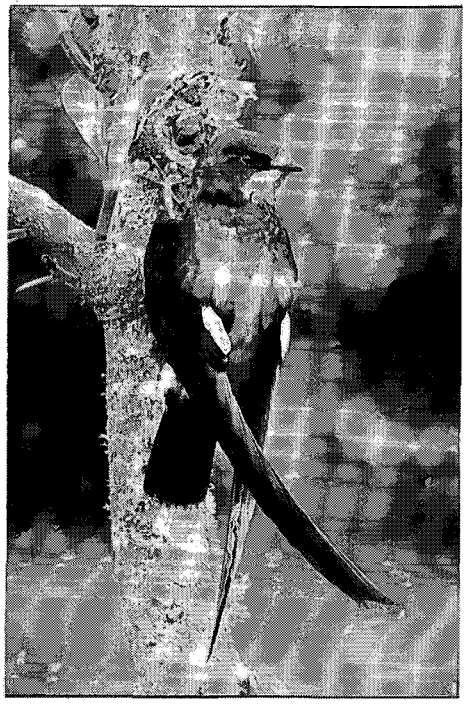
JOHN DOWDING
SIMON CHAMBERLIN

A Spine-tailed Swift in the hand

On 23 December 1994 an unusual 'swallow' was found clinging to the outside wall of a building at the Methanex Plant at Motunui, north of New Plymouth. Those who found the bird incorrectly thought it was either ill or injured. They took it to Pouakai Zoo Park near New Plymouth where it was identified by the owners, Gary and Marea Faigan, as a Spine-tailed Swift, commonly known in Australia as the White-throated Needletail. The brown tips to a number of its otherwise white undertail coverts may indicate immaturity.

The Faigans kept the swift in a cage overnight and fed it on mealworms. The writer saw and photographed it the following day. It was taken outdoors and placed about two metres up on the trunk of a tree. From there it twice flew but landed on the ground nearby. Shortly afterwards, in a slight breeze, the swift lifted off the tree again. This time it was successful in remaining airborne and flew strongly away and out of sight over some nearby trees.

In 1992 Tarburton (*Emu* 93:121-4) found a Spine-tailed Swift roost site in Queensland in open schlerophyll forest. He noted he could find only two previous instances of the species roosting in Australia. It is not known if the present bird had roosted on the wall of the building at the Methanex Plant. Its initial inability to get airborne from the tree in which it was placed may have been because it ideally required a site which provided a greater immediate vertical drop to enable it to do so.



The diagnostic white throat and patch on the tertials of Spine-tailed Swifts are conspicuous in the accompanying photograph, which appears to be the first to be published of this species in New Zealand.

DAVID MEDWAY

Kakerori Comeback

The Kakerori, or Rarotonga Flycatcher, is a forest bird endemic to the rugged interior of Rarotonga, Cook Islands. It was thought extinct in the early 1900s, but a small population was found in the south-east of the island in the 1970s. In 1984, Gerald McCormack and Rod Hay colour-banded eight birds and estimated that there were less than 30 birds alive.

With the help of a $500 grant from the OSNZ Projects Assistance Fund, Rod Hay and I carried out a very thorough search and colour-banded a further ten birds in 1987. We estimated that there were 38 birds alive, and prepared a recovery plan aimed at reducing the high level of nest predation by ship rats which seemed to be threatening their survival.

Since 1989, when the number of Kakerori had declined to just 29 birds, the Cook Islands Conservation Service, with help from the New Zealand Department of Conservation and New Zealand volunteers, especially Ed Saul (who is now on a three year contract with CICS to oversee the programme), has carried out a very intensive rat-poisoning programme in and around the 150 hectares where Kakerori survive. The results have been spectacular, with improved breeding success and increased adult survival, leading to an increase to 39 birds in 1990, 48 in 1991, 56 in 1992 and 61 in 1993.

Each spring since 1987, I have visited Rarotonga to mist-net and colour-band birds, and to carry out the annual population census of Kakerori. In 1994 the OSNZ Projects Assistance Fund very kindly paid the airfares for my three week annual visit. A team of Ed Saul, Vavia Vavia, Teina Rongo and I caught and colour-banded 20 new birds, bringing the total individually marked to 69, and by plotting the sightings of colour-banded birds and birds of different plumage colours (see *Notornis* 40: 179-187), we estimated that there were 84 Kakerori alive at the start of the 1994/95 breeding season. The 1993/94 breeding season had obviously been a good one (22 yearlings were found), and annual adult survival (97%) had been amazingly high for a 22 g bird.

In 1994/95 we tried a new experiment to assess the effectiveness of controlling rat

numbers by dividing the range of Kakerori in three; in one area we poisoned rats as usual, in one we snap-trapped rats, and in the third we simply protected nests by banding trees with metal collars. This season seems to have gone well, but it is too early to know the final outcome. This work was also supported by the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust, and by Rentokil (NZ) Ltd who supplied rat poison at a discount rate.

A paper giving more details of this conservation programme appeared in the December 1994 issue of Conservation Biology and a paper on Kakerori breeding biology will hopefully be submitted to Notornis later in 1995.

HUGH ROBERTSON

- Participants Wanted -

Chatham Island wader survey

The second half of the Chatham Island wader survey is scheduled for June 1995. 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.

Participant costs are estimated at $750.00 plus food and numbers are limited.

Applications should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, OSNZ, P.O. Box 12397, Wellington, to arrive by 30 April. Please mark envelopes 'Chatham Is. Wader Survey'.

Stoat Predation of NZ Dotterels

A Department of Conservation officer with previous experience of work with the Stewart Island NZ Dotterels was posted to Opotiki for a six month term in October 1994. One project in which he was involved was studying the nesting NZ Dotterels in the area with particular reference to possible methods of reducing losses through predation. About 20 pairs nest annually in the Opotiki area, four sites being used regularly. I was asked by the local DoC to show the 'new' man the various sites.

The Waiaua River estuary lies about 10 km east of Opotiki and we counted thirteen birds there on 6 October - this fitted in with the six pairs, more or less, seen over the past few years; a nest with two eggs was also found. On 17 October the DoC officer found a stoat's den with the remnants of five adult NZ Dotterels under a rotting log; on 19 October a second lair was found within two metres of the first, containing three approximately ten day old kits and the remains of two more dotterels. Two of the kits were destroyed and the third left in the nest, whilst a man returned to the DoC vehicle, some 500 m. distant, to fetch a gun - the intention being to shoot the mother when she returned to the nest. The adult stoat literally 'beat the gun' by emerging from beneath a nearby gorse bush, picking up the kit and disappearing before this man returned.

Six nests were found in October containing one, two and three eggs - all were abandoned or the eggs disappeared. On one occasion stoat tracks could be found 'quartering' over a distance of about 300 m., presumably looking for sitting birds. During November to mid-December only four or five adults birds were seen.

On 21 December a nest was found with two eggs and, surprisingly, a pair with three chicks about ten days old. On 9 January the nest could not be relocated but a pair with one chick was seen in the territory. A total of seven adults birds was seen on this date, along with this single chick and the three, by now, well grown chicks first seen on 21 December. It appears that there was some recolonising of the site by adults after the first stoat predation - one wonders where they came from.

Despite traps being set over several weeks, the adult stoat was never caught.

BILL SLOAN

Observations on a Gathering of Ornithologists

The 21st International Ornithological Congress, Vienna, Austria

Mid-plenary, the Convenor addresses the audience of the 21st International Ornithological Congress.....'there are over 1350 people attending this congress, but only about 300 have voted' The little chocolates, it seemed, were not working! The rooms containing the poster displays were hot and stuffy, a common condition in what is called summer, and the offer of a cold beer might have been a better inducement than sticky lollies. As all the papers offered in the congress were presented in the form of posters it had apparently been deemed necessary to bribe the congress attendees to not just look at the posters, but vote on their preferences in a number of categories. There were a lot of posters to be examined and only so much time and energy. Even for the most ardent readers it seemed an insurmountable task to give due attention to everyone's work.

In between doing the rounds myself, I was to be seen scampering back towards my own poster (the product of the compilation of two papers using morphology and DNA to examine the relationships of Takahe and Pukeko, etc), to loiter in a knowledgeable but inoffensive manner (probably a contradiction in terms) waiting for customers. I felt like a salesperson or a hopeful lek-displaying male - Kakapo, perhaps. I toyed with the idea of booming just a little, but the acoustics were not good and it might have been taken the wrong way. Despite everything the response to the poster was encouraging, and passing Kiwis were quick to spot the large blue bird with the red beak and stop for a chat. They recognised the picture of a Takahe too.

Nearby, a Dr Wink (that's 'Vink') from Heidelberg (I expect he is The Dr Wink back home) was smart in a suit as he displayed his phylogeny of raptors. Naturally we discussed results and methods and later over a beer (of course) more important issues of science politics. He was stoic about his own situation and the enforced use of posters at the congress. 'Ven you haf a high position, it doesn't matter to vait for some years to publish, but for you it cannot vait'. It occurs to me that I am very much aware of the phenomenon. Doing a PhD for me is not just a matter of pottering along doing a bit of research and writing it up in one almighty tome. It requires, if the work is to go any further, that one must struggle to disseminate the results of the work, make contact at conferences and seed in the minds of potential employers that you will have something to offer. There is little point waiting to produce papers whilst in a postdoctoral position because getting that position is highly competitive (and increasingly so) and those that get the chances are those that are known. Dr Wink chuckles when I comment that the selection of invited speakers in the seminars seemed a little nepotistic. 'Of course' he says 'it's all to do with the network'. Maybe that is why I am so anxious while hovering at my poster; after all you don't travel half way round the world just for kicks. Well, you do, but I'm keeping quiet about that.

That evening Yossi Lesham gave a marvellous spirit-raising (despite the time of the day) plenary on the unlikely topic of bird strikes (planes hitting birds) and the Israeli air force. He repeatedly alluded with pathos to the 'political' situation and caused near hysteria when showing the astonishing statistics relevant to his talk. Yossi demonstrates that per 1000 kms, Israel has a much greater number of bird species than most other comparable nations, many more individual birds (because of migration routes) than other countries, more plants, etc, etc, and many, many more tanks! Despite that, the birders of Israel and the airforce have managed to reduce drastically the incidence of birdstrike, saving the Israeli Air Force millions of dollars, and at the same time they have set up a highly

organised migration monitoring system. His was one of a series of entertaining and stimulating plenaries, improved by having no other fixtures to compete with.

It took me some time to discover that the first IOC. was also held in Vienna, on that occasion in the University buildings. The venue for the 1994 congress was the Hofburg, palace of the Hapsburg dynasty and only vacated by the emperor and family in 1918. Having a bunch of birders lurking around your palace would have been too much for even the most tolerant sovereign. But boy, what a place - like most of central Vienna, it is brimming with history and stunning architecture. Instead of numbers, the rooms have wonderfully Germanic names which tend to tie your tongue in a knot when you are rushing off to a seminar first thing in the morning; Geheime Ratstube, Zeremoniensaal and Trabantenstube. If by chance you got bored (and I started to drift myself during a list of avian ectoparasites), there was always a ceiling to gaze at, complete with cavorting nymphs, various gods and scenes from popular religions, or the candles of the chandeliers to count. The Zeremoniensaal for instance has 26 enormous double chandeliers that are overwhelming competition for even the most professional slides of exotic tropical birds. The congress guide employed a stunning piece of understatement observing that these 'lights...make the room quite attractive'. Every time the lights came up after a speaker had finished, your eyes would fixate on the sparkling crystals.

A few minutes from the Hofburg is the Museum of Natural History, itself a stunning Gothic creation little altered inside or out. If you are in a hurry to get somewhere, don't bother. It is a maze of courtyards and windy staircases. Perched high up on several almost invisible and geometrically unexpected corners are huge stone 'Thinkers' (the Rodin type) in one-seat gazebos. The hall of birds has no artificial lights, which is great for the visitor on a sunny day, bad for the specimens exposed to the sun and good for the museum staff in winter because they get to go home early when there isn't enough light coming in the windows. For me the real treasure, as with most museum collections was behind the scenes. Serendipity had been at work in bringing me to Vienna because the museum collection holds the type specimen of a flightless Takahe-ish bird from Lord Howe Island. This specimen is only one of two representing that extinct species. I had long awaited a chance to examine this animal and to include it in my research on Takahe and their ilk, and there I was. Ernst Bauernfiend and Herbert Schifter, the curators, bowled me over with their courtesy and mastery of the English language and the almost total absence of small black moustaches. They even let me have a bit of the specimen for my DNA work. My mother (oh yes, she was there too) spent a lot of time trying to recall which film she had seen Ernst in, something about a man in a white coat. We agreed that we had never seen someone look so much like a character in a '50s movie. If ever you are there look him up - see if you can work it out.

The last night of the congress was not quite what it might have been given that arrangements were made for us to cavort the night away at the zoo! Each of us was issued a ticket for a meal and two drinks. As there were so many of us the crowd was divided into three groups and spread around the gardens under some rather flimsy canopies. That is, the mere mortals were; if you were smart enough to have a sore back and needed a coach to get you there, you got to go in the Emperor's Pavilion (he was out). The wind got up as we wended our separate ways by underground train to the zoological gardens and as we roamed around looking for the action a fine drizzle started to spot my light summer jersey. About then I realised I had forgotten my beer and grub tokens. The meerkats (yes, they have them too) and the monkeys were clamouring at the doors of their cages, trying to get in out of the weather, and Ben Bell and I felt much the same...so we gate-crashed the Emperor's Pavilion! I had to start a small riot to cover the fact that I didn't have my ticket, but all the incumbents were hungry too, so we all dived in and helped ourselves. The waiting staff seemed traumatised but eventually gave up the unequal struggle to rend the serving spoons from our hands. After sufficient lubrication Ben and I went walkabout and took photos of three generations of IOC presidents, all of whom he knew but I didn't. I knew they were important bird world types, but everyone looks the same in a parka.

I am grateful to the New Zealand Ornithological Congress Trust Board for their assistance in getting me to the 21st IOC, from which I came away exhausted, entertained and inspired and generally better off for the experience. As a bonus, thanks to the organisers of this years gathering and the chocolate-fed voters, I received a prize of a rather smart pair of Swarowski binoculars for my poster paper presentation. As several people have said, I will have to do some real ornithology now.

STEVE TREWICK

Report on the 21st International Congress, Vienna, 1994.

Some conferences go down in history, others go down into obscurity. The 20th IOC., held in Christchurch in 1990, was definitely one of the former. Setting new standards of efficiency and obvious good planning, it was fondly remembered in Vienna. The 21st IOC, held in Vienna from 25-29 August 1994 will also surely go down in history, but for somewhat different reasons....

The general tone of the IOC was set at an early stage, upon arrival at the airport, when one set off in search of the desk we were promised would be there to greet us. True, there was a desk there, but it was the information desk for the airport reception, manned by an increasingly short-suffering person who had never heard of the IOC! Unconfirmed rumours floating around in subsequent days suggested that there actually was someone at the airport meeting planes - masquerading as airline staff waiting on the gangway immediately after exiting the plane. Perhaps it was just as well that we didn't find the official greeters, as another rumour suggested that the 'official' IOC bus cost twice as much as a taxi to get into town. OK, so our $700 registration fee didn't pay for transport from the airport. Surprise number one. However, it also didn't pay for such luxuries as lunch either. Surprise number two. At last theoreticians had the chance to test optimal foraging theory first-hand. So what were we getting for our fee? Contrary to the indications in the original flier (which was all most of us ever saw prior to getting there), we weren't to get proceedings either. Surprise number three. What we did get was two issues of *Journal fur Ornithologie*, containing something like two thirds of the abstracts (in time the other third may surface). This left many student members such as myself, who had (retrospectively, foolishly) decided not to apply for the reduced price (which qualified for everything but the proceedings) feeling that we had been swindled out of $140. Never mind.

What about the scientific content, which is what we were supposedly there for? Did that fare any better? In some respects, apparently not. Unlike in Christchurch, there was no synchronisation between talks within symposia, so it was very difficult to move surreptitiously from one to another. The chairman of the first symposium I attended summed up his feelings by suggesting that in light of the fact that a) the title of the symposium had been changed from that which he submitted, without consultation with him by the organisation committee, and b) the listed order of the participants likewise bore little resemblance to reality, the acronym IOC could perhaps best be changed to 'International Ornithological Chaos'! On an organisational level, then, the Vienna IOC had nothing on its predecessor.

One thing the IOC did do, however, was fill the time in with a very full schedule. Plenary started at 8.15 in the morning, which itself puts pressure on people who may be staying in hostels 35 minutes travel away. From my limited experience I have concluded that staying

alert/awake during morning plenaries is much easier when there is only one, rather than the two presented each morning. Furthermore there was scheduled only a fifteen minute break between the plenaries and the first symposium, and given the capacity for talks to go over budget (or for unscheduled interruptions to extend things) this sometimes meant having to join a growing exodus from someone's unfinished plenary (which is hardly very polite!) or being late for a symposium/sauna (ventilation methods were in their infancy hundreds of years ago when the venue was built). Evenings were not omitted from the programme, with round table discussions or plenaries going until 10 pm.

So what did we hear about? Plenaries included such topics as: Sources, sinks and metapopulations (Jamie Smith) which raises ideas about how we regard fragmented populations in New Zealand - source/sink and metapopulation concepts traditionally both require movement between populations, which obviously does not occur in most New Zealand situations; Egg production (Chris Perrins) - while everyone seems to have accepted that birds' breeding seasons are timed to coincide chick hatching with peak food abundance, the fact that eggs are getting produced while food is very low has seldom been looked at (how does a female manage it? Unfortunately he managed only to show that it must be hard for birds - he didn't go on to show/suggest how it is that they actually do manage it); Living with relatives (Stephen Emlen) in which twelve predictions about family social relationships were made (none of which I can remember as I subsequently lost my notebook where they were written down!); The ecology of the brain: food storing memory and the hippocampus (John Krebs) - how do birds manage to store food and subsequently return to that exact place, even when the environment may have changed in appearance?; The study of soaring bird migration at the junction of three continents to create coexistence between birds and aircraft (Yossi Lesham), an amazing tale of an Israeli civilian managing to move successfully both the Israeli Intelligence Service and Air Force while studying soaring bird migration, and managing to reduce bird/aircraft collisions by 88%, saving the Israeli Air Force and estimated $300 million in the past decade!; Phenotypic engineering (Ellen Ketterson) - in an attempt to tease apart the way phenotypic variation (physical differences between individuals) affects fitness, whether selection works on traits or organisms and similar evolutionary questions, Ketteron and Val Nolan have been using hormonal implants in juncos to create variation in phenotypic expression, or so-called 'Phenotypic Engineering' (not nearly so sinister as it sounds!) - an example of one approach to studying the potentially very intertwined field of life-history tradeoffs.

My attendance at symposia was decidedly non-random, and those without interest in migration or shorebirds (or even a certain shorebird) may find my selections somewhat one-sided. Allan Baker (Canada, but ex-New Zealand) discussed conservation aspects of shorebird molecular genetics, showing that while Dunlins are extremely well differentiated between populations, turnstones show very little variation, and knots virtually none at all. During that last glaciation knots may have been restricted to one population of as few as 500 pairs. Just what the lack of variation means in practical terms for knots in unknown, but studies are underway to look for meaningful genetic markers (these studies are made on natural genes - ones that have no bearing on the actual function of the animal). Petra de Goeij (Netherlands) showed how the biology of knots' main shellfish prey in Europe requires that a wide network of sites must be protected in order to ensure food supplies will be available somewhere in Europe. Theunis Piersma (Netherlands) showed how wintering in tropical or temperate areas in knots is reflected in the basal metabolic rate of the body. He suggested turning things on their head, by regarding the level of energy expenditure required to survive at a certain area as determining your body 'size' (the metabollically active part, anyway, which itself determines how much work you can do) rather than your body size determining how much work you can do and hence limiting where you can live.

For myself, the most fascinating talks were on topics I knew almost nothing about. A symposium on radio tagging in conservation studies ranged from radio-telemetry in small woodland birds (a 400 mg radio has been used on the 8 gm Coal Tit) to satellite tracking of great albatrosses. Peter Prince (with Henri Weimerskirch) discussed the latter, with 25,000 point locations gained for foraging albatrosses from South Georgia in the South Atlantic Ocean. They were able to show clearly the overlap in areas used by albatrosses and fisheries along the continental shelf of South America. However, interpretation of this is confounded by problems of cause and effect - are albatrosses simply going there because of the fisheries? In the southern Indian Ocean, they were able to do a study in a year when no fisheries were present, and the next, when fisheries had arrived. In the first year albatrosses, as in South America, used the edge of a continental shelf. In the second year fisheries were using exactly the same areas as the albatrosses, which had become somewhat more concentrated through the fisheries providing offal. Hence they were able to show convincingly that albatrosses are not merely homing in on fishing fleets, but that they have always used these areas.

The other symposium I found extremely stimulating was one on remote sensing of bird migration patterns, much of which focussed on radar studies. The level of technology utilised now is absolutely fantastic, such that a Dutch radar system is able to pick up a single Lapwing at 85 kms! The resolution of a network of radars along the Gulf coast of the USA is so good that it has proved far superior in detecting birds than the weather systems it was designed for. A problem with the Argos satellite system is that it takes two simultaneous bearings on the subject, which is fine if the radio is stationary, but if it is moving it can gave inaccurate results. One extreme example was of Golden Eagles being tracked in the American Rockies, where, by knowing the exact locality of the bird, they were able to determine the exact error of the reading, which in one case was around 4,500,000 metres (four and a half thousand kilometres!). Fortunately the satellite gives an estimate on the level of accuracy as part of the read-out, so these poor quality readings can be identified.

As in Christchurch, there was a mass of poster papers to digest, and a novelty this time was having prizes for the best (or most popular) poster in each section for each shift (posters were split into two groups to fit them in). With Swarowski Optics sponsoring the posters, these were no mean prizes either. Congratulations are well due to Steve Trewick (Victoria University) for taking out a prize for his poster on the evolutionary relationships of northern and southern Takahe. Two 'ex-Kiwis', Yolanda van Heezik and Phillip Seddon did themselves proud by not only winning a section prize (a telescope) but also by winning the best overall poster for 'King Penguins: breeding in the face of almost certain failure', which won them every traveller's nightmare prize - a complete set of *Birds of the Western Palearctic*. I suppose they could always sell the telescope to pay for the postage to send the books home.

As a venue for such a conference, Vienna had its good and bad points. We were forced to pay Viennese prices for food, although most of the hostels delegates stayed at must have found their breakfast budgets rising during the week - we were all making extra buns at breakfast time and slyly (in my case) or blatantly (in the case of former Massey student, now RAOU director David Baker-Gabb) dropping them into our bags for lunch before setting out in the morning. Vienna is the first place I have been to where beer costs as much as orange juice does, which doesn't encourage non-alcoholic restraint. Mind you, the price of beer hardly encourages over-indulgence either. But what we did get for our money was a conference in a totally fantastic city, with free outdoor

big-screen videos of performances such as *Don Giovanni*, or von Karajan conducting Mozart or Vivaldi. The conference itself was held in the buildings that for 700 years housed the Hapsburg dynasty, probably the most powerful family in Europe over that period. (It was rather less known that these were also the buildings where Hitler gave rousing speeches to massed crowds during World War II.)

In anything like this you get more out of meeting people than attending talks etc., and with 1300 people there was plenty there to mix with, if you could find the time. The chance to see just what a huge variety of work is being done on birds globally, to see how your own work can fit into this scene, and to see that even 'big names' are not infallible were all part of the experience, and I thank the New Zealand Ornithological Congress Trust Board for generously providing money that helped get me over there. The next IOC will be held in South Africa in 1998, which it is anticipated will be extremely well organised and should prove very popular. How about an OSNZ expedition there by sailing boat? It has to be cheaper than flying, and think of the birds to be had....

PHIL BATTLEY

Donations to the Society

It is pleasing to note the number of members that add that little bit extra to their subscriptions in the form of donations to the particular project they wish to support.

The Society thanks the following people -

Miss A. Hutson, C.G. Gill, Barry Friend, L.S. Rickard, K.V. Todd, Kevin J. Taylor, Stewart Lauder, Peter Grant, Hugh & Lea Robertson, Paul & Joy Sagar, Gill Eller, J.F. Davidson, Mrs & Mrs D.M. Stacey, Paul Cuming, Barbara Dingle, Jim Hamilton, Nancy D. Tanner, Ray O'Callaghan, W.A. Watters, Sue Cotton, M. & M. Hanger, Ian Southey, Dr E.J. Kirk, Dorothy Alloo, Dr Phil Moors (Aust.), Neil Cheshire (Aust.), Stephen Jarvis (UK), Harro H. Mueller (Germany), Nils Ake Andersson, Geoff Foreman, W.A. Cook, Jacinda Amey, Raymond Jackson, Sharyn Hillyer, G.R. Brown, K.B. Walshe, Mark McFadden, Kerry Oates, Margaret Bishop, Alan Tennyson, Peter Howden, Vicki Lowrie, G.I. Hunt, Lt Cdr RNZN (Rtd) B.J. Stevens, N. McKerchar & J. Alexander, J. Jackson & C. Eddington, Dr M.J. & B. Bycroft, P.L. Munns, G.W. Wells.

HAZEL HARTY
Membership Secretary

Extinct NZ Eagle?

A central Christchurch couple were somewhat taken aback when their German visitors - who 'speak better English than we do' - said there was a dead eagle on the lawn. It was not, as they suspected, a harrier, or indeed any other sort of bird, but a hedgehog, the German word for which is 'Igle'.

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Mystery Bird #18

The size, long narrow wing and webbed feet of the bird in the photo should have quickly revealed that it was a medium-sized petrel. The more observant may have noticed the tube nostrils that characterise birds from the order *Procellariiformes*. All medium-sized petrels are members of the *Procellariidae*, which include petrels and shearwaters. Fifty members of this family occur in New Zealand seas, including thirty species which breed in this region.

Identifying petrels is quite difficult as many have similar colouration. The two species of giant petrel are similar in size to small albatrosses and the two species of diving petrel are both very small; these four species can be eliminated from this puzzle based on their size. The remaining 46 species occurring in New Zealand waters can be separated on colouration. The bird in the photo has a white underside, a feature shared by 35 of the remaining petrel species.

The colour of the underwing is an important feature in this group of seabirds. The bird has dark axillaries and the leading edge is also dark. Most of the trailing coverts are also dark but white feathers are revealed where the wing is held. In flight, this bird would normally appear to have a dark underwing but may appear pale in some light conditions. Many other petrels have a white underwing with a black line on the leading edge (eg. Cook's Petrel), or are all white underneath the wing (eg. Buller's Shearwater). Only seven petrels in the New Zealand area have a combination of white underbody and dark (or largely dark) underwing: Hutton's Shearwater, Grey Petrel, Tahiti Petrel, Phoenix Petrel, Kermadec Petrel (some colour phases), Chatham Island Taiko and Soft-plumaged Petrel.

The dark-hooded appearance of the bird's head and neck is able to eliminate Grey Petrel, which has a white lower face, chin and throat, and a pale bill. Hutton's Shearwater can appear to have a hooded appearance and dark underwing, but up close the underwing has brown speckled feathers amongst the otherwise white secondary coverts, the bill is also long and narrow and the tail is shorter and more rounded compared with the mystery bird. Soft-plumaged Petrels also appear very similar to the mystery bird, but they seldom have the full hooded appearance of the bird photographed; they are paler on the chin, throat and lower face, and are smaller.

The remaining four species (Tahiti Petrel, Phoenix Petrel, Kermadec Petrel and Chatham Island Taiko) are all very similar and quite difficult to separate in the field (see note by Rogers (1980) in *Notornis* (27)). Kermadec Petrels have a wide range of plumage types and foot colour also varies. Some birds appear similar to the mystery bird but all have a skua-like white patch at the base of the primaries on the underwing and also have white primary shafts on the upperwing. Tahiti Petrels have relatively large feet and a smallish head created by the low sloping forehead (characteristic of the genus *Pseudobulweria*) when compared with *Pterodroma* petrels.

The mystery bird could therefore be a Phoenix Petrel or a Chatham Island Taiko. These species would be difficult to separate in the field although in the hand the Taiko is a larger and more robust species. Phoenix Petrels have more dark brown barring on the lateral undertail coverts compared with Taiko, giving the undertail a darkish appearance. Up close there is also a pale white submarginal patch behind the leading edge of the underwing.

The mystery bird appears to have dark lateral undertail feathers but the pale patch on the underwing is missing. This feature and the presence of tree-ferns in the background confirms that the mystery bird is a Chatham Island Taiko. It was photographed at the Tuku Valley campsite in October 1993 and for those members of the 1993 Chatham Taiko Expedition, the bird is the illustrious 'Playboy'. This Taiko

was radio-tracked on numerous occasions and eventually found at a new burrow location in November 1993. This season (1994/95), it returned to the same nest site and has now paired with a second bird caught in the 1993 telemetry operation (TX 944, caught on 5 November).

A total of 64 Chatham Island Taiko have now been banded since they were rediscovered by David Crockett and his teams in 1978. Four breeding burrows and six other occupied burrows have been located since 1987. The total population is estimated at 100-150 birds.

GRAEME TAYLOR

Mystery Bird Quiz

The fourth and final round is now complete and we start on a new round with the mystery bird pictures in this issue. Three people were leading at the end of the third round. One fell by the wayside with just two out of three correct, but George & Beth Wallace of the United States and Rod Hitchmough of Wellington guessed all three correctly. According to the rules, a draw out of the hat was made in front of Canterbury region members and Rod Hitchmough was the lucky winner. Congratulations!

It seems as though the final round pictures were too easy. Picture J was a Caspian Tern photographed above Kaitorete Spit, Picture K is of a Little Whimbrel photographed on Bougainville Island and Picture L is of a pair of Chestnut-breasted Shelducks photographed on a private lake in the North Island.

If you haven't tried this quiz before, now is the time to start as the person with the most correct guesses wins a free subscription to *Notornis* for the year. The rules are simple:

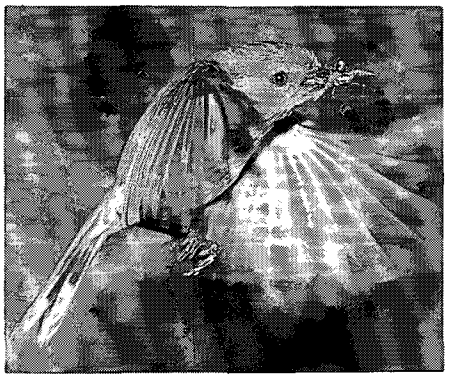
- only one guesss per person per picture
- only paid-up members of OSNZ are eligible to enter
- no correspondance will be entered into regarding identification of the bird or concerning the competition
- if no outright winner is found, the persons with the most correct answers will be separated by drawing names out of a hat at the February meeting of the Canterbury meeting
- the name of the winner will be published in the March 1996 issue of *OSNZ News*
- entries for each section close at deadline date for each issue of *OSNZ News*

DON HADDEN

Mystery Bird # 19

Identy this bird. Answer next issue

A



B

C

Our birds and Our Vernacular

The following is about to appear in Australia in Wingspan, and so is clearly Australian in emphasis. It's author points out, however, that the points made are universal, and hopes that it may be given a fair hearing.

Much has been written on this subject over the last 16 years, starting with the *Emu* supplement on recommended (which, in RAOU doublespeak means compulsory) English names. Most discussion has been directed towards detail, and away from whether the whole exercise is in the interest of the majority, and should take place at all. Many have aired their prejudices, and pushed their pet names; but the interests if the majority, who have been too confused, reticent or idle to air their views, have been completely ignored. I count myself as one of these innocents and feel an urgent, if belated, need to speak out on their behalf.

What we are discussing is whether, because our bird names are inconvenient to outsiders who speak a different dialect to us, it is reasonable to expect us to change our vernacular for their convenience, or for us to expect the same of others. Scientific names are always quoted in any serious publication, and people from all countries manage to use them to look up strange bird names, when they meet them in a foreign language. The RAOU's foreign masters, however, have decided that because some English speakers are too stupid to manage this simple chore, the loss of traditional names throughout the entire English-speaking world is necessary.

We are told that the RAOU's adoption of a different set of names need not lead to the loss of traditional ones. I simply do

not believe this: even casual contributors to an informal publication like *Wingspan* have already been brought to heel. Once new names find their way into popular books, especially field guides, our normal ones will, and have already started to, disappear. Whatever the RAOU may do, these authors have the real influence, and must be implored to consider the consequences of their decisions with the greatest care.

I know, from speaking to many people since the 1990 IOC, that I am far from alone in regarding this attempt to deny the public such a basic right to call a spade a spade, or a warbler a warbler, as intolerable arrogance. It is no less presumptuous, for example, to expect us to use the (misnomer) 'thick-knee' for stone-curlew than to require the Germans to use it for what they call 'triel'; or to ask them to give up their tongue altogether in the interests of international understanding! - the differences are only of degree. Professional scientists find this all unnecessary, but are reluctant to become involved in the layman's business. The active amateur in the field resents it, and all find it rather sad. At first glance, the culprit seems to be the pseudo-taxonomist, who presumably sees this as his only hope of leaving a mark on the world, and has misrepresented himself as the real thing.

It seems, however, that the real scoundrels are a determined few, who have been relentlessly conducting an apparently irrational campaign for this homogenisation at international meetings for some years. The RAOU and other similar bodies have allowed themselves to be bullied into compliance, and now find themselves in the position of having to try to foist conformity on the rest of us. What is surprising is how many free Aussie spirits, who would normally profess to abhor any type of imperialism, are already toeing the line of this cultural imperialism, without even understanding why.

What is the reason for such a campaign, which denies cultural differences to so little apparent purpose? A nasty suspicious mind like mine might argue as follows. We all like to see new birds, but we have all met the morbid twitcher who is no more interested in a bird, once twitched, than a stamp collector is in the paper a stamp is made from, and is fast bringing our hobby into disrepute. When abroad they see foreign culture as nothing more than an impediment to life's only valid pursuit, and if the mere cultural obstruction of language can be got rid of - then so much the better; even when the language difference, and therefore the inconvenience, is relatively small, as in our case. Is it no more than coincidence that some of the names most prominent in this campaign are those with a vested interest in purveying material which focuses on so-called English, instead of scientific or vernacular, names to this expanding and potentially lucrative market?

Apart from these (mercenary?) opponents of culture, the only ones who appear to benefit are those unpleasant types who see this as a chance to practise one-upmanship and discomfort others: they look superior and say 'do you mean *Intermediate* Egret', and utter hideous blasphemies like 'vocalisations' and 'have a nice day'; the best we can try and do is ignore them.

Let us look at the two sets of names in current use. Common names come from observers in the field, both amateur and professional, and are primarily *ecological*. In evolutionary terms they refer to birds *recent* evolution, by which they have become adapted to their present ecological niches. 'Flycatcher' and 'Warbler' immediately conjure up a picture of birds of each type anywhere in the world. These names are stable, or change only infrequently by common usage. (In Europe it is usually easier to trace a bird in literature going back two hundred years by using its common name: an invaluable facility if its scientific name has changed a dozen times.) Because they are the language of the people, common names will differ from one language or dialect to another, and it is pure arrogance not to respect this.

Common names function in a similar way to the subject index of a library. Looking up 'bigotry', for example, might refer us, amongst others, to several books on (heaven help us) re-naming birds, from quite different authors. Similarly, looking up 'warbler' in a bird book would refer us to numerous, ecologically similar, insectivorous birds, from quite different ancestors.

Scientific names attempt to arrange birds primarily according to their *ancient* evolutionary history, and are meaningful mainly to those interested in that field. They are most useful to the rest of us as an international *lingua franca*, but necessarily change as knowledge of evolution, or taxonomic fashion, changes.

Scientific names have a similar function to an author index. One might look up Lewis Carroll, and find that he wrote *Alice in Wonderland* and *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* – quite unrelated books, except for their author. Similarly one might look up crows and find that they share the same ancestry as such ecologically unrelated birds as apostlebirds, fantails and birds of paradise.

The two types of catalogue clearly have different types of functions. The first (the subject index), like common names, groups things according to their *similarities*, and is more is more useful to the practical person. The second is based only on origins. A librarian would think his superiors mad if he was told to abolish the subject index and replace it with a duplicate author index.

The pseudo-taxonomist would like all common names to be exact duplicates of scientific ones. *Egretta intermedia*, for example, would have the clumsy name Intermediate Egret. Fashion could change this to *Ardea intermedia*, so we would have to call it Intermediate Heron. More likely would be a change to *Egretta plumifera* and we would be back to our old Plumed Egret again.

Page 25 of the March *Wingspan* already lists 45 more proposed changes since the hundreds of earlier ones. Dozens more could result from a current move to regard a species as the smallest group of individuals that can be clearly defined. In this case, we will regain our old names of pardalotes, wrens, sitellas, rosellas and so on - nothing was gained in dropping them in the first place.

This brings us to the question of subspecies. We may not have Crimson or Yellow Rosellas, for example, because they are currently regarded as one species! Are we to believe that, at the touch of a taxonomic wand, these birds have lost their difference and cannot be distinguished in the field? It is scientific opinion that has changed, not the birds; a fool can see that they are still Crimson and Yellow Rosellas. This applies equally to pardalotes and the other groups mentioned in the last paragraph.

Because scientific names are not necessarily ecologically relevant, we are denied perfectly appropriate names like 'warbler'. Our warblers are in every way closely similar to those of the Old World, and are aptly named; but, because they are derived from different ancestors, they are to be lumbered with bastardised scientific-cum-common names, neither fish nor fowl, like Fairy Gerygone! Ecologically they are warblers, and it is quite incorrect to claim otherwise. For the same reason we could also be denied the names flycatcher (which would be 'fly-robin'), robin, finch, babbler and various others.

We use the word 'warbler' for the same reason we call gums and pines 'trees', and Messrs Keating and Mandela 'politicians': each pair is similarly well adapted to survive in its respective savage environment to be put into the same category. The trees are more different in evolutionary terms than the warblers, and the politicians are clearly of different stock; but only a madman would deny us the right to class them together because of their different ancestry. The terms 'politician', 'warbler' and 'tree' refer to functional groups in the modern world, and the evolutionary route by which they arrived at their present niches, are irrelevant. In the case of the politicians, such a denial would be blatant racism!

To summarise then, the common names in current use are eminently suitable for most birdwatchers. They are stable, with no need to change, are ecologically

more relevant, are valuable as part of our culture and history, and are usually more colourful than contrived alternatives. They are not subject to the same strait-jacket of rules as scientific names, and can be used for subspecies if appropriate. They have nothing to do with *scientific* taxonomy, and can never be truly international - as scientific names already are. Therefore this whole exercise is pointless, and should be rejected *in toto*.

I would prefer complete freedom to use whatever common names we like (I fancy Owl-faced Finch), but if a few old hands with lifetimes of experience with birds were asked to compile a list of bird names used by the most people for the longest time, it could be done in a few evenings, and would meet with virtually no opposition.

To those still unpersuaded I say this. If you see no good in all the richness of human cultures round the world; if you enjoy the thought of Polynesians, Eskimos and Arabs, all alike, dressed in faded tatters of blue denim (the Chinese factory workers' uniform!) washing down with tins of Coca Cola their junk food from MacDonalds; the thought of dark eyes from eastern valleys agog at blue-eyed crime on western streets, their virtues lost to television licence, their minds benumbed by electronic noise, oblivious to treasures all around them, seduced by modern trivia and cheap thrills; if you admire this obscene monoculture, encroaching like a cancer on us all; if you think that this world-wide vulgarity is for mankind and not for the profiteers; if you would have us all speak Esperanto, a language quite remote from common folk, not given birth by normal evolution but coldly spawned by missionary zeal, quite unconcerned by cultures' fragility and the human world's potential loss - then you must embrace these new bird names, look down your noise at simple folk and say 'your words are not acceptable to *us*"

Orwell was right, War *is* Peace, Love *is* Hate - and Lotusbird *is* Comb-crested Jacana.

JOHN SQUIRE

'The Taxonomists' Song"

Although not so very
Amusing and merry,
Our wits are still most energetic.
In kinship we dabble,
And love to unravel
Relationships phylogenetic.

We're well up on theory,
And frequently query
Established opinion's veracity;
And if we're proved right,
We are full of delight
And surprise at our own perspicacity.

We interpret with ease
Information from fleas
And egg-white electrophoresis.
From development foetal
And structures skeletal,
We relate the most unlikely species

To further our study
Of globulins bloody,
Antibodies we use with impunity;
And, with eager pleasure,
Precipitates measure
From different degrees of immunity

* * * * * * * *

Now, some of our number
Seek but to encumber
Some bird with their own appellation.
They are no men of learning;
Their sole aim is earning
Prestige from mis-guided ovation.
They say there's no doubt
There's more species about
Than common folk ever suspected.
They play their slick games
With long Latin names
That leave others confused and dejected

To further their end,
They often pretend
Some difference slight to discover;
Which, although quite absurd,
Means some innocent bird
Is no longer akin to his brother

There's no need for concern,
For we shortly will learn
This intrusion is doomed to be blighted;
Another will claim
They should share the same name
And brothers become reunited.

They give us the jitters,
These lumpers and splitters,
Hell-bent on hasty conclusion.
We all much prefer
The birds as they were,
And our checklists devoid of confusion.

* * * * * * * *

But far worse than these,
Are those (if you please!)
With intellect so unspectacular,
That all they can do
Is to tell me and you
Just how we may use our vernacular.

Lay folk of goodwill
Are grist to their mill,
And to their dictates give compliance,
For they wrongly assume,
Though it fills them with gloom,
That it's all in the interest of Science.

The biologists' bane,
They earn but disdain,
For to Learning they disrepute bring:
Mock scientists - they,
Who just meddle away,
Quite unable to do the real thing.

They seem not to have heard
That for each beast and bird
A binomial name is elected;
So each is defined
For the whole of mankind
Since Bauhin and Linneaus collected.

So, a duplicate set,
They'll impose on us yet,
Enshrouded aloof in their mystery;
And so for each name
That we let them disclaim,
We lose part of our culture and history.

No old systematicians
Abused their positions
To impose their own tongues upon others.
They instead used their brains
and Latinised names,
And biologists all were as brothers.

* * * * * * * *

Come, taxonomists all,
We must now heed the call
Of DNA hybridisation,
And construct, if we're able,
A new complete table,
No new Tower of Babel,
Designed to disable,
But planned to enable
The right choice of label,
To tell fact from fable -
In short, a new table
Of avian classification.

JOHN SQUIRE, copyright 1990.
Cassowary House, North Queensland

RAOU
BIRDS · KNOWLEDGE · CONSERVATION

Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress - update

Professional and amateur ornithologists are advised of the Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress, an international congress that has been scheduled for early October 1996. This meeting will be conducted in Western Australia, and organised by Australia's leading bird and conservation group the Royal Australasian Ornithological Union (RAOU). The major focus of the congress will be upon southern hemisphere birds and their habitats, although delegates who wish to highlight differences or similarities between avian systems in various parts of the world will be most welcome. Provision will be made for the presentation of spoken and poster papers.

Time: Saturday 5th - Wednesday 9th October 1996.

Location: The congress will be conducted at Albany, a major regional centre within easy reach of Perth, Western Australia. Excellent conference facilities will be available, accommodation ranging from basic to luxury provided, and pre- and post-conference tours that demonstrate

the magnificent natural history of south-western Australia offered to delegates.

Major theme: The ecology, conservation and management of southern hemisphere birds.

Sub-themes:
1) Conservation and management of birds
2) Impact of fire and habitat fragmentation on bird communities
3) Studies of seabirds and waders
4) Breeding biology and mating systems of birds
5) Abundance and distribution of birds
6) Plant-animal interaction and pollination
7) Foraging behaviour in terrestrial bird communities.

Further information: Persons seeking additional information should contact the President of the RAOU, Professor Brian Collins (C/o School of Environmental Biology, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U 1987, Perth, Western Australia 6001; Tel 61 (9) 351 7041, fax 61 (9) 351 2495, Email B.Collins@info.curtin.edu.au).

Late advice - conference on Feral and Introduced Birds, U.K.

The British Ornithologists' Union and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee of the United Kingdom are holding a conference entitled 'Feral and Introduced Birds', to be held and the Great Northern Hotel, Peterborough, on April 7 - 9, 1995.

Topics include Ruddy Ducks, hybridisation, Canada Geese, monitoring, re-introductions and legislation. Spoken and poster papers are invited on any aspect of feral and introduced birds.

For further details, please contact: Graeme Green, BOU, C/o The Natural History Museum, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP, U.K.

Reviews

A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali, by John MacKinnon and Karen Phillips, 1993. Oxford University Press, New York. 491 pp. ISBN 0 19 854135 3 (hardback); ISBN 0 19 854034 5. NZ$99.95 (paperback).

How pleased I am to see this field guide. Having travelled to parts of Borneo and throughout Bali, trying to identify the unusual species of this region without adequate information was quite frustrating. There are 820 species in the Greater Sundas and these are illustrated in 88 colour plates that include most insular forms, sexual variants and immature forms of polymorphic species. The plates are grouped at the beginning of the book and are accompanied by a page of notes mentioning key diagnostic features. The text that follows includes description, voice, range, distribution and status, habits and sometimes a taxonomic 'Note'. Each entry contains the minimum of information needed. However, with 800+ species to cover, the author could hardly afford to write at length. Of real value are comparisons with similar species but again these are brief. Species expected from a region but not confirmed are also listed.

The ordering of the species follows King *et al* (1975) but reference is made in the notes wherever Sibley and Munroe's revisions differ from King *et al*. The nomenclature of Sibley and Munroe is followed to limit the number of common names. However all well-known, currently used common names are listed below the main species name. Each family is introduced with a short description.

Additional information includes a substantial glossary, the anatomy and plumage of a bird and an excellent introduction to the region. This introduction mentions physical description, climate, natural vegetation, human population and current land use and birds in local economy and culture. Further introductory chapters cover: Biogeography, Conservation and Field Techniques for birdwatching, the latter being a valuable addition. The author clearly hopes that by following his guidelines, visitors to this relatively poorly known area will submit accurate records to one of the appropriate societies listed in Appendix Seven.

A chapter on 'When and Where to see Birds' includes twenty reserves that cover the complete range of habitats of the region. Each has a brief description and information on how to get there and the main families to be seen. Appendices cover:

- endemic and threatened, endangered species by island
- land birds found on offshore island groups
- Bornean montane birds by mountain group
- annotated list of the birds of the Malay Peninsula not described in the text
- sonosketches of characteristic bird calls
- regional ornithological clubs, journals and museums. Overseas museums holding important collections of bird skins from the region are also listed
- a substantial bibliography and index conclude the book

The author John MacKinnon, currently Director of the Asian Bureau for Conservation and author of several other books is to be congratulated on a thorough work containing more information than most field guides. This book is indispensable for any birdwatcher visiting or residing in the Sundas. There is nothing comparable and I will certainly be carrying a copy next time I visit.

Literature cited - King, B.F.; Woodcock, M.W.; Dickinson, E.L. 1975 *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. London: Collins.

DON HADDEN

A Birdwatchers Guide to Malaysia, by John Bransbury, 1993. Waymark Publishing. Distributed by Natural History Book Service Ltd, 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN, U.K. ISBN 0 646 14559 2 GBP14.00 (paperback).

As the title indicates, this handy volume guides birdwatchers to the main birdwatching sites in Malaysia. A total of 42 areas are described, 26 on West (Peninsular) Malaysia and the remaining 16 in East Malaysia, ie. Sarawak and Sabah on the north-west corner of the island of Borneo. The areas selected include a variety of habitats from offshore islands to lowland and highland sites, but geographical coverage is uneven. Only four places are described for the whole of Sarawak. On the other hand about 14 places are within relatively easy reach of Kuala Lumpur. This may be a plus or a minus depending on the time you have in Malaysia. Having spent some time in Sarawak itself this was a disappointing aspect. For the New Zealander with limited time, the wide variety of sites around Kuala Lumpur would be an advantage.

The major part of the book describes these 42 areas. Each area has seven subsections presented as follow:

a. a couple of paragraphs describe its general features, types of habitat and discuss some important birds likely to be seen.
b. good birdwatching sites within the area are mentioned. These paragraphs vary in complexity but cover such aspects as roads/tracks to follow, tides, where to contact local birdwatchers, best time of day and so on.
c. a simple map of the area.
d. a bird list with the species grouped into habitat areas, eg. open areas, overhead, ground, lower storey, middle storey, canopy and difficult to find and rare species.
e. access and accommodation: which buses or boats to catch, prices, people to contact, phone numbers and other useful information.
f. when to visit: suggests best time of the year, eg. for migratory birds, or times to avoid.
g. other attractions - if you can bear to tear yourself away from Malaysia's birds, then this paragraph is for you.

Other information includes 'Helpful Hints' for first time travellers to Malaysia, a complete checklist of Malaysian birds and mammals, a glossary of Malay terns and a list of addresses of Bird, Natural History Societies and tour operators.

There are eight colour plates with small pictures of Malaysian scenes and

wildlife but none of birds. Therefore, the birdwatcher will need to have a field guide to Malaysian birds to accompany this locality guide.

This paperback may not stand up to the ravages of tropical rainforests but if I were intending to visit Malaysia it would definitely be in my pack.

DON HADDEN

Rare and Endangered New Zealand Birds: Conservation and Management, by Peter Gaze, 1994. Canterbury University Press. 80 pp., $19.95 (softcover).

This book examines the status of sixteen species faced with extinction 'unless circumstances change'. It is a slim volume, well written and, but for one minor quibble, well illustrated.

The introduction gives an extremely succinct overview of New Zealand avifauna, it's origins and current status. Since human colonisation of New Zealand, at least 40 species have become extinct. A table shows the sad fate of our three endemic families, the New Zealand wattlebirds, New Zealand thrushes and New Zealand wrens. At the turn of the century these families were represented by fourteen species or sub-species; today all but six are extinct or presumed extinct. The book focuses on the precarious status of these and others that remain.

Each chapter is headed by three panels incorporating a distribution map, a silhouette of the species and a brief description. A short introduction is followed by an account of conservation issues related to the species, and management strategies adopted from it. A brief 'where to find' section concludes the chapter.

Habitat loss and predation are common to the story of all sixteen species. Within this overall picture however, the differing degree of impact of these factors on each species clearly emerges. For instance, there is a correlation between the retention of fertile beech forest on lowland terraces and the survival rate of Yellowheads. Where such forest has been cleared, small remnant populations have survived for a time in adjacent hill country forest, but not in sufficient numbers to withstand predation. The Eglinton Valley is an example where lowland forest remains, along with a significant Yellowhead population.

Once a species is in decline it becomes increasingly vulnerable to factors which a healthy population could be expected with withstand. For instance, egg infertility in Takahe may be caused by a high degree of relatedness in a small population. Similarly, embryo deaths may be attributed to poor nutrition and/or an aging population. The vulnerability of species such as the Taiko, Westland Black Petrel and the Stewart Island population of the New Zealand Dotterel is increased because they are now confined to a narrow breeding range. It follows that a specialised management strategy is required for each species, and these are well covered in the book.

Increased public awareness of the problems facing threatened species is an important key to their survival. The plight of the Kakapo has been accorded the highest priority by the Department of Conservation, and consequently it has a high public profile. Ironically, its precarious status means that there can be no provision for the public to see Kakapo. Fortunately, other species can be readily seen at places like the Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre or on Tiritiri Matangi Island. In some areas of the North Island, a 'nest-minding' scheme has been put in place for the New Zealand Dotterel. Not only has this raised the profile of the species, but it has also increased awareness of threatened species in general.

I have one or two minor quibbles. In my experience of the Stitchbird it is the single note territorial call, rather than a 'low warbling song' which first indicates the bird's presence. While a colour photograph is included for each species, the book would perhaps have been better served by line drawings rather than the wash-drawing silhouettes which head each chapter. In the case of birds like Kakapo or Black Stilt, the idea works well. In the case of the Yellowhead it does not. It is, however, the printing that appears to be at fault in this case.

This is an excellent volume, which will be of considerable interest to anyone drawn to New Zealand birds and conservation techniques and strategies. In particular, I believe that it will be of tremendous value to schools and overseas visitors.

KEITH WOODLEY

2 CD-ROMs - *New Zealand Birds and How to Photograph Them.* Published by ProTech International, P.O. Box 324, Nelson. Marketed by 'Merchandise Marketing' Ltd, Auckland. RRP $99.95.

Birds of Europe. Published by Expert-center for Taxonomic Identification, University of Amsterdam, P.O. Box 4766, NL-1009 AT Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

CD-ROMs are compact discs that are played on a suitably equipped computer. They can contain text, pictures, sound and video sequences and offer a powerful medium for conveying images and information about birds. The two CD-ROMs reviewed here are available for Multimedia PCs running Windows.

New Zealand Birds is a very impressive collection of photographs and text by Don Hadden. The text covers all New Zealand birds with information on distribution, voice, food, breeding, identification cues and background information. There is much more information available than in standard field guides. The text for each species can be found through indexes arranged according to common name and scientific name. There is also a snapshot index which has small pictures of New Zealand birds so the reader can skim through and find a picture that resembles an unidentified bird. In addition, computer database search functions allow the reader to search for information on groups of birds in a way that is not possible with the index of a book. There is also a good bibliography and a glossary of terms.

Around half of the birds have colour photographs that accompany the text. These are of high quality and for some species there are several pictures. A few of the birds also have full-screen photographs with the text. Recordings of the calls of many of the birds can be played back through the computer. In addition there are short video clips of a few of the birds. These videos are small, unclear and do not run smoothly, and are of little help in identifying or learning about any of the birds.

The CD-ROM also includes some tips on how to photograph New Zealand birds, including information on how some of the pictures in the title were obtained. Another feature is a collection of video clips of some New Zealand tourist attractions, but these are of the same low quality as the birds and so do not add to the CD-ROM.

New Zealand Birds is highly recommended as a source of information and a learning tool. This CD-ROM can be used to introduce people to birds in a way that may stimulate their interest via the novel medium of a computer rather than a book.

Birds of Europe covers 419 of the most important birds of Europe with colour pictures, distribution maps, songs and sonograms and colour paintings of the eggs. The information is arranged as species cards with brief details of field characters, voice, distribution, habitat and food found as a field guide. A distribution map and colour picture can be called up for each species. There is a species list and a useful taxonomic key that helps the reader identify an unknown bird using silhouettes.

The CD-ROM includes a small bird quiz, some video clips of birds and a history of the study of birds. The videos are not of high quality - this seems to be a limitation of the technology rather than of a particular CD-ROM. The program is not as easy to use as the *New Zealand Birds* CD-ROM and it stopped running several times for unknown reasons.

This CD-ROM offers an alternative to a field guide book but provides little additional information. It will be of some value to New Zealand ornithologists with a special interest in European birds who are also interested in multimedia titles.

JOHN COCKREM

Regional Round-up

Northland

In November our region coordinated its efforts with Auckland during the National Wader Count on the Kaipara Harbour. Apparently our two regions have not always covered our respective areas on the same day in the past and we are attempting to remedy this. Richard Parrish and Adrian Riegen flew the harbour's coastline the day before in a 1930s Gypsy, to find out where the birds were roosting and to look for new roosts we didn't know about. Richard believes we got a good coverage and that few birds were missed on this massive harbour. From the results it is obvious that Auckland has all the choice spots on the Kaipara - places such as Tapora and Jordans.

The following weekend, a select group went up to the Far North to count waders up there.

Our Christmas barbecue was held at Bill Ringer's place at Horseshoe Bay and saw a good turn-out.

The Black-backed Gull banders harassed two gull colonies this summer - at Waipu Oxidation Ponds and Kauri Mountain - banding a total of 190 chicks. They are carrying metal on the left leg, red on the right.

There was a wreck of seabirds on the east coast in January, but as far as I am aware no unusual species among the victims.

On Anniversary Weekend an enjoyable time was spent trespassing on Auckland's patch at Jordans and Tapora. Gavin Grant organised this trip and accommodation in the shearers' quarters at McLean's farm at Tapora. A good variety of birds was seen, the highlights being a Marsh Sandpiper, nine Far-eastern Curlews, three Red-necked Stints, seven Pacific Golden Plovers and two each of Fairy and Little Terns.

Evening meetings began again for 1995 on 9 February with a picnic tea up at the Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre, where the enthusiastic Robert Webb showed us around and told us all about what his group is trying to achieve. Alec Baxter, skipper of the 'Felicitare', came along to this meeting and showed us the video he took of the Bryde's Whales on our October OSNZ boat trip. This meeting had an excellent turn-out, and there were still some regulars absent.

(Pat Miller)

Auckland

Pat Miller came down from Northland to tell us about the North Island Brown Kiwi recovery programme at the December meeting. While good numbers of birds were recorded in a 1992 survey, the on-going survey is trying to establish the cause of steadily diminishing numbers since that time. The main predators are thought to be ferrets, stoats and to some extent possums that predate eggs. Adult kiwi are also very aggressive and may kill young birds straying into their territory.

Overall the situation is not good and it seems that increased management effort will be essential for the long term survival of kiwi. This will be another budget burden on an already hopelessly underfunded DoC.

The February meeting followed the usual format of listening to holiday adventures and bird experiences. We certainly are a well travelled group these days, with reports of birds from Borneo to Bluff.

Records of interest in the region are as follow - Muriwai, November, 1087 gannets with one chick, December 1198 gannets, 251 chicks, January 1572 gannets, 428 chicks; Rat Island, 200 Caspian Terns with 120 nests, 300 White-fronted Terns with 200 nests, 10 Royal Spoonbills, one Little Tern; Tapora, 20 Caspian Terns with twelve active nests, two Far-eastern Curlews, 13 Pacific Golden Plovers, two Fairy Terns, 300 SIPO; Northern Waitakere Ranges, eight Long-tailed Bats; Little Barrier Island, up to 80 Black Petrel burrows, about twelve active; Hunua Ranges, 21 Kokako surveyed including five pairs - one pair fledged two (possibly three) chicks, another pair suspected nesting; Whangaparaoa Peninsula, two Kaka seen roosting.

Beach patrols are returning to normal after the long dispute at Muriwai. Thirty birds of nine species were collected in November, with gannets and Sooty Shearwaters predictably being the most common. We were pleased to pick up three Cape Pigeons, a Kerguelen Petrel, an Antarctic Fulmar and a Shy Mollymawk.

The December patrol was more productive with eighty birds of fifteen different species, with Mottled, White-headed and Grey-faced Petrels and a Little Shearwater being of particular interest. Bird of the day was identified much later by Brian Gill as a Common Tern, with a live specimen recorded close to Muriwai.

We seem to have had an influx of different terns this summer, with another one or possibly two Common Terns seen by several members at the Mangere Ponds in December, and another record of a single bird comes from Waikiri Creek on the Kaipara in both November and December. Add to this two White-winged Black Terns, also at Mangere, and a flock of 42 Little Terns on the Kaipara.

It is very pleasing to be able to report the presence of two Royal Spoonbill flocks in the region. Ray Clough does a good job monitoring the flock at the Mangere Ponds, with well over fifty last year. We also had a flock of around ten birds at the southern Kaipara last winter, five of them being seen consistently throughout the summer.

In late November Mike Graham led the 16th survey visit to Tiritiri Matangi Island, the first being in April 1987. The on-going study involves counts on seven transects and at two listening posts, and is to record changes to bird numbers and types as the revegetation process progresses. We will also have good data of the situation before and after the eradication of Kiore. Dick Vietch is kindly collating and analysing the data and as a follow-up to Mel Galbraith's article in the last *OSNZ News* we will produce a report after the next survey, scheduled for 24 March.

Finally a visit to the West Auckland Matuku Reserve was led by John Staniland, who without doubt is our New Zealand version of botanical star David Bellamy. John manages this delightful area of bush for the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, and a trip with him is one of non-stop enthusiasm and amusement as he describes the different trees and birds. The weather meant that bird numbers were not great, but an albino Tui will be long remembered as it fed close to us in a Pohutukawa. Instead of the usual deep black-blue-green body colour of a normal Tui, this bird is a light brown. The various white feathers are the same as for a normal bird, so the contrast is attractive.

(M. Graham, B. Greene, K. Haslett)

South Auckland

The croquet club room could barely cope with the large number of members who attended our November meeting, during which Dick Vietch gave an excellent presentation on Raoul Island in the Kermadec group. Lying roughly midway between northern New Zealand and Tonga, the Kermadecs share much in common with the mainland, and it was interesting to draw the many parallels, not only ornithologically but also botanically.

For those pelagic fans amongst us, slides of nesting Black-winged and Kermadec Petrels were of particular interest and rounded the presentation off nicely.

The annual end-of-year barbecue in December was most enjoyable: lots of members, lots of food and, of course, lots of bird talk. A special thanks to Lynne and David Lawrie for their hospitality.

A small group of members visited the Caspian Tern colony on a large sand island at the mouth of the Waikato River on 4 December. A total of 26 nests and 24 young were counted; half the young were free-running. Unfortunately, only one White-fronted Tern nest was found.

A later visit saw a dramatic increase in Caspian Tern numbers, with 197 adults and 47 juveniles and evidence that breeding has been successful for the Variable Oystercatchers and New Zealand Dotterels also present.

New Year's Eve saw a large number of members from several regions converge at the Miranda Naturalists' Trust Centre for yet another barbecue. Once again, a most enjoyable time was had by all.

On the first day of 1995, Keith Woodley, the faithful warden of the Miranda Trust Centre, went AWOL, the temptation of starting the New Year with a new species just too much to resist. Perhaps foolishly, I had promised to show him Spotless Crakes at a renowned site near the Mangatawhiri Dam; so, in the morning Tom Barton, Keith and myself set off.

Only minutes after our arrival at the site a very obliging Spotless Crake walked by only metres away, so binoculars were useless.

Also on the agenda that day was a visit to Kidds farm on the Manukau Harbour, where we'd arranged to meet Pam ands Des Agnew, Tony Habraken and David Lawrie. Kidds is another wader hot-spot in our region and lately has been in a real class of its own.

On our arrival the tide was fully in so it was necessary to wade out to the shellbanks. Fortunately the water was very warm, having been heated by the scorching sun. It was Keith's first visit to Kidds and he was most impressed, not only with the variety of species, but also the sheer number of individuals. Some examples were 42 Pacific Golden Plover, 26 Curlew Sandpipers, 12 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 8 Red-necked Stints, 15 Little Terns and one very confiding Grey-tailed Tattler.

Kidds is also noted for it's Black-billed Gull colony, and the 90+ nests counted there on 11 December have resulted in a large number of successfully reared young. Several visits have been made lately by David Lawrie and Tony Habraken to colour-band chicks as part of a study to determine the species' dispersal. Yellow colour bands have been placed on the left tarsus of 231 individuals in total, so please report any sightings of colour-banded Black-billed Gulls to the Banding Office or to your Regional Representative.

Interestingly, a smaller number of White-fronted Terns also nest in the same area and 100 chicks were counted on 5 February.

As a further indication of Kidds' brilliance, during a visit on 28 January an incredible 47 Curlew Sandpipers were observed together, and on 5 February a Great Knot was seen. It is a place that we never tire of visiting.

Finally on the subject of waders, a colour-banded Bar-tailed Godwit was seen by several members from the hide at Miranda on 3 December. The details were sent overseas and the results of our rare find are most interesting. The bird is a female and was banded on the nest on the Seaward Peninsula, Alaska, in June 1990. It was seen at the same site in 1991 and 1992. Naturally we are very pleased with this sighting, as are the Alaskans.

Waders aside, we have had two rare tern species, both at the Mangere Oxidation Ponds. During the Manukau census on 20 November, two non-breeding plumage White-winged Black Terns were found and well-watched by a numerous members. They were followed by a lone Common Tern on 7 December, also in non-breeding plumage.

A total of four Bellbirds heard calling on the morning of 30 October by Anthea Goodwin along Moumoukai Hill Road in the Hunua Ranges is certainly an unusual record for our area, as are the three Glossy Ibis at Aka Aka. These birds stayed long after the accompanying Cattle Egrets had left and, when last seen on 12 December, they were resplendent in breeding plumage. Is there a chance that they stayed to breed?

Finally, Anthea Goodwin, our Regional Representative for several years, will sadly be leaving us soon and heading up to the winterless north. No meeting or outing will be quite the same without you, and best wishes for the future from your many friends.

(Paul Harrison)

Waikato

A small dedicated group has made monthly visits since April to census the birdlife on two small lakes in Hamilton city. The results of their work will be used by the council in determining final management plans for Lake Rotoroa and Forest Lake. Birds seen frequently at both lakes include Mallards, Australian Coot, Pied Stilt, Pukeko and Black Swan, all of which nest on the lake margins. White-faced Heron, Black, Pied, Little and Little Black Shags have all been recorded as using the lakes.

A field trip to bush near Pirongia in October to search for bush birds was disappointing. Few birds were seen and the bush was generally reported to be in poor condition. The single Kokako known to be in the area was not found, though it has been seen on subsequent visits to the area by Ian Reid and John Kendrick who recorded its song. A fleeting glimpse of a Spotless Crake was obtained by two pairs of sharp eyes at a nearby wetland area.

Inclement weather made counting very difficult for Kawhia and Aotea Harbour census participants. Trying to count an estimated 3,500 godwit in a forty knot gale is not to be recommended, as most of the time was spent trying to keep ourselves upright. The birds could not roost comfortably and shuffled about, each bird trying to be on the lea side of the flock. By moving slowly towards the flock we even put up small, vaguely countable numbers of birds, which flew off to the other end of the sandbank. Even so we felt that our final tally was too low for the larger than usual number of birds that seemed to be present.

Beach patrols have been interesting over the past couple of months with Sooty Shearwater and prion species recorded. The more uncommon finds included a Grey-headed Mollymawk, a Mottled Petrel and a White-headed Petrel at Taharoa. Several Short-tailed Shearwaters were also recorded.

Our final meeting of the year, a Christmas pot-luck dinner enjoyed by forty members and visitors, was followed by Ian Reid's videos of local regional activities, and another which featured the amazing courtship rituals of birds of paradise and Australian bower birds.

Many Waikato members congregated at Miranda with locals and other Trust members to share a barbecue dinner before seeing in the New Year, and spending New Years Day looking for the elusive rarities amongst the wader flocks.

(Bev Woolley)

Bay of Plenty

The Matata Lagoons have had some interesting visitors in recent months. The most recent of these is a Glossy Ibis which has been feeding in the eastern Lagoon around the edge of the sand bar and close to the car park. The first time, on 26 December, it was noticed feeding sociably amongst the stilts and oystercatchers. These became disturbed for some reason, and once in the air a lone Caspian Tern took a couple of dives at the ibis, and it then settled on the Western Lagoon. On another occasion it was feeding with a New Zealand Dotterel.

This is possibly the same Glossy Ibis as seen by Bill Sloan on the Waioeka River estuary near Opotiki in October 1984. On this occasion it was feeding in a water-logged paddock, accompanied by White-faced Herons and Cattle Egrets.

Other unusual birds in the Matata Lagoons area include a Little Egret in October in November, and four Black-fronted Dotterels in July and August.

A flock of Cattle Egrets was present near the Awaiti Lagoon from July to October. Numbers of up to 31 however appeared to be lower than previous years' counts.

A sighting on Lake Rotoma is worthy of mention - on a small lagoon near the Otumarokura Point a single Black-fronted Dotterel was seen on three occasions in late December-early January. On the same lagoon are two families of Grey Teal, one with six chicks, the other with seven, plus four adults. Close by on the lake shore were six New Zealand Dabchicks with four chicks.

A Little Tern was seen by Paddy Latham at Maketu during the bird count in November.

(John Brierley)

Hawkes Bay

Our Christmas meeting started out with a Twitchathon, with the winning team spotting 56 species in five hours. The meeting concluded with a bird song competition, involving listening to a tape and having to identify the calls. The results were surprising - I think we all need to listen a bit more! A barbecue finished off the evening.

A few interesting sights over the past few months include an Asiatic Whimbrel at Ahuriri and a White-winged Black Tern, both of which have been present over the summer months. The number of godwits appears to be down on the Ahuriri this summer, with only about 200 instead of the usual 350 plus. A very dry winter, followed by dry spring and early summer have seen many of our water bodies dry or nearly so. Apart from two Red-necked Stints and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, we don't seem to have many small migrant waders.

One Little Egret is still resident at East Clive. Two Royal Spoonbills were seen at Tukituki Estuary in early January but were not seen to be counted on the Waitangi Day census. The White-fronted Tern and Black-billed Gull colony at Tukituki was unsuccessful. Great numbers of dead chicks of both species were found at the deserted colony in mid-January. We have no idea what caused this. Some chicks of both species fledged, but few compared to the number of dead.

A field trip to Porangahau in early February produced godwits showing faint breeding plumage colour. Wrybills and Banded Dotterels were plentiful, one of the latter banded.

(Christine McRae)

Taranaki

During the last two months of 1994, sightings of less common birds around Taranaki were similar to sightings over the previous six months - two Rooks were seen on three occasions, and a falcon once in the city of New Plymouth.

20 Cattle Egrets in Waitara topped this season's high of 13 mentioned in the last Regional Round-up. A pair of Black-fronted Dotterels nested but were washed out with rain.

Other than these records, four rosellas were seen in Mt Egmont's ranges, NZ Scaup with young were present on Lake Rotomanu (New Plymouth town) and kiwis were heard in Tarata and Everett Park, outside Inglewood.

(Erika Woodger)

Manawatu

Since our last epistle, we have had one evening meeting, at the end of November. Ron Moorhouse gave us an update on his research on the North Island Kaka. Thanks, Ron, for an interesting evening.

We have had our usual birds this summer at the Manawatu Estuary - Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot, Red-necked Stint, Siberian Tattler, Golden Plover, Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpiper, SIPO, VOC, Caspian Tern, Pied Stilt, three gull species, Wrybill, Banded Dotterel, Spur-winged Plover, White-fronted Tern, Cattle Egret, White-faced Heron, Royal Spoonbill and, for a short time, a Far-eastern Curlew.

To make life interesting we have also had three species of bird we have either never seen before, or infrequently at the estuary. All these birds were brought to the attention of the local OSNZ group by visitors to other regions to Foxton, although we feel that we can almost claim the Moores as locals!

A Greenshank was the first bird Jim spotted, associating with Pied Stilts - it must the finding the food and company to its liking as it was still present at the end of January. A Sanderling was the next bird to arrive, identified by Jim Hamilton, Christine McRae and Geoff Foreman on 30 December. It didn't stay long, and in fact Jim Moore saw it fly away when a helicopter flew over the roosting birds on the spit on Carnival Day. It was apparently on Jim Hamilton's 'wish-list' that particular day to see a Sanderling - perhaps we should invite him over more often!

On 7 January another phone call from Jim Moore informed us that a Crested Tern was on the spit with a group of White-fronted Terns. Again, it didn't stay long - we wonder why we don't see more of them.

Roger Wasley successfully continues to increase his photographs of nesting birds. Last year Roger tackled Rooks. This year he set up his hide in a macrocarpa tree near the spillway at Whirokino. His target was Black Shags, and judging by his slides he was most successful. Pam and Roger Slack accompanied him one weekend, but neither was too keen to enter the hide perched out on the end of a branch.

A greater number of Cattle Egrets seems to have over-summered in the Foxton area this season. They have been seen flying around the estuary and at No. 1 Lake off Wylies Road - 28 is the highest number counted, some in breeding plumage. I wonder how long it will be before they decide to nest in New Zealand.

The Wrybill, banded as a chick on the Ohau River on 10/11/93, which over-wintered at Foxton, has successfully returned after a presumed migration south. It was observed on 25 September, and again on 25 December with five other birds.

After many attempts by Sybil Cresswell to advertise in local papers for observations of possible Black-billed Gull nesting on the region's rivers, Philip Battley arrived back from overseas and promptly found a colony on the Manawatu in Palmerston North. He estimated on 7 December that there were 155 birds, with 53 sitting on nests. The birds were nesting on a low island very close to the river walkway and houses, in an area where people exercise dogs on the path and in the water. By 3 January, Sybil could only see see fifteen gulls, with possibly four still on nests. Though Palmerston North has had little rain this season, the river was high and muddy due to rain upstream. On a later visit she could possibly see adults feeding young. Will they be back again next breeding season?

Spoonbills seem still to find the Foxton Estuary attractive. Our highest count was 71 birds on 7 May. They are very visible near the river mouth while duck shooting is taking place - otherwise they tend to go upstream, and you need a boat to see them. Bruce Collett found 47 birds on 25 June and 18 on the spoonbill count of 6 February, one with white bands above the 'knee'.

Several members are booked to fly down to Stewart Island in May, and we all look forward to a great AGM.

(Pam Slack)

Wellington

The first meeting of the year brought the news that Royal Spoonbills have bred on Kapiti Island for the first time. The best Wellington count so far - Peter Schweigman will be pleased!

Our mapping scheme has continued over the summer months. It has now been going for a year and we plan to continue for another year, hoping for a more comprehensive picture of our target species.

The current project on Mana Island involves trapping of Pukekos, banding, weighing and taking blood and faecal samples.

We were invited to help out with recording kiwi calls on Kapiti Island and three trips have been made this summer, with counts of two hours being done on Friday and Saturday nights. The delights of Kapiti this time included a view of the newly fledged Kokako chick.

Evening talks have been varied as usual. Peter Reese explained his work with Raewyn Empson on NZ Robins on Kapiti. Chris Robertson gave us information on his work on Royal Albatrosses on the Sisters Islands and Graeme Taylor spoke on the state of some endangered species including Shore Plover, Taiko, NZ Dotterel and Campbell Island Teal.

We also have regular updates from people who collect the information for the mapping scheme.

We look forward to an interesting year - happy birding for 1995.

(Ros Batchelor)

Canterbury

Another summer holiday over and Canterbury has had some exciting birds for the stay-at-homes.

In January Coopers Lagoon had a record 10+ White-winged Black Terns. Seven of them were still there two weeks later, and an amazing fourteen soon thereafter.

A possible Little Stint at Lake Ellesmere is greatly taxing the observation powers of local wader watchers. A Great Knot and a Greenshank have also been seen.

David Hawke sighted a probable Sooty Tern at the Orari River mouth, and seventeen Cattle Egrets were still with us on 17 January, one in full breeding plumage. Over a hundred Wrybills spent January at Lake Ellesmere, and greater numbers continue to pass through, after bank-to-bank floods on our major rivers, enabling an influx of overseas birders a great opportunity to observe this delightful bird. Five Arctic Skuas were seen at the Rakaia River mouth, and fifteen turnstones and 2500 Spotted Shags were at the Ashburton River mouth, in early February.

The November barbecue was unfortunately cancelled - we will try again in April with a farewell to the waders.

At our November meeting Kerry Wilson gave us an excellent talk on the conservation of the Kuramo'o in the Cook Islands, and an extra meeting was arranged at short notice in January to enable David Seay to show us lovely slides of his few weeks stay in Oman. David now lives in San Diego, but manages to visit Christchurch, his old home town, once a year.

The breeding season for Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns was very poor this season, with Canterbury rivers being in unseasonable full flood for weeks. Most of the birds gave up trying.

Three dead seabirds have been found in the city recently - a Kerguelen Petrel, a White-faced Storm Petrel and a Fairy Prion.

(Sheila Petch)

Otago

Otago was successful in obtaining a Ministry of the Environment grant to carry out a study of Silvereyes and South Island Robins, studies that commenced last winter. We have just worked out that the Otago Passerine Banding Group has banded 1447 Silvereyes, with a massive 584 retraps.

A few other passerines have been lured into our mist nets, but unfortunately the hope of colour-banding S.I. Robins didn't eventuate - the birds just didn't want to get caught. We will have another go this autumn.

At last we will shortly have our own mist nets. We have been relying too heavily on Derek Onley's - it shows with all those Tuis and Blackbirds going through it.

The other banding programmes in Otago went smoothly - no hiccups at Green Island Nature Reserve, which we eventually got to in zodiacs and banded 12 spoonbill chicks. The Variable Oystercatcher colour banding programme went well, with a total of 22 adults and chicks.

(Peter Schweigman)

Southland

It looks like being a worthwhile AGM on Stewart Island this year, with a healthy number of registrations from all over the country.

The Southland branch holds meetings every two months. The December one was well attended when most Southland members heard Maida Barlow talk about her long involvement with the Caspian Tern colony in the Invercargill Estuary, and the subsequent movement of the birds as they disperse.

Beach patrols have been carried out on an almost weekly basis, and we now have a fairly clear picture of bird movements in Foveaux Strait.

A census of Royal Spoonbills revealed 35, down a bit from last year. However, as there are so many suitable feeding areas around Southland, many will have been uncounted.

A flock of thirteen Cattle Egrets in magnificent breeding plumage was present at Riverton in mid-November, much later than usual. It was hoped that they might be the start of breeding, but they were probably just waiting for a break in the prolonged series of fronts to get back to Australia.

For the fifth consecutive year, a pair of SIPOs at Wrey's Bush have raised an unusually pale coloured chick. Recent sightings have been a Gull-billed Tern and a White-winged Black Tern at the lagoon by the rubbish dump, with three pairs of Chestnut-breasted Shelduck. The summer wader census turned up Far-eastern Curlews, Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, as well as good numbers of the usual godwits, turnstones and knots.

(Lloyd Esler)

DEADLINE FOR JUNE ISSUE IS 10 MAY